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Life and Faith in the New Districts.

By the Right Reverend A. A. David, D.D., Bishop of Liverpool.

In the north midlands there is a ridge of high ground commanding a wide extent of country to right and left. On one side can be seen a little country town, a huddle of grey houses clustered round a church. That shows the old England where people lived within reach of God's house, and of those who serve it. On the other side are long close-pressed lines of red cottages, sprawling out from an industrial town near by. The streets are lamentably straight, and they contain nothing but houses, shops, and a cinema or two, nothing to break the monotonous roof line, no hall where like-minded people can gather for any common purpose, no tower or spire to bear witness to the living God who wills to dwell with men. Is this what the new Britain will be like?

It is estimated that between the years 1920 and 1940 seven million people in England alone will have moved into a million and a half new houses on new ground. The face of the country is being changed. We are learning how to make its new face as comely as may be. The newest corporation estates show real attempts to please the eye. The houses are neither too uniform nor too 'original' in design. They are grouped in a variety of combinations, terraces, crescents, and sometimes in half a quadrangle, like the Regency Square at Brighton in miniature. The main roads are wide, with side roads branching off in gracious curves. No longer are shops excluded from the plan because they would 'detract from the appearance of the estate.' Shopping centres, community halls, and recreation grounds are worked into the design. So far as externals are concerned the best possible conditions will prevail in the estates now being built, with earlier mistakes and omissions fresh in the minds of their designers.

But what sort of life will the newcomers build for themselves? Consider first that their experience is entirely new. People 'change houses' often enough, too often sometimes. But that a whole multitude should be suddenly transferred to strange surroundings—for this there is hardly a precedent since Assyrian days. To each family it means a shock. They have been shaken out of old habits, separated from old friends, and torn out of their familiar environment. There will be for them a change in the direction of life, and almost certainly in its quality. Whether this change is for better or for worse depends largely on their reaction to the first upsetting disturbance of their move. At first they are suspicious of their new neighbours and therefore lonely. They are apt also to be irritated by the number and variety of good-natured people prepared to show them how to be happy. Almost every agency of social and religious welfare gets to work among them. Representatives of the churches, charitable associations, trade unions, and political parties descend upon them with suggestions for the brightening of their lives from a dozen points of view. The effect is confusing, sometimes exasperating. The inhabitants resent being regarded as a happy hunting-ground for experts and leaders in human welfare. As one of them put it, 'we are tired of being slummed.'

But leaders they must have. Soon they will produce them for themselves. But the process is slow, especially in a district composed entirely of people who though not without class differences among themselves, yet for practical purposes of common action may be regarded as standing on the same social level. They are curiously shy of seeming to aim at prominence. Whatever gift of initiative they may possess they are afraid to use, lest they should give offence. So the leadership must come at first from outside. Here is one of the Church's opportunities. A wise and sympathetic minister can make the most of it by drawing his people into a real family life, centred in the hall or church. He will not oppose or compete with other chances open to them of fellowship with their neighbours. Soon there will come into being a Tenants' Association which has many possibilities, but one disadvantage. It assumes that every Council tenant has a grumble against the Council, and must unite with others in order to get his grumble through. There are signs, however, of the development of these associations into Community Councils, in which representatives of those social agencies that seem to be taking root in the district take counsel together for the interest, both lower and higher, of all. Side by side with these the Church must declare a bond of unity higher and stronger, because it rests upon the love and care of God for all His children. Out of their worship of Him will arise a spirit of service, to make its way into all the manifold loyalties of social and industrial life. It is in Church membership that men are taught and trained to play their part as true members of any other body.

In this creative work our pioneers in these areas are faced with special conditions, some of them encouraging, and others very difficult. They are not peculiar to the new districts, and many of them tend to disappear as parochial life develops. But at first they are strongly in evidence. One of them is the size of families. New houses are assigned to parents with the largest number of children, and the child population is, and for some years remains, enormous. Another and more difficult feature is that the new populations are still largely shifting and unsettled. Many families must even now submit to a second move under the Overcrowding Act. Some cannot reconcile themselves to their new surroundings. They long to return, even to the slums. These, however, are not so numerous as was expected. An old man was induced with the utmost difficulty to abandon his cellar room for a small flat at the top of a tenement block. A month later the health visitor asked him in his new home whether he would like to go back to his old one. He led her to his window from which he had a glimpse of the Welsh hills, and said, 'I would do murder first!' A mother, forcibly transferred from the slums to the suburbs, declared a few months after that she would never return, 'not even if they offered me the Town Hall clock!' Nevertheless there will be a thin stream inwards, mainly of those who, in spite of the immensely superior health conditions in the new areas, prefer to live nearer to their work.

Many of the migrants maintain for a time their attachment to the church of the parish they have left. Lancashire folk are famous for their staunch loyalty to a particular minister or a particular building. Apart from these '*the* Church' often means very little to them. I believe that one of the opportunities this great migration is bringing us is that of lifting Church loyalty from particular places on to higher ground, and giving people a sense of what it means to belong to the Body of Christ, which can never be restricted to the narrow embodiment of places or of groups.

It has been interesting to observe the process by which a new church 'district' develops its organized life on normal lines until it wins full status as a parish, and assumes its share of responsibility for the wider work of the diocese. I have in mind two districts, each of 12,000 inhabitants, in which preparatory work was begun on a modest scale nine years ago. In one respect the conditions in both were exceptional. Instead of building first a hall, and leaving the church until the demand for it had proved itself, we were able within three years to provide in each case both. One church was given as a Memorial of Bishop Chavasse, the other by the children of the diocese. But this almost complete equipment involved a considerable charge for maintenance, and we wondered whether the people could and would meet it. They have done so without any pressure, and they have done more. In one case the hall has been enlarged, in the other a vicarage has been built. Both contribute their full assessment to the diocesan fund, and their gifts for missions overseas compare favourably with those from other and older parishes. They offer to people of all ages the normal opportunities for parochial fellowship and work. Thus in six years they have emerged from the status of a mission to that of an independent unit of the diocese, and recently they have distinguished themselves by a specially vigorous share in providing new housing areas elsewhere with equipment similar to their own, though it cannot be on so generous a scale.

I may be allowed to make a few suggestions arising out of these parts of Lancashire experience which might apply equally to other places. The first batch concerns public authorities who build and then manage new estates. I hope that by this time it is unnecessary to urge that all housing areas of sufficient size should include Community Halls. It is unreasonable to expect a miscellaneous crowd of people to develop any kind of corporate life and thereby to become good citizens if they must depend for their meetings entirely on what the churches can provide. If people are to live together a life which is in any sense a common life, they must have places where numbers of them can gather under cover. And it is better that such places should be in public rather than in private hands.

It is much to be desired that the same principle could be applied to public-houses. In many estates no licences are granted at all. Objection to the sale of drink for private profit has so far succeeded in keeping them out, and I hope it always will. But it ought to be possible for the inhabitants of such an area to decide whether or not they wish to have a restaurant under disinterested management, where food as well as drink is provided and where the sale of drink is not pushed, because it is nobody's interest to push it. This means a change of the law which will come one day, and the experience of new estates will help to bring it.

Another problem which is not yet solved is that of rent collection and inspection for repairs. Often these are in separate hands. But an official who does nothing but collect rents has a thankless task, even if he gets his money. There is an estate in the South where he is forbidden to go *inside* a house for

fear of what might happen to him, especially near the end of his round. In the more civilized North he would be quite safe, but he is never very welcome. If, however, he comes to 'see about' the repairs too, he is looked at with a kindlier eye. Best of all is the Octavia Hill system, under which trained women welfare workers gather the rents, and know how to give tactful advice on home management, which seldom fails to be acceptable. They are able also to represent to the proper quarter where the shoes pinch, with shrewd suggestions how best they can be eased. But they are of course powerless to deal with the only complaint on which the whole population is agreed, namely, that rents are too high. This is quite true, but only in the sense that a considerable proportion of the tenants are not able to afford them. We watch with interest the Leeds experiment of applying the means test to rents. But the real hope is in the rising tide of prosperity now creeping even into depressed districts.

My last suggestion is a bold one. It is that the whole management of such estates when they form new units should be entrusted to public bodies, responsible to but separate from the Corporation or the Council. These, like Parliament, are already overburdened with administration which yearly grows more complex. They cannot possibly give time and thought enough to the enormous mass of business that is laid upon them. But there are still men to be found everywhere who can be trusted to use their experience and ability in administering a public enterprise in the public interest. Such men are already at work in bodies like the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, the Electricity Commissioners, and the British Broadcasting Corporation. They would be directed as to principles by the owning authority, but left to settle details themselves. Thus questions of individual treatment would be lifted out of the arena of municipal politics into a more judicial air. And they would make a continuous study of a new sociological problem which calls for specialized attention everywhere, now that so large a proportion of our population is on the move.

Most of all it calls for the special attention of the Churches. In England it has taken some years for church folk to become aware of the problem before us, of its magnitude and of its possibilities. No adequate idea of it can be gained from statistics or from written or spoken appeals. To realize the meaning of what is happening now needs more imagination than most of us possess, until we have had opportunity of seeing an example of it for ourselves. Even a hasty tour through a new housing area, and a fleeting contact with some of the newcomers there, will bring conviction of what must be done unless we are prepared to hand down to the next generation multitudes of half-pagan folk. I know of such a tour organized by a comparatively well-to-do parish. The result has been that they 'adopted' a 'district' which is on its way to becoming a 'parish.' The adoption will not involve regular financial support. The link between the two is one of friendship, not of dependence. A group of young men from the older parish will offer service as may be desired in the young district, especially in the form of expounding the Christian message, teaching classes, and leading discussion circles in the new hall. Thus will laymen take their part in awakening the faith of others and in the process winning a firmer hold upon their own.

But here, as always, finance is an essential condition of advance in the spread of the gospel. This exceptional need came upon us at a time of exceptional depression. Nevertheless a great deal of money was raised—and spent. But the building development continued. It has become clear that in these days of manifold and costly reconstruction there is little hope in more appeals on the usual lines for large capital sums. Moreover, a task of this magnitude can be accomplished only by the whole Church, not by that section alone which attends its services, upon whom falls almost all the responsibility for maintaining Christian work. In one English diocese an attempt has begun to approach those who would call themselves 'members of the Church of England' but make use of its ministrations only when it suits them to do so, for Baptism, Marriage, Burial, etc. For this purpose an appeal was made for lay people who would undertake the task of visiting such folk and discussing with them first the question of 'membership' and its responsibilities. So far about three thousand are engaged upon this work, and the number grows every month. They have made two discoveries. First, that non-churchgoers are more warmly disposed to 'the Church' and less indifferent to religion than we had supposed. An unexpectedly large number of them have promised and are producing contributions for extension work. They agree that their church is worth to them a penny a week, and they are giving it. The result in one year has been £7000, very largely from those who have taken hitherto no part in the maintenance or the work of the Church. It has been discovered also that here is a new and hopeful method of evangelism. Men who would not think of attending a mission service, or of accepting a casual tract, are welcoming friendly visits from messengers who neither force

their views with authority, nor urge them by emotional appeal, but are prepared to discuss the great questions frankly and humbly, as fellow-seekers of God and His truth. They are supplied with a series of short letters from the bishop designed to open such discussions. It may seem a queer way of evangelism to begin by asking a man for a penny, but there is no doubt of its effectiveness so far.

In these and other ways the Churches have much to learn, how to mobilize new financial resources to meet new needs, how to offer the gospel message afresh to people who are ready to make among other new beginnings a fresh start in their religious life, how to bind new neighbours together in a lasting fellowship of faith. Our crisis has become our opportunity.

Recent Trends in Mystical Thought.

By the Reverend Principal T. Hywel Hughes, M.A., D.Litt., D.D., Edinburgh.

One of the profoundest and most acute thinkers in the United States—Professor Hocking of Harvard—expresses his conviction that the intellect has been claiming too large and exclusive a place in the life of the Western World, and that a revolt is slowly developing in favour of a more secure place for feeling in the ideals and motivation of modern men. It is not easy to accept this verdict at first hand. The modern craze for practical results; the growth of pragmatism in philosophy; the psychological emphasis on conation and the urge of life; the scientific temper and outlook of this generation; the stress on social needs and rights, and the partial eclipse of idealism, seem to suggest that 'feeling' is not recovering its place in the life of to-day. Many thinkers, such as Royce and Pratt, think the danger is quite in another direction; that we are losing our hold on the feeling values of life and suffering a measure of atrophy of the feeling aspect of consciousness. They think this is certainly true of American life and thought. It is evident, however, that there is some truth in the contention of Hocking. There are signs in all directions of a deepening of the emotional life and of a recognition of the claims of the heart as against the head. Excessive emphasis on the scientific aspect, with its dispassionate attitude to truth, tends to depersonalize by the atrophy of the emotional side of conscious life. When this is so the basic factor in consciousness revenges itself, so that there is an outburst, sometimes untamed and unrestrained, of the emotions. This has been a recurrent fact in the history of man. It is partially so in these days. The craving for 'thrills'; the growing appetite for sensational episodes; the many adventures into illicit relationships in sex life; and even the craze for speed, with the alluring prizes of record-making and record-breaking, are all tokens of the re-assertion of the feeling element of human nature.

Probably, however, the surest token of the re-establishment of feeling is to be found in the revival of mysticism. So real is this revival that modern philosophers and psychologists have been compelled to face up to the problems of the mystical life in a more thorough and effective manner than ever before. Thinkers of the very highest calibre have been constrained to take cognizance of the re-assertion of feeling and of the emotional values in the realm of religion. Among these we may mention: Inge, Eucken, Boutroux, Bergson, Otto, Delacroix, Bastide, Hocking, Royce, and Bennett; and from a different point of view, Miss Underhill, Dr. Rufus Jones, Waite, and Dom Cuthbert Butler. Through the labours of these, mysticism is being rescued from the cloud-land of hazy speculation and frothy emotionalism, and established as a movement regulated by laws, not freakish, irrational, or unmeaning. Further, it is seen to embody a well-knit philosophical core, with a distinct theory of knowledge, a sound metaphysical ground, and a definite, if severe, ethical system. In recent days several distinct trends can be observed within the realm of mystical thought, and the purpose of this article is to consider and elucidate the meaning of these trends.

We may first mention briefly some general tendencies, such, for instance, as the movement away from the positions held by the older psychologists in this field. The view of mysticism as a species of abnormality of the mind, of the will, or of the emotions, is slowly receding into the back-