Henry George

BY WILL ATKINSON

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The birth of one man, and of one man only, is celebrated the world over by Jew and Gentile, Mohammedan and Christian, Buddhist and Parsee, by men of the most diverse faiths and creeds.

That man was an American, born in Philadelphia, September Second, 1839. In 1879, he was an unknown printer. Today, his books are an inspiration to the highest ideals in every country in the world.

Thrones topple, dynasties go down in the dust, but his proclamation of the inalienable right of all men to the bounties of the Creator, to all God-given natural opportunities, goes on conquering throughout the world. And wherever honesty, eloquence, and self-sacrificing devotion to humanity move the hearts of men, the name of Henry George is revered.

No one should pretend to be well-informed who is ignorant of Henry George's proposals. Nor can our overburdened taxpayers afford to neglect the relief he offers. He asks that all earned incomes be entirely freed from taxes, and that all taxes be taken from unearned incomes.

As of 1934, Henry George's books have had a circulation of more than six million copies in English alone, and have been translated and published in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Finnish, Danish, Swedish, French, German, Korean, Hebrew, Spanish, Dutch, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Italian.

They have profoundly affected thought everywhere and legislation in many countries. No fundamental reform has ever before made such world-wide progress in . . . [one hundred twenty] years, and its growth today is more rapid though more quiet, than ever before.

John Dewey, hailed in Europe and America as the greatest living educator, ranks Henry George as one of the six greatest philosophers of all time and says of him: "It is the thorough fusion of insight into actual facts and forces, with recognition of their bearing upon what makes life worth living, that constitutes Henry George one of the world's great social philosophers."

Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, New York, said in a public address that Henry George had compelled a recasting of accepted theories of political economy.


"Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

But Henry George laid his life down for strangers, for the poor, the oppressed, the disinheritors of the earth.

To those who have read his immortal works, it will seem fitting and proper that the words Henry George used regarding Moses should be applied to himself.

"Leader and servant of men! Lawgiver and benefactor! Toiler toward the promised land seen only by the eye of faith! Type of the high souls who in every age have given to earth its heroes and its martyrs, whose deeds are the precious possession of the race, whose memories are its sacred heritage! With whom among the founders of empires shall we compare him?"

"To dispute about the inspiration of such a man were to dispute about words. From the depths of the unseen such characters must draw their strength; from fountains that flow only from the pure in heart must come their wisdom. Of something more real than matter; of something higher than the stars; of a light that will endure when suns are dead and dark; of a purpose of which the physical universe is but a passing phase, such lives tell."

1897-1997

This year — 1997 — is the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Henry George (1839-1897). As a candidate for Mayor of New York City, George died a few days before Election Day. As one of the outstanding economists in the world, he was at work on The Science of Political Economy, which was meant to be the crowning achievement of his life. It was left unfinished. As a prophet of justice, George was never to see his dream realized. To some people, he was a failure. To us, he is a hero. To honor the man, we proudly dedicate this edition of FRAGMENTS to Henry George, Apostle of Freedom, Champion of Individualism.

— The Editors