

## QUAKER REFORMER 100 YEARS BEFORE GEORGE

Georgist ideas can be presented cogently in religious language. The following passage is from the Quaker Social reformer, John Woolman, written in 1791. It is entitled "A plea for the poor, or a word of remembrance and caution to the rich".

"The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." As servants of God our land or estates we hold under Him as his gifts; and in applying the profits it is our duty to act consistently with the designs of our Benefactor. Imperfect men may give from motives of misguided affection, but perfect wisdom and goodness gives agreeably to his own nature; nor is this gift absolute, but conditional, for us to occupy as dutiful children and not otherwise; for He alone is the true

proprietor. "The world," said He, "is mine, and the fullness thereof."

The inspired lawgiver directed that such of the Israelites as sold their inheritance should sell it for a term only, and that they or their children should again enjoy it in the year of jubilee, settled on every fiftieth year. "The land shall not be sold forever, for the land is mine, saith the Lord, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." This was designed to prevent the rich from oppressing the poor by too much engrossing the land; and our blessed Redeemer said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

When Divine love takes place in the hearts of any people, and they steadily act in a principle of universal righteousness, then the true intent of the law is fulfilled, though their outward modes or proceeding may be various; but when men are possessed by that spirit hinted at by the prophet and, looking over their wealth say in their hearts, "Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" they deviate from the Divine law and do not count their possessions so strictly God's, nor the weak and poor entitled to so much of the increase thereof, but that they may indulge their desires in conforming to worldly pomp. Thus when house is joined to house and field laid to field, until there is no place, and the poor are thereby straightened, though this is done by bargain and purchase, yet so far that woe predicted by the prophet will accompany their proceedings.

As He who first founded the earth was then the true proprietor of it, so He still remains, and though He hath given it to the children of men, so that multitudes of people have had their sustenance from it while they continued here, yet He hath never alienated it, but His right is as good as at first; nor can any apply the increase of their possessions contrary to universal love, nor dispose of lands in a way which they know tends to exalt some by oppressing others, without being justly chargeable with usurpation.