

By BASIL BUTTERWORTH (Hayling Island, Hants., England)

Owing to a hitch in distribution, I did not receive the July Georgist Journal until December and so did not see until then the comments by Eugen H. Michaels on my article on George and Malthus, to which I would like to reply.

I grant that George had to attack the use made of Malthus' theory by apologists for the existing system, but that does not affect that fact, which Mr. Michaels can verify for himself if he will read the "Essay on Population," that George was rather unfair to Malthus. It also does not alter the fact that George's discussion of population growth is devoted more to scoring debating points than to serious discussion of what Malthus actually wrote. Let me ask Mr. Michaels to face the following questions:

Does he seriously suggest that, where people marry young and do not practice contraception, the normal family will contain only two children? Unless he can answer "yes," George's argument for a constant population ("Smith and his wife have a son and daughter who marry respectively someone else's daughter and son, and each have two children, etc.") does not hold water.

Secondly, of course George is right in saying that the "classes to whom the increase of wealth has brought ... a fuller and more varied life" have smaller families than the poorer classes. But why? Does Mr. Michaels think that reasonable comfort causes the sex urge to dry up? Or do those concerned apply Malthus' "prudential check" so that they are not reduced to poverty by having to support too many children?

Thirdly, Mr. Michaels says that, for George, over-population was simply "prevented by the physical fact that no more people can exist than can find subsistence." Precisely, is this not what Malthus said? And, although there would be more subsistence if George's ideas were applied, the positive check could apply if the prudential check was not.

If Mr. Michaels would re-read my article carefully, he should realise that I was not upholding Malthus as against George but merely pointing out that Malthus, although he did not see as far as George, was looking in the same direction. It was a matter of putting the record straight and doing belated justice.

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