

## An Anthology of Henry George's Thought *by George Collins*

In 253 pages consisting of seven heavily endnoted chapters, a seven page bibliography, with a frontispiece of George's 1897 photograph, and an introductory essay by the author, Dr. Kenneth C. Wenzer's *An Anthology of Henry George's Thought* is a valuable compilation of George's writings taken from the pages of his newspaper *The Standard*, his personal correspondence from the Henry George Papers in the New York Public Library archives, excerpts from his books, and other ancillary sources. The book is volume one of Dr. Wenzer's "Henry George Centennial Trilogy", published by the University of Rochester Press in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death in 1897.

The anthology is cited as "...the first addition to George's published works in a century." And an important addition it is. It puts before even the most assiduous Georgist reader George's direct engagement with the questions of his day which would otherwise remain accessible only to researchers.

The book demonstrates that no issue, economic, social, political or philosophical, was beyond the compass of what George considered man's fundamental relationship - his relationship to the land. In these works we see both abstract principle and practical strategy brought to the service of individual liberty. George's logic, perception, and humanity can be fairly judged in the way he addresses each topic.

The chapters following the author's introduction group the selected passages from his books, articles, letters and speeches on a thematic basis. The author admits the inevitability of "...some overlapping of subjects. The second chapter, *Exhortive Works*, starts with galvanic pieces such as "Ode to Liberty" from *Progress and Poverty*, the lecture "Moses" and the *Salutatory* printed in the January 8th, 1887 debut of the *Standard*, capturing the reader at the outset with some of George's most eloquent and passionate prose. Other chapters like "On Government, Politics, and the World" contain snippets of letters to notables William Lloyd Garrison Jr., son of the famed abolitionist, on the nature of political policies, and to Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, for which George served as a foreign correspondent in Ireland, regarding the best course of action for Michael Davett, the Irish agitator, in the attempt to "...topple Mr. British Crown..."

The chapter "Georgism versus Socialism" has some of the most closely reasoned arguments for and against both ideologies that one may consider, and George's strategy with regard to alliances with those who have similar dreams but dissimilar methods or objectives. And anyone who thinks that George either dismissed or failed to fully comprehend the role of money as it applied to the economy then or would later as the economy grew must read the very short but pointed "Various Matters: On the Debt" and "Politics that Mean Something" in the chapter "On Sundry Important Matters."

In the opening preface Dr. Wenzer stated that his mandate for the anthology was to "...preserve what I consider to be George's most important thoughts with as little intrusion as possible." And he does indeed achieve that, for the selections are not edited. There are however, some descriptions of George's ideas and interpretations of his statements in the introduction and in other essays preceding various chapters which may represent a misreading of his work. Georgists are said to have "...for instance, a potent belief in God and community ownership of land." George is as well said to have had "...a steadfast belief in the perfectibility of man..." and was "reticent" about noncompensation to land owners.

However much supporters of George may have favored community ownership, George was unalterably against any communal or socialized ownership. He spoke always of equal rights to and individual decisions over the use of land. He refuted all arguments for land nationalization and rejected confiscation or public purchase as methods for establishing common rights. Far from proclaiming his perfectibility, George saw man as being virtuous or villainous depending on the degree of opportunity and equity afforded him. And nowhere nor in any way does George ever countenance compensation to land owners.

But, as Dr. Wenzer says, "For the most part, George's words speak for themselves." Carefully read, this admirable compilation would, as Dr. Wenzer hopes, "answer some questions inherent in his political economy" not clear to the reader of his seven books.

If I were to wish for anything more it would be to see a chapter devoted exclusively to rights. George's supreme concern was the individual and his rightful entitlement. Liberty, he said, is justice and justice is the natural law. While that principle is everpresent and a repeated theme throughout the contents of this work, there are so many marvelous gems that could make up a separate chapter that it seemed a natural category within this structure. Its absence, however, does not render the volume deficient in its organization or purpose. Volume 1, *An Anthology of George's Thought*, available from the Schalkenbach Foundation for \$35.00, is a welcome exposure to George's broader public debates and private thoughts. It should leave every reader eagerly anticipating Volumes 2 and 3 of *The Henry George Centennial Trilogy*.