

## HENRY GEORGE

### Christian Political Economist

By MAYNARD DAVIES

MAZZINI DECLARED that every political question is, in the last analysis, a religious question. This truth found a further champion in one who, fifty years later, was to transform the science of political economy from an academic lament divorced from Christian ideals, into a clarion call of irresistible logic based upon Christ's teaching of the infinite value of every human soul.

First and foremost, Henry George stands head and shoulders above all economists for his rare insight into spiritual values. In a desert of pessimists like Malthus, George is "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Says Professor Albert Einstein: "One cannot imagine a more beautiful combination of intellectual keenness, artistic form and fervent love of Justice"; whilst Professor John Dewey of Columbia University says that "it would require less than the fingers of the two hands to enumerate those who, from Plato down, rank with George among the world's greatest social philosophers. . . . It is the thorough fusion of insight into actual facts and forces, with recognition of their bearing upon what makes human life worth living, that constitutes him as one of the world's greatest social philosophers."

But meanwhile we of this generation seem to have utterly lost our sense of values. Any quack with a fancy formula or ridiculous nostrum can get a huge following provided that—(a) the plan is so illogical that nobody can possibly understand it; (b) it promises something for nothing; and (c) it demands nothing from its adherents except the supreme sacrifice of self-respect. At least to some of us this is the supreme sacrifice, although the modern fashion is to value self-respect so lightly.

George, with a mind in tune with Christ, calls upon our self-respect, which, of course, is the exact opposite of selfishness. As Shakespeare has said for us—"To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as night the day, thou can'st not then be false to any man."

George expounds no-get-rich-quick doctrine, no soft snaps for the selfish, no luxuries for the lazy, but just plain justice for all. In other words, his teachings enunciate no principles which come into conflict with the mind of Christ. But our real difficulty is to get people to understand these first principles, from the establishment of which all else so logically and irresistibly follows. Said Leo Tolstoy, "People do not argue with the teaching of George, they simply do not know it."

The feeling grows that all our efforts as Churchmen for the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth are almost entirely without intelligent control. Anxious to do something about chaotic world conditions we rush round like a bull in a china shop, with about the same effect in both cases, "to make confusion worse confounded." We expend so much energy on alleviating the ill-effects and so little on correcting root causes, chiefly because of our failure to clearly distinguish between them. Obviously it is both more Christian and more practical to build a railing around the top of a cliff than to maintain an ambulance station at the foot.

Professor Boyce Gibson, delivering the Livingstone Lectures in Sydney recently on "Science and Conduct," said that there could be no control without knowledge, and that, therefore, understanding was the beginning of control. On this basis, we who comprise

the Christian Church, must ultimately acquire an understanding of social and economic problems, or be entirely overwhelmed by them. The latter event has already taken place in at least three European countries, and our turn may not be as far off as some would imagine.

All would agree, I think, that the world revival of Christianity must be accomplished quickly, and must come from inside the Church itself, starting with the individual and expanding irresistibly outwards. Whether we like the idea or not, our very existence depends upon our control of social and economic conditions, for it is certain that without a world based upon God's Justice, no Church or prayers or pledges can be of any avail. The holocaust would engulf innocent and guilty. Christian and pagan, in one world-shattering smash.

From the ashes a new Church may arise, a sadder and a wiser flock, as it may yet do in parts of Europe. But our concern is with the resuscitation of the Church we now have—a band of men and women whose hearts the Lord God hath touched and who, with all their faults, are the only buttress of civilization.

Professor Henry Drummond reminded us that "the programme for the next world is not out yet," and suggested we should push on with the programme which we know something about. In other words, Christianity is not merely a promise of a halcyon existence hereafter, attractive as that may be, but a programme for a saner, happier, better-balanced, more abundant life right here and now.

Great is Truth and it prevails. In the long run, as Paul says, "we can do nothing against the truth," and George was quite serene in his conviction of this, when he wrote that "the truth that I have tried to make clear will not find easy acceptance . . . but it will find friends—those who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth."

(From the *Australian Christian World*, 12th November.)

Under the heading "Cities Held to Ransom" an excellent article by Frank Point in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald* gave many examples of the high price charged for land and of the exemption from rates and taxes enjoyed by unused land, pointing to the taxation of land values as the remedy. "Cities Held to Ransom" is the title of one of the United Committee's most popular penny pamphlets showing the bearing of our present system of landholding and taxation upon housing unemployment and other problems, and giving an account of the municipal movement for rating land values.

Many elderly men and women attended a public meeting at Enfield and heckled speakers who supported a proposal to accept an offer of £50,000 for a small open space in Enfield known as "The Old People's Park."

The site which was bought for £5,000 in 1902, to accommodate the new town hall when required, has now been found to be too small for the purpose.

When a vote was taken so many people voted against selling the land that it was unnecessary to count the hands.—*Evening Standard*, 6th January.

**The value of this paper does not end with YOUR reading it. Your business associate, your neighbour or your fellow worker may not have seen it. . . .**