

REALITY

THE UNIVERSAL MAGAZINE

*Devoted to the Elimination of Prejudice,
Religious, Racial and Class*

For Progressive and Constructive Readers

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Vol. XIV

DECEMBER, 1927

No. 6

PUBLISHED MONTHLY—25 CENTS

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15-17 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.

Natural Law in the Economic World

By Oscar H. Geiger

(Continued from November REALITY)

Poverty is universal and persistent, crime and vice are on the increase, wars are more deadly than ever, nations crumble and fall and civilizations die. Almost all ancient civilizations have died. Babylon, Egypt, Greece and Rome are no more. Greece, where philosophy was born, where man is said to have reached his highest culture, is gone, and so is Rome, where imperial power reached its greatest consummation.

The life of a civilization is about 1000 years. No civilization has lived more than 1100 years, and if our wise men of today are correct, this civilization perhaps the youngest of them all, has not much longer to live.

Civilization is but a social composite of mankind at any given period and place, and is endowed only with such potentialities as are imparted to it by the minds and deeds and conditions of men.

As history dawns, we find mankind divided into two great classes, those who have and who rule, on the one hand, and those who serve and who have not, on the other hand. We find the land already appropriated, and those who own it the supporters of the Kings of Priesthood, while the mass of mankind is landless and living in comparative slavery and serfdom.

We have since then changed our terminology; for Kings and Emperors we have Presidents and Constitutional Monarchs; Despotisms we call Democracies; and Slaves and Serfs are our Labor, or Laboring Classes; also to the Priesthood we have added the Press and the Universities to administer the opiates of sacred institutionalism to the people. But those who build our modern industrial Pyramids and Palaces still live in hovels, and those who produce all the world's wealth still have the least of this world's goods. And this condition is daily becoming intensified, for wealth inevitably tends to beget more wealth, and power to increase power, while poverty tends only to ignorance, vice, crime, disease and general impotence.

What an astounding phenomenon, that producers of wealth are everywhere poor, and continually becoming poorer, while non-producers are continually becoming richer!

The social structure, at whatever time or place, rests on its producing class, as a pyramid rests on its base. Given a base that is weak and continually becoming weaker, it does not

require higher mathematics to envisage the downfall of that pyramid. History records no time when the producers, the mass of mankind, were left unmolested in the possession of their products, and history may be read as a chronicle of war and crime and devastation.

Henry George saw poverty and misery amidst increasing wealth and progress, and it would not let him rest. He knew that this is a dynamic, not a static world; that it is a world of law; that events are not left to mere chance and accident, but that everything in the universe, whether the immensely large, as viewed through the telescope, or the immensely small, as viewed through the microscope, is governed by law—intelligent, purposeful law; and being a man of infinite faith, he knew that poverty and its concomitants must be the result of the violation of Natural Law.

He found, that just as the motion of the heavenly spheres, and the appearance and reproduction of vegetation and life on earth are controlled by Natural Law, just so far the acts of men, whether as individuals, or as society, are controlled by Natural Law; and he further found, that nonconformance to Natural Law in the field of Social Science, just as disregard of Natural Law in the field of the Physical Sciences, leads eventually to death and destruction.

We in this civilization no longer ascribe bodily ailments to the visitations of evil spirits, and no longer attempt to effect cures by the casting out of devils. We may not be much further advanced in our systems of healing, but it is generally admitted among good medical authorities that permanent cure depends on knowing the cause of the ailment, and that the cause is nearly always found to be the disregard or violation of Natural Law.

Just as individual ailments are the symptoms of the violation of those Natural Laws that govern the life and well being of the individual, just so are poverty, ignorance, crime, vice, disease, business depressions, hard time, war, the breaking down of nations, and the death of civilizations, merely the symptoms of social disease, warning us of the violation of those Natural Laws that govern the life and well being of society.

Henry George was not the first to see that there was a relationship between the poverty of mankind and the private ownership of land by the few. It was seen in Biblical times, it was seen by the early Christian Fathers, it was seen by the Physiocrats, and it was seen by others. But it remained for Henry George to show that the private ownership of land,

which denied men access to the earth upon which they must live and from which they must satisfy all their needs and wants, is the primal cause, not merely of poverty and all the misery and wrong that follow in the wake of poverty, but that it is the cause of all evil on earth, and all injustice among civilized men; and that only by the elimination of the private ownership of land can liberty and justice be achieved, and evil forever abolished. It remained for Henry George to show that, potentially, this is a good world, that men are innately good, not innately bad, that Creation is based on justice, not on vengeance, that the earth is a banquet table, spread by the hand of a benign Creator, and laden with an abundance of all the things for which men have need, and at which every human being has a place.

Freedom, equality and security are man's estate in the intent and scheme of Nature. Freedom of access to the land, equality of rights and opportunity, and security in the possession of his entire product are man's birthright and these he will some day attain, even if through his ignorance men first must suffer, nations perish, and civilizations die for it.

But why wait? Why permit the misery and suffering of mankind to go on? If misery and suffering are due to the violation of Natural Law, why continue the violation?

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Render unto the individual the things that are the individual's, and to society the things that are society's.

Give back to society the one thing that is made by society, and which therefore belongs to society, and leave the individual in possession of the things that he creates, and which therefore are his.

Take the rent of land for communal purposes, and stop the robbery of the community by the landowner. Abolish all tariffs, tolls and taxes, and stop the robbery of the individual by the government.

Observe the Law—the Natural Law—which is the Word of God, and let each man take his place at the banquet table God has provided for all.