

emption in itself would be a large step towards industrial freedom. The laborer would retain all he produced, for the assessment of all land at its true value would open up natural opportunities to labor by making it unprofitable to hold land out of use. Speculation in land would die a natural death and the world would thus be delivered from its greatest obstacle to material progress. Industry on all hands would be stimulated as never before; and under the reign of justice, spiritual advancement would become possible. And the fear of want being removed, the feverish desire for excessive wealth would decline. Poverty and its evils, including charity, would cease, for there would need be none who could not realize Agur's prayer: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me."

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But none of this can be brought about by futile attempts to divorce the material from the spiritual. The highest ethical ideas animate this land movement. Its inspiring principle is justice, its ultimate object the complete freedom of the human race. Viewed even from Prof. Eucken's moral standpoint the spirituality in this movement must be obvious.

The prevailing tendency to push to extremes analysis and differentiation in the consideration of all subjects may in the end reduce the various constituent ideas to a monistic basis. It is difficult even at this stage of psychological thought to mark a dividing line between the material and the spiritual.

More than half a century ago, Mary Somerville wrote her splendid work, "The Connection of the Physical Sciences," in which she arranged and unified science as then known. With the skill of an inspired artist she blended the so-called branches of scientific knowledge so that the old dividing lines were lost in a wonderful picture of nature as a stupendous unit, a coherent and indivisible whole, in which the constituent elements acted and reacted upon each other in the evolution of phenomena. Could this unifying plan be adapted to the various problems which arise out of the relation of human beings to the universe and each other, the task of the truth seeker might be much easier, pleasanter and more successful than it has been under the control and direction of an antiquated scholasticism.

But no matter what changes may evolve in the realm of thought, the eternal spirit of justice as expressed in the golden rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," will continue in its sublime simplicity to be the

only way to human progress and happiness. This is the spirit that animates the movement for free land. It makes it the hope of the world, for only with free access to natural opportunities in land can there be free men.

EDMUND CORKILL.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

IRRIGATION GRAFT IN TEXAS.

El Paso, Tex., April 25.

In this city and valley, under the New Mexico-Texas irrigation project, is afforded an excellent illustration of the way in which the United States government, through the reclamation service, enriches private individuals at the expense of the community, and the community that is to come.

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The government has started work on the Elephant Butte dam, at Engle, N. M., under which project the Rincon and Mesilla valleys in New Mexico, the El Paso valley in Texas and the Juarez and Guadalupe valleys in old Mexico will be irrigated. The reclamation service in this, as in other projects, advances the money for the building of the dam and the main canals, the money to be paid back to the government by assessment on the land after the farmers get it under cultivation.

In this case the cost per acre will be \$40, to pay for the dam, which will cost \$7,000,000. The \$40 will be paid by the farmers in ten years at the rate of \$4 per acre per year. Ostensibly the farmer who farms the land will have to pay only the \$40 per acre for his water right. In fact he will pay double and in many cases triple this amount. The bulk of the payment will go to the speculator.

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Before the big irrigation dam was mentioned the land in this valley was worth on the average not over \$10 per acre. It was for the most part desert land and most of it could be had for a song. The minute the government decided to build the dam, however, the land took a big jump forward. Options were secured on nearly all of it by the speculators, and the price advanced immediately from \$10 to \$25 per acre. It continued to go up. Now it cannot be touched for less than \$50 per acre. And before the dam is finished it will reach \$75 and \$100 per acre. The increase in population and demand may send it still higher.

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The men who secured the options and who still hold 9-10 of the land in the valley have no intention of farming it. They will not pay the government a cent for the building of the dam.

The man who finally buys a small strip of land and farms it will pay his \$40 per acre to the government and in addition he will pay the speculator before he can touch it.

It is a simple problem in mathematics to determine just what the farmer, the man who puts the land to use, will have to pay. The difference be-

tween the value of the land before the dam was mentioned (\$10) and the value of the land before the water is turned on (\$75) is \$65, stated very conservatively—and that is the price the farmer must pay in addition to his \$40 to the reclamation service for the building of the entire project.

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It is clear that under this system of the government the man who tills the soil will not be benefited except as he overcomes almost insurmountable obstacles. It will cost him over \$100 per acre before he can get at the land and he will have a tremendous job to make the land pay him. He must face crop failures and he must experiment in new territory with new crops and perhaps will become wholly discouraged and drop the burden.

Yet there are many farmers who believe a tax on land values would be a burden on the farmer.

If land values were taxed in the El Paso valley the tax would not be one-third what the speculator is demanding, for the land tax would drop with the burden on city property and other valuable objective sites to commerce and business.

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The forestallers are growing rich in this neighborhood, as well as in all of the other irrigation centers. As mentioned above they secured options on practically all of the land. These they are holding or selling to buy other tracts from the Mexican population in sections later included under the project. More than one of these speculators will become millionaires—and without putting a cent's worth of improvements on the land.

It is notorious that no attempt is being made by the big land owners to clear or cultivate any of the land here, which is retarding the growth of the city and valley. The government has already finished the canals and it is possible even now to farm and farm successfully. Yet through the entire valley there is found a cultivated tract very rarely as compared with the idle acres.

The speculators are holding the land with the idea of letting go of it as soon as the dam is finished. This is an open secret among them. One of the prominent dealers has told me that he expects to see the value advance to a higher figure just before the dam is finished than after the water is turned on. This is expected for the reason that buyers will seize it beforehand without realizing the great burden they will assume when they pay their \$40 to the reclamation service.

A crude attempt of the government to prevent the speculator from enriching himself at the expense of the farmer is made by a ruling of the reclamation service that no one holder may have more than 160 acres of land after the project is completed. Of course, this is putting the cart before the horse. At the present time, when the increase in value is greatest, one man may own the entire valley if he has the money to gobble it up. There is no one in El Paso who would attempt to hold over 160 acres after the dam is completed and pay \$40 an acre for doing it.

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This is not the only species of graft that is

utilized as a result of the policy of the government in reclamation projects. An instance is afforded in this valley in the building of bridges. A dozen or more men bought up an island under the project for speculative purposes, paying \$9 an acre for the land. The island contains over 12,000 acres. In the present shape it is inaccessible and for that reason the former holders let loose. Immediately the purchasers, who are men of prominence and some of them office holders, induced the county of El Paso to build a bridge to the island. The people of the city are paying 90 per cent of the cost of the bridge and the people of the county the remainder. The bridge will make the land worth at least \$30 per acre. Thus the county will put a gigantic sum into the pockets of the forestallers. There is now no demand for the bridge because the island is not inhabited.

Trolley lines and roads to favorite tracts furnish other means of collecting revenue from the worker of the land for the benefit of the worker of the farmer.

WILLIAM HOFFMAN.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

ANOTHER CLERGYMAN ON THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

That the church stands condemned today, as it has many times before at critical historical periods, is indubitable. The plea usually made on behalf of the church in times past as well as to-day is in the nature of what lawyers call "confession and avoidance." Such is the nature of the plea advanced by a clergyman in *The Public* of March 19, 1909 (p. 269), and it betrays the very moral astigmatism and spiritual dry-rot for which the social reformers of all ages have condemned the church.

The blameworthiness alleged against the church is not, as the writer referred to seems to think, that the church does not "champion the cause of some specific reform or reforms, and prove the necessity of each member taking hold thereof and fighting therefor"; but it is that the church is not a leader but a timid and reluctant follower in the moral and spiritual movements which the various and specific reforms connote. The charge is that this timidity and time-serving spirit of the church and its ministers, this fearfulness respecting any thorough going and radical analysis of existing conditions and of the various reforms and remedies proposed, this waiting till it shall be prudentially safe and even materially profitable to take sides in the eternal struggle for human freedom and social justice, is a practical abdication of the divine authority and the world-redeeming mission which is the church's sole *raison d'être*.

True, the church may have some strong points despite this evidence of weakness. It may, for example, be highly respectable, or materially prosperous, or an excellent spiritual anodyne for disturbed consciences. But such excellences do not commend it to men and women aflame with moral passion in times that "try men's souls." They are not the excellence and strength we look for when what is needed is leadership, the voice of authority, the dy-