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THE SECRET OF HENRY GEORGE

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David Chester of Tel Aviv (IUN No. 16) has expressed my outlook exactly. I agree with him that so often we are preaching the message of Henry George and leaving out a very important part of it. Our Humanist friends may disagree with me, but I believe that the secret of George's greatness was his background and general cast of mind, which was deeply religious. This was the mainspring of his outlook and sustained him through many trials and disappointments.

I regard my social reform work as flowing from my outlook as Christian and obtaining its dynamic from that. We are told to "love God and neighbour." While not covering it all, Georgism is a very important way of doing this. George's Social Problems is full of the spirit Mr. Chester finds in his reading of the unabridged Progress and Poverty. May I quote a key paragraph from Social Problems:

"The intelligence required for the solving of social problems is not a mere thing of the intellect. It must be animated with the religious sentiment and warm with sympathy for human suffering. It must stretch beyond self-interest, whether it be of the few or of the many. It must seek justice."

I believe that people today are disillusioned with "19th century utopianism." That is, the idea that any "outward" social system, however good, will by itself bring the perfect good life for all. People are inclined to dismiss the Georgist philosophy as just one more utopian scheme. I believe this is one reason for our lack of progress.

But I believe the other chief reason for our slow progress is just plain selfishness. If people were really motivated by a desire to help their brother they would be more amenable to our reform. So I believe we need deliverance from selfishness - and we can only do this on a religious basis.