

# Land and Freedom

FORMERLY THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

VOL. XXIX

NOVEMBER—DECEMBER, 1929

No. 6

## Comment and Reflection

A SUBSCRIBER has sent us a copy of the *Sunday School Times* for October, published in Nashville, Tenn., which contains a thoughtful article by G. B. Winton, "Christianity and the Social Problem." It is a call to the Church to consider the economic and social condition of the people and the problems underlying it. The writer tells us that the insistence of Jesus and the Prophets is that religion is a manner of life, not a mere belief, not simply a ritual of worship. Dr. Winton says: "The evidence is multiplying, and it is not far to seek, that in our industrial life, there is much that is not only non-Christian but anti-Christian." He also says: "As for our religion it is undoubtedly on trial."

[T is true that Dr. Winton has nothing in the way of remedies to offer for the evils he indicates. We may say that this is not his purpose. He is only calling attention to the apathy of the church to the social misery and suffering around us. He is trying to arouse the church from its lethargy. He sees quite clearly that much human suffering, poverty, low wages and unemployment, spring from disobedience to God's laws. His indictment of the church is that it has failed in its duty, is not combatting these evils, is not preaching the kind of Christianity intended to correct them.

DR. Winton's article is one of the many symptoms of the spirit of inquiry and unrest among modern churchmen, clergy and laity. They are asking themselves if religion is something which concerns itself only with the hereafter and ignores the living realities; if human relation with the infinite is not destroyed by conditions which interrupting the physical and moral growth, stifle also the spiritual; whether it is possible to worship God and His justice, and remain indifferent to a civilization which deforms and brutalizes. And, more and more, sincerely devout men are asking inconvenient questions.

THERE is abundant warrant in the Scriptures for the challenge to the Church—for it is scarcely less—that Dr. Winton is voicing. For religion must concern itself with conduct as well as faith, with social conduct as well as behavior in the home or behind the counter. If any-

where, because of the failure to do our duty as professing Christians, the humblest suffer, shall we escape responsibility? If economic institutions rob the new-born child of its birthright; if somewhere men and women suffer and pine because of our laws, are we Christians indeed if we do not ask ourselves how these conditions can be removed?

IT is not solely that men and women sunk in poverty cannot practise the Christian virtues in conditions with which we surround them. The more fortunate are also sharers in the wrong they help to perpetuate. Sympathy dies, and the Church becomes merely doctrinal and ceremonious, cold and formal. Christianity is not meant to be so; it is a warm and throbbing faith. It is not a quiescent faith; it calls for action in right doing; it challenges the conscience of men; the churches may try to keep silent but they dare not, for to keep silent spells destruction. The law of Christ cannot be invoked for the life after death and denied in the life we live on earth. And if there is economic and social maladjustment, institutional perversions of the moral law by which men suffer, it is Christ's concern, and therefore the concern of all churches built in the name of Christ.

HON. PETER WITT in his interesting talk at the late Henry George Congress in Pittsburgh said, "The English were different from us—they had elections only when they needed them." There is a measure of truth in this. With us elections are a kind of habit. People complain of the troubles elections cause them, the interruptions to business, and the cost they entail. And they go about the matter in a sort of semi-somnambulistic state. Outside the circles of politicians and their immediate friends and relations, they exhibit a merely listless interest. Baseball is much more of a social excitant than all these successively recurring elections.

HOW can we make our elections interesting, for it is necessary to do so if our institutions are to survive. Otherwise more and more of our voters will abstain from participation—will neglect to register and thus fail to declare their preference for candidates and such principles and policies as are visible, if visible at all, under strong magnifying glasses.