

Land and Freedom

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Comment and Reflection

ONE of the profoundest problems of the ages is the problem of evil. Sages and moral reformers of all times have grappled with it, and the great question still cries out—Why is there evil in the world? Why, after centuries of advance and enlightenment, must we still contend with the evil heart, the wicked deed, man's inhumanity to man? It is a riddle which must perplex the stoutest.

SOME (shall we call them optimists or pessimists?) are prone to blame wickedness on conditions, to explain it as a reaction to a set of events. But this viewpoint fails to recognize man's *power of choice* between good and evil. Nor should we deceive ourselves with any purely materialistic explanation—*e.g.*, that man has no choice. To be sure, life constantly presents adverse conditions and harrassing problems, but there are likewise various methods of dealing with problems. One of the greatest of these—poverty—the Georgeist philosophy seeks to solve in a way that conforms with *goodness*. To the contrary, there are those like Hitler and his cohorts who, having power over the destinies of a large section of mankind, have chosen an evil way. But though they may scoff at "moral standards," well may we even ask of godless murderers—"Will you be vindicated on Judgment Day when you say, 'I saw that which was good in my eyes and I took'?"

GEORGEISTS sometimes forget that we are offering more than a fiscal reform—more than an economic reform. Indeed, our proposals would be veritable bricks without straw were we to omit the cohesive requisite of a great moral purpose in them. So deep-rooted is our philosophy in problems of justice and injustice, good and evil, that Henry George considered the test of morality the highest and final test of his reform. We are—and by the very nature of things must be—*moral* reformers seeking to establish a reign of justice, granting each man his vineyard and fig tree, preventing the mighty from overcoming the weak, and the evil from overwhelming the good—and our proposals are but a means to this ultimate end. Let us be on guard, therefore, against the easy convention of dwelling too much on the materialistic shortcomings of things as they are. Such emphases serve

merely to give comfort to the evil heart. Our arguments are not intended to encourage the wicked to follow their lusts more "conscientiously." We are *fighting* evil.

IN his deep concern with the moral question Henry George takes his place with the great religious teachers and reformers of the world. Zoroaster, the Persian prophet, after agonizing over the problem of good and evil, saw in a divine illumination the eternal struggle between Ahura Mazda, the prince of light, and Ahriman, the prince of darkness. In one of his loftiest utterances, Henry George recalls to us this parable. The conflict is still going on. Those who toil for the truth he tried to make clear are taking part in this struggle without end.

MERELY to know Henry George's "economics," is not enough. Again and again our leader pointed out that even a genuine political economy was but a means to fighting the good fight—for righteousness. The moral crusaders of history never tolerated evil. The prophets of Israel were never so inspired as when fighting evil. Tyranny was wrong—and they had no soft words for ugliness. It is through a misinterpretation of the command, "Resist not evil," that Jesus has been labeled as a pacifist. Besides the example he himself set of being ever on the offensive against evil things and evil motives, he offered his own unique way of fighting evil as a supplement to the above command—and in the light of which it should be interpreted—to go forth to the enemy and offer him good in return for evil; in other words, to demonstrate that evil does not pay. Can this be other than a truly militant way of fighting error?

INDEED, in the present world conflict, the greatest weapon the United Nations have in their possession is the promise of a better life for all. We refuse to be cynical about the possibility of a happier world. Let us accordingly accept and teach the philosophy of Henry George as it really is—a great moral reform, the purpose of which is to establish on earth the reign of good. Let us never forget that our place is in the midst of the eternal struggle against evil.