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# THE SINGLE TAX REVIEW

A Record of the Progress of Single Tax and Tax Reform  
Throughout the World.

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## PRIVATE PROPERTY IN LAND.

(For the Review.)

By JAMES A. WARREN.

“Heroes and Hero Worship” furnishes no essay more absorbing than the study of Martin Luther. The touch of the master delineated the character of the great reformer as none other has ever done. D’Aubigne, as the historian, presented the panorama of Luther’s life and works. With consummate genius the Sage of Chelsea drew a real picture of the Monk of Erfurt. Cynical as was Carlyle at times, there is no trace of the iconoclast in this portrayal. For illustration Norse mythology was invoked, and we see “A youth nursed up in wintry whirlwinds, in desolate darkness and difficulty, that he may step forth at last from his stormy Scandinavia, strong as a true man, as a god; a Christian Odin—a right Thor once more, with his thunder-hammer, to smite asunder ugly enough *Jotuns* and Giant-monsters.” It was after Carlyle had seen Kranach’s portrait of Luther that he could, too, portray with superb imagery and analytical art: “A rude, plebeian face; with its huge crag-like brows and bones, the emblem of rugged energy; at first, almost a repulsive face. Yet in the eyes especially there is a wild, silent sorrow; an unnamable melancholy; the element of all gentle and fine affections, giving to the rest the true stamp of nobleness. Laughter was in this Luther, as we said, but tears also were there. \* \* \* I will call this Luther a true Great Man; great in intellect, in courage, affection and integrity; one of our most lovable and precious men. Great, not as a hewn obelisk, but as an Alpine mountain—so simple, honest, spontaneous, not setting up to be great at all; there for quite another purpose than being great! Ah, yes, unsubduable granite, piercing far and wide into the Heavens; yet in the clefts of its fountains, green, beautiful valleys with flowers! A right Spiritual Hero and Prophet; once more, a true Son of Nature and Fact, for whom these centuries, and many that are to come yet, will be thankful to Heaven.”

A soul-refreshing view of a hero of the sixteenth century given in the nineteenth. More majestic do they appear and more inspiring are the towering glaciers of the Alps as we leave the foothills and view their glittering pinnacles from afar. There stands Luther replying to the overtures of a Roman Pontiff. “Standing on this, I, a poor German Monk, am stronger than you all. I stand solitary, friendless, but on God’s Truth; you with your tiaras, triple hats, with your treasuries and armories, thunders spiritual and temporal, stand on the Devil’s Lie, and are not so strong.” Luther feared nothing earthly. He stood on the Rock of Ages—Truth. Here was the renaissance of thought. Luther’s torch spread its light. Imprisoned thought was liberated.

In every great epoch in our own national history have the splendid figures risen: Jefferson, to teach the rule of life; Lincoln, to free a race; Garrison, whose love for human liberty drew upon himself the vindictiveness of ignorant selfishness and the tigerish ferocity of an entrenched oligarchy; and the gladiator Phillips, born and reared in the atmosphere which is enervating to the growth of a love for all mankind, sprang into the arena to do battle with a giant wrong. These knights never sounded a truce that untruth might confer with a hope to temporize.

"On the night on which I had finished the final chapter of 'Progress and Poverty' I felt that the talent intrusted to me had been accounted for—felt more fully satisfied, more deeply grateful than if all the kingdoms of the earth had been laid at my feet; and though the years have justified, not dimmed, my faith, there is still left for me, something to do." So wrote the great teacher in the preface to his last work. Other abler pens have paid tribute to Henry George. To his memory the choicest blooms have been plucked to form a fitting wreath, and as the above words are re-read one feels exalted by the sublime faith, the unselfishness, the love for his fellow—the virtues of Abou Ben Adhem, whose name, on a shining page, led all the rest.

The splendid advance of the Single Tax movement since Mr. George's death is a source of wonderful cheer and hope to all those who in all parts of the world have been unceasing in their labors to enlighten men. There are times when the bravest falter. It is now, just as Mr. George wrote twenty-five years ago, of human desire, in the fullness of that marvelous faith, which with him was a thing that had no end:

"\* \* \* He works for those he never saw and never can see; for a fame, or maybe but for a scant justice, that can only come long after the clods have rattled upon his coffin lid. He toils in the advance, where it is cold, and there is little cheer from men, and the stones are sharp and the brambles thick. Amid the scoffs of the present and the sneers that stab like knives, he builds for the future; he cuts the trail that progressive humanity may hereafter broaden into a highroad. Into higher, grander spheres desire mounts and beckons, and a star that rises in the east leads him on."

Of the great work of the Massachusetts State Single Tax League and its indefatigable president no one can be unmindful, but the writer desires to register an unequivocal protest against the reason given for annulling a resolution adopted in 1902 by the league, as published in *The Review* of last January, and as printed was as follows:

"The reason for annulling the first resolution was stated by those in favor of such annulment, notably President C. B. Fillebrown, as being that the declared object of the league, stated in the constitution, is the propaganda of Single Tax principles. No mention is made in the constitution of what any of these principles are; and there are those in the League who see in the statement that private property in land is unjust, an exaggerated declaration of Henry George's avowed principles, and, in that sense, an untrue one. Mr. Fillebrown is the leader in this view. He holds that only one condition of private property in land is unjust, namely, the private appropriation of ground rent; that all other conditions will remain the same under the Single Tax as now, except the one necessarily disappearing under the equal taxation of unoccupied and occupied land—land speculation. Hence, a false impression of the practical application of the Single Tax is given to the uninformed by the wholesale assertion, 'Private property in land is unjust,' since this condemns those conditions of the present system which are equally conditions of the Single Tax System."

Shade of Herbert Spencer and his transcendental ethics! To this resolution the following bill of exceptions is filed:

It is an unconsciously framed indictment of Mr. George's philosophy.

Such interpretation could only be made by a confusion of thought, and one which would cloud the clear teaching of the distinction between private possession of land and the private ownership of land.

The justice and righteousness of a great cause is veiled by such suggested limitations of speech.

A conservatism not justified by ethical reasoning or the demands of expediency.

A timidity of propaganda wholly at variance with Mr. George's teachings and definite declarations.

Space forbids more than a brief argument in support of these exceptions, and it must necessarily be fortified by Mr. George's own words. In "Progress and Poverty," Book VII, Chapter I, is devoted to "The Injustice of Private Property in Land."

"When it is proposed to abolish private property in land," says Mr. George, "the first question that will arise is that of justice. Though often warped by habit, superstition and selfishness into the most distorted forms, the sentiment of justice is yet fundamental to the human mind, and whatever dispute arouses the passions of men, the conflict is sure to rage, not so much as to the question 'Is it wise?' as to the question 'Is it right?' This tendency of popular discussions to take an ethical form has a cause. It springs from a law of the human mind; it rests upon a vague and instinctive recognition of what is probably the deepest truth we can grasp. That alone is wise which is just; that alone is enduring which is right. In the narrow scale of individual actions and individual life this truth may be often obscured, but in the wider field of national life it everywhere stands out. I bow to this arbitrament and accept this test."

Has ancient or modern philosophic teaching ever furnished an example of the patience exhibited by Henry George in his search for truth? The key to the whole character of this remarkable man is given in the following words: "I propose to beg no question, to shrink from no conclusion, but to follow truth wherever it may lead. Upon us is the responsibility of seeking the law, for in the very heart of our civilization to-day women faint and little children moan. But what that law may prove to be is not our affair. If the conclusions that we reach run counter to our prejudices, let us not flinch; if they challenge institutions that have long been deemed wise and natural, let us not turn back."

We are told that there are those in the Massachusetts Single Tax League who see in the statement that private property in land is unjust, an exaggerated declaration of Henry George's avowed principles, and, in that sense, an untrue one. Misrepresentation or misconception does not alter truth. Let us briefly consider the statement that private property in land is unjust is an exaggerated declaration, and as used by Mr. George is wrongfully interpreted to-day. Here are a few quotations from "Progress and Poverty" which may be reviewed with interest and benefit:

"There can be to the ownership of anything no rightful title which is not derived from the title of the producer and does not rest upon the natural right of the man to himself. There can be no other rightful title, because (1st), there is no other natural right from which any other title can be derived, and (2d) because the recognition of any other title is inconsistent with and destructive of this."

"What most prevents the realization of the injustice of private property in land is the habit of including all the things that are made the subject of ownership in one category, or, if any distinction be made, drawing the line, according to the unphilosophical distinctions of the lawyers, between personal property and real estate, or things movable and things immovable. The real

and natural distinction is between things which are the produce of labor and things which are the gratuitous offerings of nature ; or, to adopt the terms of political economy, between wealth and land."

" The moment this distinction is realized, that moment is it seen that the sanction which natural justice gives to one species of property is denied to the other ; that the rightfulness which attaches to individual property in the produce of labor implies the wrongfulness of individual property in land ; that, whereas the recognition of the one places all men upon equal terms, securing to each the due reward of his labor, the recognition of the other is the denial of the equal rights of men, permitting those who do not labor to take the natural reward of those who do."

" Whatever may be said for the institution of private property in land, it is therefore plain that it cannot be defended on the score of justice."

For the late Mr. Faidy the writer had an affectionate regard, a sentiment inspired by his devotion to the cause of educating men, because of his earnestness, his sincerity, and for the many intellectual gifts with which he was endowed. It was provocative of pain and deep regret, therefore, when this gifted young man became so entangled in a mental morass, so clearly evident by his conclusions regarding interest and the compensation of land owners. There was not an uneven note in the clarion voice of Henry George as he considered the question of compensation, when he said :

" It (private property in land) is not merely a robbery in the past ; it is a robbery in the present—a robbery that deprives of their birthright the infants that are now coming into the world ! Why should we hesitate about making short work of such a system ? Because I was robbed yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that, is it any reason that I should suffer myself to be robbed to-day and to-morrow ? any reason that I should conclude that the robber has acquired a vested right to rob me ? If the land belongs to the people, why continue to permit land owners to take the rent, or compensate them in any manner for the loss of rent ? Consider what rent is. It does not arise spontaneously from land ; it is due to nothing that the land owners have done. It represents a value created by the whole community. Let the land holders have, if you please, all that the possession of the land would give them in the absence of the rest of the community. But rent, the creation of the whole community, necessarily belongs to the whole community."

Of the operation of the common law, whereby the individual must surrender all his property in case of the discovery of a defective title, Mr. George says:

" Now if we apply to this case of *The People vs. The Land Owners* the same maxims of justice that have been formulated by land owners into law, and are applied every day in English and American courts to disputes between man and man, we shall not only not think of giving the landholders any compensation for the land, but shall take all the improvements and whatever else they may have as well. But I do not propose, and I do not suppose that any one else will propose, to go so far. It is sufficient if the people resume the ownership of the land. Let the land owners retain their improvements and personal property in secure possession. And in this measure of justice would be no oppression, no injury to any class. The great cause of the present unequal distribution of wealth, with the suffering, degradation, and waste that it entails, would be swept away. Even landholders would share in the general gain. The gain of even the large landholders would be a real one. The gain of the small landholders would be enormous. For in welcoming Justice, men welcome the handmaid of Love. Peace and Plenty follow in her train, bringing their good gifts, not to some, but to all."

In concluding the argument for our bill of exceptions the following is taken

from Mr. George's great work, "Protection or Free Trade." This is given to show that the Single Tax philosophy is something more than a question of scientific taxation, for in its depths lies the soul of a new life that will yet come forth to renew and regenerate the hearts of the sons of men:

"Property in land is as indefensible as property in man. It is so absurdly impolitic, so outrageously unjust, so flagrantly subversive of the true right of property, that it can only be instituted by force and maintained by confounding in the popular mind the distinction between property in land and property in things that are the result of labor. Once that distinction is made clear—and a thorough discussion of the tariff question must now make it clear—and private property in land is doomed."

To those earnest and sincere Single Taxers who urge with a tinge of impatient speech the formation of a party and reproach our leaders for their seeming lack of zeal, a word. The greatest enemy of our cause would rejoice in the launching of a Single Tax party. True progress of the Single Tax movement can be made only by the process of education. The creation of a political party would, to a large degree, vitiate the magnificent work of those teachers who are consecrating their lives to the education of men. All we, who are proud to be in the ranks, may do, is to faithfully follow these lines for propaganda work. It is not for us to anticipate the full fruition of our labors in that we may in our day see the standard of equal freedom floating over the fallen citadel of injustice. The plan outlined by Single Taxers of Chicago is the true and intelligent beginning of outpost work. Of this, quotation is again made from Mr. George's "Protection or Free Trade:":

"In the United States the most direct way of moving on property in land is through local taxation, since that is already to some extent levied upon land values. And that is doubtless the way in which the final and decisive advance will be made. But national politics dominate state politics, and a question can be brought into discussion much more quickly and thoroughly as a national than as a local question. Now to bring an issue into politics *it is not necessary to form a party*. Parties are not to be manufactured; they grow out of existing parties by the bringing forward of issues upon which men will divide. We have, ready to our hand, in the tariff question, a means of bringing the whole subject of taxation, and, through it, the whole social question, into the fullest discussion."

Of all of Mr. George's writings no one sentence or paragraph furnishes a truer guidon. In that single paragraph is concentrated the wisdom of a true philosopher and matchless generalship in statecraft. When we see the Democratic party raising any other issue than the tariff question we can feel that once again are the people betrayed by false leaders. There can never be any advance by the raising of any other issue. There is, in truth, no other issue before the American people. Until the tariff question is settled, and carried to its logical conclusion, all efforts of the party of the people will prove abortive.

A great artist, some twenty years ago, gave to the world the product of his genius. Who cannot recall the "Christ Before Pilate," the masterpiece of Mikhail Munkacsy, the Hungarian painter? To the left, held back by a centurion, was the mob led by a Jerusalem ruffian, whose brutalized face denoted the predominance of the lowest passions as his cry of "Crucify Him" rang through the praetorium. What a contrast with the figure of the Christ, idealized by the artist, standing in majestic dignity before the weak and vacillating Roman governor; Caiaphas, the high priest, to the right of Pilate, denouncing the "dangerous" Nazarene, stood boldly out; but the one figure whose face bore the look of hatred and vindictiveness combined with arrogant assumption, as his gaze was fixed upon the Christ, was the richly appareled

Pharisee. This was the central force arrayed against the Redeemer of Men. This was the type of the "special powerful interest" crouched behind the cries of the mob and the real voice of the inflamed Caiaphas. This was "the lion in the way." Distorted with malignancy was the face of the Pharisee as he glared at the prisoner who was deemed a disturber, a person to be suppressed, aye, one to be crucified. And so was led away that figure of the ages.

How many since the world's tragedy on Calvary have died to make men free? Yet man is still in bondage. How soon dies away the real battle cry of the world's great reformers when life's labors for them have ended. In this brief review of a few of Henry George's declarations there has been no thought of hero worship, for any approach to adulation would be quickly condemned could the dead but speak. There would, however, ring out true and clear that voice we loved so well, in its plain condemnation of private property in land, and of this how fitting are the words of Dryden:

"Through all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in man."

Henry George worked not for a day but for all time. In the valley he toiled to reach the mountain top; the summit gained, unsatisfied, he looked toward the stars; he would have penetrated the heavenly arcana and lifted his fellow man to all the glory of the vision. There is inspiration in his life for all who would become true servants of the Most High, and in the work we have to do let our watchword be:

"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,  
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me;  
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,  
While God is marching on."



## ECHOES OF THE INTEREST "SYMPOSIUM" IN SPRING NUMBER.

### THE LAWS OF DISTRIBUTION.

BY JAMES S. PATON.

The symposium on Henry George's theory of interest in the Spring number of the SINGLE TAX REVIEW shows that there is a great difference of opinion among Single Taxers in regard to at least one of the laws of distribution, and I hope the interest aroused by Mr. Faidy's article will be kept up until we discover the true laws of distribution. I believe that I can point out the stumbling block over which Henry George fell, and although I do not think he succeeded in working out the laws, he not only made the most successful attempt of any political economist up to his time, but he showed so plainly how the laws may be traced that I have found it a very easy matter to work them out—to my own satisfaction, at least.

The laws of distribution are the laws that govern the division of all wealth, between landlord, laborer and capitalist, who represent the three factors in production, land, labor, and capital. The proportion that each receives varies. Under certain conditions one of the parties will receive a very large share, while if the conditions are changed, one or both of the other two