

## CONCLUSION

I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind. ... It is true that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion; for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered it may sometimes rest in them and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate and linked together it must needs fly to Providence and Deity—Bacon.

### The Moral Of This Examination

I HAVE laid before the reader enough to show what weight is due to Mr. Spencer's recantation of his earlier declarations on the land question.

But even his high reputation and great influence would not have led me to make so elaborate an examination, did it relate only to him. My purpose has been more than this.

In abandoning his earlier opinions Mr. Spencer has adopted those which have the stamp of the recognized authorities of our time. In seeking for excuses to justify his change he has taken the best he could find; and the confusions and fallacies and subterfuges to which he resorts are such as pass for argument with the many men of reputation and ability, who have undertaken to defend the existing system. Examination will show that no better defence of that system has been made or can be made.

Taking Mr. Spencer as the foremost representative of those who deny the justice and expediency of recognizing the equal right to land—a pre-eminence given him by his great reputation, his accorded ability, and the fact that he once avowed the opinions he now seeks to discredit—I have set forth his utterances on the land question, from his first book to his last, printing them in full in order to do him the amplest justice, and subjecting them to an examination which any one of ordinary ability and information is competent to test. I have thus given the best example to be found in the writings of one man, of what may be said for and what may be said against the equal right to land.

It is not the example of intellectual prostitution thus disclosed that I would dwell upon. It is the lesson that prompts to intellectual self-reliance. It is not merely the authority of Mr. Spencer as a

teacher on social subjects that I would discredit; but the blind reliance upon authority. For on such subjects the masses of men cannot safely trust authority. Given a wrong which affects the distribution of wealth and differentiates society into the rich and the poor, and the recognized organs of opinion and education, since they are dominated by the wealthy class, must necessarily represent the views and wishes of those who profit or imagine they profit by the wrong.

That thought on social questions is so confused and perplexed, that the aspirations of great bodies of men, deeply though vaguely conscious of injustice, are in all civilized countries being diverted to futile and dangerous remedies, is largely due to the fact that those who assume and are credited with superior knowledge of social and economic laws have devoted their powers, not to showing where the injustice lies but to hiding it; not to clearing common thought but to confusing it.

It is idle to quarrel with this fact, for it is of the nature of things, and is shown in the history of every great movement against social wrong, from that which startled the House of Have in the Roman world by its proclamation of the equal fatherhood of God and the equal brotherhood of men, to that which in our own time broke the shackles of the chattel slave. But it is well to recognize it, that those who would know the truth on social and economic subjects may not blindly accept what at the time passes for authority, but may think for themselves.

It is not, however, in regard to social problems only that I trust this examination may do something to enforce the need of intellectual self-reliance. It is in regard to those larger and deeper problems of man's nature and destiny which are, it seems to me, closely related to social questions.

Stepping out of their proper sphere and arrogating to themselves an authority to which they have no claim, professed teachers of spiritual truths long presumed to deny the truths of the natural sciences. But now professed teachers of the natural sciences, stepping in turn out of their proper sphere and arrogating to themselves an authority to which they have no claim, presume to deny spiritual truths. And there are many, who having discarded an authority often perverted by the influence of dominant wrong, have in its place accepted another authority which in its blank materialism affords as efficient a means

for stilling conscience and defending selfish greed as any perversion of religious truth.

Mr. Spencer is the foremost representative of this authority. Widely regarded as the scientific philosopher; eulogized by his admirers as the greatest of all philosophers—as the man who has cleared and illuminated the field of philosophy by bringing into it the exact methods of science—he carries to the common mind the weight of the marvellous scientific achievements of our time as applied to the most momentous of problems. The effect is to impress it with a vague belief that modern science has proved the idea of God to be an ignorant superstition and the hope of a future life a vain delusion.

Now, the great respect which in our day has attached to professed scientific teachers, and which has in large degree given to them the same influence that once attached to the teachers of religion, arises from the belief in the truthfulness of science—from the belief that in the pure, clear atmosphere in which its votaries are supposed to dwell they are exempt from temptations to pervert and distort. And this has been largely attributed to them where they have passed the boundaries of what is properly the domain of the natural sciences and assumed the teaching of politics and religion. It is his reputation as an honest, fearless thinker, bent only on discovering and proclaiming the truth, a reputation which he derives from his reputation as a scientific philosopher, that gives to Mr. Spencer the powerful influence which, having been exerted to deny all hope of a world to come, is now exerted to deny the right of the masses to the essentials of life in this world—to maintain the wrong, wider than that of chattel slavery, which condemns so many not merely to physical, but to mental and moral privation and want, to undeveloped and distorted lives and to untimely death.

While the examination we have made has only incidentally touched the larger phases of Mr. Spencer's philosophy, it has afforded an opportunity to judge of the very things on which his popular reputation is based—his intellectual honesty and his capacity for careful, logical reasoning. It has, so to speak, brought the alleged philosopher out of what to the ordinary man is a jungle of sounding phrases and big words, and placed him on open ground where he may be easily understood and measured. In his first book, written when he believed in God, in a divine order, in a moral sense, and which he has now

emasculated, he does appear as an honest and fearless, though somewhat too careless a thinker. But that part of our examination which crosses what is now his distinctive philosophy shows him to be, as a philosopher ridiculous, as a man contemptible—a fawning Vicar of Bray, clothing in pompous phraseology and arrogant assumption logical confusions so absurd as to be comical.

If the result be to shatter an idol, I trust it may also be to promote freedom of thought.

As there are many to whom the beauty and harmony of economic laws are hidden, and to whom the inspiring thought of a social order in which there should be work for all, leisure for all, and abundance for all—in which all might be at least as true, as generous and as manful as they wish to be—is shut out by the deference paid to economic authorities who have as it were given bonds not to find that for which they profess to seek, so there are many to-day to whom any belief in the spiritual element, in the existence of God and in a future life, is darkened or destroyed, not so much by difficulties they themselves find, but by what they take to be the teachings of science. Conscious of their own ignorance, distrustful of their own powers, stumbling over scientific technicalities and awed by metaphysical terminology, they are disposed to accept on faith the teachings of such a man as Mr. Spencer, as those of one who on all things knows more and sees further than they can, and to accord to what they take to be intellectual pre-eminence the moral pre-eminence that they feel ought to accompany it. I know the feeling of such men, for I remember the years when it was my own.

To these it is my hope that this examination may be useful, by putting them on inquiry. In its course we have tested, in matters where ordinary intelligence and knowledge are competent to judge, the logical methods and intellectual honesty of the foremost of those who in the name of science eliminate God and degrade man, taking from human life its highest dignity and deepest hope. Now, if in simple matters we find such confusion, such credulity, such violation of every canon of sound reasoning as we have found here, shall we blindly trust in deeper matters—in those matters which always have and always must perplex the intellect of man?

Let us rather, as I said in the beginning, not too much under-rate our own powers in what is concerned with common facts and general

relations. While we may not be scientists or philosophers we too are men. And as to things which the telescope cannot resolve, nor the microscope reveal, nor the spectrum analysis throw light on, nor the tests of the chemist discover, it is as irrational to accept blindly the dictum of those who say, "Thus saith science!" as it is in things that are the proper field of the natural sciences to bow before the dictum of those who say, "Thus saith religion!"

I care nothing for creeds. I am not concerned with any one's religious belief. But I would have men think for themselves. If we do not, we can only abandon one superstition to take up another, and it may be a worse one. It is as bad for a man to think that he can know nothing as to think he knows all. There are things which it is given to all possessing reason to know, if they will but use that reason. And some things it may be there are, that—as was said by one whom the learning of the time sneered at, and the high priests persecuted, and polite society, speaking through the voice of those who knew not what they did, crucified—are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.

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