

## LORD AND LANDLORD

## A CHRISTMAS PROBLEM

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,—the reality of the inner life,—and all outward and necessary things shall be added! Nothing clearer than this statement. The spiritual cause creates the material effect. Moral order in the material world results from immutable righteousness in the religious realm. So taught the Master of Nazareth. That which exists as ethical principle within, should appear as material order without. Unless this vital correlation is realized, there will be only disorder and disaster among men!

Question:—How is it that, after twenty centuries of the teaching of Christ, his great principles have not been more generally practiced? It is easy to see that the ideals of the Spirit are far different from the standards of the world. Spirituality and materialism get separated; or if brought into proximity, they antagonize each other. Christ and the World,—have they any vital relation to each other in practical living? Too often the answer is: None whatever! Christ inculcates justice, mercy, humility, honor, good-will, love; the World indulges in mercilessness, injustice, pride, dishonor, evil intentions, self-seeking, strife. The angelic and the brutal side by side,—and, so often brutality dominant! "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" "Tremble, suffer, die!" Thus opposed to each other are the Christian and the Pagan! Why

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again; and for so long a time after the sowing of the seeds of righteousness?

Fruitful tillage depends upon two factors:—the seed; and the seed-ground. We have the one; but not the other. Christ brought the seed; he did not develop the seed-bed. He endeavored, mightily, during his brief life, to prepare men's hearts to receive the good seed; but he did not reach the vast multitude who needed to be reached e'er the seed-truths of his spirituality could be sown in fruitful ground. It takes time,—centuries upon centuries,—to bring men to realize that the material world and the possession thereof should be held subsidiary to the ideals of the Spirit. However good the seed, the harvest will be negligible if the ground be ill-prepared. And this is a chief reason why the Christian idealism has not, yet, dominated the affairs of men!

Man is of the Spirit, heavenly; but, also, as to his physical organism, he is of the earth,—very earthy, indeed! The cultivation of his immortal soul is one thing; nourishment of his body, quite another matter. He does not need to strive with his brother-man for the gifts and attributes of the inner life; justice, humility, mercy and love are, potentially, the inestimable endowment of every child of the heavenly Father. But man does contend with his brother-man for the material objects that minister to his body,—food, shelter, clothing, and the innumerable things that, though they perish, serve his temporal and physical well-being. This contention for material necessities may be conducted honorably, honestly, and unselfishly; or it may be pursued selfishly,

dishonestly, unjustly, cruelly, and brutally. Two thousand years of Christ's teaching seems to have made very little difference among men in their material relations. Must it ever remain so? Must it always obtain, that a young man can see no way of practising the truths taught in Home and Church and Church School in the "business" world? He claims that it is so! Must we conclude that Christ was wrong,—that however much we may seek the righteousness of the Spirit, the desirable things material come mostly through deeds *not* approved in the sight of good men? Does Christ show us the honorable way; yet the Father withhold from us the ability and disposition to follow?

The history of the Christian Era and of the period dating a century and a half before the beginning of that Era shows exactly where the difficulty lies. Briefly, the ideals of the spiritual life,—the seed,—as set forth by Christ, are what they should be; but the standards of the physical and material life,—the seed-ground, as it were,—are *not* what they ought to be, being unjust, brutal, savage and selfish. The two aspects of life,—the spiritual and the material,—are, therefore, intensely discordant. We know who was the prophet of the spiritual ideals at the beginning of the Era,—Christ. Who was the reformer, looking to a just material order, before Christ? It was Tiberius Gracchus, who lived during the middle portion of the second century, B. C. He saw, clearly, that the foundation of man's physical life is the LAND; all food, shelter, clothing, all material necessities come from Mother Earth. Therefore, in order to anything like harmony and justice among men, civilization,

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on its material side, must be based upon land-equity. He tried to get the public lands of the Romans portioned out equitably, in freeholds worked by the owners of the soil,—500 jugera (about two-thirds of an acre, each jugerum) for the head of the family, and 250 jugera for every two sons. In short, his scheme made possible the small farm and the individual development in the farm-home that comes of that sort of land-use. This, for a time, succeeded; though only after his death incurred in trying to execute the new laws. Later, his brother, Caius Gracchus, attempting still other reforms, was killed; and his conqueror, Livius Drusus, restored the former inequitable order of things, removing ground rent, and handing back to the nobles their confiscated lands. Public lands became private property, *no longer subject to taxation!*

Upon this unjust foundation, Roman civilization became more and more corrupt and cruel, until, by the time of the birth of Christ, the small farmer had mostly disappeared, and with him that sturdiness of character that had filled the armies of Rome and made her the conqueror of the world. The cities congested with a hungry and dispossessed proletariat, fed by largesses of grain from the public treasure. The land basis of human relations remains as the Romans established it, to this day!

Here we see, then, on the one side Christ and his spiritual ideals of justice and equity and good-will among men; on the other side, the material struggle for existence based upon unjust relations between men and the land. The seed of righteousness had to be sown upon the

seed-bed of selfishness and the animal conflicts for the means of physical support,—ever the heavenly treasure in earthen vessels!

This is a primary reason why the principles of Christ have made so little headway during the centuries of the Christian Era,—the EARTH has been and still is held and used brutally and unjustly!

The Gracchi saw the difficulty; but did not know how to meet it. They seemed to think that, if the land were *redistributed*, all would be well. But the same cause that first brought the land into the control of the few, gathered into great estates worked by slaves, still operated after the redistribution of the land. The cause has been discovered only in modern times. The pressure of people upon the land creates rent; and that rent, being created by the community, belongs to the community, not to the private owners of the land. All that honestly belongs to the private owners of the land is the right to *use* the land; and because it is necessary to invest labor and capital upon the land, the owner must be secured in permanency of tenure and negotiability of that tenure, guaranteed by fee simple deeds, publicly recorded. But this is really, a *privilege* tacitly granted by the community; and for that privilege the holder should pay rent to the community. As all have equal claim, as God's children,—His free gift to them,—to the land, each has an equal right to use the land; but, if one does not care to use it, those who do so should pay rent in order to equalize matters where all have common equity in the land. Taking economic rent of the land by the community, but leaving

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all else derived from labor and capital-values to private individuals, maintains the normal balance between men and the land. Had the Gracchi known these truths, they could have, and most likely would have, made this system the rule of the Roman Republic. Thus the economic seed-bed would have become fit soil for the planting of the seed-truths of Christlike equity; and the last twenty centuries would have been vastly different! Justice and equity and good-will would have become the order of things in the material concerns of men; as they have been, since Christ's day, the spiritual ideal of human living. Eagerly men would have sought God's righteousness and put it into practice in daily life and material affairs; inevitably, spiritual righteousness would have borne the fruitage of good things of the physical necessity,—and honorably, not after the manner of predatory men!

Again, why has not the Christ Ideal,—equity on earth,—become established more completely during all these centuries? Surely, it was eternal truth for human well-being that Christ preached!

A further explanation is this:—It is the universal law, that Spirit must always incarnate itself in material bodies. In this instance, the seed-bearer, Jesus Christ, brought the seed-truths of divine justice and equity in the use of God's material gifts to men; Tiberius Gracchus had attempted to prepare the material seed-bed of land equity, all unknowing of the Christ that was to come. Had the Tribune of the People been *God-conscious*, the material

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seed-bed would have been, in all probability, adequate to receive the great principles of equity in the use of Mother Earth. But Tiberius Gracchus, land-reformer, differed from Jesus Christ, man-helper, in this very important particular,—God-consciousness! Therefore, the Roman tried to establish land-justice upon humanly ethical considerations, but, so far as we know, uninspired by Divine Love. The Christ, on the other hand, sowed the seed-truths for the welfare of humanity, inspired by the love of God,—a love that constrained him to do the deeds of righteousness among men! Seek human equity and well-being first; then, all material good will be added, was the Roman's basis for action. Seek God and His Righteousness first; then, every material good will follow, was the solid foundation of Christ's activities. So, it came to pass, that the good seed of the Son of God fell upon a seed-bed only partially and inadequately prepared by the son of men!

It is, therefore, the imperative and immediate duty of Christian churches and institutions, gathered under the shelter of and inspired by the Spirit of Christlike Idealism, to complete the preparation of the seed-bed of Land Reform begun so long ago by Tiberius Gracchus. This must be done, if we would have a vital correlation and harmony between the realm of the Spirit and the things of this material earth of ours. We, like Christ, are God-conscious; thus inspired, we must help to rectify the land laws of our time so that land shall be held and used equitably and honestly and justly! Nothing can be done for the lasting worth for the material welfare of human

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beings, until land reform is established; for, the most of material wrongs that need righting, in the economic affairs of men, have their root in the primary and basic wrong,—LAND MONOPOLY!

And, if God-inspired, the process of rectification is all very simple, given the Christlike disposition to righteousness among men on earth!

All that is necessary is to take, by taxation, the economic rent of the land for the use of the community to whom it rightfully belongs as the creator of that rent; leave all else tax free (except in times of extraordinary crisis, such as convulsions of nature, or the wars of men), to the private individuals who own, because they create these values, the labor and capital which must be employed to cultivate, or in some way, use the land.

As one studies, again and again, this problem, one is ever brought back to the basic-wrong upon which all the other economic wrongs of the day rest—LAND! So long as there is land-inequity, just so long will there be preventable human suffering. There is only this alternative:—Christlike reform; or, bloody Revolution! People stand about so much suffering; then, they turn with destructive violence! Here is where the Christian churches, in the very spirit of their founder, can render an inestimable service. In accordance with Christ's principles, let us help to fulfill the dreams of the Gracchi concerning land equity! They saw the need, but not the remedy. Human happiness and progress wait upon our fidelity in taking the initiative in this IMPERA-

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