

## The Philosopher-Politician: The Struggle for More Than Honor in His Own Land

### I *George's Campaigns for Office and the Standard, 1886-87*

**I**N 1886 George reached the peak of his career as a personal symbol of reform. He had become by then a respected writer with an international reputation. He had even won honors as an economist and social philosopher at home, but the scope of his political influence was not so great as it was in the British Isles. During the summer the opportunity came to participate actively in American politics as a candidate for office as well as a spokesman for a cause and a theory. The Central Labor Union of New York City asked George to run for mayor. As he said just after the election, he "was nominated because it was believed that [he] best represented the protest against unjust social conditions and the best means of remedying them."<sup>1</sup>

The Central Labor Union, whose own course of development ran roughly parallel to George's, had grown from a group of delegates from labor organizations that had been formed in the winter of 1881-82 at a mass meeting at Cooper Union, called to express the collective sympathy of New York workingmen for the downtrodden people of Ireland in their struggle with landlordism. It was almost a matter of course that the Central Labor Union should have turned to George in its effort to grasp political power, for by this time George's international commitment to labor and to the Irish had been well established. On receiving the invitation, he made one unusual condition before he would allow his name to be put forward in nomination: the

Union had to prove to him that the rank-and-file workingman was behind the idea by securing a petition with at least thirty thousand signatures. A month later it submitted to George the names of 34,460 voters who had pledged him their votes.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to his comment after the election about the reasons for his nomination, George had said in reply to the Central Labor Union's invitation that it seemed to him that a movement for labor reform should begin in "our municipalities, where we may address ourselves to what lies nearest at hand, and avoid dissensions that, until the process of economic education has gone further, might divide us on national issues. The foundation of our system is in our local governments."<sup>3</sup> The dissension came soon enough during the state-wide campaign the next year.

In September, George wrote to his old friend, Dr. E. R. Taylor, in San Francisco: "All the probabilities are that I will be in the fight, and it is by no means impossible that I will be elected. But the one thing sure is that if I do go in the campaign will bring the land question into practical politics and do more to popularise its discussion than years of writing could do. This is the only temptation to me."<sup>4</sup> Such was the reason a social philosopher must have in order to abandon his study for the hurly-burly of a political campaign. George was however, an agitator of long standing, and the choice was not a hard one. In his personal letter to Taylor, he was simply making it clear that desires or ambitions for personal glory had no part in his decision. On the basis of all the evidence, there is no reason whatever to question his motives nor his explanation. The campaign gave George opportunity to spread his gospel.

In his "Bunker Hill" address the night of the election, after most of the votes had been tabulated, he suggested that the fight had only begun and that the forces of labor had won a victory, despite having lost the immediate battle: "Thank God, we have made a beginning. We have demonstrated the political power of labor. Never again—never again, will the politicians look upon a labor movement with contempt."<sup>5</sup> George had hopes for a national labor party and thought that labor's rights would soon be affirmed. But New York City politics then, as now, was a thing apart. In November, 1886, he could never have believed the disastrous defeat of the next year. In cheering his disappointed supporters the night of the mayoralty election, the

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philosopher-politician believed what he said, "We have done in this campaign more for popular education, more to purify politics, more toward the emancipation of labor from individual slavery, than could have been accomplished in twenty years of ordinary agitation."<sup>6</sup> As public propaganda of the hour that much may well have been true. Its lasting effect upon practical politics, however, was another thing altogether.

The campaign had been brief but intense. Labor organizations rallied to the call, with Samuel Gompers chairing the city organization of Henry George clubs and running the speakers' bureau. At one point early in the campaign, the Democratic organization tried to get George to remove himself voluntarily from the contest. In a statement made just before his death and in the midst of his 1897 campaign, George said:

Before my nomination had formally taken place I received a request from Mr. William M. Ivins, then Chamberlain of the city, and a close political friend and representative of Mr. Grace, to privately meet him. I did so at Seighortner's, on Lafayette Place. We sat down in a private room, unattended, and smoked some cigars together. Mr. Ivins insisted that I could not possibly be elected Mayor of New York, no matter how many people might vote for me; that the men who voted knew nothing of the real forces that dominated New York. He said that I could not possibly be counted in. He offered on behalf of Tammany Hall and the County Democracy that if I would refuse the nomination for mayor they would run me for Congress, select a city district in which the nomination of the two was equivalent to election; that I should be at no expense whatever, but might go to Europe or anywhere I willed, and when I came back should receive a certificate of election to the House of Representatives. I said to him finally: "You tell me I cannot possibly get the office. Why, if I cannot possibly get the office, do you want me to withdraw?" His reply was: "You cannot be elected, but your running will raise hell!" I said: "You have relieved me of embarrassment. I do not want the responsibility and the work of the office of the Mayor of New York, but I do want to raise hell! I am decided and will run."<sup>7</sup>

Judged by "hell-raising" standards, George's 1886 campaign was a magnificent and unqualified success. As the Democratic organization in the city had feared, the election results were as disquieting to the establishment as was the campaign publicity

generated by labor before the election. Without the support of any of New York's major newspapers, labor's voice was confined mainly to a German paper and the *Leader*, the Central Labor Union's own hastily thrown together daily. Speaking up to a dozen times a day all over the city, George was joined by many of his supporters in round-the-clock speech-making. The final official results gave his opponent, Abram S. Hewitt, the Democratic candidate, 90,552 and the "third party" candidate, Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican nominee, 60,435. George polled 68,110. The election had been a struggle between George and Hewitt, independent labor and the Democratic machine. Roosevelt and the Republicans were never in the race. In fact, the "Red scare" and labor-anarchy opinions caused worried anti-socialist elements in the Republican Party to desert Roosevelt during the campaign in order to support Hewitt and were later assailed for their dishonesty by the future President. So far as Roosevelt was concerned, George was at least an honest man, something that could not be said of Tammany Hall and the Democratic machine.

The election showed clearly George's current popularity and labor's apparent strength in the city. Perhaps, George thought, its potential was even greater than the almost seventy thousand votes given him. A national party was a distinct possibility. In addition, George believed that in reality he had been elected and then "counted out," that Hewitt's twenty-two thousand vote margin of victory was the result of organizational tampering. In his "Bunker Hill" remarks, George said: "They may bribe, they may count us out, by their vile arts they may defeat what would be an honest verdict of the people; but we have gained what we fought for." "Under a fair vote of the people of New York," he went on to say, "I would be to-night elected Mayor."<sup>8</sup> Whether or not Tammany had been able to control the election by manipulating affairs at the district level and elsewhere remains a moot point. There were many, however, who shared and have continued to share George's opinion.<sup>9</sup>

Several permanent patterns for the future resulted from the election: (1) George's anti-poverty program and the single tax remedy were in politics for some time to come; (2) George and the Roman Catholic Church participated in a drawn-out private and public debate—and a strange dialogue it was; (3) George's

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New York newspaper, the weekly *Standard*, was born, a fellow organ for a time of the United Labor Party's daily and campaign-founded *Leader*; and (4) labor political activity was intensified locally and nationally with the birth of the United Labor Party—a party which George for a time hoped would draw together all the workingmen of America in a single powerful and politically effective force for social reform.

On January 8, 1887, the first number of the *Standard* was published, appearing weekly until August, 1892. Its publication began when serious consideration was being given to George's chances for president in 1888, and two days after the convention of the United Labor party. During the summer the new party leaders called for a convention which was to be held in Syracuse on August 17th in order to prepare for state and municipal contests to be decided in November. For the moment at least, labor had gone several steps beyond the old Knights of Labor or even the Central Labor Union in its effort to assert political force and pressure. On the basis of its showing in George's mayoralty campaign, hopes were high that the strength of the labor movement would continue to grow, first in New York State in 1887 and then nationally in 1888. George's supporters, who shared his hopes for a united front, were soon disillusioned by the trouncing they received at the New York State polls that November.

Once again the fundamental ideological split between George's policies and those of the socialists became apparent. Some time before the convention met, the socialists in the party began to proclaim essential Marxist doctrine. They said "that the burning social question is not a land tax, but the *abolition of all private property in instruments of production.*"<sup>10</sup> This demand was one of the basic points of difference between George and the British socialists. George countered by writing that "either they must go out" of the party "or that the majority must go out, for it is certain that the majority of the men who constitute the united labor party do not propose to nationalize capital and are not in favor of the abolition of all private property in the 'instruments of production.'"<sup>11</sup> Though the *Leader*, in socialist hands, attacked George, he and his supporters had their way at the convention, and the socialists founded their own party. The split was permanent and irreparable.

After the election, George wrote to his friend, the German translator of *Progress and Poverty*, C. D. F. Gutschow, in San Francisco, explaining his course of action:

I have no doubt whatever that the notion that I had turned on the socialists as a mere matter of policy was widely disseminated among our German population and did me harm, for this was the socialists' persistent cry through their German papers and I had no way of correcting it. The truth however is just the reverse. Beginning about January of this year [1887], they made the most persistent efforts to force socialistic doctrines upon us. I did not resist and refused even to enter into controversy with them until it became absolutely necessary. There was no alternative other than to consent to have the movement ranked as a socialistic movement or to split with the socialists. Although this lost us votes for the present I am perfectly certain that it will prove of advantage in the long run. Policy, however, did not enter into my calculations; I was only anxious to do the right thing.

It was characteristic of George to want "to do the right thing." His certainty about advantages "in the long run" stemmed, however, from his philosophical rather than from his practical grasp of political affairs. Discussing his position with regard to the convicted anarchists in the Chicago Haymarket Riot, a position which was bitterly attacked by many prominent British Socialists who had once supported him, like William Morris and Hyndman, George wrote in the same letter:

Second, as to the Anarchists. . . . Our bench is not immaculate, but I could not believe that every one of seven men, with the responsibility of life and death hanging over him, could unjustly condemn these men. In spite of all pressure I refused to say anything about the matter until I had a chance to somewhat examine it for myself, and a reading of the decision of the Supreme Court convinced me, as it did everyone else whom I got to read it, that the men had not been condemned as I had previously supposed, for mere opinion and general utterances. . . .

It is in the nature of things that the man who acts solely by conscience must often be misunderstood, and seem to others as if he were acting from low motives when in reality he is acting from the highest. This cannot be avoided, but I so much value your esteem and your friendship that I want to make this personal explanation to you.<sup>12</sup>

To be great and yet to be misunderstood is an axiomatic Emersonian truth, but George's position was one which Thoreau, the defender of John Brown, would not have taken no matter what company he accidentally kept. That George believed men could be as objective as he in the heat of ideological clashes or in cases where their interests may have been involved does credit to his abiding faith in the capacity of human beings to act justly under any circumstances—whatever it may say about his understanding of the ways in which climates of opinion are created. His faith in human reason would have made Jonathan Swift smile. Needless to say, George's break with the socialists also split the *Leader* and the *Standard* as fellow organs of labor opinion. Whatever may be said of the philosophical and theoretical differences, however, the cleavage between the socialists and George was unfortunate for the united forces of labor in the day-to-day battle for social reform.

Running at the head of the ticket for Secretary of State, George hoped for 150,000 votes. He was soundly beaten, receiving only 72,000. The Republican candidate totaled 459,000 and the Democratic winner 480,000. Within New York City itself, he polled barely one-half of the 68,000 he had received the year before. As a national party, United Labor had aborted. Though George was to run again for office in 1897, his mayoralty campaign of 1886 was his most successful attempt as a practical politician; it was the closest he was to come to holding elective office in his own land. George, however, was not a personally ambitious man. He had made it clear many times that "It was never 'my principles,' 'my movement,' 'my cause'; but always 'our principles,' 'our movement,' 'our cause.'" <sup>13</sup>

## II *McGlynn, Catholic Churchmen, Pope Leo and the Anti-Poverty Society*

George's efforts in the last half of the decade that followed the publication of *Progress and Poverty* went mainly into his editorial labors on the *Standard*, much of which was concerned with the Catholic Church and its attitudes toward him, his political activity at home and abroad, his Catholic supporters, and the principles on which his major work was based.<sup>14</sup> One of

the chief developments of the 1887 campaign which helped to defeat George was the open and powerful opposition of the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of this opposition, the *Irish World*, for which George had written his dispatches from Ireland and which had supported him in his race for mayor the year before, came out against him. George was therefore attacked by the church and the Irish-Catholic press on one hand, and by the socialists and socialist press, including the *Leader* and the *Volkzeitung* (the former pro-George, German language newspaper) on the other hand. The opposition of the church was roused by George's spirited defense of his supporter, Father Edward McGlynn of St. Stephen's, one of the largest churches in the city. George's attacks upon the Catholic Church for trying to silence McGlynn dominated many of the *Standard's* early issues during the first half of 1887.

McGlynn had met George for the first time late in 1882 after George's celebrated visit to Ireland and England. He had already read *Progress and Poverty* and had spoken publicly in support of George and George's crusade while the *Irish World* correspondent was still abroad. Sharing many views about labor and poverty, and also the cause of the Irish, the two men became intimate friends. Four years later, George in fact asked McGlynn his opinion about the race for mayor, and McGlynn advised him to accept the nomination and to run.

McGlynn came into general public notice at a meeting sponsored by the *Irish World* in the summer of 1882. It was called to organize support for Davitt who was once again in the United States after his release from Portland prison. Davitt, who had been accused of being "captured" by George, was asked to explain that he and the Land League had not lost their identities. In his public address McGlynn told Davitt to "preach the gospel" and not make excuses for it or explain it. In a rousing speech that was received with loud cheers, he said "that if I had to fall into the arms of anybody, I don't know a man into whose arms I should be more willing to fall than into the arms of Henry George."<sup>15</sup>

Five years later in 1887, he explained in the *Standard* his initial difficulties in speaking publicly on behalf of George: "I voluntarily promised to abstain from making land league speeches, not because I acknowledge the right of any one to



forbid me, but because I know too well the power of my ecclesiastical superiors to impair and almost destroy my usefulness in the ministry of Christ's Church to which I had consecrated my life."<sup>16</sup>

Despite the repeated warnings between 1882 and 1886, McGlynn publicly supported George in his campaigns in 1886 and 1887. Though already suspended and removed from his church by Archbishop Corrigan, McGlynn continued to spread George's ideas, delivering a strong address at the end of March, 1887, at the Academy of Music, entitled "The Cross of the New Crusade." Punctuated by cheers and applause from a largely Catholic audience, he said again there was no conflict between George's idea of the land for the people and the fundamental truths of the Church. More than any other event, this speech brought about the formation of the Anti-Poverty Society—the idea for the organization and its name having been originally suggested by a member of the *Standard*. McGlynn was named president and George vice-president. The first meeting of the society was held on May 1st in a packed hall from which thousands were turned away. The next Sunday evening, which with the previous Sunday established the normal meeting time, was a repetition of the first meeting. The only difference was that George rather than McGlynn gave the major address. Denounced and ridiculed by the press, the Anti-Poverty Society was for a time very popular and well-supported. Many papers, in fact, took advantage of McGlynn's difficulties with his superiors to snipe at both the labor movement and the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1887, McGlynn was threatened with excommunication and in May was given forty days in which to get to Rome. To George, events were unmistakable and the signs clear. In the *Standard's* last number for June, he compared McGlynn to Galileo.<sup>17</sup> George's choice of a historical analogy was not particularly precise, but it was effective. Galileo had been imprisoned, George demonstrated, for having asserted an obvious truth. McGlynn was being punished for stating the truth about land and labor, which, George implied, would some day be as obvious and as accurate as seeing "that the earth revolves around the sun." There "will arise by the spot" where McGlynn "shall be excommunicated" a statue and an inscription the like of those dedicated to Galileo; for McGlynn, "the true-hearted American

priest," had seen, as had George himself, the fundamental economic facts and principles around which human poverty revolved.

McGlynn's discovery of these universal economic laws were not to be acknowledged, however; for after expressly refusing to go to Rome, he was finally excommunicated on July 3rd by Archbishop Corrigan. Henry George, Jr. tells us that the Archbishop did not stop at excommunication, but instead harassed McGlynn's sympathizers, clerical and lay, and even "In two instances . . . prevented burial of persons in the Catholic Calvary Cemetery, because, while these persons were known to be strict in their duties to the Church, they attended the Anti-Poverty Society lectures of Dr. McGlynn."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps Patrick Ford's action during the 1887 campaign, when the *Irish World* turned against the United Labor Party, should not have surprised McGlynn and George so completely as it did.

It was not until 1892 that the McGlynn case was finally closed. In 1891, Pope Leo had sent Archbishop Satolli to the United States to review the case of Father McGlynn, and a board of Catholic clerics who were also professors at the Catholic University in Washington examined the evidence. Dr. Burtzell and McGlynn submitted statements explaining once again the excommunicated priest's adherence to George's land tax principles. After McGlynn promised Archbishop Satolli that he would present himself to the Pope within four months, the bans of excommunication were lifted. Archbishop Corrigan, somewhat astonished by the entire procedure, sent Father McGlynn to a parish in Newburgh, New York, just north of New York City. According to Henry George, Jr., McGlynn "went to Rome some months afterwards and was accorded an interview by the Pope. The reference to the social question was of briefest description. 'Do you teach against private property?' asked his Holiness. 'I do not; I am staunch for private property,' said the Doctor. 'I thought so,' said his Holiness, and he conferred his blessing."<sup>19</sup>

Two days before Father McGlynn celebrated mass for the first time in five years, George wrote to Reverend Dawson, his friend of long standing, that he had "for some time believed Leo XIII to be a very great man; . . . Whether he will ever read my letter [*The Condition of Labor*] I cannot tell, but he has been acting as though he had not only read it, but had recognised its force."<sup>20</sup>

In the same letter George credited the Pope with quieting the toryism of Archbishop Corrigan and stopping the fight against the public school.

George and McGlynn had had very little to do with each other after 1888 when they had split over George's support of Cleveland and over McGlynn's belief that the United Labor Party should persevere. McGlynn and the Anti-Poverty Society had gone its own way after George had voluntarily withdrawn. McGlynn had continued to live the life of a priest, though excommunicated, and had continued to preach the single tax. The Anti-Poverty Society slowly lost its force, and George's opportunistic hopes in Cleveland were dashed. Not only was Cleveland defeated in 1888, but when he was re-elected in 1892 his mildly expressed free-trade policy was overshadowed by his use of Federal troops in the Pullman strike. By that time George's disappointment in the one Democratic president who had broken the hold on the White House which the Republicans were to maintain from the end of the Civil War to the Bull Moose days was complete.

In 1891, just as George began his final work, *The Science of Political Economy*, Pope Leo XIII issued his famous encyclical *On the Condition of Labor*. Though the Pope did not mention George by name, Archbishop Corrigan saw the letter as evidence in support of his own opposition to George and McGlynn. Henry George, Jr., writes that Cardinal Manning told him personally that the Pope's encyclical was indeed aimed at his father's teaching, "although he intimated that between the postulates and the deduction Henry George could drive a coach and four."<sup>21</sup> At any rate, George assumed that the encyclical was "aimed at us, and at us alone, almost,"<sup>22</sup> and proceeded to answer it with mixed feelings of honor at so being addressed. It gave him the opportunity to speak his piece once again on a national and international scale. In reply he set forth his principles in a long "Open Letter," completed in September, 1891, which was more than double the length of the Pope's encyclical.

*The Condition of Labor, an Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII* is one of George's best written and soundly argued works and states very well the religious and ethical bases of his social philosophy. Published in October, 1891, in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy (in translation) at the same time,

George's book never received any answer from Rome, though a personal and handsome copy of the Italian translation had been presented to the Pope. Employing the editorial "we," as well as speaking for all who thought as he did, he said: "Our postulates are all stated or implied in your Encyclical. They are the primary perceptions of human reason, the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith" (3). The Pope's encyclical, for all it had in common with George's own views, did not stress equality and insist upon land reform which George felt were necessary if any real changes in labor's condition were ever to occur. In a letter to his son, George wrote that he had written "for such men as Cardinal Manning, General Booth and religious-minded men of all creeds."<sup>23</sup> *The Condition of Labor* repeated all the essential points of George's arguments developed in *Progress and Poverty* and the writings that preceded and followed his major work.

To attach to things created by God the same right of private ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor is to impair and deny the true rights of property. For a man who out of the proceeds of his labor is obliged to pay another man for the use of ocean or air or sunshine or soil, all of which are to men involved in the single term land, is in this deprived of his rightful property and thus robbed. (5)

Clearly, purchase and sale cannot give, but can only transfer ownership. Property that in itself has no moral sanction does not obtain moral sanction by passing from seller to buyer.

If right reason does not make the slave the property of the slave-hunter it does not make him the property of the slave-buyer. Yet your reasoning as to private property in land would as well justify property in slaves. To show this it is only needful to change in your argument the word land to the word slave. (25)

After much religious and historically oriented discussion in the first half of his argument, George turned in the third section of his "Open Letter" to current economic theories, indicating how he differed from trade unionism, communism, socialism, or anarchism. He then developed his argument in the fourth section by drawing together his social and religious points of view, saying that "the social question is at bottom a religious question" (67). (The phraseology is reminiscent of his address "The Crime of Poverty.")

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After complimenting the Pope for lending his support to this point, he then says of the Pope's remedies that they "so far as they go are socialistic, and though the Encyclical is not without recognition of the individual character of man and of the priority of the individual and the family to the state, yet the whole tendency and spirit of its remedial suggestions lean unmistakably to socialism—extremely moderate socialism it is true; socialism hampered and emasculated by a supreme respect for private possessions; yet socialism still" (70-71). This point was ironic, since the Pope had already written that socialism fails "to see the order and symmetry of natural law" and "fails to recognize God" (61).

Continuing his argument, George then struck at the division of society into classes:

For is it not clear that the division of men into the classes rich and poor has invariably its origin in force and fraud; invariably involves violation of the moral law; and is really a division into those who get the profits of robbery and those who are robbed; those who hold in exclusive possession what God made for all, and those who are deprived of his bounty? Did not Christ in all his utterances and parables show that the gross difference between rich and poor is opposed to God's law? Would he have condemned the rich so strongly as he did, if the class distinction between rich and poor did not involve injustice—was not opposed to God's intent? (83)

Listing the contradictions in the "moral teachings" of the Pope's encyclical (97-98), George concludes: "you give us equal rights in heaven, but deny us equal rights on earth! . . . your Encyclical gives the gospel to laborers and the earth to the landlords" (98). In the language of his "Moses" address, he appeals: "Servant of the Servants of God! I call you by the strongest and sweetest of your titles. In your hands more than in those of any living man lies the power to say the word and make the sign that shall end an unnatural divorce, and marry again to religion all that is pure and high in social aspiration" (104). Such public sentiments were in marked contrast to George's opinions of the same year expressed in a personal letter just before he was confronted with the Pope's encyclical: "How sad it is to see a church in all its branches offering men stones instead of bread, and thistles in-

stead of figs. From Protestant preachers to Pope, avowed teachers of Christianity are with few exceptions preaching alms giving or socialism, and ignoring the simple remedy of justice."<sup>24</sup>

Despite his many Roman Catholic friends and associates, clerical and lay, at home and abroad, Henry George's relations with Rome were at best uneven and uncertain. It was touch and go for many years as to whether or not his works were to be included in the *Index librorum prohibitorum*.

### III *Henry George's Last Ten Years: The Single Tax*

By the end of 1887 Henry George's career as a leader of social reform took its final turn. His November 19th editorial in the *Standard*, "The Chicago Tragedy," which followed the disastrous defeat at the polls, and the October 8th editorial which may have helped to cause that defeat, explained George's position regarding the convicted anarchists. Explanations did no good, however; he was called a traitor by labor partisans and by the labor press. Many of his former supporters and associates in the United Kingdom, except some of the Fabians and religious social reformers, joined their American compatriots in condemning him for siding with the establishment's opinion of who were to be held responsible for the deaths that occurred during the Haymarket Riot. In the United States George's opposition came not only from the right and from the Catholic Church but also from many workingmen's organizations.

From 1887 onward, most of George's activity as a writer and thinker was devoted to his editorials in the *Standard*; to his lectures and addresses, including several tours abroad; to his reply to Pope Leo and his attack upon Herbert Spencer in *A Perplexed Philosopher*; and to his posthumously published *The Science of Political Economy*. His political activities centered around the single tax movement in the late 1880's and early 1890's, his support of free trade policies in Congress, and finally his return to active campaigning in the 1897 New York mayoralty race, the major cause of his sudden death.

The single tax movement began gradually to gather force through 1887, mainly as a result of the work of a New York lawyer named Thomas Shearman; and George's last editorial in the *Standard* for the same year showed how completely he had

adopted the phrase and the idea as a rallying point for himself. The editorial was entitled "Socialism vs the Single Tax." Over a year later, after another trip abroad, George described frankly what he believed the single tax to mean: "The term single tax does not really express all that a perfect term would convey. It only suggests the fiscal side of our aims. . . . Before we adopted this name, people, even intelligent people, insisted on believing we meant to divide land up. . . . Since we have used the term single tax this sort of misinterpretation seems to have almost entirely disappeared. . . ."

George was not completely happy with the term because it failed to communicate his socio-economic and religio-ethical creed in its entirety, but it had its advantages—especially in the slogan-ridden world of popular political propaganda. He did not like the restrictions implied by the narrowness of the term. George thought, nevertheless, that the term associated the single tax movement with "those great Frenchmen, ahead of their time, who, over a century ago, proposed the *impôt unique* as the great means for solving social problems and doing away with poverty. . . . Our proper name, if it would not seem too high flown, 'would be freedom men,' or 'liberty men,' or 'natural order men,' for it is on establishing liberty, on removing restrictions, on giving natural order full play, and not on any mere fiscal change that we base our hopes of social reconstruction."

"This idea," he went on, "is more fully expressed in the term single tax than it would be in land rent tax or any other such phrase. We want as few taxes as possible, as little restraint as is conformable to that perfect law of liberty which will allow each individual to do what he pleases without infringement of the equal right of others."<sup>25</sup> The Henry George of *Progress and Poverty* was always present, even in the days of the single tax, which term he was one day to label a "misnomer" that somehow or other stuck. From 1888 to 1890, single tax clubs began to organize throughout the country. While George's relationship with labor organizations cooled, his standing with the middle class began to rise almost like one of his economic ratios.

Just after the 1888 election, George had the opportunity of returning to the United Kingdom for the fourth time. It was a quick trip and a hectic and busy stay. He was very well received and, as usual, very optimistic about the progress of his ideas

throughout the British Isles. By Christmas he was back in New York. Three months later, however, he was abroad again for a longer stay, taking his wife and daughters with him and leaving his eldest son in charge of the *Standard*.

A letter from a leading Fabian, Sidney Webb, indicates better than anything else how George stood with the socialists in 1889:

I am afraid that you will be denounced and attacked by the wilder kind of Socialist. . . . others beside myself are doing all we can to induce them to keep quiet, *as it would be fatal to arouse an antagonism between the Radical and Socialist parties*. Many of us have been working for years to keep the peace between them, & to bring them into line on practical politics. . . .

Now I want to implore your forbearance. When you are denounced as a traitor, & what not, by Socialist newspapers; and "heckled" by Socialist questioners, or abused by Socialist orators, it will be difficult not to denounce Socialism in return. But do not do so. They will be only the noisy fringe of the Socialist Party who will do this, & it will be better for the cause which we both have at heart, if you can avoid accentuating your differences with Socialists.<sup>26</sup>

Though the break with the Socialists was fairly obvious, George's four-month visit, his longest since 1882, went well. His speaking schedule was heavy, but it was not so concentrated as it was during his short tour at the end of 1888. As usual, his most successful meetings were in Scotland where his blend of religious-ethical ideas and socio-economic reform plans went over well. His older addresses, like "Moses," were accompanied by "Thy Kingdom Come," his very stirring and effective sermon delivered in the Glasgow City Hall. He had begun his tour in London with "Thou Shalt Not Steal," his repeatedly successful speech on the Eighth Commandment, which, dating from 1884, he had delivered impressively in New York City to the second public meeting of the Anti-Poverty Society in May, 1887. The speech was always a success because it answered the question of who really were the land stealers, the landlords or the reformers. The Scottish Land Restoration League audiences, of course, already knew the answer. Aside from farewell meetings in London, George ended his tour with "The Land for the People," delivered in Ireland in the summer just before his return to the United



States; the title of the address was one which Davitt had used for a speech to an English audience in 1883.

George was well on his way in 1889 to becoming the elder statesman of Land Reform in Europe. An interview in the *Pall Mall Gazette* with Leo Tolstoy sounded this note more clearly than anything else: "In thirty years private property in land will be as much a thing of the past as now is serfdom. England, America and Russia will be the first to solve the problem. . . . Henry George had formulated the next article in the programme of the progressist Liberals of the world."<sup>27</sup>

When the Paris Conference for land reform met in June, that international body elected Henry George its honorary president. As an outgrowth of the conference, about which George had mixed feelings, the Universal Land Federation was organized: George was named world leader. Not himself an active organizer of the new international federation, he was nevertheless informed about its affairs and asked to help create a world-wide list of individuals, organizations, and publications interested in the cause of land and tax reform. After he went back to the British Isles, he returned to America with invitations to visit Australia and New Zealand. His role as an international elder statesman, his world-wide honors, even his influence on political and economic affairs, dwarfed his stature at home.

On his return to New York, he received a fine welcome, but what cheered him most was the news that single tax petitions to Congress were growing steadily. Several large individual subscriptions soon put the *Standard* in good financial condition, and the paper became the hub of the single tax movement. Between George's return from England in the summer and his departure for Australia early in 1890, the *Standard* proclaimed in brief in a box on its front page as a regular feature of the paper, a three-point program for reform:

"The Standard" is an exponent of the principles and a weekly record of important facts affecting social problems and rational politics. It especially advocates the following great reforms:

*THE SINGLE TAX. This means the abolition of all taxes on labor or the products of labor, that is to say, the abolition of all taxes save one tax levied on the value of land irrespective of improvements.*

*FREE TRADE. Not "tariff reform," but real free trade; that is, as perfect freedom of trade with all the world as now exists between the states of our union.*

*BALLOT REFORM. No humbug envelope system; but the real Australia system, the first requisite of which is the exclusive use of elections of official ballots furnished by the state and prepared and cast by the voter in compulsory secrecy.*

Hopes were high that Congress could be influenced. And though *Protection or Free Trade* was finally read into the Congressional Record in 1892, those hopes were to remain largely unfulfilled.

One of George's first articles on his return from England had been devoted to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* and the new Nationalist Clubs that were becoming very popular and very numerous as a result of Bellamy's book, second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its influence upon American social ideas. Like Mrs. Stowe's book, but unlike *Progress and Poverty*, *Looking Backward* was indeed a novel and not a treatise on political economy. Unlike Mrs. Stowe's book, however, it belonged to a particular literary genre of great popularity in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Its utopianism, though similar in some ways to George's own dreams for the perfect and just society, was socialistic and literary or artistic rather than individualistic and economic or pragmatic. *Looking Backward*, George wrote, "is a castle in the air, with clouds for its foundation . . . a popular presentation of the dream of state socialism, and in its failure to indicate any way of 'getting there,' does not differ from the more serious socialistic works which have supplied its suggestion." "Nevertheless," he wrote, "it is doing, and will do, great good." "That it is giving a strong impulse to socialism—the idea of effecting social improvement by government paternalism—is probably true. But socialism is far better than the contented acquiescence in suffering and wrong without thought of improvement in general conditions."<sup>28</sup>

Granting *Looking Backward* its contribution to the general movement for social reform, George and many of his supporters could not accept Bellamy's abridgement of laissez-faire economics. By this time, George had cut himself off almost completely from any truly socialistic thought, but he was still the staunch defender of the downtrodden and would not thwart any

movement that would lessen in any way the suffering of human beings. He was convinced that the social revolution then beginning could not help but accept his principles, his theory, and his remedy as the only means by which its final success could be assured. Clearly never a Marxist, by the last decade of the nineteenth century it would have been difficult for an impartial judge to conclude that George was even in the broadest sense a Christian Socialist. Long right of Morris, George was ideologically not even so far left as Tolstoy, much less the Bellamyites in America or the Fabians in England; but George found great satisfaction in their influence upon socio-economic ideas. Essentially, he had more in common with Emerson than with Charles Fourier, or any of Fourier's American disciples like Horace Greeley. Thomas Jefferson remained his master. George dreamed an American dream in an American tradition.

Before George's departure for Australia in February, 1890, he made a number of lecture tours through the eastern United States, speaking often to single tax clubs. While he had had already the support of William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., in New England, by 1889 the young Hamlin Garland also became active in support of George's program, serving as the president of a single-tax club in Boston. Moreover, Garland's admiration for George the man and for George's ideas was lasting.

Finishing his tour in December, George set his affairs in order and left with his wife and daughters for Australia, going overland to San Francisco via St. Louis, New Mexico, and Los Angeles. Everywhere George was warmly and often enthusiastically received. In San Francisco in early February, he spoke twice to packed houses and "wild applause." Addressing himself to "Justice the Object—Taxation the Means" in Metropolitan Hall, he said:

We call ourselves to-day single tax men. It is only recently, within a few years, that we have adopted that title. It is not a new title; over a hundred years ago there arose in France a school of philosophers and patriots—Quesnay, Turgot, Condorcet, Dupont—the most illustrious men of their time, who advocated, as the cure for all social ills, the *impôt unique*, the single tax.

We here, on this western continent, as the nineteenth century draws to a close, have revived the same name, and we find enormous advantages in it.

We used to be confronted constantly by the question: "Well, after you have divided the land up, how do you propose to keep it divided?" We don't meet that question now. The single tax has, at least, this great merit: it suggests our method; it shows the way we would travel—the simple way of abolishing all taxes, save one tax upon land values.<sup>29</sup>

The address was directed mainly at the fiscal and political sides of George's single tax and was illustrated with biographical reminiscences. Following his usual style, he concluded on a Biblical and religious note.

George's reception and impact in 1890 in the city in which he had written *Progress and Poverty* and in which he had first come into prominence was equaled by his reception and his impact in New Zealand and Australia, if not surpassed. Sir George Grey, who had written glowingly from New Zealand of *Progress and Poverty* when he had first read the Author's Edition which George had sent to him ten years before, was in person all that George had expected. Grey's letters to George and his reply after their brief but extremely warm visit attest to the lasting friendship, the understanding, and the mutual admiration they had for each other and which had been sealed by their meeting: "You have expanded a spark," Grey wrote, "into a blaze of thought and of unselfish conceptions which is spreading to every part, and ennobling countless minds."<sup>30</sup>

In general, the globe-encircling trip was going well. Australia was Mrs. George's birthplace and the destination of George's first voyage from home aboard the *Hindoo* as a young, unknown, and inexperienced cabin boy. Although hectic and poorly organized, the visit stirred their emotions deeply. Coming thirty-five years after George's early adventure, the Australian tour was the high point of the entire voyage. The fact that he was then a world-famous figure only increased the excitement by supplementing private associations with public acclaim.

Leaving Australia, George and his family made their way from India through the Red Sea to Italy, France, and finally England. The visit made clear once and for all, however, that George still stood well with Protestant and radical organizations but that labor and socialist groups and he had drifted far apart. Back in New York in September, he attended the first National Single Tax League of the United States. On September 2nd, just after

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his arrival, George was greeted by thirty-five hundred people and spoke on the question of free trade. The meeting was simultaneously a kind of celebration of George's fifty-first birthday and a welcome-home party.

The end of 1890 was a time for summing up the accomplishments of three decades of writing, speaking, and teaching. In that time, which began with his coming of age, he had grown from the writer of that brotherly millennial letter to his sister to the father of the single tax movement. Emerson's sphinx had been answered many times. Perhaps, he felt, the "promised Millennium" was at least a little nearer than it had been at the beginning of the Civil War.

When George had returned from his round-the-world trip in September, he had planned to do some writing, but lecture tours in New England and Texas took up much of his time. Then came a serious stroke. Though he made a remarkable recovery, the strain and pressure of his busy life were beginning to tell—even on his strong constitution. Well rested by February, when he returned from Bermuda where he had been taken to recuperate, he now had the opportunity to devote himself to the kind of thought that had preceded and accompanied the composition of *Progress and Poverty* in the late 1870's. The political activity that had taken almost all of his time since his entry into the 1886 mayoralty campaign had slipped into the background, and George was in 1890 no longer at the center of labor politics. He began to work on what was intended to be his magnum opus, *The Science of Political Economy*. He felt that the time had now come for a theoretical reclarification of his ideas because so many of his concepts had become clouded in the popular press during the heat of political campaigning.

While much of the remaining six years of George's life was taken up with *A Perplexed Philosopher* and *The Science of Political Economy*—both discussed in the next section of this chapter—his death was to occur in a more public, more spectacular, and more typical way than at the writing desk. In 1897, finally working away full time on his last book, George heard rumors about the possibility of his running for mayor of the soon-to-be-expanded city of Greater New York. Seriously stressing his physical condition and the need for time to complete his book, he did his best to avoid the invitation to be the inde-

pendent candidate for mayor. After he finally had made up his mind to accept, however, none of the medical advice which said that the campaign would be fatal could persuade him not to so engage all his energies.

When he formally accepted the nominations of several political groups and organizations at a large meeting at Cooper Union, he rose to the occasion:

I have not sought this nomination directly or indirectly. It has been repugnant to me. My line lay in a different path, and I hoped to tread it; but I hold with Thomas Jefferson that while a citizen who can afford to should not seek office, no man can ignore the will of those with whom he stands when they have asked him to come to the front and represent a principle.

A little while ago it looked to me at least that the defeat that the trusts, the rings and money power, grasping the vote of the people, had inflicted on William Jennings Bryan (applause) was the defeat of everything for which the fathers had stood, of everything that makes this country so loved by us, so hopeful for the future. It looked to me as though Hamilton had triumphed at last, and that we were fast verging upon a virtual aristocracy and despotism. You ask me to raise the standard again (applause); to stand for that great cause; to stand as Jefferson stood in the civil revolution in 1800. I accept. (Applause. Three cheers for Henry George were called for and given with cries of "And you will be elected, too!")

I believe I shall be elected. (Applause.) I believe, I have always believed, that last year many so-called Democrats fooled with the principles of the Chicago platform, but that there was a power, the power that Jefferson invoked in 1800, that would cast aside like chaff all that encumbered and held it down; that unto the common people, the honest democracy, the democracy that believes that all men are created equal, would come a power that would revivify, not merely this imperial city, not merely the State, not merely the country, but the world. (Vociferous applause.)<sup>31</sup>

The newly organized party in support of George called itself, at his suggestion, "The Party of Thomas Jefferson." Once again it was an intense campaign, with George's friends doing their best to keep his share of the work to a minimum. But rallying the dissident elements to one banner was not an easy task. Three

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other major candidates were in the field, including Seth Low, the reform Republican, of whom George said on the night before his death: "I am not with Low. He is a Republican and is fighting the machine, which is all very good as far as it goes. But he is an aristocratic reformer; I am a democratic reformer. He would help the people; I would help the people to help themselves."<sup>32</sup> Low finished second, ahead of his party's machine-picked candidate.

Five days before the election, after four speeches in widely separated parts of the city, George returned at midnight to party headquarters at the Union Square Hotel. Exhausted, he went to bed only to awake during the early morning hours with a supposed case of indigestion, but he suffered a stroke soon after. Paralyzed but conscious for several hours, he was dead by morning, his final campaign and his last book both unfinished. He had died as he had lived, speaking and writing. The politician and the philosopher had been active to the very end in both of his callings. The writer, the thinker, and the political campaigner had spoken as one in the first of the four speeches he delivered the evening before his death:

What I stand for and what my labor has been, I think you know. I have labored many years to make the great truth known, and they are written down in the books. What I stand for is the principle of true Democracy, the truth that comes from the spirit of the plain people and was given to us and is embodied in the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. The Democracy of Jefferson is simple and good, and sums up the majesty of human rights and boundaries of government by the people. . . .

Slowly but surely the Democracy of Jefferson has been strayed from, has been forgotten by the men who were, by its name, given office and power among the people. Error and wrong have been called by the name of truth, and the harvest of wrong is upon this land. There are bosses and trusts and sumptuary laws. Labor-saving machinery has been turned like captured cannon, against the ranks of labor, until labor is pressed to earth under the burden!

And must no one rise up in the land of liberty when labor must humbly seek, as a boon, the right to labor?<sup>33</sup>

In the days that have come after the Henry George-like New Deal, the current right to labor or right to work and anti-poverty laws, and President Johnson's "Great Society," we may wonder

as much at the language he chose as we may at the ideas. The problems and many of the catch-words are still, after all, the same. "What I stood for," he said that last night with the tone of a Hebrew prophet and a Jeffersonian, "is the equal rights of all men!"

#### IV *The Last Writings of Henry George*

After his reply to Pope Leo and the death of the *Standard*, George's writing oscillated from his books to free-lance journalism and back to his books again. In 1892 he published *A Perplexed Philosopher*, his attack on Herbert Spencer. Returning to *The Science of Political Economy*, which he had set aside for the reply to Leo and for the refutation of Spencer, George developed a large part of that work only to abandon it with the coming of the 1896 presidential election which he covered as a special correspondent and political analyst for the *New York Journal*. His series of articles was climaxed by "Shall the Republic Live?" which was printed the day before the election. After Bryan, whom George had supported and had predicted would win, had in fact lost, he returned to *The Science of Political Economy* until wooed away in order to make his last campaign.

In some ways *A Perplexed Philosopher* is as much a companion to the letter to the Pope as *Protection or Free Trade* is to *Social Problems*. His reply to Pope Leo, which stated George's understanding of the relation of social reform to the Christian ethic, was an attack upon the Pope's reasoning and clericalism, an attack by freedom and liberalism upon restraint and conservatism—enlightened as it may have been. *A Perplexed Philosopher* stated George's understanding of the relation of social reform to materialism. It was an attack upon the "Pope of the Agnostics" and evolutionary thinking, an attack by freedom and liberalism upon license and reaction. The premises and logic of both "popes" were called into question.

In *A Perplexed Philosopher*, George was not interested in debating biological evolution, but he would not tolerate the transfer of Darwinian theories of biological development to social philosophy and social development. The "essential fatalism" of Spencer's philosophy led, in George's mind, to the toleration of any social ill—a reactionary position with which he had no patience.<sup>34</sup>



The quarrel with Spencer had begun long before the 1890's. Spencer was more than a symbol of the enemy: he was the enemy. George and his disciples often quoted Spencer in support of the single tax and of George's general ideas about land. He is quoted in support of the argument in *Progress and Poverty*. Spencer's *Social Statics*, though published in 1850, was reviewed with *Progress and Poverty* in England early in the 1880's because of obvious similarities. But Spencer denied his support in any way, even denying to George face-to-face that the Irish were in the right or at least had a good case. Spencer finally recanted publicly and prepared a new edition of *Social Statics* purged of any suggestion that he had supported radical ideas about land. To George, Spencer had been dishonest as a writer, as a philosopher, and as a man. He had been irresponsible and self-contradictory. And in essence, George had a sound complaint: Spencer's actions had been questionable. He had kept a book in print for forty years without making any attempt to indicate that he no longer entertained some of its major contentions or obvious implications. An uneven attack, *A Perplexed Philosopher* is not to be listed among George's best books, however justified.

Toynbee's very early rejection of George's ideas, Huxley's more recent onslaught in *Nineteenth Century* in 1890, and Spencer's public turnabout made Spencerianism and many late nineteenth-century points of view logical targets for George. He tried his best to define a late eighteenth-century idealism of a Jeffersonian kind while attacking the *Zeitgeist* of the late nineteenth. *A Perplexed Philosopher* is divided into three parts: "Declaration," "Repudiation," and "Recantation." The first two parts have six chapters each; the third, thirteen. A short introduction and a brief conclusion state the "reason for" and the "moral of" the examination. The book is often bad-tempered and sometimes tedious while occasionally brilliant. George was again in the middle. His laissez-faire individualism was informed by the Judeo-Christian ethic whereas essentially Spencer's was not. Spencer, George contended, was clearly materialistic, like the socialists; his laissez-faire social philosophy was that of the jungle, unjust and illogical—reason enough for the rapid rise of socialistic movements for reform that cared more for the progress of the community or social organization than for the survival of the fittest.

Against the "scientific" Spencer, George appeared almost a democratic socialist and certainly a Christian. "In his first book, written when he [Spencer] 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" (274-75). The "Pope of the Agnostics" was "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" (276).

Against the Pope of Rome, George appeared the Christian democrat, a radical and evangelical individualist against socialism and the pious status quo. The open letter to the Pope had been a restatement of his views from one perspective and in opposition to a particular kind of denouncement. *A Perplexed Philosopher* restated clearly George's opinion that private property in land should be abolished, and it also implied strongly that personal income taxes were unfair and unnecessary. It was as much a rejection of materialism as his open letter had been a rejection of clericalism, though it was not so well-presented nor so well-written and even-tempered as the earlier reply of the previous year. George was inclined to be less patient with a man who had apparently retreated from an enlightened social view and who was a materialist than he was with a man who had apparently made an advance of some sort toward an enlightened social view and who was the spiritual leader of millions of Christians. His attitude toward his respective opponents affected the style and the worth of his two books accordingly.

All students of George agree that *A Perplexed Philosopher* does contain one particularly effective, well-written, and well-argued chapter—one capable of standing independent of the book. The chapter is "Compensation," the eleventh in Part III. It is a firm and brilliant restatement of the reasons for the confiscation of private property in land without payment or compensation to the supposed owners. George's supporters in the United States and abroad asked at the time for separate publica-

tion of the chapter in pamphlet form because they thought it so well done as to be helpful in the daily struggle to propagate the ideas of George's total view.

George half regretted writing both *A Perplexed Philosopher* and *The Condition of Labor*. The two polemical replies had cost him time that he thought might have been better spent on *The Science of Political Economy*. Many of his critics, friendly and otherwise, have thought that the posthumous publication of an unfinished work from a dying body and a tired spirit was an unfortunate error. *The Science of Political Economy* should not really be compared without care to *Progress and Poverty*, a literary shot heard round the world. In all fairness it is not a bad book, but only an unfinished and unsettled one that was never destined to receive the undivided attention of its author. Whatever the reason may be for George's unwillingness or inability to work upon his last book as intensely as he had on his master-work, the fact still remains that the final result in each case was as different in kind as the method of composition.

George worked intermittently on the book from 1891 until his death, and its divisions and organization in no way reflect the order in which its various parts were written. *The Science of Political Economy* begins with a general introduction and is followed by five "Grand Divisions" or Books, each with an introduction of its own and various well-indexed chapters: I. "The Meaning of Political Economy"; II. "The Nature of Wealth"; III. "The Production of Wealth"; IV. "The Distribution of Wealth"; and V. "Money—The Medium of Exchange and Measure of Value." According to his eldest son:

The last three books were largely written in the summer of 1897, but were not completed at the time of Mr. George's death; and when the work was published as it had been left by his hand, many critics spoke of the evidences of declining powers in the last three divisions and especially in the broken and even rough places in the part on money. The truth is that "The Science of Political Economy" as posthumously published is the best example that can be found of Henry George's method of work; for the last three divisions or "books" present much of his earlier drafting of the general work. The money division was written in 1894 and 1895, as dates on the rough-draft manuscript and in note-books indicate. The really last work he did was in smooth-

ing and polishing the first two divisions, which Dr. Taylor assured him were equal in force, clearness and finish to his earlier high-water performance of "Progress and Poverty"; and in his opinion his own judgement concurred.<sup>35</sup>

Contemporary reviewers, as well as subsequent students of George's work, did not feel that *The Science of Political Economy* was really a good final statement of his philosophy; but it would have been impossible for George to have surpassed *Progress and Poverty*, especially since he had not altered any of the essential points of view expressed in his younger and more fiery major work. A. T. Hadley in the *Yale Review* more succinctly than anyone else sums up the reactions of those who were unfriendly to George's ideas:

Henry George was a great preacher. *Progress and Poverty* is one of the most eloquent volumes of sermons which has appeared in the English language. But in proportion as George passes from the field of oratory into the field of science, his work becomes less good. He criticises his predecessors with no sparing hand, but he lays himself open to the same kind of criticism in far greater measure than they do. With all its claims of novelty, the book has little which is really new, unless it be a somewhat commonplace metaphysics within which the author tries to frame his economic system. Subtract this, and we have simply a new edition of *Progress and Poverty*, less well written, plus a number of rather disconnected utterances on money and kindred topics, logical enough when the author sticks close to Smith and Mill, and less so in proportion as he departs from those models. For this reason it is quite impossible to review the book *in extenso*. This is not the first time a good preacher has proved himself a poor conversationalist. Those of us who have admired George for his brilliant earlier work and for his unblemished personal character can only regret that this last book was ever written and desire that it may be forgotten as soon as possible.<sup>36</sup>

*The Science of Political Economy* is not a whole book, even less so than *A Perplexed Philosopher*. The faults of George's last work, however, are not those of his book on Spencer. The book is partly autobiographical, partly critical, partly historical, and partly a review of *Progress and Poverty* and its reception by those for and against him. There is little in it that is truly new so far as George's religio-economic thinking is concerned. It is

not the definitive statement of his views that he wished to write, and it suffers from the many interruptions that caused it to be set aside for other matters and events of equal interest to its author during its composition. Nevertheless, it is well argued and well written, deserving the praise that Georgists have given it.

In *The Science of Political Economy*, George exploits the leviathan metaphor of Hobbes and Melville by writing that "the body politic, or Leviathan" of which every citizen is a part, is dependent upon "the body economic, or Greater Leviathan." "This body economic, or Greater Leviathan, always precedes and always underlies the body politic or Leviathan. . . . And from this relation of dependence upon the body economic, the body politic can never become exempt" (27). It was this "Greater Leviathan" that "Saint George" had tried to make fast, if not overpower, with his social and economic theories.

As in all his works, George very effectively in *The Science of Political Economy* stresses man's ability to master his economic difficulties through the power of reason. He refers to man as "the only progressive animal" and emphasizes man's "power of 'thinking things out,' of 'seeing the way through'—the power of tracing causal relations." Typically, he presses his point through a habitual stylistic device—the homely and humorous analogy: "The dog and cow sometimes look wise enough to be meditating on anything. If they really could bother their heads with such matters or express their ideas in speech, they would probably say that such sequences are invariable, and then rest. But man is impelled by his endowment of reason to seek behind fact or cause. For that something cannot come from nothing, that every consequence implies a cause, lies at the very foundation of our perception of causation. To deny or ignore this would be to cease to reason—which we can no more cease in some sort of fashion to do than we can cease to breathe" (56). Here again is seen George's dedication to Jeffersonian and Emersonian modes of thought and expression, the theme of "The Sphinx" poem which he had quoted more than thirty years before, and the compulsion to go "behind fact or cause" which is reminiscent of Melville's deep dive for the "little lower layer." His philosophical linking of the barter in ideas through speech or language with that of goods through money is a fine insight that is

finally developed late in the book. To see the spiritual force behind natural or material objects is to see the economic forces behind politics. As Adam discovered in the beginning, the naming of things properly is important. There is an embryonic esthetic theory in George's elucidation of that well-known American maxim, "money talks." George's definition of money is just that:

*Whatever in any time and place is used as the common medium of exchange is money in that time and place.*

There is no universal money. While the use of money is almost as universal as the use of languages, and it everywhere follows general laws as does the use of languages, yet as we find language differing in time and place, so do we find money differing. In fact, as we shall see, money is in one of its functions a kind of language—the language of value. (494)

In writing about the genesis of *Progress and Poverty*, George recalled that "While in the East [in 1869-70], the contrast of luxury and want that I saw in New York appalled me, and I left for the West feeling that there must be a cause for this, and that if possible I would find out what it was. Turning over the matter in my mind amid pretty constant occupation, I at length found the cause in the treatment of land as property" (201). From 1871 with *Our Land and Land Policy* to 1879 and *Progress and Poverty*, George developed a theory and found a remedy which he still was convinced were right in 1897.

In *The Science of Political Economy*, George repeated and also enlarged upon his theories, offering additional analogies to explain value. He said that to the political economist, land in reality is "not wealth at all" (265). He compared the value attached to land to the value attached to works of art:

The value that attaches to land with the growth of civilization is an example of the same principle which governs in the case of a picture by a Raphael or Rubens, or an Elgin marble. Land, which in the economic sense includes all the natural opportunities of life, has no cost of production. It was here before man came, and will be here, so far as we can see, after he has gone. It is not produced. It was created.

And it was created and still exists in such abundance as even now far to exceed the disposition and power of mankind to use

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it. Land as land, or land generally—the natural element necessary to human life and production—has no more value than air as air. But land in special, that is, land of a particular kind or in a particular locality, may have a value such as that which may attach to a particular wine-glass or a particular picture or statue; a value which unchecked by the possibility of production has no limit except the strength of the desire to possess it. (255)

One can imagine what George's response would have been to the moral of Tolstoy's parable, his famous short story "How Much Land does a Man Need?" had he read it.

Like all of his works, *The Science of Political Economy* shows George's eloquent and deep understanding of the nature of humanity and the progress of civilization—what might be called social history—and his keen insights into the relation of economics to politics. He and his supporters were fond of quoting Macauley's ironic observation that had powerful financial interests decided to block general acceptance of the law of gravitation its truth would still be open to question.

The question that was being posed, however, was the one which George addressed to the readers of the *New York Journal* in November of 1896, "Shall the Republic Live?":

The banks are not really concerned about their legitimate business under any currency. They are struggling for the power of profiting by the issuance of paper money, a function properly and constitutionally belonging to the nation. The railroads are not really concerned about the fifty-cent dollar, either for themselves or their employes. They are concerned about their power of running the Government and making and administering the laws. The trusts and pools and rings are not really concerned about any reduction in the wages of their workmen, but for their own power of robbing the people. The larger business interests have frightened each other, as children do when one says, "Ghost!" Let them frighten no thinking man.<sup>37</sup>

But the economic ghosts of yesterday were no less powerful then than they are today. Bryan lost the election, labor was crucified after a fashion on a cross of gold, and George's question remained unanswered. One would not be far wrong in saying that the ghosts still haunt the politico-economic nightmare that is often America's public opinion life:

Would they [the voters] not expect to have every man who stood prominently for freedom denounced as an Anarchist, a communist, a repudiator, a dishonest person, who wished to cut down just debts? Is not this so now? Would they not expect to hear predictions of the most dire calamity overwhelming the country if the power to rob the masses was lessened ever so little? Has it not been so in every struggle for greater freedom that they can remember or have ever read of?<sup>28</sup>

George's climactic article in his series for the *Journal* demonstrates more clearly than anything he wrote in his later years that he was the same man he had always been, that he had not ceased to fight them with any less zeal than before.

Though George wrote a little peevishly as a disappointed preacher-prophet in *A Perplexed Philosopher* and in *The Science of Political Economy*, he did so characterize his own background as to place himself undeniably in the tradition of the American writer whose Yale College and his Harvard was either before the mast of a sailing vessel or under the masthead of a newspaper. George's voice came straight from the fore-castle and swept aft over the whole length and breadth of the ship of state. His role was that of the prophet Elijah and not of the priest-kings or Ahabs of this world:

What were their training and laborious study worth if it could be thus ignored, and if one who had never seen the inside of a college, except when he had attempted to teach professors the fundamentals of their science, whose education was of the mere common-school branches, whose *alma mater* had been the fore-castle and the printing-office, should be admitted to prove the inconsistency of what they had been teaching as a science? It was not to be thought of. And so while a few of these professional economists, driven to say something about "Progress and Poverty," resorted to misrepresentation, the majority preferred to rely upon their official positions in which they were secure by the interests of the dominant class, and to treat as beneath contempt a book circulating by thousands in the three great English-speaking countries and translated into all the important modern languages. Thus the professors of political economy seemingly rejected the simple teachings of "Progress and Poverty," refrained from meeting with disproof or argument what it had laid down, and treated it with contemptuous silence. (204)

Unfrightened and unmoved by economic ghosts or by silent academic spirits, George had had his say and many had listened.