Biblical Economics

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Biblical Economics
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Introduction: Justice and the Word

This is the fifth edition of Rev. Archer Torrey's study on the land in Biblical economics. This vital pamphlet resurfaces now at a time when the Bible is resurgent in the United States, and around the world. Millions of people are looking to the Bible for guidance, not just in spiritual life but in culture, politics and even science. Torrey's work has special relevance for all who believe — as he did — in the Bible's authority as the direct word of God. However, it also serves as a thoroughly-researched guide to one of the central themes in this collection of stories that has had such a pivotal role in the shaping of Western culture.

Archer Torrey was as uncompromising a "Bible-believing Christian" as any of those who adopt that appellation today. His citing of Eugene Faulstich of the Chronology-History Research Institute as an authority on Old Testament chronology indicates his commitment to literalism. Given this, it is remarkable that Torrey's detailed study yielded an understanding of Biblical economics that is quite at odds with those who believe the scriptures support modern conceptions of exclusive private ownership of land. Torrey's response to them would have been simple. He would have quoted Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Those who claim to own the earth as their private possession are idolaters.

Torrey's essay demonstrates the central importance of the Bible's fundamental message of justice and the land. Torrey refers to the community in times of peaceful prosperity, when it is following the Law, as being "under the Lord". This poetic phrase underscores that economic justice is not a structure to be *imposed* on a society that would otherwise be just a collection of self-interested "economic actors". When a community is "under the Lord" in this sense, justice flows organically from its institutions — and conversely, when the Lord's economic laws are shunned, stability and prosperity are unattainable.

Torrey's patient scholarship offers us a road map through the difficult terrain of the Old Testament story. He shows how clearly the biblical record states that the Levitical land laws were followed — were a vital part of Jewish social order (whether in breach, or observance) through all the years from Moses to Jesus, and beyond. The story tells us in no uncertain

terms that peace and prosperity result when the Bible's economic laws are honored — and disaster follows their abandonment.

The Bible tells us that "The land shall not be sold for ever, for you are strangers and sojourners with Me." Archer Torrey's work shows us how the scripture insists that this principle must be observed now, not in some kingdom-come. It states, in other words, a fundamental principle of human society. Human freedom — including the freedom to worship according to one's conscience — is ultimately impossible if one must pay a private "owner" for access to the land one needs in order to survive.

Archer Torrey proposes that God gave us explicit instructions in the Bible on how to properly arrange human society. This guidebook to those instructions remains timely for all who find in the Bible a pattern for how people can live together in harmony.

— Lindy Davies

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by R. Archer Torrey III

Foreword

At the time the editors of *Land and Liberty* asked me to do an article on Biblical Economics I thought that what the Bible had to say on the subject was very important and had been seriously neglected, but I did not realize there was so much material on the subject! I was taught in graduate school that the law of the jubilee had never been taken seriously, and that was the sum total of information on the subject I got in seminary!

As I began to do the research, I discovered to my own amazement that I had been taught myths in theological school. There is every evidence to indicate that the land laws of Leviticus 25, including the proclamation and observance of the jubilee, were kept for seven centuries, until the time of Omri and Ahab, in Israel, and for another century in Judah. For a long time I shared the Church's habit of seeing this as a trivial issue. Even after I had completed the first part of the research, I was only beginning to see the seriousness of the problem.

I had read Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*, and was convinced of its correctness and of its Biblical orientation. I was aware also that my grandfather, R. A. Torrey, when he was Superintendent of Moody Bible Institute, and just before he published his textbook, *What the Bible Teaches* (which is still widely used), publicly endorsed Henry George's teaching on economics. George was often called "The Prophet of San Francisco." While in his textbooks he sought to maintain a relatively cool and detached attitude, in his sermons one discovers the burning anger at injustice that put him in the same class as Amos, Micah, and Isaiah. Compared to the cautious and noncommittal statements of theologians today, Henry George flames with anger and reminds us that anyone who says poverty is an insoluble problem is blaspheming God by calling God a liar. The Apostle John tells us that anyone who claims to love God and does not love his brother is a liar; and that anyone who claims to love his brother and does not make any effort to meet his brother's material needs is both a liar and a murderer (I John 3.11-18, 4.20). Henry George and Scripture teach the same thing: that the space on the surface of this

globe has been created by God and not by man and any man who does not have any "right" to any space of his own has been robbed, and people who buy and sell space are dealing in stolen goods. Without space of his own, a human being is completely at the mercy of whomever "owns" the space: he must come to him humbly asking for a job and money with which to buy the necessities of life. If he is a slave, he has a right to be fed, sheltered, and clothed until he dies. But if he is a "free" man he is worse off than a slave, because no one is responsible to take care of him. To say that everyone has a right to work, to health care, to this, that, and the other, without at the same time recognizing his right to land, is to declare frankly that he is a slave. The United Nations has published a list of thirty "human rights." But they omit the right to land, which is the basic human right given by God and clearly defined in the Bible. If the right to land were recognized, the other rights would follow automatically and would hardly need to be defined.

This booklet does not contain all that the Bible teaches on the subject of economics. The study goes on and on. But if it can serve to open people's eyes and start them on a study of their own, they will be amazed at the wealth and the consistency of God's teachings on economics.

The Year of Jubilee

This paper will attempt to present the teaching of the Bible with regard to land as well as the evidence given with regard to historical practices. We will take the Biblical account at face value without considering the various theories with regard to the dating of the various documents. Some people would regard such a study to be vitiated by treating later documents as if they were earlier, but the internal evidence strongly indicates that the so-called "later documents" correctly reflect earlier principles. The author is deeply indebted to Eugene Faulstich of the Chronology-History Research Institute for his startling exposé of the critical theories and his evidence that Biblical chronology as given is without error. We shall begin with the clear-cut and well-known legis-

lation on the subject contained in the Pentateuch, and then examine the evidence for actual practice in Israel from the time of Genesis to Nehemiah. The teaching of the prophets will be dealt with in the context of their historical setting.

The laws are stated clearly enough. The basic law is contained in Leviticus 25, and the key principle enunciated is in verse 23: "Land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land belongs to me and you are only strangers and guests. You will allow a right of redemption on all your landed property."* This concept underlies all the Bible's teaching on land. No other teaching is indicated prior to the time of Moses, nor is the teaching anywhere repealed. It is repeated and reinforced by the prophetic teachings.

What makes this study imperative is that where Karl Marx was mistaken in his prophecies, the prophecies of the Bible have been fulfilled.

Underlying the actual legislation in Leviticus is the fact of Israel's invasion of the land of Canaan and the division of the land by lot, as a heritage from the Lord to be passed on to future generations. The modern word "lot" as used for a piece of real estate derives directly from this concept. The Greek and Hebrew words usually translated "inheritance" in the Bible refer to a division made by casting lots. The countless references in the Bible to "inheritance", "lot", "line", "possession", etc., are all against this background: that the lot expresses the will of God who divides equally to all His people.

Once the land has been divided and allotted, however, each portion is to remain within the family or clan that has received it — it may never be alienated. The land never belongs to an individual, but to all future generations of the current possessor's descendants. Therefore, he is not free to give the title of the land to anyone else. Nor is he able, however he may covet his neighbors' land, to accumulate a large estate for himself — except very temporarily.

According to Lev. 25, when a possessor of land wishes to sell it, all he can do is offer a leasehold up until the year of jubilee. There is no special word in the Bible translated either "lease" or "rent", because this is what is meant by the word "sell". The concept of selling land as held in most "civilized"

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*Scriptural quotations will usually be from the Jerusalem Bible or the more traditional King James version, but will occasionally be the author's own paraphrase.

lands today does not exist in the Bible, except as a crime. (There are three exceptions, where a perpetual title was acquired by purchase, and these will be examined.)

Under the normal law, when a price of land is sold (leased) the seller has a right to redeem the land at any time by refunding the balance of the lease. If the seller is unable to redeem the land himself, his next-of-kin may do so. The maximum lease is for 50 years, and all leases expire in the same year, the Year of Jubilee, or the Year of Liberty, or the Year of the Trumpet. The Hebrew word *yobel* is translated both "trumpet" and "jubilee" depending on the context.

The year of the Trumpet is the year after the seventh in a series of sabbatical years. (It actually begins halfway through the 49th year). The sabbatical years are referred to in Ex. 23, Lev. 25, and Deut. 15. In the sabbatical year, the land was to lie fallow, debts (including mortgages) were to be canceled, and slaves and bondservants were to be set free. When land is under mortgage, the mortgage is canceled in the sabbatical year, but if it has been sold in good faith, it does not return until the jubilee unless redeemed by the payment of the remaining rent.

Proclaim Liberty throughout the land...

In the year of the Trumpet, the *shofar* or ram's horn is to be sounded on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement. This gives everyone five days to travel back to his ancestral land to keep the great feast of Tabernacles on the 15th day, when the Jubilee begins. It also gives the previous lessor of the land time to harvest his last crop before returning the land to the original family.*

The word "freedom" has a great fascination for modern man, but few Christians are aware of its meaning in the Bible.

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*The Feast of Tabernacles is the same date as the "August Festival" or "Moon Festival" very widely kept in Far Eastern countries (the eighth month in the Chinese Calendar being the seventh month in the Jewish Calendar.

Lev. 25.10 reads: "Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim freedom throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee to you; each one shall return to his family property and each to his own clan." Apart from land, there is no meaningful freedom. When Abraham Lincoln, in the United States of America, issued the "Emancipation Proclamation" giving freedom to the slaves, he specified that each family was to be given forty acres and a mule. The Civil War was fought, not over a landless "freedom," but over land. Unfortunately both sides stood to benefit from landless laborers who could be exploited by those with land.

Laws Concerning Property

Houses in walled towns are exceptions. The right of redemption is limited to one year, except in the case of Levites*, who have no landed property other than the pasture lands attached to their towns. Levites have an unlimited right of redemption and, if they are unable to redeem a house, it returns in the year of liberty.

Leviticus 27 elaborates the law with regard to property donated to God (i.e. for the use of the Temple). Its value is computed according to the number of years until the jubilee. However, if the owner, instead of exercising his right of redemption, should transfer it to another party, when the jubilee comes, it will return not to him but to the Temple. If a man dedicates a leased field to the Lord, it returns to the original owner (or his heirs) in the jubilee.

Deuteronomy adds nothing to Leviticus, but stresses the sabbatical year and the cancellation of debts, along with a solemn command not to covet another's fields (5:21). In time, the coveting of other men's lands and the seizing of them by foreclosing of mortgages became a serious abuse which would only be justified by appealing from the laws of the Bible to the laws of Baal. There are further references to the sanctity of boundary markers and subsidiary issues. Deuteronomy, however, allows a number of exceptions in dealing with non-Israelites, and the three cases, referred to above, of land being

*The Levites — the tribe of Levi — were responsible for maintaining and carrying out religious functions. Their duties precluded full-time farming. But because all had an equal right to the land, the custom of tithing was instituted as an indemnity for the lands that would otherwise have gone to them. — L.D.

bought in perpetuity all happen to involve purchase from non-Israelites. In each case, however, it was not a private transaction but involved the approval of the entire tribe from whom the title was obtained. All other titles were obtained directly from the Lord by the casting of lots on land taken in war under the divine mandate to possess and divide the land of Canaan.

The three exceptions are as follows. Gen. 23: Abraham buys a burial place for a perpetual possession from the Hittites. Presumably, this was a valid sale under Hittite law. The ruling body of the Hittite people witnessed the transaction and approved. Gen. 33: Jacob buys a lot on which to build an altar, from the Shechemites. This transaction is referred to again in Josh. 24:32 and John 4:5. It was purchased from the whole tribe, not from any private individual. Finally, in 2 Samuel 24 and in 1 Chr. 21, we have the account of David buying a threshing floor from the chief (Araunah, or Oman appears to be a title, not a man's name) of the Jebusites.

A fourth case is that of Omri (I Kg 16) buying the hill of Samaria from a private individual. But, as we shall see, Omri was the revolutionary or usurper who introduced the Baal land-laws into Israel, and it is recorded of him that "he did what is displeasing to the Lord."

Mishpat: The Laws in Practice

We come now to the question: "Were these laws enforced?" If not, what other laws were accepted? In the absence of specific references to the jubilee, the trumpet or the year of liberty, it has been supposed by many that some other system was in force. Even this argument from silence, weak as it is, breaks down when we recall that the expression "proclaim liberty" is used.

Actually, very few of the many laws in the Pentateuch are referred to again in detail, but we are told frequently whether the "the laws of the Lord", or the "covenant of the Lord" was kept or violated. We are not told that the laws were ever repealed or other laws enacted prior to the time of Omri, except for the specific case of "the sin of Jereboam, the son of Nebat", which consisted in making golden calves in Bethel and Dan, thus leading the people into idolatry and schism and weakening the authority of the Lord, so that the way was paved for the introduction of Baalism and the total rejection of

the laws of the Lord, in the Northern Kingdom.

There is no evidence that Jereboam repealed the civil system and, if he did, there are no clues to indicate what system he substituted for it. The prophets of Israel (the Northern Kingdom), Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea, all assume that Israel is still under the Lord. They see the problem not simply as that of the golden calves but the total abandonment of the Lord for the landlords' god, Baal, introduced by Omri and Ahab. It was this constitutional change under Omri that gave rise to the great prophetic movement which provides the bulk of the material in the Old Testament.

With this in mind, let us go through the Bible and find the references to land laws and see what they indicate with regard to the validity of the actual legislation set forth in the Books of Moses. The very first reference is in the book of Numbers. It deals with a case where a man had only daughters and his fellow clansmen were afraid that the land would pass to their husbands' clans in the year of liberty (Num. 36). Moses ruled that the girls must marry within their father's tribe and that the inheritance could not be allowed to pass to another tribe. This case is referred to also in chapter 27, but the specific reference to the jubilee is in 36.

Within the same year, the people crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land. The first fruits of the conquest was the city of Jericho, and it was ceremonially dedicated to the Lord. Joshua 6 contains the account, which is significant for its use of the word *Yobel*. There are two words translated "trumpet" in English. The word *shofar*, for the ram's horn, is used 13 tunes in the account, and the word *yobel* five times. This was the first jubilee, the liberating of the land from the Canaanites and the beginning of its distribution to the Israelites.

Judges 11:2 — Jephthan, an illegitimate son, is prevented by action of the entire clan from receiving any portion of the clan's inheritance. This supports the picture of the division of land into clan allotments as referred to frequently in Numbers and Joshua.

Judges 21:24 : "The people returned, each to his own inheritance." It appears that after the lapse of some 250 years, no significant alienations of land occurred, or, if it had, that the jubilees had been declared and enforced. This is the language of Lev 25:10.

The story of Ruth takes place in the time of the Judges, two

generations before the time of Samuel. Here a land inheritance plays a key role in the romance. Apparently, before Elimelech left Bethlehem for Moab, he sold (leased) his famine-stricken acres for whatever he could get. Ten years later his wife Naomi returns to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law Ruth, but husband and sons are dead. If she lives long enough, Naomi will get the land back in the jubilee — or, if she dies and Ruth has married within the tribe of Judah, Ruth's heirs will be able to claim it. The only right Naomi can exercise prior to the jubilee is the right of redemption. Since, due to her extreme poverty, she cannot redeem the land, she offers to "sell" it (that is, to transfer the lease) to the next-of-kin, who has the right of redemption. But she makes a condition: she will not give this right of redemption to the next-of-kin unless he is also willing to act as the brother of the deceased and marry the widow to raise up progeny for him. Thus the land will revert, in the jubilee, to the eldest son of Ruth and her husband, who will be counted as the grandson of Elimelech. The conditions Naomi lays down are unacceptable to the next-of-kin and he transfers his right to Boaz, who is next in line and cheerfully ready to redeem the property and marry Ruth. The entire affair is premised on the legal code of Leviticus.

Ruth gleaning in the field of Boaz

The next specific reference to land is in I Sam. 8:10 ff. Here the prophet Samuel, a bitter opponent of the monarchy, warns the people of what will happen if they insist on having a king. He says that "the manner of the king" will be land seizures in the style of the neighboring countries. The word "manner" translates into the Hebrew "mishpat", which may also be rendered "rights", or "customs" as well as its more usual translation "judgment". It is used equally of customs established by Israelite (divine) law and the "customs of the heathen", which is what is in view here; the people have demanded of Samuel, "Give us a king to rule over us like the other nations", and the Lord replies to Samuel: "they have rejected me from ruling over them... only you must warn them solemnly and instruct them in the customs of the king who is to rule over them."

Samuel closes his warning against the violation of the ancient land laws — which the monarchy will certainly introduce — with the words: "When that day comes, you will cry out on account of the king you have chosen for yourselves, but on that day, God will not answer you. The prophetic writer adds: "The people refused to listen to the words of Samuel. They said, 'No! We want a king... like the other nations.'"

The "rights", then, that the king will claim, following the custom of other nations, will include: "He will take the best of your fields, of your vineyards and olive groves and give them to his officials." There is nothing in the record, however, to indicate that Saul, the king then elected, did anything of this sort, but we have the following interesting words of Saul himself, in I Sam 22: "Listen, men of Benjamin... is the son of Jesse ready to give you all fields and vineyards... that you all conspire against me?" This suggests that, although Saul has not followed the pagan custom, he suspects Ben-Jesse of bribing support with such promises. It is not clear, however, whether the fields and vineyards are to be seized from citizens of Israel and given to his officials, as Samuel had threatened, or whether they are going to be from land taken in war.

The Kings

In the wars of Saul and, later, David, land was taken from the Philistines, Amalekites, and other Canaanites. This land had been given to Israel by God, but the Israelites had not made good their claim and it had never been included in the original allotments, as is seen from the accounts in Joshua and Judges. If, at a later time, these lands were conquered, the title might well pass to the crown and, by assignment, to various officials. In this way, both Saul and David undoubtedly acquired considerable holdings. David's many wars, indeed, would provide sufficient opportunity to legitimately* amass considerable land.

Actually, David's conquests extended beyond these limits, and much of what he seized would come under the law for booty of war, as given in Numbers 31: half to those who fight and half to the rest of the community. In I Sam 30, we find

*"Legitimately", in this case, refers to the divine mandate enunciated in Num 13:1: "this land of Canaan which I am giving to the sons of Israel", described in v.21 as "from the Wilderness of Zin to Rehob, the Pass of Hamath".

David enunciating a variant on the same principle and establishing it as law: "As the share is of him who goes down to battle, so is the share of him who stays by the baggage:" It was on this same occasion that David sent proportionate shares of the booty to the elders of Judah in the towns of the Negeb where the raiding and fighting had been taking place.

At least one considerable estate came to David by way of the old law of inheritance. When one of the Calebites named Nabal (who owned 3,000 sheep and 1,000 goats) died without heirs, David married his widow, and the inheritance passed to him under the legislation that was made for Zelophedad's daughters, referred to in Num 36. Since the clan of Caleb, to which Nabal belonged, was also of the tribe of Judah, his land could be transferred to David's clan through his widow and their children.

1 Chr 27:25 lists David's crown estates, or rather, the estate managers, but leaves unanswered the question as to their exact locations or how they were acquired. He had cattle in pasture at Sharon, but this is not to say that he owned land in Sharon, which belonged to Manasseh, not Judah. There is nothing to indicate that he acquired any of his land by speculation, mortgage, or other practices forbidden by the law. It remained for some of his successors to introduce such violations of the law of the Lord.

After the death of Saul, the question of what to do with his clan heritage arose. Pagan custom would decree the wiping out of his descendants as potential claimants to the throne, and confiscating their estates — but in 2 Sam 9 we find the account of how David restored all the land of Saul to his one remaining descendant, Meribaal, and kept the latter at the palace while a steward, Ziba, managed the estate. Later, Ziba accused Meribaal of plotting to regain the crown. David, deceived by what was a very likely story, gave the estate to Ziba. When, later, David found that he had been deceived, he dared not renege on his oath, so he compromised by dividing the estate between Meribaal and Ziba. There is no record of the extent of this estate or whether it included, besides the clan holdings, any lands seized as booty of war. (All but one of the adult males of the clan had been wiped out in the last disastrous battle and the subsequent struggle for the crown.)

During the reign of David, one land case is recorded as coming to the king's attention (2 Sam. 14). A woman of Tekoa

comes before the king and explains that her husband is dead and that one of her two sons killed the other in a brawl. Now the clan members are demanding the execution of the living son, which will leave her husband without an heir. She is, actually, more concerned, in this case, with preserving the name and posterity (she uses the word "remnant") of her husband than with the title to the land. The king rules in her favor.

Solomon, of course, was famous for his great wealth, but it seems to have been derived from tribute paid by areas conquered by his father, David, and from various forms of trade, including the munitions trade (chariots and horses). There is no indication that he seized anyone's land, as Samuel had predicted, and the rebellion under Rehoboam seems to be directed more against burdensome taxation, and forced labor on grandiose construction projects, than with any injustices with regard to land (1 Kg 12: 2 Chr 10). On the other hand, we are told (1 Kg 4:25) "Judah and Israel lived in security, each man under his vine and his fig tree", a common phrase for one's own inheritance.

A House Divided

It was for another king, the notorious Ahab, to fulfill the dire warnings of Samuel and revise the land-laws, earning for himself the reputation of being the worst king in the history of the country. Before Ahab's time, a succession of fairly decent kings had managed to keep the laws of the Lord and enforce them. Solomon's dedication of the Temple in the 12th year of his reign, 52 years after David's accession to the throne of Judah in Hebron and possibly just 50 years after David's acknowledgment by the men of Israel, has all the marks of a jubilee. It is kept on the feast of Tabernacles and ends with the people being sent back to their homes with the king's blessing, "joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people" (1 Kg 8:66). The Chronicler notes: "Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt." The Temple had actually been completed eleven months earlier, but Solomon delayed the dedication to make it coincide with the celebration of the feast of Tabernacles.

The next jubilee would have been during the reign of Asa, and although we are told nothing very complimentary about his father and grandfather, we are told that Asa renewed the

covenant, urging the people of Judah to observe the law and commandment (2 Chr 14 and 15), and that they pledged their oath, after a series of reforms, "with shouts to the sound of trumpet and horn." Asa had a very long reign, as did his son, Jehoshaphat, and the next jubilee would have been due in Jehoshaphat's reign, which came in Judah after Omri and Ahab had begun their work of introducing Baalism and wiping out the religion and laws of the Lord in the Northern Kingdom. We find that Jehoshaphat, under the influence of the prophet Elijah, is consistently opposed to Baalism. He sends officials around the towns of Judah to teach the laws of the Lord (2 Chr 17) and, later, (2 Chr 19) reforms the judicial system. 2 Kings 3 makes it clear that he was influenced by and had the approval of the prophet Elisha. There is no reason to suppose that he failed to proclaim either sabbatical years or jubilees as they fell due, especially in view of his concern for law and judgment.

As for the Northern Kingdom, Israel, sabbatical years and jubilees and the entire Mosaic system were now abolished. The Phoenician system, sanctified by the worship of Baal, was instituted. The changes were first introduced by Omri, who seized the throne of Israel in the thirty-first year of Asa's reign in Judah. But it was Jezebel, the daughter of Omri's ally, the Phoenician Ithbaal, who married Omri's son, Ahab, who seriously set about not merely introducing the Phoenician system but wiping out every trace of the Mosaic system.

Of Ahab we are told (1 Kg 16): "Ahab, son of Omri, did what was displeasing to the Lord, and was worse than all of his predecessors. The least that he did was to follow the sinful example of Jereboam the son of Nebat (idolatry and schism). He married Jezebel, the daughter of Ithbaal, king of the Sidonians, and then proceeded to serve Baal and worship him... and committed other crimes as well, provoking the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, more than all the kings of Israel who were his predecessors." (The Jerusalem Bible adds this footnote: "Ithbaal was a priest of Astarte who seized power in Tyre at the same time as Omri in Israel; the two usurpers came to terms and sealed their alliance by a family marriage. The effects on the religion of Israel were to be increasingly felt throughout the reign of Ahab.")

Ithbaal's immediate successors established the colony of Carthage in North Africa. It was from Carthage, after the

Punic Wars, that the Phoenician (Baalistic) land laws were eventually adopted by Rome — whence they spread to Europe, Britain, and the western world, Actually, the Phoenician system did not originate with Ithbaal, but was the same system which so polluted the land of Canaan that God ordered the Israelites to wipe it out (2 Kg 17:8, Jer 2:7f, Ex 23:24, Deut 9:5, 18:12, Hos. Ll:lf, etc.)

Naboth's Vineyard

Omri came to power 125 years after David's accession, and his line came to an end just 50 years later with the execution of his daughter, Athaliah, who was queen in Jerusalem. But the laws which Omri introduced and which his son Ahab and daughter-in-law Jezebel enforced continued to compete with the law of the Lord until finally the law of the Lord was almost forgotten — and Israel was wiped out as a nation.

Micah, the eighth-century prophet, speaking shortly before the fall of Samaria, when the Southern Kingdom, Judah, was also deeply dyed with the land lust of the Phoenicians, said, (Mic. 6.16) "For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation..." This is elaborated in 2:2: "They covet fields and take them by violence: and houses and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." This describes Ahab.

The episode of Naboth's Vineyard is the central fact given for Ahab's reign, and the specific reason given by the prophet (1 Kg 21:19) for the destruction of the entire dynasty of Omri. It involves Ahab's greed for land and Jezebel's application of Phoenician (Baalistic) law to Israel.

Ahab wanted to buy or exchange Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth pointed out that, under the law of the Lord he was forbidden to alienate the heritage of his clan. Ahab, still an Israelite at heart and half a believer in the Lord, hesitated to act. Under the Phoenician system, however, this was a ridiculous position. Moreover, Naboth's refusal to accede to the

King's reasonable request (under the Baal system) was *lese majeste*. Jezebel said to Ahab: "Aren't you the king of Israel? I will get it for you myself." She proceeded to have Naboth condemned in a public trial for blasphemy against God and the king. Certainly, it was blasphemy against Baal to assert right or duties given by the Lord (Yahweh), and it was blasphemy against the king to assert that he was not free to enforce the Phoenician system, which treats land as a commodity and not as a heritage.

Baal — God of Landlords

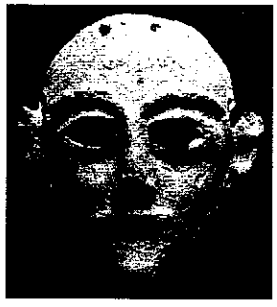
The concept of "heritage" is important: it means that the land is God's property. The possessor is given the use of the land by God on the understanding that he must pass it on to his descendants. Naboth's reply to Ahab, "the Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors!" is, indeed, under the laws of Omri, blasphemy against God (Baal) and king. Naboth and his heirs were executed and the land reverted to the crown, but not without an immediate condemnation by the fierce prophet Elijah, who was sent to meet the king as the latter was in the act of taking possession of Naboth's land. Elijah pronounced God's sentence of death on Ahab, Jezebel, and every male descendant of his line. The episode is referred to again in 1 Kg 22.38, with the account of Ahab's death, again in 2 Kg 9.7-10 when God's commission to wipe out the house of Ahab is given, and again in 9.26 when Jehu killed Ahab's son, Joram, and threw his body onto Naboth's field.

The prophet's word on Ahab, in 1 Kg 21, given at the end of the account of the Naboth episode, was "Indeed there never was anyone like Ahab for double-dealing and for doing what is displeasing to the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the most abominable way, adhering to idols, just as the Amorites used to do whom the Lord had dispossessed for the children of Israel." Here the idolatry (Baal-worship) of the Amorites is clearly put in the context of the land issue.

The prophet Elijah had received a commission from the Lord to anoint Jehu king and this commission was passed on to his successor, Elisha (2 Kg 9). Not only did Jehu make a clean sweep of Ahab's dynasty, but he also, by feigning devotion to Baalism, wiped out all the devotees of Baal, not just the prophets and priests, but all the worshippers. This effectively broke the back of any landlord opposition to the enforcement

of the laws of the Lord.

There was one woman of Omri's line, his daughter, Athaliah, who was not killed in Jehu's revolution. She continued to support the landlord movement in Judah. The taste for power and luxurious living, which had been introduced into both kingdoms by this family, did not die easily.



Mask of Baal, ca. 1300 BC

Elijah the prophet dealt only with Ahab and his son, Ahaziah. His successor, Elisha, headed the opposition to the Baal movement during the reigns of Ahab's second son, Joram (who succeeded Ahaziah), the reformer, Jehu, and Jehu's son Jehoahaz and grandson Joash. During the time of Elisha, one land case is recorded, but the king's name is not given. Presumably it was Jehu or one of his successors. The account is given in 2 Kg 8.6. The account is of a Shunamite woman whose son had been raised from the dead and who had been warned by Elisha of a famine and advised to leave the country. She was gone seven years, and when she returned she found that her land had been confiscated. We are not told by whom or on what pretext. It may be that the influence of the laws of Omri made it impossible for her to receive justice in the lower courts. She appealed to the king and the king, influenced by the prophet Elisha, ordered her land to be restored to her together with the revenues for the time she was away. This would indicate that she had not, as Naomi and Elimelech had done, leased her land, but had intended that it should lie fallow. The king's order that she should be given the revenue from the land indicates that this was not a case of someone refusing the right of redemption (a right unique to the laws of the Lord). Had this been a case of redemption, the revenues up to the time of redemption would have belonged to the lease-holder. The land had been seized illegally.

Athaliah

In the meantime, Ahab's sister, Athaliah, who had survived Jehu's purge, had married king Jehoram of Judah and was obviously the main source from which the "Laws of Omri and the Practices of the House of Ahab," referred to by the prophet Micah, entered into the life-stream of the nation of

Judah. Up until now, under the two long and just reigns of Asa and Jehoshaphat, the laws of the Lord have been taught and enforced in Judah. But now, in Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, we meet a man who was a fair match for his wife, a woman as ruthless as her more famous sister-in-law, Jezebel. As soon as Jehoram had secured his own position as king (2 Chr 21) he murdered his six brothers, and some officials of Israel, too (members of the embassy, possibly).

This Jehoram of Judah (not to be confused with his contemporary, Ahab's son, Jehoram of Israel) was succeeded by his and Ahaliah's son Ahaziah. Their daughter, Ahaziah's sister, Josheba, married Jehoida, the priest of the Lord, although the rest of the family were giving their support to Mattan and his temple of Baal. Ahaziah "followed the example of the House of Ahab, since his mother gave him wicked advice... he also put their counsel into practice (2 Chr 22)," but he was killed the same year, getting caught in Jehu's revolution when he went to visit his cousin Jehoram of Israel.

Athaliah was determined that Jehu's reform not spread to Judah, and she had the entire royal family, including her own children, liquidated, except for Ahaziah's infant son who was rescued by Ahaziah's sister, Josheba, Jehoida's wife. Athaliah was not aware that one infant remained, secreted in the Temple. His name was Joash. For eight years, Athaliah ruled the country, but when Joash was eight years old, Jehoida the priest very skillfully and carefully arranged a *coup d'etat* and proclaimed Joash king before the people. He crowned him, anointed him, and "imposed the law on him" (Cf. Deut. 17.18: the king is required to write out a copy of the Law of the Lord in his own hand). The people had acclaimed the king before Athaliah knew what had happened and she was put to death when she attempted to interfere. Jehoida "made a covenant between the king and all the people, by which they undertook to be the people of the Lord. All the people then went to the temple of Baal and demolished it... and killed Mattan, priest of Baal... then taking the commanders

The death of Athalia

of hundreds, the notables, those holding public positions, and all the country people, he escorted the king down from the Temple of the Lord... and seated the king on the royal throne. All the country people were delighted, and the city made no move." (2 Kg 11 and 2 Chr 23). 2 Chr. 24.15 records that Jehoida's influence was so great and so greatly appreciated that he was buried among the kings when he died at the age of 130. He would have been past 90 when he put Joash on the throne, as he lived almost to the end of Joash's reign.

The Rich and the Poor

The two references to the "country people," or "people of the land," in the account of Jehoida's coup, are the first in a series of such references in the historical books. This is a new class that has arisen, and their political power is shown by the role they played in this coup. It is they, rather than the city (which "made no move"), who supported the reforms. This new class appears to be in opposition to the sophisticated luxury-loving urban classes who are condemned increasingly by the prophets from this time onward. They would include those who have lost their lands under the Phoenician system and have now become tenants on their own lands, people whose only hope is that the king will declare the sabbatical year for the canceling of mortgages and the jubilee for the return to one's own inheritance. As time goes on, it becomes clear that they distrust any but the House of David and become increasingly and fanatically loyal to the royal house of Judah, to their own undoing; for the house of Judah eventually became as corrupt as the successive dynasties of Israel.

Although Jehu's revolution in Israel had liquidated one set of landlords, the taste for luxury, which Omri's system had so stimulated, revived in full force during the long and (superficially) prosperous reign of Jereboam II, Jehu's fourth-generation descendant. As predicted (2 Kg 10:30), he was also the last of Jehu's line.

Every aspect of the life of the upper classes — their ivory houses, their drinking parties, their overeating, their love of entertainment and music, and the ruthless exploitation of the poor that made it all possible — is condemned by the farmer-prophet Amos in some of the most scathing language in the Bible. Amos was the first of the writing prophets, but he was followed by a brilliant succession, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah,

Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

Amos condemned the land-hungry real estate speculators as men so eager for land that they were "panting after the dust on the heads of the poor."* He warns of either land reform or foreign invasion and makes it clear they can have their choice. He says (5:11) "Forasmuch therefore as your treading is on the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards but ye shall not drink wine of them... they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate (from their rights)... wherefore establish justice in the gate, it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious." (As the city gate square was the place of judgment, the word "gate" in the Bible has the same meaning as the modern word "court.")

What rights did the poor have, when they came to the courts for justice? The law of the Lord gives the poor three basic rights: the right of redemption on the land, the right to return to his land in the jubilee if not previously redeemed, and the right to have his debts canceled in the sabbatical year. Obviously, the rejection of these rights was the foundation for the luxury of Samaria.

Although there was no temple of Baal or prophet of Baal at this time, the royal temple at Bethel and its venal high priest Amaziah supported the system completely, and Amos was warned to prophesy in Judah where he could make more money as a prophet in his style. Amos replied that he was not a professional prophet; he wasn't in this thing for money, but was simply obeying the word of the Lord. Then (7:17) he warned Amaziah that when the land reform did come (presumably at the hands of invaders from a foreign country) Amaziah's land would be divided by line, and all Israel would go into captivity.

In chapter 8, there are further condemnations of the rich who "swallow up the needy and make the poor of the land to fail." It is clear that the gap between the rich and the poor is growing and, judging from the messages of Amos' successors, it continued to grow until the end, for no prophet was ever

*They didn't just take the poor man's inheritance out from under his feet (cf. Isaiah's expression, "until there is nowhere to stand": Is. 5:8) but they want even the dust on top of their heads!

able to bring the landlords, merchants, grafters, or corrupt officials to repentance. Moses had promised that if the worship of the Lord in the three great feasts of redemption, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles, were kept faithfully, "no man will covet your land" (Ex. 34:24); but the feasts and the reading of the law, much less the execution of the law, were now a thing of the past, having been replaced by the libidinous worship of the Amorite gods.

Altogether there are at least 144 direct references to economic poverty, over 26 to oppression and exploitation, with one word used interchangeably for "poor" and "meek." We must bear this in mind when we read Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This can equally well be translated, "Blessed are the oppressed, for they shall receive their land back as their inheritance." This was very disturbing to the landlords who held power in Jesus' time under the Roman law which, by that time, had been changed to agree with the Phoenician law.

The Prophets

The luxurious reign of Jereboam II, based on the exploitation of the poor through the adoption of the Baal land-laws and the rejection of the Mosaic laws, brought forth more protests than at any other time in the history of Israel. Following after Amos, the protests continued with Jonah, Obadiah, Micah, Joel, and, the greatest of the period, Isaiah. After the death of Hezekiah, the Baal forces wielded unchallenged power in Judah for 70 years, until the reforms under Josiah, which came too late to save the country. Isaiah and his disciples were forced underground (accounting for the radical change in style in the middle of Isaiah's written works) and Isaiah was finally killed by order of King Manasseh, one of the wickedest and longest-reigning rulers in history.

In each of the prophets we find protests against the violation of the land laws and warnings of the disastrous consequences, both natural and supernatural (e.g. plagues of locusts, famines, floods).

Hosea writes, "She does not know it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal. Therefore I will take back my grain at harvest time and my new wine in its season (2.8f)" and "The Lord has a case against the inhabitants of the land,

because there is no faithfulness or kindness or knowledge of God in the land. There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing, adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed (This has always been the history of those countries that reject the Bible's laws on land, from ancient Israel to modern Ireland.) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being my priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children. (4:1-6)" and "The princes of Judah have become like those who move a boundary; on them I will pour out my wrath like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgment, because he was determined to follow men's command. (5.10f)" Most of Hosea deals with the false idea that prosperity comes from following Baal, and warnings against the destruction that Jehovah will send on the land until it repents and returns to himself.

David and Isaiah

Leaving Hosea and turning to Joel, we find this book is primarily concerned with terrible plagues that God is sending as punishment, and the prophet calls for the trumpet to be sounded and a fast and repentance to be proclaimed. This may be a reference to the jubilee. The jubilee trumpet was blown on the Day of Atonement, which was a day of solemn fasting. The language of Joel 2:1 and 15 is the same as Lev. 25:9 which refers to the trumpet of the jubilee (the "trumpet year"). Joel also looks beyond the time of Jereboam and Hezekiah to the dividing of the land by the heathen (3:2) and promises that God will, in tune, restore the land to a penitent people.

Obadiah's short prophecy is a condemnation of Edom for trying to take advantage of Judah's defeat in war and get some of her land: "On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, and foreigners entered his gate and cast lots for Jerusalem — you, too, were as one of them." (v.ll) He assures Judah that the land will be restored: "The house of Jacob will possess their possessions... and those of the Negev will possess the moun-

tain of Esau, and those of the Shephelah the Philistine plain; also, they will possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead... and the exiles of Jerusalem... will possess the cities of the Negev (v.17-20)." This prophecy is being fulfilled in the latter half of the 20th century!

Micah is very specific in stating what laws of Jehovah have been violated: "They covet fields and then seize them, and houses and take them away. They rob a man and his house, a man and his inheritance... on that day, they will take up against you a taunt-saying... 'to the apostate he apportions our fields.' Therefore you will have no one stretching a measuring line for you by lot in the assembly of the Lord... The women of my people you evict, each one from her pleasant house." (2:2-9) The entire book deals with the economic injustices. In chapter 6, at verse 16, he makes it clear that it is the rejection of Jehovah's laws and the change made at the time of Omri and Ahab that is the root of the problem: "The statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab are observed; and in their devices you walk. Therefore I will give you up for destruction."

The prophet Isaiah preached over a longer period of time than any of his contemporaries and, although several kings felt obliged to treat him with respect, it was not until Hezekiah that any serious effort was made to apply his teachings. His book begins with a sweeping condemnation of the corruption and violence, injustice and oppression that characterized the period immediately preceding Hezekiah's reign, and alternates warnings of punishment with promises of blessing for repentance. A famous passage reads, "The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people, 'It is you who have devoured the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people, and grinding the face of the poor?'" (3.14f). But the most dramatic line is, "Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room (not even standing room), so that you squat alone in the midst of the land! (5:8)." (See also 10:1-2.)

After Hezekiah came to the throne he instituted reforms under the guidance of the great prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah is remembered today more for his amazing prophecies of the Messiah, of Christ, and we often forget that he was a practical reformer and counselor to the kings of Israel, especially Ahaz and Hezekiah.)

Even his prophecies of the coming Christ had an economic reference. Is. 61.1-2 says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted... to proclaim the favorable (i.e. acceptable, voluntary) year of the Lord." (This is the NAS Version. The King James had "meek" for "afflicted," the New Testament, where this is quoted by Christ, himself, has "poor.") The reference to the "year of the Lord," is to the Jubilee, the returning of land to the original "inheritors."

Isaiah had already been prophesying for more than 20 years when Hezekiah came to the throne at age 25, and Hezekiah immediately began reforms. In his first year he restored the worship of Jehovah, cleansing and reconsecrating the temple and making his opposition to Baal clear. This is recorded in great detail in 2 Chr. 29, 30, and 31. Hezekiah the king became strong and when Assyria took Samaria captive, he was able to maintain a relatively independent status for Judah, but about twelve years after the reforms in the temple, Isaiah warned him against his self-confidence in his preparations to withstand a siege (ch. 22), and predicted that a day was coming when the land (Edom's, actually) would be redistributed — to the wild beasts! (ch.34). Then Hezekiah became sick and Isaiah warned him that he would die, but God had pity on him, healed him and gave him another fifteen years. Two years later, the Assyrians returned, besieging Jerusalem. All the country people fled to the city. Hezekiah realized that there was nothing he could do. The Assyrians counted on serious discontent among the oppressed elements of the nation, knowing that the formal reforms had not brought about real deliverance for the poor. We know this to be a fact from the writings of Isaiah as well as his contemporaries throughout this period. 2 Chr. 31.1 probably refers to Hezekiah's 16th year. The dramatic account of the siege, the offer by the Assyrians of land reform and resettlement on good farming land, and God's reply through the prophet Isaiah, as well as Hezekiah's humbling of himself before Jehovah, is found in 2 Chr. 32, 2 Kings 18 and 19, and Isaiah 36 and 37. It is probable that Is. 29, 30, 31 and 32 were all given at this time, as well as Ps. 44, 73.

God's reply through Isaiah is one of the most important evidences of the fact that the land laws of Leviticus were still considered to be in force under the Jehovah party's reforms. 2 Kg. 19:29 calls for a jubilee year to be kept. The jubilee always

came in the year after the seventh sabbatical year, causing two sabbatical years to be kept in succession, the 49th and the 50th (Lev. 25:8-13). We may assume that Hezekiah did as he was told, but the actual deliverance by a miraculous intervention of God came the very night that the king received Isaiah's message and (presumably) resolved to act upon it. 2 Chronicles records that this was followed by great prosperity. As far as we can ascertain, this was the last jubilee before the exile. The next jubilee should have been during the reign of Manasseh, but as soon as Hezekiah died and his eight-year-old son became king, the Baal party seized power and continued in power for 70 years, as they had been under Ahaz, Hezekiah's father.

Eighty-one years after Hezekiah's jubilee, Josiah the king, at the age of 26 (his 18th as king) broke the power of the Baal party and instituted sweeping reforms. There is no clear reference to any sort of economic reforms, and we find Jeremiah the prophet at the same time saying, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.' For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow,* and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal... and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered to do all these abominations?' Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?" (Jer. 7:4-11). The complete return to oppression as usual on the death of Josiah gives reason to suppose that the Baal party were still actually in power, at least to the extent of limiting the reform to superficial formalities.

Only one powerful family backed Jeremiah during his lifetime and, while they could prevent his enemies from taking his life, they were not able to bring about any meaningful canceling of debts. A remarkable episode took place when the

*These are the ones who were most likely to be cheated out of their land.

Babylonian army first besieged Jerusalem. Apparently, Hezekiah's proclamation of the Jubilee and the sudden retreat of the Assyrian army were still remembered. Zedekiah, the king, proclaimed a sabbatical year, with the cancellation of all debts and the freeing of all slaves. The Babylonian army withdrew! But the king and his advisors decided that it had nothing to do with God, but with the Egyptian army that was attempting to support the Jews. The sabbatical year was repealed.

The prophet Jeremiah then brought a message from God, "You have not obeyed me in proclaiming liberty... I am proclaiming liberty to you to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine ... and Zedekiah king of Judah and his officials I will give into the hand of their enemies ... and I am going to command, declares the Lord, and I will bring them (the Babylonian army) back to this city, and they shall fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant." (See Jer 34; also 26:20-24; 22:13-19; 38:1-6)

It was not until the fall of Jerusalem and the captivity of the last king, Zedekiah, that Gedeliah the son of Shapan (the scribe), the son of Azaliah (this was the family that had protected Jeremiah) was made governor and instituted a land reform under the protection of the Babylonians (2 Chr. 36:20-21, Jer. 39:9-10). This was frustrated by the anti-Babylonian nationalists (Jer. 40 and 41) and the land was left completely waste. Symbolically, the 70 years of "sabbaths" referred to in 2 Chronicles, figured from the first captivity, would take the need for reform back the 490 years to the time of Samuel. If the 70 years' exile is included, it would refer back to the closing years of David's reign. God is saying that, though the sabbatical years were proclaimed, they were not enforced according to the Law.

From the Captivity to Nehemiah's reform is a period of two jubilees, but there are no reforms of an economic nature clearly referred to until the time of Nehemiah. He clearly enforced the laws on both land and interest (Neh. 5:1-13). This may well have been in connection with the discovery of the law relative to the Feast of Tabernacles (which relates to the Jubilee), referred to in Neh. 8.

The Old Testament ends approximately one jubilee later, with another call for reform (Mal. 3:1-6) but the record does

not indicate whether the call was heeded or not.

Maccabees tells of how the keeping of the sabbatical year brought an end to a war and the giving of religious freedom by the Greeks. In Ch. 6, beginning at verse 48 we read the account of Lysias' campaign and the shortage of food due to the keeping of the sabbatical year. The Jews were in bad shape and surrendered at Beth Zur, but soon Lysais found that he had no way of feeding of his own troops — the shortage of food cut both ways — and he sent word to the king that he was unable to continue the campaign "...so let us offer these men terms and make peace with them and their whole nation. Let us guarantee their right to follow their laws and customs as they used to do." The proposal met with the king's approval and peace was made.

There is also a reference in Maccabees to the rule of Simon the high priest in 142 BC, 300 years after Nehemiah's reform, where it is said of Simon's time; "The country was at peace throughout the days of Simon. He sought the good of his nation... resettled a host of captives... they farmed their land in peace... each man sat under his own vine and his own fig tree, and there was no one to make them afraid... He gave strength to all the humble folk among his people and cleared away every renegade and wicked man. He strove to observe the Law. (1 Macc. 14:4-14)."

The New Testament

The New Testament does not add to, nor amend, the legislation of the Old Testament, but puts it in a different perspective, that of Jer. 31:31. Ez. 36:24 and Joel 2:28. In these passages, God promises not to repeal the laws which his people have failed to keep, but to write his laws on their hearts and to place his Spirit both within them and upon them so that they will be able to keep his laws without external sanctions.

In the Old Testament, the law of the Lord is either enforced or repealed by government sanction, by the actions of kings who enforced the laws of the Lord or the laws of Baal. In the New Testament it is expected that each individual will have the power of the Holy Spirit to keep the laws in the interim until the final establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

Jesus's first recorded sermon, announcing his platform, is the "Sermon on the Mount", given in Matt., chapters 5, 6, and 7. After quoting several key Old Testament passages, including

the promise of land to the downtrodden ("Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the land" — quoted from Ps. 37:11), he goes on to say: "Think not that I have come to destroy but to fulfill..."

One of the key verses in the Sermon on the Mount is Matt. 6:33 where, after warning against preoccupation with immediate and individual economic needs, Jesus says, "Seek first His kingdom and His justice and all these things shall be added to you." The kingdom, obviously, is a corporate solving of the social problems. "Kingdom" can also be translated "rule" or "governance." God's kingdom means God's rule, a group operating under his guidance.

King James' hired translators were careful to avoid the word "justice" as much as possible, and to substitute the vague and, to most people, meaningless "righteousness". The word "righteousness" has been habitually used in a "spiritual" sense by the church, concealing its reference to justice. The words for "justice" in both Greek and Hebrew are used in the Bible over 278 times, but in 250 cases the King James translation is "righteousness." It should be borne in mind that the writers of the Bible were nearly all out of step with the powerful political and economic forces of their time, but the translations of the Bible, whether into Latin or any modern language, have been done by scholars trained in the existing system — what the Bible refers to as "the world." As a matter of fact, the expression "the world," can quite accurately be translated, "the system," especially the Greek word "cosmos."

This Sermon the Mount led some of Jesus's listeners to conclude that he, as the anointed king, the Messiah or Christ, would enforce the laws. This role he expressly rejected when he was asked to intervene in a case of injustice over land (Lu. 12:13-14) and be a "divider". Instead, he called on his disciples to do their own dividing: whatever you want someone else to do for you, you do for him (first) — Mt. 7:11. The landlords, who held power under the Roman system, had no intention of allowing the Old Testament laws to be enforced, as they would lose both their land and their power. Jesus made no effort to explain that he only meant all this "spiritually." He allowed them to see him as a threat who must be removed by any means possible. In private teaching to his disciples he made it clear that he was not advocating violence as the way to solve these problems, but voluntary action. The general public as-

sumed that the Messiah would enforce God's justice by some sort of resort to power, whether military or angelic.

On one occasion, a very rich young man, presumably a large landholder, asked Jesus directly what he should do. Jesus told him to keep the law. The man replied that he had done so all his life. Jesus told him bluntly, to dispose of everything and give it to the poor. This, clearly, was beyond the requirements of the law. (The story is given three times, and is obviously considered very significant: Mt. 19:21, Mk. 10:17, Lu. 18:18 etc.) Who this rich young man was, who went away sadly, we do not know. We do know that just such a man, on the Day of Pentecost or very shortly thereafter (see Acts 4:36ff), followed Jesus as an apostle. His name was Barnabas, and the record shows that eventually, after financing his and Paul's first missionary journey, he disposed of all that remained of his wealth (probably in further missionary work) and worked, as Paul also did, as a laborer to support himself in his apostolic work (I Cor 9:6)

Proclaim Liberty

Jesus's most startling definition of his mission came in his home town of Nazareth. The record is in Luke 4. On this occasion he quoted Is. 61:1-2 as his text and made it clear that he had come to proclaim the year of liberty. The words of Isaiah are, themselves, quoted from Lev. 25:10, but with the characteristic "new" covenant touch: the reference to the Holy Spirit. Here, again, it is the Holy Spirit who is going to bring in the jubilee, not the civil power and this is the good news ("gospel") for the poor ("meek)."

In Lu. 4:22 it is said that the people were amazed at these "words of grace." Grace, of course, is the free gift: cancellation of debt, restoration of the heritage, and Jesus is here announcing grace, proclaiming liberty. The essence of the legislation for the sabbatical years and for the year of liberty is the word "free". Each man returns to his inheritance, freely. No charge, no obligation, nothing done to merit it. God orders it. This concept is spiritualized in the New Testament. God sees his people dispossessed by Satan, enslaved by sin, debt-ridden by unfulfilled obligations, and he proclaims liberty, he sets them free to return to their own inheritance, which is fellowship with God and a portion in his kingdom.

Most of the New Testament is concerned with the battle by

which Jesus won the victory. It is quite intentional that the name "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua", who won the battle and led the people into the promised land — which made this redemption possible. The words "grace", "freedom" and "redemption" are the main themes of the New Testament, and they all derive from the Old Testament land legislation! But now the land in question is no longer the good earth of Palestine, but the coming Kingdom of God, the inheritance of God's new people, the new Israel, the disciples of Christ.

The leaders of the Christian Church, ever since the "conversion", without repentance, of the landlords of the Roman Empire in the time of Constantine, have been playing the game of the prophets and priests of Jeremiah's time, making things easy for themselves by ringing the changes on the spiritual interpretation of the old land laws while ignoring studiously their practical application, or fulfillment, in everyday life.

This course has usually been justified by arguing that the Church has lacked the authority to give or execute land legislation. Once the church came to terms with the ruling power in 311 AD, at the Edict of Toleration and, obviously, once a majority of voters in a democracy are Christians, the authority — and responsibility — to bring about justice through correct land laws was inescapable. Somehow, the church managed to ignore the issue in Constantine's time and, eventually, became the tool of the landlords. The rise of Islam was in protest against the Christian landlords' exploitation of the indigenous peoples of North Africa and the Middle East. Today's churches seem to have forgotten the issue completely!

As far as Jesus's first disciples are concerned, it is clear that there was no question in their minds as to how the jubilee was to take place: they took Mt. 5:17 and Mtt. 7:11 literally and, as we are clearly told in Acts 2:41ff and 4:32ff, instituted the jubilee among themselves in the power of the promised Holy Spirit. "They that gladly received Peter's words were baptized; and the same day there were added about 3,000 souls... and all that believed were together and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, as every man had need... neither said any of them that aught of the things he possessed was his own; but they had all things common... neither was there any among them

that lacked: for as many of them as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." Obviously, no one sold houses or lands that he was actually using and needed in order not to be a burden on the church. It was the surplus property which would have gone out in the year of jubilee that was now disposed of.

That this action was entirely voluntary is made clear by the story of Ananias and Sapphire (Acts 5:3-8), a couple who tried to get credit for more generosity than they really had. They were told that they didn't have to sell their land, in the first place, and, if they chose to sell it, they were free to do what they pleased with the proceeds. The word "free will," which is frequently used in the Old Testament of offerings and sacrifices above and beyond those required by the law, is the Greek word (in the Septuagint version) *dektos*. The word was used by Jesus in proclaiming the "acceptable" (that is "Free will") year of the *Lord*. What God does is free, and our response is free.

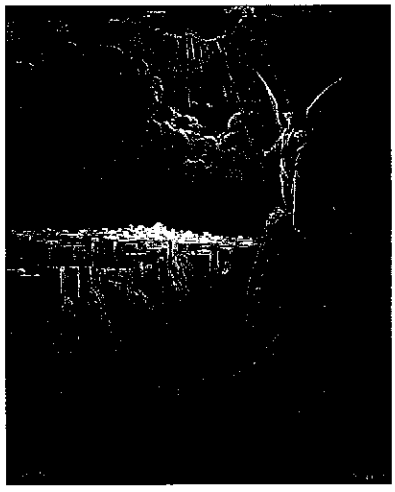
The Ongoing Jubilee

Jesus's promise of such a jubilee was fulfilled within only three years, when his own disciples, without waiting for the law or the government, took it upon themselves to practice what Jesus had preached. Thus was the Law of the Lord not destroyed, but fulfilled, right under the nose of a selfish, brutal, and hypocritical ruling class which gave lip service to the Lord but practiced the laws of Baal.

Even so, this not the final jubilee. According to the Bible, there is one more to come, that described by Ezekiel and the book of Revelation. It is also referred to in Matt. 24:31: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather his elect from the four winds." I Cor 15:51: "Behold, I show you a secret: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and we shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed... thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ... your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Finally in the book of Revelation (Chap. 18) comes the summary of all the prophetic messages, the sweeping con-

demnation of the world system based on international trade in luxury goods, high living, ruthless exploitation of the poor, the armaments trade, injustice and bloodshed, and buying and selling "the souls of men." When this final "Babylon" is defeated, to the sound of not one trumpet, but seven, the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven onto earth and the theme of Ezekiel is picked up again as the earth is once more distributed among men in a new fellowship with God far transcending that of the garden of Eden, and the river of life flowing, not through the garden, but through the city, with the tree of life on either side of the river, with twelve kinds of fruit and leaves which are for the healing of the nations, flowing on out to bring new life to all the earth.



The New Jerusalem

Appendices

I — the Church and the Land

For three centuries Christians practiced the "free will jubilee" (sharing goods voluntarily) and eventually there were so many followers of Christ that the emperor Constantine felt obliged to recognize Christianity. However, nothing was said about changing the land laws. When Rome conquered Carthage 200 years before Christ, the laws of Baal, under which Carthage had been governed since it was settled by Jezebel's relatives at the time of Ahab, stimulated the greed of many Romans. The war veterans who had fought in the Punic Wars (against Carthage) were given estates in North Africa, the former Carthaginian Empire. In time, the old Roman system was replaced by the Baal system. The sturdy independent farmers of Italy became serfs on the estates of the new landowning class. The same system which "found Rome brick and left it marble" also led to the decline and fall of the Roman empire. But the church did not offer to change it. On the

contrary, the church became dominated by the landlords to the extent that all of North Africa rebelled against Christianity and became Mohammedan under the slogan — taken from the Bible — "The land belongs to God." The same pattern was repeated in the Middle East. In Europe, after the barbarian invasions had destroyed what was left of Roman civilization, the church did make various efforts towards a more equitable land system, but by the 16th century, when the Anabaptists (modern Mennonites, Hutterites, etc.) called for Biblical land reform, both Catholics and Protestants persecuted them ruthlessly. In nearly all of Europe the church had become the biggest landlord. In the wars between Protestant and Catholic the real issue was not religion at all, but land.

This can be seen clearly with regard to Ireland where successive kings of England, under the pretext of saving the souls of the Irish, seized their lands and bestowed them on their Anglican and Presbyterian henchmen.

The same "Christian" Europeans, parceling out Africa to land-hungry colonists, destroyed the relatively fair land systems of Africa — with disastrous results in impoverishment of the Africans and the breeding of bitter hatred along with the corruption of the colonists. The colonial powers "bought" the most productive land (whether for tea and coffee plantations or for diamonds and other mineral products) and sent all of the profits back to Europe, paying the local people the smallest possible wages to work on the plantations and in the mines. The colonial powers have given political independence to the various governments, but the economic exploitation continues. Today we see a continent torn by war and murder, anger, fear, soil erosion and starvation.

Almost every country that "went communist" since the Russian revolution was once a (nominally) Christian country. In every case the underlying cause of the problem was the practice, by the Christians or their allies, of the land system of Baal and the rejection of the Biblical system or anything resembling it.

The land-value tax, or "LVT" is based on the concept that the land is to be rented, not sold, an effort to modernize the jubilee concept. Wherever this has been implemented, there has been successful resistance to communism and outstanding prosperity (e.g. Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, etc.). It is notable that severe poverty and starvation is not a product of "overpopu-

lation," but of improper land distribution. The most densely populated countries of the world have less poverty than some of their neighbors, because of more equitable land systems. Corrected for the amount of arable land and the number of growing seasons, the most densely populated countries are South Korea, Japan, Mainland China, North Korea, England and Taiwan. Relatively underpopulated, by the same measures, are Java, Bangladesh, Philippines, India, and Pakistan.

Unfortunately for the common people in these countries, none of the Western models have demonstrated proper regulation of land use. The economic "experts" (who have been raised up to refute Henry George's biblically-based remedy along with other forms of "normative" economics) do not acknowledge any need to control land speculation. In some cases there has been a "land reform", but once the "jubilee" has been declared and the land has been more or less redistributed, the return to Baalistic economics has begun and within half a century land speculation has once more become rampant. The middle class is disappearing, while the landlord class becomes more and more powerful. The rest of the population become increasingly proletarianized. The Christian missionaries, having been trained in the Baal system, have been blissfully unaware of what was going on.

Let us Christians pray earnestly that each of our countries will undo the Baal system and move in the direction of a Biblical system of land distribution. Christians can begin, as some are doing in America, by organizing land trusts and buying land and seeing that it is used to benefit those who are willing to work it, as well as working for land-value taxation.

Missions

How does the issue of land tenure relate to the work of the church and the missionary? Knowing that application of Biblical principles would wipe out the slums and the poverty of the world, how can we be silent in the face of the horrible conditions we see every day in Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East (not to mention the steadily growing slums of our Western megalopolises)? If the missionary keeps silent on this matter, he is giving his consent to the ruthless exploitation of the landless that has filled the slums of the great cities with populations of diseased and starving people who sell their little boys to carpet factories and their little girls

to brothels just to keep alive. Thousands of people live on the garbage dumps of the great cities. We cannot allow the gospel to be identified with the ruling powers in these horrible situations. We must have "good news for the poor." They should know that God has another plan, that God is a God of justice. If we have no power to bring that justice about, we can at least be known as champions of it, and do like the early Christians, practice *koinonia* — which is a form of justice, not mercy.

In some countries, such as South Korea, there is nothing to prevent the church and the missionaries from exerting every effort, openly and vigorously, to bring about a more equitable land system. In many other countries, the moment a missionary began to work actively and practically for justice he would be expelled from the country. However, I still believe that we have the duty, as we teach the Bible, quietly to point out that God is not the God of the big landlords, but that God, 3,500 years ago, revealed that it was His intention for every family to have their own land, that the most basic human right is the right to land.

If this right were honored today there would be no more starvation and all the millions of slum-dwellers would be able to return to a healthy life! This is exasperatingly obvious. I do not see how missionaries can act as if poverty were inevitable and content themselves with hopelessly inadequate works of mercy. The Bible puts justice first, mercy second, and walking humbly with your God, third*.

I am afraid the missionary community has stood God's priorities on their head and is seen throughout the world as allied with the ruthless exploiters of the poor, preaching only pie in the sky. I personally think every clergyman and every missionary should read *Progress and Poverty.* It is one of the great literary classics of the world and breathes a Biblical fragrance. During his lifetime, Henry George was widely known as "the Prophet of San Francisco." In spite of being a careful and sound economist, he sounds like the prophets of the Bible, whose constant demands for "justice" have been bowdlerized by most translators as mere "righteousness".

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*See page 36.

II — Interest and Inflation

Leviticus 25, in addition to laying down principles with regard to the right to land, also states that God's people may not charge interest on loans. This is contrary to our present system, which is largely based on getting a return on capital through interest! What is the morality of this and what is the psychology or ethics behind what the Bible teaches? Is there a workable alternative to what we have been assuming is the only possible way to do business?

The Bible's basic concern is with exploitation of the poor. I have known Korean immigrants in the USA to borrow money from their fellow Koreans, since they had not been in the USA long enough to establish credit and had no property they could mortgage in order to borrow money from a bank. With the money they borrowed from a fellow Korean, the people set up a dry-cleaning business. They worked very hard and the business was successful. But the interest on their loan was so high that it ate up all their profits and they ended up bankrupt. This is clearly what the Bible seeks to avoid. If people need a loan to get started in business or farming, the loan must be given on terms that will not ruin them.

In the Middle Ages, the Church decided to clarify this principle by distinguishing between "interest" and "usury." An artificial figure was adopted and any interest rate higher than this was referred to as "usury", and was outlawed as unethical. This general concept is still widely accepted in the West. The fact remains, however, that the relatively low rates of interest charged by the banks are still high enough to prevent the poorest people from getting loans — and they make it possible for people to get rich simply by lending money.

The solution offered to this problem in Leviticus 25 is the canceling of debts every seven years. If your debtor has not been able to repay the debt by the time of the sabbatical year, the debt must be canceled. Only two instances of this are actually recorded in the Old Testament. One was the keeping of the jubilee year and its prior sabbatical year in Hezekiah's time, when the Assyrians were besieging Jerusalem. The other was the sabbatical year that was proclaimed by Zedekiah, when the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem.

The canceling of debts in the sabbatical year has nothing to do with business principles or an economic system. It is not

part of what the Bible calls "justice." The low rate of interest can be referred to as "justice," but the total canceling of debts without either interest or return of the original amount of the loan comes under the heading of "mercy." Cf. Micah 6:8.

Is there a way of modernizing these concepts? Is the setting of interest rates by the government the answer? I believe that what we need is a system of credit cooperatives or credit unions where money is loaned for exactly enough to run the cooperative and pay the salaries of the employees, with neither profit nor loss. I know of many examples in the USA of credit unions. People with capital to spare but with no project of their own to invest it in, should let the credit union use their money, accepting only as much return as will keep up with inflation.

Inflation and God's Laws

God has said: (Lev 19:35) "Ye shall do no injustice in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure." (Deu 25:14-15) "Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city... Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (Mic 6:9-10)

The modern world prides itself on accurate and honest weights and measures, but it is undermined by dishonesty in the banking and monetary system. Banks are granted the privilege of creating money out of nothing and using it to control ever-more wealth.

Are we going to shrug our shoulders and let the banks and the government steal from all those who do not own jewels or land? Are we going to get into the land-speculation business and steal from the rest of the country?

There are some values that do not really change: the number of hours of labor required to grow a crop of potatoes and the number of potatoes one person needs to eat to stay healthy. If people who live by their own labor on their own land will stay out of the market, they can maintain the same standard of living over a period of years. But if they have to sell their

potatoes for less than it cost to grow them and buy rice for far more than they got for their potatoes, they are in trouble.

On the other hand, in a country where there is no control of land values — that is, where the government fails to collect the rent for the national land — a landowner can not only beat inflation but become richer and richer regardless of the degree of inflation. Those with power bid against each other for land and the price goes up and up. The rate of inflation may be 10% but the rate of increase in land value will be as much as 50% or 100% or even higher. That is why those who have invested in land to protect themselves from inflation will fight with all the energy and power at their disposal to keep the government from collecting the rental value of that land. They do not like the teaching, "The land is mine, saith the Lord, it shall not be sold forever." The moment a prophet or preacher begins to talk like that they begin to find ways to ridicule or otherwise silence him, threatening his life, if necessary.

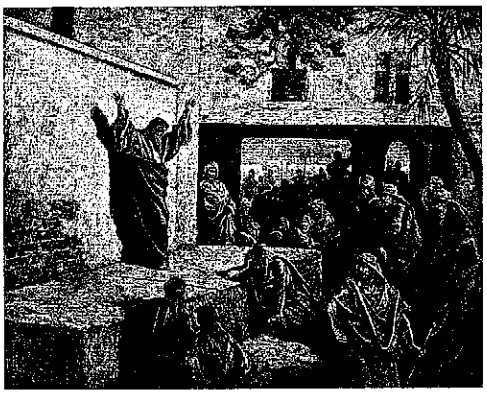
III — Commentary on Micah 6

MIC 6:8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Of the three things God expects of us, the first is to do justly. The Christian nations and the hireling clergy have covered up their refusals to do justly by spending money on "mercy" missions of all sorts. If they had done justly, few of these mercy missions would have been necessary. God hates this hypocrisy. On the other hand, there are nations such as Taiwan and Hong Kong who have done justly to a very considerable extent, but they seem to know nothing about walking humbly with God. Because they do not know God, of course, there will always be evil people who will never cease trying to subvert justice and, as in the case of Hong Kong (where $^2/_3$ of what used to be revenue for the people of Hong Kong now goes into private pockets) these people will succeed, because there are no prophets to expose them and only weak groupings of people to oppose them.

Whenever justice is mentioned in the Bible, we must remember that the Biblical basis of justice is land for all. Man

cannot live without land. Without land there is no liberty. The New Testament tells the poor of a better system, that no amount of corrupt government can destroy, called *koinonia,* but the corrupt governments have corrupted the scholars who have translated the Bible into other languages, and they have successfully confused the vast majority of Christians as to what *koinonia* is, (using from 17 to 23 different words to translate the Greek, which was frighteningly clear to all who spoke Greek, and have said that the church has no obligation to proclaim the Old Testament principle of justice). Jesus said he did not come to abolish the law and the the prophets, but to fulfill them, and when he said, publicly, that the meek would "inherit the land," (that is, receive it as their right, not have to pay for it) and that he had come to proclaim the Year of the Lord (that is, the year of Jubilee, when all land is returned to its rightful owners and no one, not even the alien, is left out of the redistribution), as far as the landowners were concerned, he had signed his death warrant. Jesus was not executed for healing the sick or comforting the broken-hearted or for telling people to be nice. He was executed for talking about a government where Old Testament justice would prevail, and for getting too big a following among the landless poor.



> *MIC 6:11-12 Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

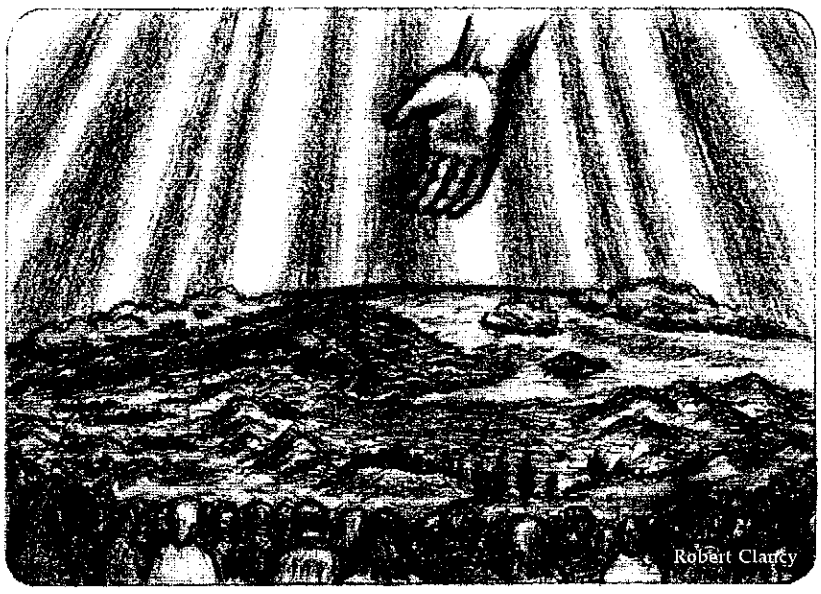
As long as the rich men can get sound economic teaching ignored, they are happy. If the teaching really begins to take hold and threatens their system, their innate violence will come to the surface. Micah's "Hear ye the rod" refers to the *"argumentum ad baculum."* If lies don't work, they will shed blood. Wars are not fought over sex, wars are not fought over ideas, was are not fought over race, wars are fought over land. The rich men of the West who covet the land of Russia are not

going to sit quietly by and let a handful of Georgists get away with establishing justice in Russia. They will find ways to stir up violence and put into power those who will divide the land with them. Russia is headed to be another Ireland. Land is the issue. Land is the only issue. And land is what the rich men are after and is why they are full of violence. Only the supernatural power of God can change this natural law. We need Spirit-filled economists, now!

> *MIC 6:13 Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. 14) Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. 15) Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. 16) For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.*

"The statutes of Omri" refers to the rejection of God's economic system, in favor of the Baalistic system, which Omri's ally, Ahab's father-in-law, Ithbaal exported to North Africa to become the foundation of the Carthaginian Empire and, following that, the Roman Empire. One of the pagan Roman writers said, "The big estates were the ruination of Rome." The Roman Empire "went Christian," but continued to keep the statutes of Omri and all the works of the house of Ahab. The church failed to condemn this wickedness, but joined in it, and God raised up Mohammed, with the cry, "The land belongs to Allah" — from the 25th Chapter of Leviticus.

The church has still not repented, and today Islam is a worldwide threat to Christianity. The Roman Empire flourished until the death of the emperor Basil II, exactly 1000 years after Jesus died on the cross for justice. During all this time (except for the first 325 years of the Christian Era) it claimed to be a "Christian" nation until God did to Rome (Byzantium) just what He did to Israel, sent against them the Arabs and the Turks to destroy such a travesty of "Godliness." The church did not repent, but shed blood for four centuries trying to get back the land they had lost to the Mohammedans. Is it any wonder it is hard to send Christian missionaries to Muslims today?



IV — From The Condition of Labor: An Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII by Henry George (1891)

This world is the creation of God.

The men brought into it for the brief period of their earthly lives are the equal creatures of His bounty, the equal subjects of His provident care.

By his constitution man is beset by physical wants, on the satisfaction of which depend not only the maintenance of his physical life but also the development of his intellectual and spiritual life.

God has made the satisfaction of these wants dependent on man's own exertions, giving him the power and laying on him the injunction to labor — a power that of itself raises him far above the brute, since we may reverently say that it enables him to become as it were a helper in the creative work.

God has not put on man the task of making bricks without straw. With the need for labor and the power to labor he has also given to man the material for labor. This material is land — man physically being a land animal, who can live only on and from land, and can use other elements, such as air, sunshine and water, only by the use of land.

Being the equal creatures of the Creator, equally entitled under his providence to live their lives and satisfy their needs,

men are equally entitled to the use of land, and any adjustment that denies this equal use of land is morally wrong.

Being created individuals, with individual wants and powers, men are individually entitled (subject of course to the moral obligations that arise from such relations as that of the family) to the use of their own powers and the enjoyment of the results.

There thus arises, anterior to human law, and deriving its validity from the law of God, a right of private ownership in things produced by labor — a right that the possessor may transfer, but of which to deprive him without his will is theft.

This right of property, originating in the right of the individual to himself, is the only full and complete right of property. It attaches to things produced by labor, but cannot attach to things created by God.

While the right of ownership that justly attaches to things produced by labor cannot attach to land, there may attach to land a right of possession.

This right of private possession in things created by God is however very different from the right of private ownership in things produced by labor. The one is limited, the other unlimited, save in cases when the dictate of self-preservation terminates all other rights. The purpose of the one, the exclusive possession of land, is merely to secure the other, the exclusive ownership of the products of labor; and it can never rightfully be carried so far as to impair or deny this. While any one may hold exclusive possession of land so far as it does not interfere with the equal rights of others, he can rightfully hold it no further.

To combine the advantages of private possession with the justice of common ownership it is only necessarily therefore to take for common uses what value attaches to land irrespective of any exertion of labor on it.

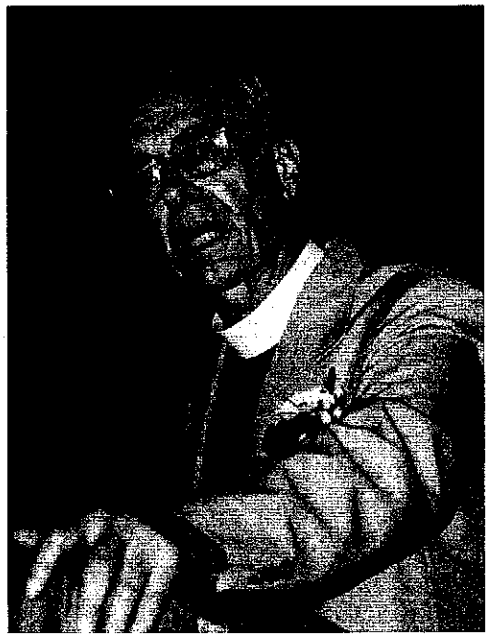
We propose — leaving land in the private possession of individuals, with full liberty on their part to give, sell or bequeath it — simply to levy on it for public uses a tax that shall equal the annual value of the land itself, irrespective of the use made of it or the improvements on it. And since this would provide amply for the need of public revenues, we would accompany this tax on land values with the repeal of all taxes now levied on the products and processes of industry — which taxes, since they take from the earnings of labor, we hold to be infringements of the right of property.

V — Excerpts from the Memorial Sermon for Reuben Archer Torrey III

By. Rev. David E. Ross, August 10, 2002

Father Torrey was a Christian who lived beyond boundaries. Liberals thought he was much too conservative. Conservatives knew with certainty that he was too liberal! The truth is that he was neither — he was simply walking with Jesus. And Jesus is radical!

One moment Father Torrey would be talking passionately about the necessity for every Christian to be "baptized in the Holy Spirit." (He never was satisfied with the milder term, being "filled with the Spirit.") He would point out his argument by meticulously alluding to the Bible. Then just a few minutes later, he would be talking with equal passion about the urgency of land reform and economic transformation, about the urgency of Christians being involved in working for social justice! He walked with Jesus.



Reuben Archer Torrey III

Like his Master, Archer had a great concern for the poor. He not only loved justice, he actually practiced justice! He often pointed out that the Scriptures do not tell us to love justice and do mercy, but rather the reverse — to love mercy and do justice!

His mind was filled with justice for the poor, the needy, the outcasts of the world. Archer Torrey actually did become poor, like Jesus, for the sake of the poor and needy. Father Torrey understood, I believe, the suffering of great masses of God's people today. And he had a burning heart for those who suffer on the Korean peninsula. He prayed for many years for them, and he was committed to unification of the peninsula.

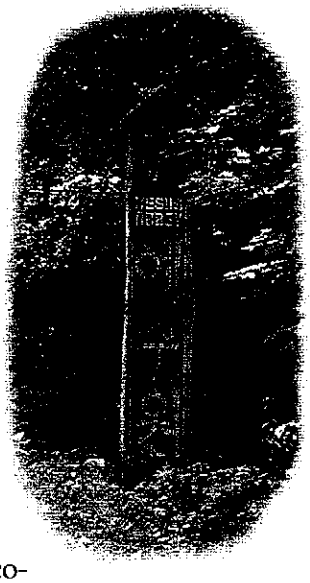
What would Father Torrey say to us if he were to speak to

us today? Surely he would encourage us to continue to walk with Jesus, to follow Him wherever He leads. He would tell us to walk in holiness and in the joy that comes only from living a life of purity before the Lord. He would emphasize that we must walk in justice, do deeds of justice for the poor and oppressed of the world, seeking to change nations that are filled with unrighteousness and injustice. He would insist that we walk in love and compassion, together with all who bear the name of Jesus Christ, in the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit.

For many of us, Archer Torrey's name was synonymous with community. He embodied the lifestyle that makes community work. His great passion was that we walk together in unity with all brothers and sisters in the Lord.

And Archer definitely would tell us, along with the writer of Hebrews, to lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, so that we might run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfector of our faith.

Jesus Abbey



After they had taught for seven years at the Anglican seminary, Arthur and Jane Torrey "decided to pack up and head to the mountains to build a house where they and a few others would lead a simple life of prayer and farming", writes their daughter, Bunny Torrey. They founded the Jesus Abbey, which at first was never intended to house more than ten people or so. But before long, people from many differnt backgrounds came to become part of the Abbey household. "At the Abbey, the wealthy businessman and the homeless alcoholic, the seminarian and the skeptic, the pampered college student and the factory worker all had to share rooms and meals, and work and worship together."

Through the years, the Abbey never made any direct appeals for funding, trusting the Lord to provide what was needed. Yet over the last four decades, thens of thousands have participated in the life of this community. Find out more at: **www.jesusabbey.tv**

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