

THE SINGLE-TAX ADDRESS.

MR. EDITOR,—Most of your readers, doubtless, have perused the address presented to the several Church Courts at their last annual meeting, and I daresay many of them have also read the reply to that address printed as editorial matter in the *Christian Guardian*. Permit me to make a few remarks in reply to the *Guardian*.

It begins with a criticism of the literary style of the address. This, I think, is unfortunate. Further on, the *Guardian* declares its intention to look through the address "in a spirit of sympathy;" but the carpenter verbal criticism with which it begins its examination seems to me to put it at once into an antipathetic attitude—seems indeed to be a revelation of the fact that the writer feels himself to be talking down from a lofty height of condescension to "mere working men;" an attitude which one who speaks for the Christian Church should not assume.

Equally unfortunate is the attempt to show that the framers of the address erred in supposing that they had a right to appeal to the churches on the sole ground that our existing laws in their practical working wrought injustice to the majority. While Mr. Holbrook, as quoted by the *Guardian*, is undoubtedly right in saying "that the New Testament is not, and does not purport to be, a treatise on economics, sociology, civics, or political liberty," it is equally true that no one should suppose himself to be informed by the spirit of the New Testament if he can look with quiet toleration on the working out of false and inequitable economic, social, civic, or political systems. The Christian should be a knight-errant. Given a wrong, he cannot rest in peace till he has done what in him lies to find and apply a remedy.

Another objection made to the address is that the language in which it describes the social conditions brought about by the economic and political errors complained of, is exaggerated as applied to Canada. This is almost ludicrous. The argument of that part of the address is, that there are certain fundamental errors in our political economy, and that these inevitably produce certain evils, the reply of the *Guardian*—shown of its verbiage—is, that these evils are only just beginning to show themselves in Canada, and that we should wait until they have become chronic and malignant before we talk of finding the remedy!

Let me come now to the central question. The *Guardian* quotes Henry George, and is therefore without excuse if it misstates the position of Single-Taxers. And it certainly does misstate it. Were I dealing with the work of a partizan politician, I should say that, relying upon popular ignorance of the Single-Tax theory, he was endeavoring to discredit it by a smart travesty of its doctrine. Single-Taxers are represented as contending that the ownership of land must make a man rich, and that nothing else can! And having set up this man of straw, the writer proceeds to knock him down by pointing out that many Canadian land-owners have become poorer in recent years, and, he proceeds to tell us, "brewers and distillers are growing wealthy, are buying landed property." Why do they buy it, may I ask? Plainly because they believe it to be the best investment they can make.

Take, again, this sentence. "Rent is not paid simply for the use of land. It is paid partly for the use of buildings, partly for the advantages of improvements, and only partly for the value of land pure and simple as a producing agent." This, calculated to produce the utterly false impression that Single-Taxers wish the State to take all rent, is inexcusable from one who professes acquaintance with the works of Henry George.

Curiously enough, the paragraph immediately following the sentence, or rather part of a sentence, just quoted, concedes the whole case to the Single-Tax men. It states that, were it possible to determine

just what proportion of rent is due to land value pure and simple, "there might be a reasonable claim that the State, the people as a whole, should receive that amount in revenue." Just so. Single-Taxers say that ground rent in cities, and the rental value of land "pure and simple"—that is, land irrespective of improvements—outside of cities, can be much more easily ascertained than the value of many things now subject to taxation, and all they ask is, that this rent be taken by the State, and that all other taxes—or, more properly, all taxes, be abolished.

"Single Tax" is acknowledged to be a misnomer. The theory is, that all taxes are unnecessary and unjust. Take, for illustration, a tract of land lying out in the wilderness. It affords a squatter a living, but it has no other value, nor does it entail any charge upon anyone. After a time men come in hundreds and thousands, and we have a city. Two things are created. One of them is land value. Men are willing to pay a certain rent for land upon which to build their houses and stores. Plainly this is not created by any individual. It is created by the presence of the community. The other thing so created is the necessity for government expenditure. Streets, lighting, water, police, etc., have to be provided for. The community must pay for these. You have then a value, or fund, created by the community, by the people as a whole, and you have an expenditure the necessity for which is also created by the community, by the people as a whole. Single-Taxers say that, until this common fund is exhausted, you have no right to touch one cent of any value created by the individual, for the discharge of the debts of the community.

Roughly, that is the basis of the theory. Let us follow the matter up a little. Suppose our city governed by present methods, and you have a buying up of, and holding on to, the lots into which the town-site is divided. Result, the poorer people must get back to the outskirts in order to find homes within their means. So we have a population which could live quite healthily and comfortably on one square mile of land, scattered over five. Streets, light, water, police, for five miles instead of for one. Largely increased expenditure, largely decreased efficiency. Individuals burdened by taxation, public services hampered for want of revenue—waste, inefficiency, a host of evils, while the fund created by the community, and rightly belonging to it, and which would be ample to furnish public services and public conveniences of the very highest order, is diverted into private pockets.

Single-Taxers start from the proposition that the Creator has stored the earth with resources ample for the support of all who inhabit it and of millions more; and that the people living upon the earth have a life interest (and no more) in these resources. Allow every man, they say, to use his right—to enjoy freely his life interest in these natural opportunities or natural resources—and you banish involuntary poverty. The shiftless and the dissolute would still have to be dealt with, the mentally or physically incapable would still have to be cared for; but we should no longer have millions able and eager to work and yet hovering always on the brink of starvation.

But, you say, in a highly organized society, men cannot go, each for himself, to field and forest and river and sea, for the supply of their wants. True; and further, without fixity of tenure, civilization would be arrested. The Single-Taxer admits all this, but he says that the difficulty is easily overcome by requiring each one who is using a "natural opportunity"—which, by the way, is what a Single-Taxer means when he speaks of "land"—to pay a fair rent to the State, the whole body of the people, for such use; and so long as he pays that rent let him be undisturbed in his possession.

This rent providing an ample revenue, all taxation would be abolished; government

would be greatly simplified, and many causes of corruption removed. The government of the country would find itself in a position to assume the ownership of transportation services, the governments of municipalities could undertake the lighting and water services, and these things would be conducted for the benefit of the people as a whole. Large individual accumulations of wealth would be impossible; but grinding toil for a bare livelihood would no longer be necessary. Thus—without removing healthy incentives to individual exertion—would be taken away the two sharp spurs, the ambition for great wealth and the fear of want, which goad men on in the mad scramble for the "almighty dollar." Men would have time then for the cultivation of their spiritual, moral, and intellectual nature. To my mind, this is essentially a religious question. No man can deny the abundance of the provision made by Him who openeth His hand and satisfieth "the desire of every living thing"; who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Shall we then be silent while the greed of the few, in the name of law, turns aside from the many the bounties of the Father? Shall the Church turn a deaf ear to the cry that is raised against this chartered wrong, or meet it with a smirking recital of charitable doles, or cold sermonettes about spiritual sonship and wholesome poverty? If it does, surely it should not wonder if many are ready to say with Romola, "If of such be the Kingdom of Heaven, let me and let those I love stand outside of it."

R. A. DIX.

THE BICYCLE ON SUNDAY.

The bicycle can no longer be viewed as a "craze." It is now recognized as one of the necessities of our swiftly-moving age. We rejoice to learn of the many blessings that are following in its train. It is diverting the youth of our land from the theatre and from morally unhealthy "sports" of various forms. Very remarkable also has been the decrease in the sale of tobacco and intoxicants. Every friend of youth rejoices in these results of the extensive use of the bicycle. But the bicycle can be made a means of evil as well as of good, and unfortunately one of the evils is causing much anxiety to many who are seeking the highest welfare of the youth of our land. We refer to the increasing prevalence of bicycling on Sunday. The use of the wheel to attend church, or to aid in the discharge of Christian duty, no one will raise serious objections to; but the misuse of it as a source of pleasure or selfish gratification, is nothing less than Sabbath desecration in one of its most seductive forms. Thousands of young people—and older people, too, alas!—are seen spinning along with their faces toward the parks or the country, from morning till night, all bent on pleasure-seeking. The Law of God is ignored, His house is forgotten and His holy day is turned into a holiday. Here is an opportunity for Christian Endeavorers to exert a strong influence for good. It would be better not to use the bicycle at all, even to attend church, than to give countenance to desecration of the Lord's day. This will afford a splendid opportunity of declaring your allegiance to Christ, and of exhibiting the spirit of self-denial for His sake. Such self-sacrifice will not be without its reward. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."—*Christian Endeavor Herald*.

Teacher and Scholar.

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Sept. 11 { DAVID'S GRATITUDE TO GOD. } 2 Sam. xxii. 1896, 40-51.

GOLDEN TEXT—2 Sam. xlii. 2.

MEMORY VERSES.—17-50.

CATECHISM—Q. 73, 80.

HOME READINGS.—M. 2 Sam. xxii. 1-25. T. 2 Sam. xxii. 26-51. W. 1 Kings ii. 1-11. Th. 2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7. F. 1 Chron. xxix. 1-9. S. 1 Chron. xxix. 10-19. Sab. 1 Chron. xxix. 20-30.

This week we study the last of our series of lessons from the life of David. Throughout we have found him a man with a single purpose. Jehovah must be magnified, and His worship established in Israel, both for the sake of His glory, and for Israel's lasting security. More than once we have found things wholly inconsistent with such an aim, yet we must not judge of David from the few spots which marred the brightness of his godly career, but from the true light which shines from that career as a whole. Though the words we study this week were probably written about the middle of David's public life, yet perhaps none are better fitted to give us a view of David in proper perspective, and therefore most appropriately may they be taken as a closing study. Let us glance briefly at the *Victories Recorded* and the *Victor Acknowledged*.

I. *Victories Recorded*.—David's life as king had been one long-continued warfare, so that because he was a man with blood-stained hands, he was excluded from building God's house. Here David recounts, in general terms, the dangers which have beset him, and the victories he has achieved. First of all, from his enemies among the nations around him God has given deliverance. For them there was no deliverance, for there was no Jehovah to whom they could look. Therefore these enemies met with utter destruction, were beaten "small as the dust of the earth," and were as the "mire of the street" under their conquerors' feet. Then there were dangers from within the kingdom itself; from the strivings of his own people God gave David deliverance. Clearly, it seems to me, David recognized the fact that he was kept by God, and given these victories because he had a mission to perform. David recognized that Israel, as a nation, was intended by God to be the light-bearer unto the Gentiles. Therefore God had kept him "head of the heathen," and he looked for a time when nations he knew not should serve him, when strangers should obey as soon as they heard, or else should flee away to hide from his face. Nor was it to him personally that this submission should be made, but to him as the leader of God's chosen people, the head of God's Kingdom.

II. *The Victor Acknowledged*.—David did not take the glory of these victories, either past or anticipated, to himself. "The Lord liveth" was his watchword. The Lord who was his rock—his sure stronghold—the rock of his salvation. God was his avenger, God the subduer of people under him, God that gave him the victory, and lifted him up above his enemies round about him. It is this humble heart-felt acknowledgment of God as the victor, which shows us that David regarded himself as the typical representative of the leader of God's hosts. What God did for David He had not done simply for David's sake, but for the sake of the cause which David represented—the Kingdom of God upon earth. Therefore David concluded this psalm of acknowledgment with a renewal of consecration. "I will give thanks," "I will sing praises" among the heathen is a pledge of self-surrender, as well as a faith breathing of victory. In the very last words comes out distinctly the thought we have been trying to develop. In the mention made of "his seed for evermore," we see clearly the keynote of the whole psalm. David's enemies were the enemies of God's cause, his victories were victories for God's cause, his anticipations of widespread, nay universal, triumph were of the triumph of the "seed," to whom the promise had been given. This will help us to a practical application of the lesson. First, to the cause of Christ in the world to day. The pages of history tell us of the marvellous preservation of God's Church from her enemies, of their utter destruction, as enemies, before her. They tell us of that Church torn by dissensions within, yet kept and made victorious. What God has done is but an earnest of His readiness to fulfil the promises made to the eternal "seed," that He will "give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." What should be the effect of these things upon us? Just the effect which David's victories had upon him. They should lead us to lean more unreservedly upon God. He will give us the victory and He is the rock of our salvation. Or, we may apply the lesson to the struggle which each Christian finds himself called upon to face. Attacks from the enemy without, and strivings from the lusts within. Yet to every child of God there has come deliverance in some measure. Let us recognize God as the author of our victories, let us take courage in these earnest of the complete victory promised us, and, above all, while we strive for this victory, let us do it in the strength of the Lord and for the glory of His name.