

company man as long as he is possessed of human nature. One, greater than Mr. George, has said: "The poor you have always with you" and history shows that poverty has ever and always followed man. To abolish it, it will be necessary to destroy the freewill of man and replace it by an instinct so perfect that the laborer will no longer squander his earnings for the gratification of his passions, nor the capitalist risk his fortune on dangerous speculations. To say the least, it is scarcely credible that after centuries of unsuccessful effort on the part of creeds and civilizations to abolish poverty, the true solution has at last been found by the socialist of our day. But let us pass to the minor proposition of the argument. "The cause of poverty is private property in land. To prove this statement, Mr. George says: 'If private property in land be just, then is the remedy I propose a false one; but if, on the contrary, private property in land be unjust, then is the remedy the true one.'" The sophistry of this argument must be apparent. Even should the main proposition be granted, we could not logically conclude that the abolition of private property in land would do away with all property, since there exist many other social injustices which might equally well lead to the same consequence. But Mr. George goes further; not only does he say that private property in land is unjust, that it is the cause of all poverty, but even that it is the cause of many crimes, that it is robbery, that it is the creator of the slum and the gaol. Proudhon, the French economist, expressed a similar idea when he said: "Property is theft." Mr. George, however, does not say that all property is theft, but confer as the crime to private property in land. To prove the injustice of this kind of property, he quotes freely from the Bible and applies thereto his own interpretation. He quotes such texts as the following: "God hath given the earth to the sons of men." "The Lord's is the earth and the fulness thereof." Strange it is that Mr. George, in these later days, should find an interpretation for these texts which the greatest men of the past failed to discover; though many of them spent their lives in the elucidation of God's written law. God, of course, has given the earth to the sons of men, but he has not specified the manner in which they should own it.

Concerning the interpretation of these ordinances, history leaves us in doubt, for Christians and Jews, throughout the last 600 years, have strongly upheld the justice of the private ownership of land. But Mr. George, having vainly attempted to distort in his favor the teachings of Holy Writ, applies to nature, to natural law for the establishment of his peculiar theory. The only title to exclusive possession, says he, is that which nature gives. But nature gives such title only to labor. Therefore, labor in production is the only title to exclusive possession. This was Fichte's argument, before it was Mr. George's. When he says that title of possession is acquired only by labor, he denies validity of title derived from priority of occupation, and, furthermore, he asserts that this title is most absurd. The problem thus presented resolves itself into the following alternative: If any other title than that of labor can be proven, then Mr. George is wrong; if none other can be proven, then he is right. But it is a fact that there does exist another source of right of possession, acknowledged by every human race that has emerged from the state of savagery, and which forms the corner-stone in the foundation of every civilized community, namely, the right derived from prior occupation. To prove that this right has no claim to our consideration, he uses the following example: Has the first comer at a banquet a right to turn back all the chairs and claim that none of the other guests should partake of the food provided, except as they make terms with him; and again, Has the first passenger who enters a railroad car the right to scatter his baggage over all the other seats and compel those who come in after him to stand?

These are for Mr. George two most unhappy illustrations, for they prove the contrary of what he intended. Undoubtedly, the man who takes a seat at a banquet or in a railway car has no right to exclude others from the other seats, but he may certainly exclude them from the seat which he occupies; and, in like manner, the first settler on a piece of land may exclude others from that particular portion on which he is already established. And I have little doubt but that even the philanthropic Mr. George would resent it as an injustice, if another guest at a ban-