

A BELGIAN SEER

Hypothese sur l' Evolution Physique et Metaphysique de l' Energie. By Henri Lambert, Bruxelles, 1935.

Possessing too little knowledge to follow M. Henri Lambert into the rarified atmosphere of scientific speculation, I have yet found in his posthumous essay entitled, "An Hypothesis Regarding the Physical and Metaphysical Evolution of Energy," interesting passages dealing with the economic problems that confront the world today. Content with some references to these, I shall leave to others his more abstruse speculations.

An effort is made to trace the process by which material things are endowed with the qualities that we call spiritual, and to guess at the nature of the energy which may be responsible for this transformation. "Religion," says M. Lambert, "finds its true source, not in revelation or the imagination, nor in abstract reason, but in the progressive faculty of man to observe and interpret natural phenomena, which form a constant and omnipresent true revelation of the Supreme design." In other words, philosophy, morality, religion consist in observing and fulfilling the natural laws. In this manner alone can individuals or nations achieve peace and concord. M. Lambert even goes so far as to suggest that, by a series of metamorphoses, individualized energy, at first unconscious, is endowed successively with consciousness, will, intelligence and morality, passing finally into a spiritual state susceptible of harmony, love and "absolute and final happiness."

However this may be, man's economic relations are fundamental, since they embrace the vital needs (food, clothing and shelter), and since they are capable of providing the ease and leisure indispensable in attaining higher needs and satisfactions. By the nature of things, and thus by the Divine will, material well being is the necessary basis of intellectual development and morality. And morality or justice in economics relation is the necessary condition of spiritual progress for the individual, of harmony in private relations, in social contacts and international intercourse.

The sense of justice is developed as a result of trade, or of the exchange of services, for these transactions require a consideration of equivalent values and lead to a code of morality. The true balance of the things and services exchanged will be assured if the exchange is free and voluntary. In these circumstances prices and wages will be fair, and the ownership of property legitimate.

M. Lambert points out that the effort of will exercised in the production or appropriation of things and services is self-centered, whereas in exchange, where the practice of equivalence, equity and justice develop self control, a progressive morality engenders concord, happiness, moderation, quiet, tolerance, prudence, wisdom, sociability, sympathy, altruism and charity. Those who are engaged in the exchange of goods (whether as individuals or associations), should be both free and responsible for their actions, if the law of demand and supply is to function properly. The laws that permit members of corporations to dodge their natural responsibilities are as incompatible with economic freedom as is the protectionist system. Deprived of the compass of responsibility, the intelligence goes astray and conflicts are prolonged by abuses and injustice.

As the idea of justice (reflected in values, prices and wages), develops it creates greater and greater liberty, responsibility and equality. Through the sense of justice men escape from the domination of force. A new energy is liberated that may be called the soul. Eventually the mental and physical differences, so striking at present, might tend to disappear, thanks to education and the scientific knowledge of hygiene and diet. We should thus have a society composed of individuals exercising liberty and responsibility and moving in an ever more complex fusion towards the universality that is the final goal of a spiritualized humanity. Where, on the other hand, responsibility is limited by statute, the course of development will be retarded and may end in State supremacy and moral decay.

Democracy is, by definition, the only political arrangement that can further the desired result: government of the people by the people.

M. Lambert meets the land question squarely. Private property, he says, becomes unjust when it partakes of monopoly, or includes the raw materials which Nature offers freely to the race. He therefore regards as morally unjustifiable every law facilitating monopoly, "such as the private appropriation of land." Economic freedom, upon which man's destiny depends, demands the removal of legal privileges and monopolies and "protection" of all kinds; it implies free access for all human beings to the natural resources, and the repeal of immigration and emigration restrictions. The restitution to the human race of the value of the land and minerals wrongly appropriated by individuals, would be justly assured, he asserts, by a tax on the value or rent of land, as would the equal right of access to the natural resources. Economic rent would be collected by national governments while waiting for the economic union of peoples under a regime of free trade, and ultimate political federation of mankind.

"The earth is the common mother and nurse of humanity. All have equal rights to the good things she offers freely. No individual, no group, no people have an absolute or exclusive right to any portion of the planet. They must either cooperate in producing and exchanging freely, or fight; such is the dilemma. Democracies are no more able than autocracies to enjoy social and international peace so long as they have not accepted this truth with all its implications."

Touching on concrete international problems, M. Lambert says: "It is not without reason that Cobden defined free trade as the international law of the Almighty." The dilemma in Europe offers a choice between universal free trade or new world wars, chaos and a return to barbarism. This implacable dilemma has not been faced by the so-called statesmen assembled at Geneva because they were in fact adventurers, political charlatans, war profiteers, or nonentities. A specific proposal advanced is that there can be neither stability nor security in the world without an entente between England, France and Germany, a consortium alone capable of exercising a beneficent hegemony in Europe. The United States, he adds, "although well intentioned, is totally incapable, being versed in all our errors, having committed all our faults, often accentuating them—and without any of our excuses. Europe can expect nothing from the American nation, not even good counsel." It was M. Lambert's belief that the entente suggested, based on free trade, would end by imposing free trade on the whole of Europe.—FRANK W. GARRISON.

PAMPHLETS RECEIVED

The amount of excellent writing in defense of our principles is amazing. In this category we place "The Problem of Unemployment," by Don L. Thompson of Spokane, Wash., who has made a number of signal contributions in pamphlet form to the discussion of true economics. In the 24 pages and cover he treats of Why Jobs Are Scarce, Our Land Policy and Unemployment, The Machine Theory of Unemployment, The Short Work Day as a Remedy for Unemployment, etc. The pamphlet is sold for 25 cents and it is well worth it.

Dr. F. M. Padelford of Fall River, Mass., has issued a revised version of his "Economics of Democracy," which we trust will be widely circulated.

A few of the pamphlets containing the address of Benjamin W. Burger can be had by writing to LAND AND FREEDOM. This is almost indispensable to teachers and speakers and will soon be out of print.

"THE oldest discoverable forms of property in land were forms of collective property."—SIR HENRY MAINE.