

The Social Problem in Israel and Other Nations

IN essential features, the social and economic problem of ancient Israel, was the same as in other countries. All nations are overtaken, soon or later, by the double pressure of heavy taxes and concentrated land ownership. But among Gentile peoples this problem has been expressed in secular phraseology; whereas, in ancient Israel the problem clothed itself in religious terms, owing to the peculiar course of social development among the Hebrews. No other national evolution has enthroned a cult of desert origin over cities representing a previously rooted commercialism. This peculiar structural fact in Hebrew history made it possible to formulate reactions between the nomadic and the territorial points of view in terms of cult-rivalry. And thus, while the social and economic problem of ancient Israel was the same as in other parts of the world, there is a difference in the forms of expression, whereby the God-idea was uniquely welded into the process which at length gave rise to Judaism and Christianity.

"God and the Social Process," by LOUIS WALLIS.

PPRIVATE ownership in the soil has obtained among all nations; but, at the same time, it has always gravitated into the hands of the few. The problem was attacked in vain by Greece and Rome through readjustment of debts and interest. France guillotined her landed nobles, and reapportioned her soil among the peasantry. Russia's landed nobility was expropriated in the Red Terror. America more recently has undertaken to stay the concentration of land by legal moratoria and national guaranty of mortgage bonds. The mass of Great Britain's population was long ago swept off the soil into overcrowded centers where the productive capital of the middle class pays ground rent, and also carries a mounting burden of direct taxation. Since modern society has not thus far discriminated the moral and economic factors of its collective problem, we cannot, with frankness, go back twenty-eight hundred years into the past and blame the prophets of Israel for not opposing the institution of human slavery; nor should we pick flaws when they assail the concentration of private land ownership among a small clique of nobles, while ignoring the deeper question of individual proprietorship in the earth as a moral issue. . . . One of the greatest problems which ultimately confront all nations is that of recognizing the social character of land, while simultaneously guaranteeing secure and absolute private possession; so that the benefits of personal enterprise and work may accrue to the individual. But this problem has never been solved by any nation at any time during the course of history.

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Not A Free Advertisement

ABOUT a generation ago, it was common to hear people say that Miller & Lux could drive their herds a thousand miles through California without leaving their own lands. Miller & Lux, Inc., still control immense tracts of land throughout California. Through the Hearst papers they are exploiting these lands—"Controlled Irrigation Farm Lands." Get in on the ground floor. "There are prospects of recovery." Even "fool" Henry George folk know that the first indication of any kind of "recovery" at once is reflected in the price and rent of land. The *Los Angeles Times* says "Sit tight. Don't let go your holdings." They will have to come to you before they can "recover." Take your "share" of that "recovery" before the producers of future wealth get it.

Of course, thinking people know that the exploiters cannot grab wealth before it is produced, but they are few in number. The "masses" believe that wealth is handed down from those above in the social scale. It is they who "pay wages," and furnish employment. But the real exploiters know how to do the trick. They know that the only necessity is to get hold of the source of supply of all wealth—land. So today Miller & Lux, Inc.,—through ads in the Hearst papers—say "Put part of your funds into Controlled Irrigation Lands." Let us not forget that slogan. It is going to become very popular—in California! Sunny California waxes mighty torrid at times, especially in the "rich San Joaquin Valley," where these M. & L. lands lie unshaded out of doors in blistering heat. So there are those "Controlled Irrigation" channels through which these lands might be made profitable—or otherwise. That the lands in that Valley are rich in every quality necessary for agriculture, every one knows—who knows California. During the winters, when there is abundant rainfall, those lands blossom forth with the most gorgeous wild flowers—hundreds of varieties—that may be found anywhere on earth. But—from May until February—those lands are waterless as dust, except where there is "Controlled Irrigation," chiefly "controlled."

I wonder if the "ad" writer for Miller & Lux, Inc., is just naive, or if he is "putting over some Single Tax propaganda" on the boss. (If the latter, God bless him, however absurd the hope.) For here is a quote from the ad in the Hearst papers:

Many investors have found these Miller & Lux lands unusually profitable investments . . . They do not intend to farm the land themselves, but, based upon the experience of others, they expect it to yield a profitable return on their investments. No matter what might happen to their other holdings, they know that at all times the land is *there* . . . and it is *theirs!* . . . None of these men (and there are more like them) farm their lands. None of them expect to. Miller & Lux has helped them to get experienced farmers to operate their holdings and