

PREFACE

When we meet with a new interpreter, eager to impart a revelation, we set ourselves to challenge and compare his impassioned message with the ruling spirit of the age, the *Zeitgeist*, as the Germans call it. Thus when Mr. Verinder speaks of the land-usages and laws of our times, and sets against them the ancient orders and directions of the Pentateuch, we are aroused at once to question and to find out how this new view of possession and occupation fits in with the dominant thoughts of today. From these sacred books he builds a creed for working folk: that the earth is the Lord's, and that any occupier who claims more than the ancient Jubilee gave is a bold interloper; and he bases on these early Scriptural regulations a new brotherhood between the man of labor and the soil on which his sinews work.

There springs out of his argument another proof of the universal nature of the Bible. It is alike ancient and modern. He points out to us that private property in land is nothing but a survival of privileges won by the mailed fist. We know that the first settlement of the Jews in the land flowing with milk and honey was really a raid of moving "landgrabbers." After their bad times in Egypt, they fell on the natives of Palestine, drove them out, and took their place: as the missionaries of Jehovah they proclaimed that they had seized it for His use and in His Name; and they went on to show the world a better way of occupation, and a happier and more equable life.

Their main principle was that the holding of land, unlike the owning of commodities, carried with it a great social duty; land is the base of life, and to till the land the first of human tasks; not because a man owns it,