

APPENDIX

THE BELIEF THAT THE DOCTOR RECANTED

WHENCE came the rather widespread belief among Catholics that Dr. McGlynn made some kind of retraction or recantation of the Georgan land doctrine as a condition of his restoration to the priesthood? The reason is to be found in the obviously “inspired” statements regarding his restoration after his death, and in the official utterances of Church authorities of that time. Thus the New York *Sun*, in concluding the story of Dr. McGlynn’s activities outside of the Church, said:

Finally, Archbishop Satolli arrived here as the personal representative of the Pope in the United States. On Dec. 7, 1892, it was announced in the *Sun* that one of the first acts of the Apostolic Delegate would be to restore Dr. McGlynn to communion in the Church and to the priesthood. Not long after that, Dr. Burtzell, the personal friend of Dr. McGlynn, and a representative of Archbishop Corrigan, met Archbishop Satolli at the Catholic University in Washington. Both sides made concessions and the terms of restoration were agreed upon. Dr. McGlynn then went to Washington and was restored to all his priestly rights, privileges and functions on Dec. 23, 1892.

The *Sun*’s story was typical of many others, but the *Tribune* condensed the essential truth regarding his restoration in the following words:

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Finally, in 1892, in order to end the conflict, the Pope commissioned Cardinal Satolli with full power to act in the case. A full statement of his doctrines, together with those of Henry George, was furnished to Cardinal Satolli, and submitted by him to the five theologians of the Catholic University of America. They unanimously agreed that there was nothing in them contrary to the doctrines or teachings of the Church. Accordingly, Cardinal Satolli absolved him from excommunication and restored him to his priestly office.

Without making any downright misstatements of what occurred, the versions of Dr. McGlynn’s restoration given by authoritative Catholic publications manage to convey by their omissions and mode of treatment the impression that the Doctor did so modify his doctrine as to constitute some kind of retraction. Thus we find in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1911, pp. 24-25), the following:

Dr. McGlynn’s partisans organized themselves into what they called the Anti-Poverty Society. He addressed this body every Sunday until about Christmas, 1892, when, having ‘willingly accepted the conditions laid down by the Pope, he was absolved from censure and reconciled by Mgr. Satolli, the Apostolic Delegate. According to a published statement by Mgr. Satolli, the conditions were in this form: ‘Dr. McGlynn had presented a brief statement of his opinions on moral-economic matters, and it was judged not contrary to the doctrine constantly taught by the Church, and as recently confirmed by the Holy Father in the Encyclical ‘*Rerum Novarum*.’ Also it is hereby made known that Dr. McGlynn, besides publicly professing his adherence to all the doctrines and

teachings of the Catholic Church, has expressed his regret (saying that he would be the first to regret it) for any

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word or act of his that may have seemed lacking in the respect due to ecclesiastical authority, and he hereby intends to repair, as far as he can, any offense which may have been given to Catholics. Finally, Dr. McGlynn has of his own free will declared and promised that within the limits of a not long period of time, he will go to Rome in the spirit and intention which are becoming to a good Catholic and a priest.”

There is here no statement that Dr. McGlynn retracted, but in his “having willingly accepted the conditions laid down by the Pope” there is an intimation that he did; and in his regrets for words uttered in heat “that may have seemed lacking in respect due to ecclesiastical authority” we find the same thought. His consent to go to Rome is made to appear as an act of long-delayed obedience, though he had always proclaimed his willingness to go to Rome if restored to his priestly office, and when he went, he went not as a suppliant.

But the most unimpeachable evidence that there was no retraction comes from the partisans of Archbishop Corrigan. Outstanding among these was Arthur Preuss, for many years editor of the *Catholic Fortnightly Review*, later the *Fort-nightly Review*, and an ardent supporter of the Archbishop’s theory that the Georgean land doctrine was socialistic and contrary to Catholic doctrine and the Christian faith. When Henry George’s reply to Pope Leo’s Encyclical “*Rerum Novarum*” appeared, he had expressed amazement that a man like George should have had the temerity to offer reasons for disputing the truth as laid down by the Pope. It seemed to him a sort of sacrilege. And now, with Dr. McGlynn restored to communion and the priesthood without having retracted the obnoxious doctrine, it was obvious to him that “a mistake had been made,” but

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it was made by Mgr. Satolli and the University professors, not by the Pope.

Mr. Preuss never recovered from this shock, for in 1908, sixteen years after Dr. McGlynn’s restoration and eight years after his death, we find him publishing a book, *The Fundamental Fallacy of Socialism, An Essay on the Question of Landownership*,¹ in which the fallacies of the Socialists are not mentioned. He devoted it entirely to the land question and the Corrigan-McGlynn controversy. He covered the whole ground thereof, comparing Pope Leo’s Encyclical with Henry George’s reply, point by point, showing to his own satisfaction how entirely right the Pope had been and how entirely wrong George was. He identified Dr. McGlynn’s statement of the Georgean doctrine submitted to the University professors as the Georgean doctrine, pure and undefiled, and reiterated in the most positive way his belief that Mgr. Satolli and the professors had made a fatal mistake when they decided that there was nothing in that doctrine contrary to religion and the Catholic faith. He concluded his examination of the case with these words: **2**

We have demonstrated, by a minute and accurate examination of the tenets of Henry George and Dr. McGlynn, that their doctrine is essentially the same. We have demonstrated that their whole economic teaching is essentially embodied in the statement: “There is no private, but only common, ownership in land.” We

have, finally, demonstrated that this doctrine openly conflicts with natural reason, with the explicit teaching of Leo XIII, and with Holy Scripture. The opinion, therefore, of the professors who pronounced the Henry GeorgeMcGlynn Land Theory to contain nothing contrary to

1 B. Herder, St. Louis, Mo. (This book is out of print, but may be found occasionally through *The Bookseller*.)

2 Chap. VIII, pp. 150-154.

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the teaching of the Church has no value whatever. And in the reinstatement of Dr. McGlynn, as well as in the events connected with it, there is nothing that could be construed as a doctrinal decision or judgment from any ecclesiastical authority. The action of the Apostolic Delegate in the McGlynn case was of a merely disciplinary character.

Those who followed the events occurring soon after the arrival of Mgr. Satolli in this country will remember what a surprise to the public was the news of Dr. McGlynn's restoration, on December 23, 1892. Catholic writers and lecturers had stigmatized Henry George's theory of land ownership as contrary to the teaching of the Church and of Holy Writ. Dr. McGlynn, who had made the Georgean tenets his own, had chiefly on that account come in conflict with his ecclesiastical superiors. *Nevertheless, he was absolved from censure by Mgr. Satolli without being requested to retract his former teaching. This was and remained for many an insoluble riddle. . . •8*

Dr. McGlynn's absolution from ecclesiastical censures at the hands of the Apostolic Delegate was, under the circumstances, a great humiliation for Archbishop Corngan; for it made the steps which had been taken against the Doctor by his immediate ecclesiastical superior appear before the whole world as arbitrary and unjust. Yet the saintly Archbishop never uttered a word of protest, but preferred to be silent, after the example of his Divine Master.

What could the Archbishop have said?

It is useful to record that Mr. Preuss, in his contention that the Georgean land doctrine was "contrary to Holy Writ," was so greatly annoyed by the Mosaic law, "The

B Italics mine.

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land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. xxv, 23), that he dismissed it altogether with these words:

The whole Mosaic code ceased with the introduction of the new law,~ though the Ten Commandments, with the exception of some details evidently intended only for the "chosen people," were renewed by Christ and form part of the new law, which is to last to the end of time.

Regardless of what Mr. Preuss intended to prove, his book clearly proves that Pope Leo XIII recognized that a mistake had been made in the condemnation of the Georgean land philosophy and its priestly advocate. It should silence forever

those who may still retain a belief that Dr. McGlynn made any kind of recantation in order to secure his restoration, or that his land doctrine is still under the ban of the Church.

How may these conflicting views be reconciled, as they must be, since one truth cannot contradict another?

“*Rerum Novarum*” still stands as the authoritative utterance of Pope Leo XIII. Succeeding pontiffs and innumerable priests and prelates have quoted from it and endorsed it. It still seems to condemn the Georgean land doctrine. Its apparent inconsistency with the judgment of Mgr. Satolli and the Catholic University authorities in the McGlynn case puzzled many clergymen and laymen, and at last, in 1916, there appeared a book by the Rev. John A. Ryan, D.D., associate professor of political science of the Catholic University of America and professor of economics of Trinity College, published by the Macmillan Co., New York, under the title of *Distributive Justice: the Right and Wrong of Our Present Distribution of Wealth*, in which the author discussed the moral aspects of the entire (distnibu.

‘Compare with Matt. v, **17-18**.

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tive) process, “and, incidentally, to prove that there was no real conflict between the views of Pope Leo and those of Henry George.”

Dr. Ryan sets forth an accurate description of all the different systems of land tenure and ownership that humanity has practiced, at various times and places, and explains that the apparent contradictions between the utterances of Pope Leo and those of Henry George arose from the fact that they were talking of different aspects of land ownership, out of which arose Henry George’s misunderstanding of the Pope’s position.

We find on page 68 of this book, “The Teaching of Pope Leo XIII,” from which we quote:

The official teaching of the Church on the subject is found in the Encyclical “On the Condition of Labor,” by Pope Leo XIII. In this document we are told that the proposals of the Socialists are “manifestly against justice”; that the right of property in land is “granted to man by nature,” that it is derived “from nature, not from man, and the State has the right to control its use in the interest of the public good alone, but by no means to abolish it altogether.” These statements the Pope deduces from a consideration of man’s needs. Private property in land is necessary to satisfy the wants, present and future, of the individual and his family. Were the State to attempt the task of making this provision, it would exceed its proper sphere and produce domestic and social confusion.

While Pope Leo defined the natural right of private ownership as incompatible with complete socialism, that is, collective use as well as collective ownership, his statements cannot fairly or certainly be interpreted as condemning the Single Tax system, or any other arrangement which would leave to the individual managerial use

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and secure possession of his holding, together with the power to transmit and transfer it, and full ownership of improvements.

There follow several pages in which is elaborated the theme that the position which George attacked was not the position which the Pope had taken, that he “never touched him,” and the chapter concludes with these words:

While Henry George opposed the doctrines of the Encyclical in his “Open Letter to Pope Leo XIII,” all his arguments are directed against the proposition that private ownership is right and just. The “Letter” is an attack upon private ownership rather than a defense of the Single Tax. Apparently its author did not find that Pope Leo condemned any positive or essential element of the Single Tax as a proposed system of land tenure.

If the rejoinder is made that Pope Leo could have had no other group of persons in mind than the Single Taxers when he wrote the paragraph quoted above, our answer must be that he did not definitely identify them, either by naming them, as he named the Socialists, or by any other sufficiently explicit designation. Applying to this paragraph the customary and recognized rules of interpretation, we are obliged to conclude that it does not contain an explicit condemnation of the Single Tax system.

Thus, argues Dr. Ryan, the Pope’s position really was not what it seemed to be or what Henry George believed it to be, and there is no real inconsistency between the Encyclical and Dr. McGlynn’s restoration to the priesthood without recanting the Georgean doctrine. The Pope had asserted “the right of the State to control the use of the land in the interest of the public good,” and had no objec

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tion to the Georgean method of exercising this control through taxation.

Looking back at the events of half a century ago, the light of hindsight enables us to see that the Georgeists— even Henry George and the good Dr. McGlynn himself

—were in part responsible for the misunderstanding of their aims that existed and still exists in conservative circles in and out of the Church. To one who has comprehended the Georgean philosophy, parts of the Encyclical of Pope Leo seem childish, and Henry George’s reply seems a flawless bit of logic, yet, if he will but set his understanding of it aside for a moment and try to consider it as a proposition newly set before him for judgment, he will see less reason for criticising the Pope and more reason for questioning the wisdom of George’s bald assertion in “Progress and Poverty:” “*We must make land common property,*” while he really had no thought of disturbing a single existing title to land but merely desired to “control the use of land in the interest of the public good.” And, studying the Encyclical and George’s reply more carefully, it will dawn on him at last that there is warrant for the explanation that the word “ownership” did not connote to the two men quite the same idea. Dr. Ryan’s conclusion that neither Pope Leo nor any other Pope ever condemned the economic philosophy of Henry George may have been arrived at by reasoning which seems a bit attenuated in spots, yet, by asserting that very common genesis of many disputes, the use of words in differing senses, it does permit the unification of the private possession of land, which the Pope regarded as the essential of private ownership, with the security of private tenure and public appropriation of ground rent which George regarded as the essential of common ownership.

In conclusion, it is fitting that attention should be called

to a significant modification of the tone of the Vatican regarding economic matters which has been wrought by the logic of events since 1891, when Pope Leo XIII issued his famous Encyclical on The Condition of Labor, "Rerum Novarum." In 1931, forty years later, came the equally famous Encyclical by Pope Pius XI on the Reconstruction of the Social Order, "Quadragesimo Anno."

In this essay Pope Pius traverses the ground covered by his illustrious predecessor and approves all he said in defense of "property rights," without, however, being much more discriminating than was Leo as to what are indisputably property rights and what perchance may be property wrongs.

But on page 292, under the sub-caption "Mitigated Socialism," he discusses certain changes which he believes to have come over certain schools of "Socialism," which bring their program, "often strikingly," into close conformity with the just demands of Christian social reformers.

He continues:

If these changes continue, it may well come about that gradually the tenets of mitigated Socialism will no longer be different from the programs of those who seek to reform human society according to Christian principles.

For it is rightly contended that certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, since they carry with them an opportunity of domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large.

Just demands and desires of this kind contain nothing opposed to Christian truth, nor are they in any sense peculiar to Socialism. Those therefore who look for nothing else have no reason for becoming Socialists.

We can think of no "certain forms of property which must be reserved to the state since they carry with them an

opportunity for domination too great to be left to private individuals without injury to the community at large," except the forms of property which were denounced by Henry George and Dr. McGlynn. If the Church now prepares to lay claim to the doctrine proclaimed by these great men, they would be the last to dispute its right to do so, for both were unremitting in asserting that the doctrine was eminently and essentially Christian, and Dr. McGlynn again and again referred to it as "a plan to provide at God's table a place for all His children."

The state of the world at present suggests that a definite decision on the matter must be made, and that there is no time to lose in making it if civilization is to be saved.