

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Testament present a more or less continuing history of conflict between religion institutionalized and static, and prophetic religion, alive and dynamic, ever striving to raise man to higher and nobler conceptions of life and of God. Dr. McGlynn was a modern exemplar of prophetic religious, a fit brother of that prophet who many centuries before the Christian era had said: "What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God?"

Half a century has passed since Dr. McGlynn was excommunicated for "insubordination" in preaching an economic doctrine which his ecclesiastical superior declared to be "contrary to the Christian faith and Catholic doctrine." Forty-five years have elapsed since he was judged by the highest ecclesiastical authorities of the Church to have been guiltless of advocating anything contrary to that faith and doctrine and restored to the priesthood *without having retracted one jot or tittle of the economic philosophy which his Archbishop had condemned.*

The restoration was made, indeed, on a masterly restatement of that philosophy by the priest, a statement which aroused Henry George's unbounded admiration.

This restoration in itself constituted a tacit acknowledgment that his excommunication had been a dreadful mistake, but it is the only acknowledgment which the authorities of the Church have ever made. With the passing of time, his apology for things said in the heat of passion while the controversy raged has been twisted by his detractors into some sort of recantation or modification of the Georgean philosophy, but the evidence that there was no such modification or recantation is clear and ample, coming from his opponents as well as from himself and his friends. He continued to preach it on all proper occasions as long as he lived.

Wherefore the purpose of this book is twofold: First, to keep alive the memory of the great priest who, for the truth which he believed would free mankind from economic bondage, braved the power of the "ecclesiastical machine" and by his persistent refusal to compromise that truth finally prevailed upon the authorities of the Church to admit that he was right. Second, to dissipate a belief, widely but erroneously held, that the Georgean economic philosophy, for the espousal of which he had been condemned is still condemned by the Church as a species of Socialism. It is, and has been since Father McGlynn's vindication, "open doctrine," which Catholics are free to accept or reject according to the dictates of their judgment as they are to accept or reject any other politico-economic belief.

The importance of a correct concept or understanding of the economic philosophy of Henry George cannot be overestimated. The publication of *Progress and Poverty* in 1879 opened a new vista in the progress of civilization. Its diagnosis of the politico-economic distress of the world and the remedy it prescribed were accepted by millions of intelligent men and women in all walks of life as true and adequate. Even Pope Pius in his Encyclical Letter of 1981 has given in one of the passages of that great document clear indications that he entertains a favorable opinion of this Georgean philosophy.

The philosophy was rejected half a century ago without adequate examination. The logic of events has proven many of Henry George's contentions to be correct. Perchance it may yet prove to be the saving of civilization. At any rate, the nations cannot afford to ignore it, and the state of the world indicates that we can afford to

lose no time in solving its problems.

Fortunately for humanity and civilization, God has decreed that it is never too late to mend.

January 13, 1937 – Stephen Bell