

## CHAPTER VII

### GEORGE AND RELIGION

THE one great task of religion, for Henry George, was the justifying of the ways of God to man, and at such a task institutionalized religion had tragically failed. It had failed to demonstrate, he felt, that there was indeed a fatherhood of God and a brotherhood of man, for in a world which piously accepted poverty and wretchedness and flagrant injustice, God's ways were not mysterious but mischievous, and "fatherhood" and "brotherhood" were empty tropes. Religion had appeared to him timorous or indifferent when confronted by glaring wrongs; too often, like philosophy, it had fled to the ivory tower to be shielded from contamination, and then from its lofty seat had thundered against all evil, damning it as some elemental attribute, some primordial corruption or privation of divine essence. But to George it was smug blasphemy to declare that always there shall be the poor and the miserable. It was cowardice to flee from the squalor and brutishness of life even if the path of retreat bore the legend of individual salvation. And charity was hush-money. ✓

Yet George was a devoutly religious man, and all his work breathed a spirit of piety. He was certain that his mission was to justify the ways of the Creator, to show that poverty, and injustice, and all the perplexing absurdities that have made even the faithful wonder, must be traced not to God's forgetful equanimity but to the blindness and ignorance of man. Was not man's inhumanity to man the result of the

disregarding of natural law—that natural law which was the very word of God? George's religion meant a faith that revolted against the complacent acceptance of wrong, and scorned an arm's length warfare against it. All the fiery zeal of the prophet and the quiet confidence of the initiate were his, for he was sure that whatever vitality and worth lay in religion depended upon religion itself taking a hand in the battle against evil, and not in the issuing of proclamations condemning it. The religious spirit was to him always the crusading spirit, and it was as a crusade that he regarded his own efforts. Indeed, to describe George's work as essentially religious is perhaps to bring it more within the realm to which he felt it really belonged. He led the attack upon land monopoly in almost the spirit of a holy war; his economic postulates were the sacraments of a religion that was to make all men brothers and God a father whose ways could now be understood. Institutionalized religion had not concerned itself with that poverty and injustice, and to that degree had it failed.

George's distrust of institutionalized religion, however, did not carry over to the basic articles of faith upon which religion rested. The existence of God and the immortality of the individual human soul George accepted with a reverent confidence. In fact, except for a short time when as a young man in California he experienced the usual phase of boyish cynicism and rejected all forms of spiritual belief, he never did completely shake off his early pietistic training. But, as has so often been the case in the histories of individual religious experiences, George reinterpreted the religious discipline of his childhood in terms of his later convictions. The devoutness of his youth returned, after a period of eclipse, in a rationalized form which broadened and justified his early religious beliefs but did not fundamentally change them. The faith that had been taught him reappeared

against a richer background; it was transformed from a faith to a philosophy. He accepted the essential teachings of the Christian church, which as an institution he criticized, because he felt that were they correctly understood they would be recognized as a necessary corollary of economic freedom. George was not a Christian Socialist, as he sometimes has been described, for he was never a socialist, but certainly he may be considered a Christian, a Christian who followed the "cross of a new crusade."

Religion as an institution, however, was for George of the same nature as accepted political economy, a set of doctrines rigidly formulated and blindly followed, and acting too often as a method for preserving error, stifling opposition and serving a privileged class. It had become, he felt, almost an opiate to be administered to the discontented. The simple religious experience, so typically illustrated in early Christianity, was something which, in an unbalanced social order, became soiled and distorted, and hardened into an inappropriate apology for the very conditions that debased it. George held that the history of Christianity itself afforded a pointed illustration of how the freshness of a religious faith could be transformed into the stuffiness of a wordy and pharisaical dogma; and such a transformation he interpreted not as any change within religion itself, but as the result of pressure superimposed from without by a malformed economic system. The freshness of Christianity, or of any religion, could not live under institutionalism, for that meant inevitably control by the powerful and the wealthy.

This distinction between religious faith and the religious institution, between primitive or even Tolstoian Christianity and the Christianity of fashionable and richly appointed pews, is one that explains George's contrasting reactions to religion. It also explains why his doctrines were received by converts like Father McGlynn and the members of the Anti-

Poverty Society as a new gospel, a vindication of all that was worthy in Christianity, and why they were also interpreted by others as a justification for an attack upon the church as violent as any made by the socialists. George himself, while he never spared the absurdities of religious cant, always followed his attacks with a plea for a new understanding of religion, one that would bring the power of religious experience to the aid of the conflict against social wrong. If he could write that:

This is a most Christian city. There are churches and churches. All sorts of churches, where are preached all sorts of religions, save that which once in Galilee taught the arrant socialistic doctrine that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God; all save that which once in Jerusalem drove the money-changers from the temple.<sup>1</sup>

He also realized that:

. . . there is in true Christianity a power to regenerate the world. But it must be a Christianity that attacks vested wrongs, not that spurious thing that defends them. The religion which allies itself with injustice to preach down the natural aspirations of the masses is worse than atheism.<sup>2</sup>

He knew that there was a "perverted Christianity to soothe the conscience of the rich and to frown down discontent on the part of the poor,"<sup>3</sup> but there was also this interpretation of its teachings:

Here is the essential spirit of Christianity. The essence of its teaching is not, "Provide for your own body and save your own soul," but, "Do what you can to make this a better world for all." It was a protest against the doctrine of "each for himself and devil take the hindmost!" It was the proclamation of a common fatherhood of God and a common brotherhood of men. This was

<sup>1</sup> *The Land Question, Works*, Vol. III, pp. 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *The Science of Political Economy*, p. 174.

why the rich and the powerful, the high priests and the rulers, persecuted Christianity with fire and sword. It was not what in so many of our churches to-day is called religion that pagan Rome sought to tear out—it was what in too many of the churches of to-day is called “socialism and communism,” the doctrine of the equality of human rights! <sup>4</sup>

And “the Christianity that ignores this social responsibility has really forgotten the teachings of Christ.” <sup>5</sup>

In a sermon on “Thy Kingdom Come,” first delivered in Glasgow in 1889, George stated clearly and eloquently his conception of the significance of Christianity. It was an interpretation that may or may not have been good Christian exegesis, but it does indicate the attitude with which he approached the traditional problems and challenges proffered by Christianity. George believed:

. . . that a very kingdom of God might be brought on this earth if men would but seek to do justice—if men would but acknowledge the essential principle of Christianity, that of doing to others as we would have others do to us, and of recognizing that we are all here equally the children of the one Father, equally entitled to share His bounty, equally entitled to live our lives and develop our faculties, and to apply our labor to the raw material that He has provided. Aye! and when a man sees that, then there arises that hope of the coming of the kingdom that carried the Gospel through the streets of Rome, that carried it into pagan lands, that made it, against the most ferocious persecution, the dominant religion of the world. Early Christianity did not mean, in its prayer for the coming of Christ’s kingdom, a kingdom in heaven, but a kingdom on earth. If Christ had simply preached of the other world, the high priests and the Pharisees would not have persecuted Him, the Roman soldiery would not have nailed His hands to the cross. Why was Christianity persecuted? Why were its first professors thrown to wild beasts, burned to light a tyrant’s gardens,

<sup>4</sup> In an address on “Thou Shalt Not Steal,” before the Anti-Poverty Society, May 8, 1887. In *Works*, Vol. VIII (*Our Land and Land Policy*) pp. 251–252.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.

hounded, tortured, put to death, by all the cruel devices that a devilish ingenuity could suggest? Not that it was a new religion, referring only to the future; Rome was tolerant of all religions. It was the boast of Rome that all gods were sheltered in her Pantheon; it was the boast of Rome that she made no interference with the religions of peoples she conquered. What was persecuted was a great movement for social reform—the Gospel of Justice—heard by common fishermen with gladness, carried by laborers and slaves into the Imperial City. The Christian revelation was the doctrine of human equality, of the fatherhood of God, of the brotherhood of man. It struck at the very basis of that monstrous tyranny that then oppressed the civilized world; it struck at the fetters of the captive, at the bonds of the slave, at that monstrous injustice which allowed a class to revel on the proceeds of labor, while those who did the labor fared scantily. That is the reason why early Christianity was persecuted. And when they could no longer hold it down, then the privileged classes adopted and perverted the new faith, and it became, in its very triumph, not the pure Christianity of the early days, but a Christianity that, to a very great extent, was the servitor of the privileged classes. And, instead of preaching the essential fatherhood of God, the essential brotherhood of man, its high priests engrafted on the pure truths of the Gospel the blasphemous doctrine that the All-Father is a respecter of persons, and that by His will and on His mandate is founded that monstrous injustice which condemns the great mass of humanity to unrequited hard toil. There has been no failure of Christianity. The failure has been in the sort of Christianity that has been preached.<sup>6</sup>

George was very bitter against “the sort of Christianity that has been preached.” There was this inquiry, for example:

What sort of God is it that the Rev. Dr. Huntington worships and to whom the Episcopal collects and liturgy are addressed? Does the rector of Grace Church really think that the “most merciful Father,” “Our Father which art in heaven,” is really allowing

<sup>6</sup> *Works*, Vol. VIII (*Our Land and Land Policy*), pp. 289–291. George’s conception of the cause of the Roman persecutions does appear historically accurate, but it is strange to see Christianity upheld as teaching the supremacy of a kingdom on earth and not a kingdom in heaven. For George’s views on the person of Jesus, see *Life*, p. 548.

bitter injustice and want to continue among His children in New York City and elsewhere simply because the Episcopal Church does not formally ask Him every Sunday "to suffer not the hire of the laborer to be kept back by fraud"? . . . Is the want and suffering that exist in the centers of our civilization to-day, the bitter struggle among human beings to merely live, and the vice and the crime and the greed that grow out of that struggle, because of God's neglect or because of man's? Is it in accordance with the will of God or is it because of our violation of God's will? . . . Human laws disinherit God's children on their very entrance into the world. . . . If he [Dr. Huntington] ignores this wrong and robbery, and yet prays to God to relieve injustice and want, his prayer is an insult to God and an injury to man.<sup>7</sup>

And again:

"The poor ye have always with you." If ever a scripture has been wrested to the devil's service, this is the scripture. How often have these words been distorted from their obvious meaning to soothe conscience into acquiescence in human misery and degradation—to bolster that blasphemy, the very negation and denial of Christ's teachings, that the All-Wise and Most Merciful, the Infinite Father, has decreed that so many of his creatures must be poor in order that others of his creatures to whom he wills the good things of life should enjoy the pleasure and virtue of doling out alms! "The poor ye have always with you," said Christ; but all his teachings supply the limitation, "until the coming of the Kingdom." In that kingdom of God *on earth*, that kingdom of justice and love for which he taught his followers to strive and pray, there will be no poor. But though the faith and the hope and the striving for this kingdom are of the very essence of Christ's teaching, the staunchest disbelievers and revilers of its possibility are found among those who call themselves Christians.<sup>8</sup>

George's conception of Christianity, then, was of a militant Christianity, one that fought and crusaded not against infidels but against economic injustice. He attacked the religious institution not because of any peculiarly religious

<sup>7</sup> In the *Standard* of January 1, 1890.

<sup>8</sup> *Social Problems, Works*, Vol. II, p. 78.

shortcoming but because, as an institution, it ignored, either deliberately or unwittingly, the social causes that were the basis of nearly all human misery—and sin. If the church persistently disregarded the economic problems that have thrust themselves ruthlessly into individual life and have so often determined man's reaction to the traditional ethical questions, then, for George, in precisely that measure had it defeated the very ends for which it was ostensibly striving.

This clash between George's interpretation of Christianity and the doctrines of ecclesiastical institutionalism is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the Papal attempts to discipline one of George's most powerful and fervent disciples, the priest, the Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn, one who confidently sought to turn the strength of his religion to solving the riddle of social injustice. Here was an episode that was significant not only as an example of the conflicting religious attitudes that could be evoked by the consideration of an economic problem, but also as one of those rare instances when Rome has voluntarily reversed itself. It may be of some value, then, briefly to discuss the excommunication and reinstatement of Father McGlynn, and to indicate the official position of the Papacy toward George's proposals, for there is offered, in this matter of doctrinal theology, a striking commentary upon certain reactions of the religious institution.

The name of Father McGlynn<sup>9</sup> was first associated with

<sup>9</sup> The best accounts of the work and career of Father McGlynn are found in the New York newspapers and magazines during the first half of 1887 and the closing months of 1892, the periods of his excommunication and reinstatement. (In the Henry George Scrap Books in the New York Public Library, especially Vols. 12-16, there are collections of such articles.) A complete chronological account of the "McGlynn case" can be had from the files of George's newspaper, the *Standard*, for the very first issue, of January 8, 1887, opened with a discussion of the priest's suspension, and the entire course of the theological controversy was traced from that point on. The *Standard's* reports of the meetings of the Anti-Poverty Society, of which Father McGlynn was president, are also useful. Of special importance is the



the land question in 1882 while George was in Ireland on his first lecture trip. In that year Michael Davitt had come to the United States to arouse support for the Irish land movement, and it was at his first meeting in New York, in the old Academy of Music, that Dr. McGlynn delivered an address in which he definitely allied himself to the work of George and of the Irish Land League. This was no unknown priest who had joined the ranks of social reform but one of the most influential Catholic clergymen in the country, and an orator who had been classed with Henry Ward Beecher and Wendell Phillips. He had been born in New York City and had been educated for the priesthood at the Urban College of the Propaganda in Rome, where he spent ten years, finally becoming vice-rector of the newly established American College. In 1860, at the age of twenty-three, he received his Doctor of Philosophy and Sacred Theology degree and was ordained a priest in the Church of St. John Lateran at Rome. He returned to New York, held several pastorates in the poorer sections of the city, was made chaplain of the Military Hospital in Central Park during the last years of the Civil War, and, finally, in 1866, became pastor of St. Stephen's Church, which ministered to one of the largest and best-known parishes in the city. His unceasing work of personal charity among the poor, his constant and active interest in political reform in New York City, his lectures throughout this country and Canada on questions of government and

issue of February 5, 1887, in which Dr. McGlynn wrote a review of his own case. Biographical material and written memorabilia concerning Father McGlynn and selections from his speeches and writings may be found in the book of the late Sylvester L. Malone, *Dr. Edward McGlynn* (New York, Dr. McGlynn Monument Association, 1918). Vol. II of the *Life of Henry George* also contains a treatment of the work and personality of Father McGlynn. See also Professor Young's *Single Tax Movement in the United States* (*op. cit.*), especially pp. 111-118, and *The Single Tax Year Book*, compiled and edited by Joseph Dana Miller, editor of *Land and Freedom* (*op. cit.*), pp. 407-408 and 414-416.

religion, had brought him recognition as an outstanding Catholic cleric. Long before his association with Henry George he had been known and loved as the "priest of the people."

Dr. McGlynn's first public declaration of his support of the policies of George and the Irish Land League was followed by several other speeches at the Davitt meetings, and when George returned from Ireland one of his first acts was to make the acquaintance of this priest and disciple who was later to exert so powerful an influence upon the popular reception of his own doctrines. George had written from Ireland that Father McGlynn was the Peter the Hermit of a new crusade, and that "if Davitt's trip had no other result, it were well worth this. To start such a man [McGlynn] is worth a trip around the world three times over. He is 'an army with banners.'"<sup>10</sup> The meeting of these two men, both devoutly religious and both believing that in the search for the solution of economic problems lay the true end of religion, began a long friendship which, although interrupted for a time, proved to be not only a source of strength in the spread of George's ideas, but also an example of that real fellowship that comes of devotion to an ideal.

The defense of the Irish land movement by Father McGlynn did not, however, remain unnoticed by his ecclesiastical superiors. He was accused of favoring the "Irish Revolution" and several letters of complaint were addressed to Cardinal McCloskey of New York about the "priest McGlynn" by Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Propaganda. Dr. McGlynn was summoned to an interview with Cardinal McCloskey and the result was, in Dr. McGlynn's words, that:

I voluntarily promised to abstain from making Land League speeches, not because I acknowledged the right of any one to

<sup>10</sup> *Life*, pp. 386-387.

forbid me, but because I knew too well the power of my ecclesiastical superiors to impair and almost destroy my usefulness in the ministry of Christ's Church to which I had consecrated my life.<sup>11</sup>

This was not the first time that Father McGlynn had clashed with the Catholic authorities. Once before he had been reprimanded for his advanced doctrine on the question of education; he had insisted that secular instruction was the concern only of the State and not of the church, and that parochial schools could expect no financial support from the government.<sup>12</sup> Nor was this the first time that a clerical defender of the Irish cause, or more particularly of the Irish land movement, had been disciplined by Rome. All throughout the agitation of the late '70s and early '80s great numbers of the Irish clergy had rallied to the support of the "non-renters," and many had been summarily punished. It was this attempted disciplining of the Irish clergy that had led Daniel O'Connell to demand "as much religion from Rome as you please, but no politics!"<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> In the *Standard* of February 5, 1887. See also *Life*, p. 386.

<sup>12</sup> This idea was expressed by him most forcibly in an interview which appeared in the *New York Sun* of April 30, 1870, on "No Public Moneys for Private Schools." Later, in 1889, in a speech at Cooper Union on "Public Schools and Their Enemies," he stated his position even more strongly.

<sup>13</sup> This slogan was later used by George in the *Standard* articles on the McGlynn case.

Perhaps the most notable of the Irish priests who were silenced by their ecclesiastical superiors was the Bishop of Meath, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Thomas Nulty. In February, 1881, he had addressed a pastoral letter, devoted largely to the matter of land, to the clergy and laity of the diocese of Meath, which was followed, on April 2, by another letter, written at Mullingar, which contained an "essay on the land question." This second letter was also addressed to the clergy and laity of Meath, but, as Dr. Nulty indicated, he drafted it not in his capacity as bishop but rather as a layman writing an economic treatise. The letter was published in pamphlet form by Joseph Dollard of Dublin in 1881. This is a passage from it: "The land of every country is the gift of its Creator to the people of that country; it is the patrimony and inheritance bequeathed to them by their common Father, out of which they can, by continuous labor and toil, provide themselves with everything they require for their maintenance and support, for their material comfort and enjoyment. God was perfectly free in the act by which He created us; but, having created us, He bound himself by that act to provide us with the means necessary for our subsistence. The land is

Father McGlynn engaged in no further agitation for the Irish Land League; he was so bound by his pledge. He did not, however, interpret his promise to Cardinal McCloskey to mean that he was to put aside all interest in political or social questions, and in 1884 he gave his active support to the candidacy of Grover Cleveland. Then in 1886 he was faced with what is perhaps the most difficult problem that can confront the priest, the problem of conflicting allegiances. George had been offered the United Labor Party's nomination in the New York mayoralty election and it was to Dr. McGlynn that he first turned for advice. He was counseled to enter the campaign, and Father McGlynn, with his wide knowledge of political practices, helped in the early organization of George's followers. And now again the priest met the force of ecclesiastical discipline. Archbishop Corrigan wrote warning him to "leave aside" anything that would seem "to coincide with socialism" and to have no further "relations with Henry George."<sup>14</sup> In another letter, several days later, Father McGlynn was forbidden, under pain of suspension, "to take any part in any political meeting whatever without permission of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide," and

the only means of this kind now known to us. The land, therefore, of every country is the common property of the people of that country, because its real owner, the Creator who made it, has transferred it as a voluntary gift to them. *Terram autem dedit filiis hominum.* Now, as every individual in that country is a creature and child of God, and as all His creatures are equal in His sight, any settlement of the land of a country that would exclude the humblest man in that country from his share in the common inheritance would be not only an injustice and a wrong to that man, but, moreover, would be an impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of his Creator."

George interviewed Bishop Nulty for the *Irish World*, and the interview, which appeared on November 19, 1881, together with a long article on the land question which the bishop contributed to the *Irish World* on November 26, were the direct cause, as George intimated in his letters to Patrick Ford, editor of the paper, of the clergyman's later enforced silence. George wrote to Ford (November 10) that: "My visit to Bishop Nulty was most delightful. Instead of in anything falling below my anticipation he rather exceeds it. Here is a Christian Bishop. . . . I never met a man that seemed to me to so really fill the ideal of a Reverend Father in God. How I wish he were Pope."

<sup>14</sup> *Life*, p. 465.

specifically to absent himself from a meeting at Chickering Hall at which he was scheduled to speak.<sup>15</sup> But Dr. McGlynn did speak, and speak "as if he expected that night to be his last."<sup>16</sup> The next morning he was suspended from his church.

The suspension was originally for a two-week period. However, after the appearance of an interview in the *New York Tribune* of November 26, 1886, in which Father McGlynn upheld the teachings of George and specifically attacked a pastoral letter of Archbishop Corrigan that had condemned "certain unsound principles and theories" of private property, the suspension was extended to the end of the year, and the Archbishop laid the matter before the Cardinal Prefect of the Propaganda at Rome. Dr. McGlynn was then ordered to Rome but declined, and in his letter to Archbishop Corrigan he wrote that:

As I cannot go to Rome to give an account of my doctrine about land, I would say that I have made it clear in speeches, in reported interviews and in published articles, and I repeat it here: I have taught and shall continue to teach in speeches and writings as long as I live, that land is rightfully the property of the people in common and that private ownership of land is against natural justice, no matter by what civil or ecclesiastical laws it may be sanctioned; and I would bring about instantly, if I could, such change of laws all the world over as would confiscate private property in land, without one penny of compensation to the miscalled owners.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The meeting, which took place on October 2, was under the auspices of those supporters of George who were not connected with the labor movement. They included many clergymen and professors, and among those attending the meeting were Professor Daniel De Leon of Columbia, Professor David B. Scott of the College of the City of New York, the Rev. John W. Kramer, Charles F. Wingate, and Professor Thomas Davidson.

<sup>16</sup> *Life*, p. 465.

Before Father McGlynn's suspension he had sent George to Archbishop Corrigan for a personal interview, in order to show the Archbishop the type of man he was supporting. The meeting was friendly and courteous, but did not affect Dr. McGlynn's suspension.

<sup>17</sup> Letter of Dec. 20, 1886, which appeared in the *Standard*, Feb. 5, 1887.

The first issue of George's *Standard*, of January 8, 1887, was devoted largely to the "McGlynn Case," and although the disciplining of the priest had aroused attention in New York and throughout the country, the *Standard* was almost alone in its attack upon the church authorities. George, in this first issue, stated that he was devoting the attention of his paper to this purely ecclesiastical matter because he felt that it involved "the attitude of the greatest of Christian Churches towards the world-wide social movement of our times, and its decision will be fraught with the most important consequences both to the development of that movement and to the Church itself."

Father McGlynn was removed from his pastorate at St. Stephen's in the middle of January, but he continued to support the work of George and never for a moment did he consider that there was anything in his conduct that was at all contrary to his priestly vows. He was confident that there was a distinct separation between the realms of religious authority and of political action; the conviction that "in becoming a priest I did not evade the duties or surrender the rights of a man and a citizen,"<sup>18</sup> clearly expressed the attitude with which he approached the apparent conflict between his allegiance to the church and his economic reasoning. In fact, for him there was really no conflict between the two; he felt that as a priest his vow of obedience was "simply a promise to obey the church authorities in matters concerning the priest's duties of religion,"<sup>19</sup> but that as a man and a citizen and a fervent seeker after social justice, his opinions and actions were free so long as they were not "clearly contrary to the teachings of the Christian religion." After his suspension from his pastorate and even after his later excommunication, Father McGlynn never doubted that he was still a Catholic priest or that his conduct was any-

<sup>18</sup> Letter in the *Standard* (*op. cit.*).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

thing but that of a good Christian. Perhaps his most eloquent exposition and defense of the Catholic Church is found in the very address in which he lifted the "cross of a new crusade."<sup>20</sup> Here was a remarkable attempt, in an oration that must certainly be given very high rank,<sup>21</sup> to fuse the tenets of political economy with the ardor of religious enthusiasm. It was an endeavor that ambitiously undertook to uphold the teachings of Catholicism and to bring the power of the church to the service of social reform, at the same time insisting that the Catholic hierarchy had no authority over civil or political opinion. Father McGlynn's efforts to dissociate his church's jurisdiction from temporal affairs and yet to remain faithful to its principles are strikingly illustrated in several passages of his speech:

And while I do not admit that it is the province of the Christian church to minutely control—because of its custody of great general religious truths, and because she is the depository of priceless graces to men—the political interests of nations, or to define to them the complicated, the knotty and what would almost seem the insoluble questions of policies, of politics and of political economy; yet, at the same time, I cheerfully give permission to whomsoever will to denounce me as a traitor to that which I myself hold most precious, if on any platform I shall ever say a word against the truth that I have once taught, and that I shall teach, so help me God, as long as I shall live. . . . I repeat, and I shall never tire of repeating, that I find justification for loving every social cause, every economic cause, every political cause, whose object is the diminution—rather let us say the abolition—of poverty, for the diffusion of knowledge, for the refinement and

<sup>20</sup> "The Cross of a New Crusade" was delivered by Father McGlynn in the Academy of Music in New York, March 29, 1887, before a great audience consisting almost entirely of Catholics and especially of his former parishioners of St. Stephen's Church.

<sup>21</sup> The *New York Sun*, a paper that was by no means friendly to the George-McGlynn agitation, declared that "The Rev. Dr. McGlynn's address is entitled to rank with those great orations which at critical times and from the mouths of men of genius have swayed the course of public opinion and changed the onward movement of nations." (March 31, 1887.)

the civilization of these images of God all around us—a cause in which I must sympathize, and for which, as far as I can, I must speak and labor; and I never for a moment fancied on that, to me, most sacred day, when, full of reverence, I bowed before a Christian altar, to receive the consecration of Christ's priesthood, that I was to rise from the prostrate attitude any the less a man, any the less the citizen.<sup>22</sup>

This religious attitude with which he viewed the new gospel of George is evident in these words:

This new crusade, then, while, to use a modern phrase, there is nothing sectarian about it, is necessarily a religious movement. And permit me to say, and I am not at all singular in the saying of it, if it were not a religious movement you might at the very outset count me out of it; for I think that any cause, any movement, any object that enlists the thought of men and the affections of the hearts of men must have a religious inspiration, a religious justification and a religious consummation. . . . The cross of the new crusade is not raised in hostility to the cross of Christ. The very thought of a crusade and of the honored badge of a crusade—the holy ensign of the cross—is entirely borrowed from Him.<sup>23</sup>

The direct result of Dr. McGlynn's address was the founding of the Anti-Poverty Society. Such an organization had been previously suggested by Thomas L. McCready of the *Standard's* staff, but it was the religious note in the "Cross of the New Crusade" that inspired the forming of a society which sought "to spread, by such peaceable and lawful means as may be found most desirable and efficient, a knowledge of the truth that God has made ample provision for the need of all men during their residence upon earth, and that involuntary poverty is the result of the human laws that allow individuals to claim as private property that which the Creator has provided for the use of all." The first meeting took place in Chickering Hall on May 1, with Father McGlynn,

<sup>22</sup> Malone (*op. cit.*), pp. 18, 26-27.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 19.



who had been elected president of the organization, delivering the opening address.<sup>24</sup> Owing to the great crowd that was attracted to this first meeting, the following gatherings of the society were held in the Academy of Music, and every Sunday evening a pious yet militant band of converts listened to the words of Father McGlynn, George and other leaders of the movement.

An organization such as this, which was supported by hundreds of Dr. McGlynn's former parishioners who had remained loyal to him, served to widen still further the gap between the deposed priest and his superiors, and early in May he was notified that if he did not report in Rome within forty days he would be excommunicated. "Dr. McGlynn contented himself with his former reply that grave reasons would prevent his making the journey then,"<sup>25</sup> and as it became evident that he would be excommunicated, labor opinion in New York became deeply concerned. A parade of Catholic working men, estimated by the newspapers as numbering from thirty to seventy-five thousand marchers, protested against the impending excommunication at a great demonstration on the 18th of June. Yet the *Standard* still remained almost alone in its denunciation of the Catholic authorities.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> George wrote (in the *Standard* of May 7): "Never before in New York had a great audience sprung to its feet and in a tumult of enthusiasm cheered the Lord's Prayer; but it was the Lord's Prayer with a meaning that the churches have ignored. The simple words, 'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done *on earth* as it is in heaven,' as they fell from the lips of a Christian priest who proclaims the common fatherhood of God and the common brotherhood of man; who points to the widespread poverty and suffering not as in accordance with God's will, but as in defiance of God's order, and who appeals to the love of God and the hope of heaven, not to make men submissive of social injustice which brings want and misery, but to urge them to the duty of sweeping away this injustice—have in them the power with which Christianity conquered the world.

<sup>25</sup> *Life*, p. 493. The "grave" reasons were the advice of Dr. McGlynn's physician, who cautioned him against making the trip.

<sup>26</sup> George waxed very bitter and very eloquent in his *Standard* editorials. He wrote, for example, on June 25: "There stands hard by the palace of the holy inquisition in Rome a statue which has been placed there since Rome became the capital of a united Italy. On it is this inscription: 'GALILEO GALILEI was imprisoned in the neighboring palace for having seen that

Father McGlynn was excommunicated on the 3d of July, 1887. But this heaviest of ecclesiastical punishments made no change in his attitude. He was convinced that "once a priest, always a priest," and he was sure that he had been unjustly disciplined, since never, in any word or act, had he attacked the Catholic Church or departed from his duties as a Catholic priest. Archbishop Corrigan interpreted Dr. McGlynn's excommunication to mean that any sympathy for the deposed priest was in itself an act of disobedience to the church authorities, and he went so far as to refuse burial in the Catholic Calvary Cemetery to several Catholics who, although devout in their religion, had attended Father McGlynn's talks at the Anti-Poverty Society.<sup>27</sup> In addition, he disciplined the Reverend Dr. Richard Lalor Burtzell, one of the most prominent of Catholic scholars and a close friend of Dr. McGlynn, by transferring him from his church in New York City to a small parish upstate.

In the summer of 1887, Father McGlynn took an active part in the State convention of the United Labor Party, and after George's nomination for the position of Secretary of State he stumped the State in an active speaking campaign. The election, however, resulted in the break-up of the party, for not only was the socialist element alienated from the George forces, but also a large Catholic group; Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, had definitely withdrawn his support and George and McGlynn thereby lost many followers.

the earth revolves around the sun.' In after years when the true-hearted American priest shall have rested from his labors, and what is now being done is history, there will arise by the spot where he shall be excommunicated such a statue and such an inscription. And days will come when happy little children, such as now die like flies in tenement houses, shall be held up by their mothers to lay garlands upon it." And after the excommunication had been definitely announced, George declared in no uncertain language that: "The real cause of this excommunication . . . is that the priest against whom the heaviest bolt of Rome has been hurled has dared to preach the gospel of his Master; has dared to apply to the social institutions of the present day the essential teachings of Christianity." (July 16.)

<sup>27</sup> *Life*, p. 495.

Dr. McGlynn continued his work in the Anti-Poverty Society, but in the following year occurred the break between him and George which caused the latter to withdraw from the organization. The rupture arose over the question of supporting President Cleveland in the election of 1888. The President had definitely identified himself with tariff reform, and since free trade was so paramount an issue in the single tax proposals, George and the great majority of his followers felt that they should support Cleveland and the Democratic Party. To this Father McGlynn was vigorously opposed. Although he was a free trader and an admirer of the President, he refused to ally himself in any way with Tammany Hall and the Democratic Party, chiefly because the New York City Democratic organization had actively defended the church authorities in their disciplinary efforts, and, relying upon its important influence among Catholic voters, had attempted to make political capital out of the excommunication. Father McGlynn insisted that an independent labor party, formed upon the platform of the 1887 State convention, be supported in the national election. The final result of the dispute was that George, together with the members of the executive committee of the organization, withdrew, and Dr. McGlynn kept on with his Sunday evening meetings and retained the name of the Anti-Poverty Society.<sup>28</sup>

The most important episode, however, of the entire controversy between Father McGlynn and the church was yet to occur. It was the full reinstatement of the priest at the instance, not of Dr. McGlynn himself, but of the Papal authorities. The first hint that the Holy See had reconsidered its act of excommunication came in 1889, when Archbishop Satolli, Papal Ablegate to the Church in the United States, who had been sent to this country for the inauguration ceremonies of

<sup>28</sup> For an account of the dispute, see the *Standard* of February 18, 25; March 17, 24, 1889.

the Catholic University in Washington, telegraphed Father McGlynn granting him an interview. Dr. McGlynn, however, was on a lecture trip and was unable to meet the Ablegate before his departure from New York for Rome. But three years later, Archbishop Satolli again visited America and made it known that he had been instructed to inquire into the whole matter. He first interviewed Dr. Burtzell, who presented him with an exposition of the single tax proposals that had been endorsed by Father McGlynn. Father McGlynn himself then drew up a doctrinal statement<sup>29</sup> and submitted it to Monsignor Satolli, who, after examining it, forwarded the statement to the Catholic University at Washington, where it was reviewed by a committee of four church authorities.<sup>30</sup> The statement was declared "to contain nothing contrary to

<sup>29</sup> The statement may be found most conveniently in the *Single Tax Year Book*, pp. 414-416, and in Malone, pp. 47-51. It opens with this assertion: "All men are endowed by the law of nature with the right to life and to the pursuit of happiness, and therefore with the right to exert their energies upon those natural bounties without which labor or life is impossible. God has granted those natural bounties, that is to say, the earth, to mankind in general, so that no part of it has been assigned to any one in particular, and so that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry and the laws of individual peoples." After upholding the right of private property, Dr. McGlynn states that: "The assertion of this dominion by civil government is especially necessary, because, with the very beginning of civil government and with the growth of civilization, there comes to the natural bounties, or the land, a peculiar and increasing value distinct from and irrespective of the products of private industry existing therein. This value is not produced by the industry of the private possessor or proprietor, but is produced by the existence of the community and grows with the growth and civilization of the community. It is therefore called the unearned increment. . . . The justice and the duty of appropriating this fund to public uses is apparent, in that it takes nothing from the private property of individuals, except what they will pay willingly as an equivalent for a value produced by the community, and which they are permitted to enjoy. . . . To permit any portion of this public property to go into private pockets, without a perfect equivalent being paid into the public treasury, would be an injustice to the community. Therefore, the whole rental fund should be appropriated to common or public uses." Father McGlynn's concluding passages are devoted to outlining the effects of the single tax. It is altogether a concise and unequivocal statement of economic doctrine.

<sup>30</sup> The four professors were: Rev. Dr. Thomas Bouquillon, then Dean of the Theological Faculty; Rev. Dr. Thomas O'Gorman, afterward appointed Bishop of Sioux Falls; Rev. Dr. Thomas J. Shahan, the late head of the Catholic University, and Rev. Dr. Charles Grannan.

Catholic teachings." Thereupon Dr. McGlynn professed his complete acceptance of the doctrines of the Catholic Church and withdrew whatever words of disrespect he might have offered to the Holy See during his period of excommunication. However, he did not go into retreat, as was the custom for those of the clergy who were about to be reinstated, for that, he explained to Monsignor Satolli, would have been interpreted as a punishment for his economic opinions. Furthermore, he insisted that he be permitted to expound his single tax convictions at the Anti-Poverty Society meetings or wherever an opportunity presented itself, and it was with such an understanding that on December 23, 1892, the Papal Ablegate announced from Washington that "Dr. McGlynn was declared free from ecclesiastical censures and restored to the exercise of his priestly functions, after having satisfied the Pope's legate on all the points in his case."<sup>31</sup> On Christmas Day Father McGlynn celebrated mass for the first time in five years. And in the evening he addressed the Anti-Poverty meeting.

Three weeks later Archbishop Satolli drew up a lengthy statement<sup>32</sup> reviewing the case, in which he declared that "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*." In June of 1893 Father McGlynn visited Rome and was graciously received by the Pope, who gave him his apostolic blessing. Dr. McGlynn later became pastor of St. Mary's Church in Newburgh, N. Y., and remained there until his death in 1900. His friendship with George was renewed shortly after his reinstatement, and at George's funeral he delivered one of his most impressive orations. He never relaxed in the advocacy of his economic doctrines and

<sup>31</sup> Malone, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

he remains, with the possible exception of George himself, the most popular and influential figure in the early single tax agitation.

There are several significant aspects of this incident of church discipline that may justify this apparent digression into the details of the McGlynn case. One is suggested in the words of Monsignor Satolli, who found that there was nothing in Father McGlynn's "opinions on moral-economic matters" that was contrary to "the doctrine constantly taught by the church." It would of course be patently absurd to intimate that such an isolated statement, even were it a sentence from a Papal encyclical, might be interpreted as some atavistic reminiscence of early Christian communism. Certainly there are no stronger defenders of all forms of private property than the institutions of present-day religion. Yet there must be a dim recognition, even if it does not lead to any overt action by Christianity, of what George liked to think of as the "social justice" mission of Jesus. And especially in Catholicism must there be some recollection, not perhaps of that first vague aspiration of primitive Christianity, but rather of the unambiguous patristic teachings concerning property, and particularly, in this connection, landed property. It is not necessary, or rather it is not possible, here to discuss the land views of the church fathers, especially since their communistic approach to property is fairly familiar.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, their utterances have perhaps no sig-

<sup>33</sup> A few scattered comments of the patristic writers regarding landed property may be presented here; these are merely casually and accidentally discovered quotations, no attempt having been made, obviously, to have investigated the question.

" . . . This earth, whence their gain came, is given to all men to be held in common, and therefore produces for all men common nourishment. . . . He argues, therefore, wrongly, who argues that he is innocent if he appropriates specially to himself the good things which God gave us for common use. . . . Therefore, when we give the poor what they require, we give them their own, not ours; and we can more rightly say that we pay them a debt, than that we act generously towards them . . . It is reason-

nificance for modern Catholic political economy. Much of the work of the Latin fathers in economics, if not in theology and philosophy, has been recognized, and by the church itself, as anachronistic, and what may have been scattered glimpses of profound social truths have gone the way of the mediæval doctrine of interest. Yet, a nineteenth century Papal Ablegate found in George's single tax nothing contrary to "the doctrine constantly taught by the church." And while it must again be insisted that such a declaration cannot be made the basis for any gratuitous excursion into the teachings of the Catholic Church on the question of private property in land, especially since property in land was specifically defended in the encyclical on the "condition of labor," which shall be considered shortly, nevertheless it has definitely stamped the opinions of Father McGlynn and George as Catholic "free doctrine"—"Catholics are free to hold the doctrine [of the single tax] or not to hold it as they see fit."<sup>34</sup>

The effect of the McGlynn controversy upon George was to widen still further the gap that he had recognized between the religious spirit and the religious institution. On the one hand his own conception of the religious power in

able for us to enjoy in common that which is given to us from the common property." Gregory the Great, in his *Pastoral Care*. (The English translation is that of Henry Sweet from King Alfred's West-Saxon version of Gregory's work; Early English Text Society, London, Trübner, 1871, Vol. XLV to L, pp. 334-336.)

"God has ordered all things to be produced so that there should be food in common to all and that the earth should be a common possession for all. Nature, therefore, has produced a common right for all, but greed has made it a right for a few." St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy*, Chap. XXVIII, Sec. 132 (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*; Shaff and Wace ed., New York, Scribner, 1896, Vol. X, p. 23).

There are several other quotations which the writer has been unable to locate specifically, but which may be mentioned here. One is from Tertullian, "The land is no man's property; none shall possess it as property." Another from Cyprian, "No man shall be received into our communion who sayeth that the land may be sold. God's footstool is not property." There are also several interesting statements from the *Divine Institutes* of Lactantius, which, however, are too long to be quoted—neither have they been verified specifically.

<sup>34</sup> See Malone (*op. cit.*), p. 6.

his "moral-economic" system was strengthened and, in a sense, justified; in the person of Father McGlynn and in the devout gatherings of the Anti-Poverty Society were crystallized all that vague force of fervent protest against social wrong which George felt to be the very basis of religion. And on the other hand his distrust of religious institutionalism, although offset to a degree by the final disposition of the controversy,<sup>35</sup> was confirmed and embittered. He wrote, for example, in 1891:<sup>36</sup> "How sad it is to see a church in all its branches offering men stones instead of bread, and thistles instead of figs. From Protestant preachers to Pope, avowed teachers of Christianity are with few exceptions preaching almsgiving or socialism and ignoring the simple remedy of justice." On the same day he wrote a similar letter to his Irish friend, Father Dawson:

But it is very sad to see the general tendency on the part of all clergymen—and it is quite as marked, perhaps even more so, among the Protestant sects even to the Unitarian—to avoid the simple principle of justice. As Tolstoi has put it, they are willing to do anything for the poor except to get off their backs. This is leading them into the advocacy of socialism, and to all sorts of dangerous

<sup>35</sup> In a letter to Dr. McGlynn, George expressed his intense satisfaction with the act of reinstatement by Pope Leo XIII: "My appreciation of the present Pope, greatly increased by the Encyclical, has been steadily growing, and since the errand of the Ablegate has developed, has reached the highest point. It would previously have seemed incredible that such radical, comprehensive and far-reaching action would have been the work of his surroundings and age. Nothing that I can recall has so surprised and gratified me. For the powers linked against it have seemed too great to be broken down save in long years. It seems indeed as if a greater power had on all sides overruled evil for good." (Quoted by Father McGlynn at a meeting of the Anti-Poverty Society, January 15, 1893; cited by Malone, p. 52.) Even before Dr. McGlynn's reinstatement George appreciated the possible contrast between Catholic doctrine and the Catholic hierarchy. He wrote to Father Dawson (Dec. 9, 1888): "You understand my feelings towards the Catholic Church, but there are many—even of Catholics—who do not understand the distinction Catholic theology makes between the Church and Church officialism. . . . Some time after the fight is over, we shall have a Pope condemning private property in land. We shall not be here; but I have faith we shall be somewhere."

<sup>36</sup> To a friend, James E. Mills (May 18).



things, even to the acceptance and even advocacy of principles which will lead ultimately to atheism.

The spectacle of a priest being disciplined by his superiors because, although a godly and zealous cleric, he had sought to make his religion a force in the search for economic justice was, for George, a travesty upon religion. And therefore the apparent change of attitude on the part of the Catholic hierarchy, as reflected in the reinstatement of Father McGlynn, was of the utmost significance for him, especially since his own work, he felt, had been at least partially responsible for that about-face. This work was his reply to the much-discussed encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on *The Condition of Labor (Rerum Novarum)*, and it was a work that may be considered as probably the most important tangible product of the McGlynn case.

On the 15th of May, 1891, there was addressed to "our Venerable Brethren, all Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World," a Papal letter<sup>37</sup> which was prompted by the fact that "the spirit of revolutionary change, which has so long been predominant in the nations of the world" had "passed beyond politics and made its influence felt in the cognate field of practical economy."<sup>38</sup> The letter recognized that:

The elements of a conflict are unmistakable: the growth of industry, and the surprising discoveries of science; the changed relations of masters and workmen; the enormous fortunes of individuals, and the poverty of the masses; the increased self-reliance and the closer mutual combinations of the working popula-

<sup>37</sup> For the text of this encyclical see George's *Works*, Vol. III, Part II. The following quotations will be from that volume. In connection with this encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the recent encyclicals of Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (May 15, 1931, the fortieth anniversary of *The Condition of Labor*); *Nova Impendet* (October 2, 1931), and *Charitas Christi* (May 3, 1932), may be mentioned as presenting other important economic essays.

<sup>38</sup> *Works*, Vol. III, p. 109.

tion; and, finally, a general moral deterioration. The momentous seriousness of the present state of things just now fills every mind with painful apprehension; wise men discuss it; practical men propose schemes; popular meetings, legislatures, and sovereign princes, all are occupied with it—and there is nothing which has a deeper hold on public attention. . . . There can be no question whatever, that some remedy must be found, and quickly found, for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor.<sup>39</sup>

Here, then, was a recognition of social problems, and, apparently, a promise of some carefully reasoned attempt to solve the riddle that had sent George and other reformers on their separate paths of investigation. But no such attempt was forthcoming, for, after a cursory examination of the more serious economic and political proposals for changing the conditions of “misery and wretchedness” among “the very poor,” they were all condemned as “socialistic,” and the remedy offered was, instead, that:

. . . Masters and rich men must remember their duty; the poor whose interests are at stake, must make every lawful and proper effort; and since Religion alone, as We said at the beginning, can destroy the evil at its root, all men must be persuaded that the primary thing needful is to return to real Christianity, in the absence of which all the plans and devices of the wisest will be of little avail. . . . For the happy results we all long for must be chiefly brought about by the plenteous outpouring of Charity. . . .<sup>40</sup>

It will not be necessary to examine the Papal arguments against socialism except to indicate that almost all of the non-theological reasoning against collectivism, that is, those attacks which were strictly economic in character, were con-

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–110.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150–151. It is true that the Pope also suggested the benefits of benevolent and Christian working men's associations, and of some form of governmental regulation of working conditions; but inasmuch as he condemned the entire theory of socialism, such proposals were necessarily superficial and palliative, not to be ranked with the religious approach.

fined, with little exception, to the suggestions of the land reformers. There is scarcely a mention of capital or interest in the encyclical, and, excluding those passages which concern the more strictly political proposals of socialism, there is no mention of any of the fundamental reasoning of the Continental school. The doctrines attacked are labeled "socialistic," but they are essentially those of George. For example, in referring to the right of private property, the Pope gives, as illustration, only property in land:

Thus, if he [the workman] lives sparingly, saves money, and invests his savings, for greater security, in land, the land in such a case is only his wages in another form; and consequently, a working man's little estate thus purchased should be as completely at his own disposal as the wages he receives for his labor.<sup>41</sup>

Other types of private property were introduced only parenthetically; land nationalization seemed the only type of "socialism" with which the Pope was concerned.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, the fallacy of confusing the proposals of George and his followers with those of *bona fide* socialism was exhibited so strikingly in the encyclical, and there was so flagrant a disregard of any attempt to discriminate between conceptions which were diametrically opposed, that the Papal letter was

<sup>41</sup> *Works*, Vol. III, p. 111.

<sup>42</sup> For example, in attempting to explain away the traditional demands for a community of property—the Pope does not mention that such demands were characteristic Christian tradition—the letter confines itself entirely to landed property, and furthermore is not beyond employing a bit of unusual reasoning: "And to say that God has given the earth to the use and enjoyment of the universal human race is not to deny that there can be private property. For God has granted the earth to mankind in general; not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they please, but rather that no part of it has been assigned to any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's own industry and the laws of individual peoples. Moreover, the earth, though divided among private owners, ceases not thereby to minister to the needs of all; for there is no one does not live on what the land brings forth. Those who do not possess the soil, contribute their labor; so that it may be truly said that all human subsistence is derived either from labor on one's own land or from some laborious industry which is paid for either in the produce of the land itself or in that which is exchanged for what the land brings forth." (Pp. 113-114.)

interpreted by many who were interested in the work of George, and especially in its expression as a theological question in the McGlynn case, as a direct attack upon that work. George himself felt that his proposals were singled out as a special target;<sup>43</sup> Cardinal Manning in London expressed himself the same way,<sup>44</sup> and Archbishop Corrigan in New York "hailed the Papal letter as the highest sanction of his own opposition to the single tax doctrine as preached by Dr. McGlynn and Henry George."<sup>45</sup>

Whether or not the encyclical was directed particularly against the proposals of the single taxers, George took this opportunity to present his doctrine again in a suave and polished piece of polemical writing. Especially did he wish to distinguish his conceptions from those of the socialists and to emphasize the religious and ethical implications involved in his system.<sup>46</sup> The book, for his answer to the encyclical developed into a small volume of some twenty-five thousand words, was published in New York, London and Rome in the form of an open letter to Pope Leo XIII, with the date of September 11, 1891. It was called *The Condition of Labor*, the same title as that of the Pope's letter. A handsomely printed and bound copy was presented to the Pope, but George never received any acknowledgment of his work from the Holy See.

The religious character of George's reply was clearly indicated in the opening words of his letter:

<sup>43</sup> He wrote that: "For my part, I regard the encyclical letter as aimed at us, and at us alone, almost. And I feel very much encouraged by the honor." (*Life*, pp. 565-566.) Also in his letter to the Pope, he stated: "Your Encyclical will be seen by those who carefully analyze it to be directed not against socialism, which in moderate form you favor, but against what we in the United States call the single tax." (*Works*, Vol. III, p. 102.)

<sup>44</sup> *Life*, p. 565.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> George wrote to his son shortly after the work was finished: "What I have really aimed at is to make a clear, brief explanation of our principles; to show their religious character, and to draw a line between us and the socialists. I have written really for such men as Cardinal Manning, General Booth and religious-minded men of all creeds. . . . I think I have done a good piece of work and that it will be useful and will attract attention."

Our postulates are all stated or implied in your Encyclical. They are primary perceptions of human reason, the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith. We hold: That—This world is the creation of God. The men brought into it for the brief period of their earthly lives are the equal creatures of His bounty, the equal subjects of His provident care. By his constitution man is beset by physical wants, on the satisfaction of which depend not only the maintenance of his physical life but also the development of his intellectual and spiritual life. God has made the satisfaction of these wants dependent on man's own exertions, giving him the power and laying on him the injunction to labor—a power that of itself raises him far above the brute, since we may reverently say that it enables him to become as it were a helper in the creative work. God has not put on man the task of making bricks without straw. With the need for labor and the power to labor He has also given to man the material for labor. This material is land—man physically being a land animal, who can live only on and from land, and can use other elements, such as air, sunshine and water, only by the use of land. Being the equal creatures of the Creator, equally entitled under His providence to live their lives and satisfy their needs, men are equally entitled to the use of land, and any adjustment that denies this equal use of land is morally wrong.<sup>47</sup>

That religious note was continued throughout; indeed, Professor Ritchie characterized the controversy as a “dispute between those two scholastic theologians, Mr. Henry George and Pope Leo XIII.”<sup>48</sup> George, however, was writing a letter of criticism to the Pope, and since the encyclical dealt with theology rather than with political economy, there may be some excuse for his rôle of “scholastic theologian.” But it is precisely this religious approach to his economic concepts that is of interest in this connection, and it will not be necessary here to examine the arguments of George against the more strictly economic sections of the Papal letter; they were largely a restatement of opinions that had been expressed many times before. George made his usual distinction be-

<sup>47</sup> *The Condition of Labor*, (*Works*, Vol. III, *The Land Question*), pp. 3-4.

<sup>48</sup> *Natural Rights* (London, Allen and Unwin, 3d ed., 1916), p. 270.

tween the different forms of private property, that is, between property in land and property in the products of labor, and he treated with little ceremony the Pope's proposed criterion of the validity of private property, namely, that it is in "the power of disposal that ownership consists, whether the property be land or movable goods." George quite neatly demonstrated that such a standard of private property completely justified slavery. He also was particularly concerned with the contrast between his proposals and those of socialism, and the very suggestions of the Pope, such as State regulation of employment, of working conditions and wages, which, although they appeared alongside of a violent denunciation of socialism, George showed to be essentially socialistic.

But it is to the religious aspect of George's reply that we must turn again if his attitude in this controversy is to be completely understood; his belief that "the social question is at bottom a religious question" is the explanation of his attempt to join theology and political economy. That such a suggested relation is one that lays itself open to criticism is, of course, obvious.<sup>49</sup> Certainly theology is not political economy, and when the discipline of one is transposed to the other there is, if nothing else, a clash of techniques. But George's conception of the oneness of the social and the religious ideal was something more than merely a trespass upon the preserves of an alien field of thought. It was clearly a method of approach to those ethical considerations which were always his guide; it was an attitude of mind that lent religious fervency to social programs. This view of the coincidence of the social and religious questions is eloquently expressed by George in one of his *Standard* articles (July 28, 1888):

<sup>49</sup> Professor Young, in discussing the activity of the Anti-Poverty Society, holds that it brought about "that confusion of the realms of religion and political economy which is to the detriment of each." (*The Single Tax Movement in the United States*, p. 115.)

The men who have worked, the men who will work, the men who can be counted on everywhere and every time till death closes their eyes, are those to whom this reform appeals from the moral, the religious side; those who see in it not a mere improvement in taxation, but a conforming of our most important social advantage to the law of justice, to the will of God; a restoration to the disinherited of the bounteous provisions which the Intelligence that laid the foundations of the world and brought men upon it, has provided for men. And so, while we point out the fiscal advantages of the single tax, while we show how it will reduce their burdens and increase their incomes, let us never lay aside the appeal to higher principles—never seek to gain recruits by presenting to others in the light of a trading expedition that shall bring back much gain to those who participate in it, what to us is really a crusade. The unenlightened selfishness which brings want amid all the elements of plenty, which forces us to stint where we might enjoy, which converts into barren wastes what ought to be gardens, and makes life a drudgery where it might be a development, cannot be cast out by enlightened selfishness. . . . And it is to the quick and sure moral sense, rather than to the slower and duller intellectual perceptions that we can most successfully appeal.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the line of thought that thrusts itself forward most insistently, and undoubtedly to many most distastefully, in George's letter is not this type of approach to the questions

<sup>50</sup> This religious appeal of George's work is noted by C. B. Fillebrown, the economist: "Some chapters of *Progress and Poverty* were written in a spirit of almost apocalyptic fervor, and it was this that gave it its wide currency. It was a beautiful vision to the outclassed and disinherited. . . . Here was a man who had seen a vision and pointed a way to deliverance. So the people read his works and joined in the new crusade against unjust power and privilege. And in their leader there was no pretense. He believed implicitly in himself and in his gospel. . . . All these facts must be understood in order to appreciate *Progress and Poverty*. It is, in a sense, a theological work as well as an economic textbook. It is, on the one hand, an attempt to reconcile the concept of a beneficent deity with the poverty and misery of mankind, and, on the other hand, to analyze the cause of this same poverty and misery by a coldly intellectual process and to find the remedy therefor. . . . His doctrine had come to him as a vision and he preached it with the absolute self-confidence of one of the Hebrew prophets foretelling the new Jerusalem. It was this that gave him his immense popularity with the masses. He held out to them the promise of deliverance from poverty." (*The Principles of Natural Taxation*, Chicago, McClurg, 1917, pp. 40-41).

of ethics and political economy and religion, but is rather the concern with a divine system of teleology in economics. It is a concern that must seem to economists as strange and singular, as a species of scholastic reasoning that has no place outside of a technical theological discussion. George's interest in the manifest purpose of God's will in economic affairs appears as perhaps the most insistent element in the letter, not because of any particularly lengthy treatment but because it is taken by him as almost a self-evident postulate. As an illustration of the point that is being suggested here is this passage from the work:

Nor do we hesitate to say that this way of securing the equal right to the bounty of the Creator and the exclusive right to the products of labor is the way intended by God for raising public revenues. For we are not atheists, who deny God; nor semi-atheists, who deny that he has any concern in politics and legislation. . . . Now, He that made the world and placed man in it, He that preordained civilization as the means whereby man might rise to the higher powers and become more and more conscious of the works of his Creator, must have foreseen this increasing need for State revenues and have made provision for it. That is to say: The increasing need for public revenues with social advance, being a natural, God-ordained need, there must be a right way of raising them—some way that we can truly say is the way intended by God.<sup>51</sup>

And again:

That God has intended the State to obtain the revenues it needs by the taxation of land values is shown by the same order and degree of evidence that shows that God has intended the milk of the mother for the nourishment of the babe.<sup>52</sup>

It is evident, then, that the coincidence between the social and religious ideals, which is probably the most suggestive implication in George's conception of Christianity, was regarded by him (at least in this answer to the Pope) as valid

<sup>51</sup> *The Condition of Labor*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.



only to the degree that it rested upon a supreme intelligence that had disclosed to man, through the operation of natural law, its purposeful consideration of social affairs. In fact, his own economic proposals seemed to George essentially removed from the realm of human control to that of divine prescience. "This we propose," he wrote concerning his fiscal suggestion, "not as a cunning device of human ingenuity, but as a conforming of human regulation to the will of God."<sup>53</sup>

The real strength of George's letter did not, of course, lie in any such presentation of divine purpose; nor did its persuasiveness attach itself to his economic arguments, for, although cogent and convincing, they were not peculiar to this particular work. Its appeal, rather, was in the direct challenge to the power of institutionalized religion, as exemplified in its most majestic figure, to put aside, not its neglect of social evils (for George realized that the encyclical was indeed a sincere effort to investigate the "condition of labor"), but its attempt to solve them by pious exhortations and tepid Christian socialism. It was an appeal that, coming as it did during the period of the McGlynn excommunication, could not have been easily disregarded; but it was more than a bit of opportunism. It was a gallant attempt, on the part of George, not only to turn the Pope's economic reasoning from palliatives to fundamentals, but also to enlist the active and whole-hearted support of religion, as expressed in the Catholic Church, in the cause of social reform. Such an overt interest, George held, was the manifest duty of religion. In fact, he endeavored to shift the attack which had been directed in the encyclical against his own proposals to the neglectful attitude of religion itself; he was not apologizing—he was accusing.

Herein is the reason why the working masses all over the world are turning away from organized religion. And why should they

<sup>53</sup> *The Condition of Labor*, p. 9.

not? What is the office of religion if not to point out the principles that ought to govern the conduct of men toward each other; to furnish a clear, decisive rule of right which shall guide men in all the relations of life? . . . What is the use of a religion that stands palsied and faltering in the face of the most momentous problems? What is the use of a religion that whatever it may promise for the next world can do nothing to prevent injustice in this? . . . Is it any wonder that the masses of men are losing faith?<sup>54</sup>

To ignore social injustice was to defend it, and "Shall we to whom this world is God's world—we who hold that man is called to this life only as a prelude to a higher life—shall we defend it?"<sup>55</sup>

This devoutness, this sincere insistence upon the responsibility that faced religion, and, above all, what may be termed the "God-justifying" tenor of the letter, could hardly have failed to impress the church authorities, sensitive as they must have been to the reactions that had been aroused by the McGlynn case. The conviction of George that his mission was indeed to justify the (economic) ways of God to man, and to demonstrate that social evil and injustice were the results of man's transgressions of God's natural laws, stamped his work with a fervent theistic character that, in the minds of the Holy See, must have distinguished his proposals from those of other social reformers. For example, toward the conclusion of his reply there was this passage concerning God, a passage that would have been almost inconceivable in the work of any other writer on the condition of labor:

What is the prayer of Christendom—the universal prayer? . . . It is, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Yet where this prayer goes up, daily and hourly, men lack bread. Is it not the business of religion to say why? If it cannot do so, shall not scoffers mock its ministers as Elias mocked the prophets of Baal, saying, "Cry with a louder voice, for he is a god; and perhaps he is talking, or is in an inn, or on a journey, or perhaps he

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-100.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

is asleep, and must be awakened!" What answer can those ministers give? Either there is no God, or He is asleep, or else He does give men their daily bread, and it is in some way intercepted.

Here is the answer, the only true answer: If men lack bread it is not that God has not done His part in providing it. If men willing to labor are cursed with poverty, it is not that the storehouse that God owes men has failed; that the daily supply He has promised for the daily wants of His children is not here in abundance. It is, that impiously violating the benevolent intentions of their Creator, men have made land private property, and thus given into the exclusive ownership of the few the provisions that a bountiful Father has made for all.

Any other answer than that, no matter how it may be shrouded in the mere forms of religion, is practically an atheistical answer.<sup>56</sup>

And finally, at the very close of his answer to the Pope, George addressed this strikingly direct and impassioned appeal to the religious ruler of half the Christian world:

Servant of the Servants of God! I call you by the strongest and sweetest of your titles. In your hands more than in those of any living man lies the power to say the word and make the sign that shall end an unnatural divorce, and marry again to religion all that is pure and high in social aspiration.<sup>57</sup>

There is, of course, no evidence to show that George's letter had any bearing upon Father McGlynn's unsolicited reinstatement. It is probable that this unusual action on the part of the Holy See was instead determined largely on the grounds of general church policy, for Dr. McGlynn's punishment had created a decided schism in the ranks of New York and even of American Catholicism. The excommunicated priest had been supported not only by the great majority of his former parishioners at St. Stephen's, which was one of the most influential churches in the city, but also by a large body of Catholic working men and by those Catholics who, although not directly concerned with the labor movement,

<sup>56</sup> *The Condition of Labor*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

had become indignant at any interference of the church in local political and economic matters. The fact that as early as 1889, two years before the encyclical was written, Archbishop Satolli had intimated that the Papacy was willing to reconsider the McGlynn case was proof that the direct results of the controversy had been sufficient to arouse some degree of apprehension among the church authorities. But that George's letter played a part in the final act of reinstatement in 1892 there can be little doubt.<sup>58</sup> And so, religion in this case, although it had not entered the ranks and battled for social reform, had nevertheless finally refrained from attacking such efforts at reform—and that was something.

One last point may be mentioned in connection with this discussion of the McGlynn case, and that is the ideational contrast between George's views on the fusion of economics and religion and those of Father McGlynn. It may be said, very roughly, that, while both approached the social question with the same religious zeal, George argued for a marriage of economics to institutionalized religion, and Dr. McGlynn hoped for their divorce. As has been noted, McGlynn constantly distinguished between the priest and the citizen, and

<sup>58</sup> George himself felt that his reply had had more than a little influence. This may be seen in an article of his in the *New York Sun*, during January of 1893, in which he said "that the encyclical on *The Condition of Labour* seemed to me to condemn the 'single tax' theory is true. But it made it clear that the Pope did not rightly understand that theory. It was for this reason that in the open letter to which your correspondent refers I asked permission to lay before the Pope the grounds for our belief and to show that 'our postulates are all stated or implied in your encyclical' and that 'they are the primary perceptions of human reason, the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith'; declaring that, so far from avoiding, 'we earnestly seek the judgment of religion, the tribunal of which your Holiness, as the head of the largest body of Christians, is the most august representative.' The answer has come. In the reinstatement of Dr. McGlynn on a correct presentation of 'single tax' doctrines, the highest authority of the Catholic Church has declared in the most emphatic manner that there is nothing in them inconsistent with the Catholic faith. From henceforth the encyclical on the *Condition of Labour* . . . is evidently to be understood not as disapproving the 'single tax,' but as disapproving the grotesque misrepresentations of it that were evidently at first presented to the Pope." (Quoted in the *Life*, pp. 565-566, n.)

between the church as the depository of religious truths and economic science as the hoped-for source of social justice. That quest for social justice, it is true, was a veritable crusade, and it was "necessarily a religious movement," but it was religious only so far as it proved to be the revealer of that inspiration and fervent sincerity which were demanded by such a quest. There was always the fear in his mind of the dominance of ecclesiasticism over civil affairs, of the Church over the State, and so, while the religious psychological experience must be directed toward a solution of social problems, the religious institution must concentrate upon religious and not economic truths. George, on the other hand, felt that the religious institution itself must turn from such perhaps musty work to the vital task of formulating social programs and directing social reform—the very essence, he believed, of primitive Christianity. Such a difference in emphasis between the two men was possibly an inevitable result of their completely different backgrounds, a contrast which sent George from the arena of social reform to religion, looking upon it always as an instrument of such reform, and which forced McGlynn to hold fast to a distinction between his priestly and his civil duties.

George's definite conviction that there was a divine purpose operating in economic as well as in other affairs may perhaps have been expressed a little baldly in his letter to the Pope. But it must be remembered that this attempted refutation of the Papal encyclical was necessarily a strange combination of moods and arguments, and the almost anthropomorphic suggestions indicated in the passages quoted a few pages back are by no means a fair illustration of George's more articulated theistic conceptions. George's argument for the existence of God was expressed by him most clearly in his last work, *The Science of Political Economy*, and particularly in the chapter on the laws of nature—laws which he identified

with the will of God. The argument here is largely that of a primal will rather than the argument from design which he had previously made use of in opposing the hypotheses of Spencer. Reasoning from the two premises of a universal causal connection between phenomena, and of the particular causal power of a conscious will in human activity, George was led to infer that the cosmic processes were dependent upon a spiritual purpose that, at least in its method of operation, was similar to human will. The effect of his interest in Schopenhauer is quite evident here. In the following passage, for example, George's insistence upon the continuous functioning of a cosmic will parallels, except for a certain emphasis which becomes readily apparent, the contentions of Schopenhauer, even to the use of his phraseology and of his slightly exaggerated biological analogies:

The bird flies because it wants to fly. In this will or spirit of the bird we find an ultimate cause or sufficient reason to satisfy us so far as such action is concerned. But probably no man ever lived, and certainly no child, who, seeing the easy sweep of birds through the open highways of air, has not felt the wish to do likewise. Why does not the man also fly when he wants to fly? We answer, that while the bird's bodily structure permits of the gratification of a will to fly, the man's bodily structure does not. But what is the reason of this difference? Here we come to a sphere where we can no longer find the cause or result in the individual will. Seeking still for will, as the only final explanation of cause, we are compelled to assume a higher and more comprehensive will or spirit, which has given to the bird one bodily structure, to the man another. . . . To find a sufficient cause . . . we are compelled to assume a higher will and more comprehensive purpose than that of man; a will conscious from the very first of what will yet be needed, as well as of what already is needed.<sup>59</sup>

And again:

What we apprehend as the beginning cause in any series, whether we call it primary cause or final cause, is always to us

<sup>59</sup> *The Science of Political Economy*, pp. 52-53.

the cause or sufficient reason of the particular result. And this point in causation at which we rest satisfied is that which implies the element of spirit, the exertion of will. For it is of the nature of human reason never to rest content until it can come to something that may be conceived of as acting in itself, and not merely as a consequence of something else as antecedent, and thus be taken as the cause of the result or consequence from which the backward search began. . . . I know, by consciousness, that in me the exertion of will proceeds from some motive or desire. And reasoning from what I know to explain what I wish to discover, I explain similar acts in others by similar desires.<sup>60</sup>

A primal will, then, was the first or final link<sup>61</sup> in the chain of causation, and that will George postulated as God. "We are compelled when we seek for the beginning cause and still escape negation to posit a primary or all-causative idea or spirit, an all-producer or creator, for which our short word is God."<sup>62</sup> He recognized that such an argument was not fashionable,<sup>63</sup> but to him it was securely valid; it was, in fact, the inevitable product of "rationalism," that rationalism

<sup>60</sup> *The Science of Political Economy*, p. 49.

<sup>61</sup> George's discussion of "causes," showing the identity of the first and final causes, has somewhat of an Aristotelian flavor: "In a series of causes, what we apprehend as the beginning cause is sometimes called 'primary cause,' and sometimes 'ultimate cause'; while 'final cause,' which has the meaning of purpose or intent, lies deeper still. This use of seemingly opposite names for the same thing may at first puzzle others as at first it puzzled me. But it is explained when we remember that what is first and what last in a chain or series depends upon which end we start from. Thus, when we proceed from cause towards effect, the beginning cause comes first, and is styled the 'primary cause.' But when we start from effect to seek cause, as is usually the case, for we can know cause as cause only when it lies in our own consciousness, the cause nearest the result comes first, and we call it the 'proximate cause'; and what we apprehend as the beginning cause is found last, and we call it the 'ultimate' or 'efficient' cause, or, at least where an intelligent will is assumed, as the all-originator, the 'final cause' . . ."  
(*Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.)

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>63</sup> "The 'doctrine of final causes,' now largely out of fashion, is understood to mean the doctrine which, as the last or final explanation of the existence and order of the world, seeks to discover the purpose or intent of the Creator. The argument from the assumption of what are now called final causes for the existence of an intelligent Creator is called the 'teleological argument,' and is by those who have the vogue in modern philosophy regarded with suspicion, if not with contempt." (*Ibid.*, p. 50.)

which had for its purpose the demonstration that "the only way in which we can hope to discover what to us is yet unknown is by reasoning to it from what to us is known." There was, for George, an intelligent order operating in the world, and man, being acquainted with certain finite manifestations of that order, could legitimately essay to discover the complete system. His conception of a primal purpose did not make it some blind, enslaving will to live which substituted, as was the case he felt with Schopenhauer, "for God an icy devil." For George it was not "will" so much as the "will of God." But this will of a Christian God was entirely divorced from Christian revelation and Scripture, and was disclosed to man only by the light of reason. So, to natural law and natural rights was added deism, and the eighteenth century synthesis in George was almost complete.

The evidence for the immortality of the soul, however, was not presented by George in quite the rational form in which he argued for the existence of God. And perhaps that very absence of cool reasonableness contributed to the strength of its almost mystic appeal. It is true, of course, that George's passionate conviction of human immortality was a vital part of his more general ethical conceptions, and therefore it was necessarily a rational conviction, but its exposition was poetic rather than logical. Certainly individual human immortality was required by his ethical system as a fulfillment and completion of earthly striving, but the expression of that desire for an essentially logical closed order took the form, as has so often been true in other discussions of immortality, of a lyrical intimation. The clearest example of this in George's work is at the very close of *Progress and Poverty*, the "problem of individual life." "My task is done," he wrote. "Yet the thought still mounts. The problems we have been considering lead into a problem higher and deeper still. Behind the prob-



lems of social life lies the problem of individual life.”<sup>64</sup> The thought mounted to those heights where the niceties of discursive proof seem almost empty and trivial, where, from Plato down, the precise arguments for immortality become pale beside the vision of an inarticulate longing they endeavor to express. Those Platonic words of Plutarch with which George closed his book strike the dominant note of this last chapter on the problem of individual life, the problem of immortality:

“Men’s souls, encompassed here with bodies and passions, have no communication with God, except what they can reach to in conception only, by means of philosophy, as by a kind of an obscure dream. But when they are loosed from the body, and removed into the unseen, invisible, impassable, and pure region, this God is then their leader and king; they there, as it were, hanging on him wholly, and beholding without weariness and passionately affecting that beauty which cannot be expressed or uttered by men.”<sup>65</sup>

Life must continue, if life is to have any meaning; thus George postulated immortality.

. . . If human life does not continue beyond what we see of it here, then we are confronted, with regard to the race, with the same difficulty as with the individual! For it is as certain that the race must die as it is that the individual must die. We know that there have been geologic conditions under which human life was impossible on this earth. We know that they must return again. Even now, as the earth circles on her appointed orbit, the northern ice cap slowly thickens, and the time gradually approaches when its glaciers will flow again, and austral seas, sweeping northward, bury the seats of present civilization under oceans wastes, as it may be they now bury what was once as high a civilization as our own. And beyond these periods, science discerns a dead earth, an exhausted sun—a time when, clashing together, the solar system shall resolve itself into a gaseous form, again to begin immeasurable mutations.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *Progress and Poverty*, p. 553.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 562–563.

<sup>66</sup> Compare this with the striking picture Lord Balfour has painted in his *The Foundations of Belief* (New York, Longmans, Green, 1897), p. 31.

What then is the meaning of life—of life absolutely and inevitably bounded by death? To me it seems intelligible only as the avenue and vestibule to another life. And its facts seem explainable only upon a theory which cannot be expressed but in myth and symbol, and which, everywhere and at all times, the myths and symbols in which men have tried to portray their deepest perceptions do in some form express.

The scriptures of the men who have been and gone—the Bibles, the Zend Avestas, the Vedas, the Dhammapadas, and the Korans; the esoteric doctrines of old philosophies, the inner meaning of grotesque religions, the dogmatic constitutions of Ecumenical Councils, the preachings of Foxes, and Wesleys, and Savonarolas, the traditions of red Indians, and beliefs of black savages, have a heart and core in which they agree—a something which seems like the variously distorted apprehensions of a primary truth. And out of the chain of thought we have been following there seems vaguely to rise a glimpse of what they vaguely saw—a shadowy gleam of ultimate relations, the endeavor to express which inevitably falls into type and allegory. A garden in which are set the trees of good and evil. A vineyard in which there is the Master's work to do. A passage—from life behind to life beyond. A trial and a struggle, of which we cannot see the end.<sup>67</sup>

The yearning for a further life is natural and deep. It grows with intellectual growth, and perhaps none really feel it more than those who have begun to see how great is the universe and how infinite are the vistas which every advance in knowledge opens before us—vistas which would require nothing short of eternity to explore.<sup>68</sup>

Immortality, whether expressed as a vague, imaginative yearning, or as still another evidence of the rational order and design of God, was equally convincing to George.<sup>69</sup> While part

<sup>67</sup> *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 560-561.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555.

<sup>69</sup> In that more intimate and homely commerce with the problem of immortality which, through the presence of death, carries to every man vague glimpses of faith and philosophy, George, of course, was even more certain of the deathlessness of the human soul. Here, belief was vital and personal, something other than metaphorical and more than the peroration to a social philosophy. For some of his more direct and humble opinions on immortality, prompted by the deaths of those with whom he had been intimate, see the *Life*, pages 545-547.

In a letter from George to Charles Nordhoff, editorial writer on the

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of his own personal belief, it was at the same time consolidated into his system of thought as an epilogue. Just as with his other earlier religious conceptions that had been renounced during his turbulent years as a youth, the assurance in immortality returned to strengthen him. "Out of this inquiry has come to me something I did not think to find, and a faith that was dead revives."<sup>70</sup> This restoration of religious faith was perhaps the most interesting personal product of his attempted fusion of political economy and religion; it gave George once more confidence in a spiritual order. His sense of religious reverence which had never wholly left him was now justified.<sup>71</sup>

In this general discussion of George and religion the really significant element, however, is not any such question of the

New York *Herald*, written at a time when some of his opinions were still in a process of formation (December 21, 1879), George expressed the importance he felt to lie in the question of immortality: "Do you know what impressed me so much with you and made me want to talk with you, was that you actually believed in the immortality of the soul. It made you to me almost a curiosity, and I thought of it over and over again. It was like meeting a man whose opinion was worth something who told you he saw something which you would very much like to see; but which you could not make out for yourself and which every one around you whose opinion was worth anything said did not exist at all."

<sup>70</sup> *Progress and Poverty*, p. 555.

<sup>71</sup> In one of George's note-books there is a clear expression of this fundamentally reverent attitude. He wrote that "there are those who think and have the idea that they should war against religion because it has been used for the enslavement of men. I do not think so. The true spirit is that rudely expressed in the ringing song"—and then he quotes the stanza from the "Battle-Hymn of the Republic" which opens: "In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the sea." (In *Notes on Conditions in Ireland and England*, dated January 9, 1883, to May 9, 1884.)

In the biography there is a specific account of how his economic views were linked to George's revival of religious experience: "He attached himself to no sect, yet his nature was strongly reverent. He wished to have his children say night and morning prayers, and often at twilight or before they went to bed he would lie on his lounge in the library and have them and their mother mingle their voices in the old hymns that he had heard as a child in Philadelphia, and again 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' seemed to swell and echo through old St. Paul's. Out of the inquiry, why want goes with plenty, religion had come to have a new meaning. In the conviction that he had discovered that it was not by God's will, but because of violation of God's ordinance that men suffered involuntary poverty in the heart of civilization, 'a faith that was dead revived' . . ." (*Life*, p. 252.)

revival of personal faith. It is rather a concern with the challenge that he made to the religious institution. It was a concern that sought to justify a divine plan by demonstrating that natural law—or the will of God—if correctly understood and obeyed, would result in a society nearer the ideal of a city of God. George attempted to shift the cause of social misery from the blunderings of a Creator to those institutions of man which, founded upon a heritage of might and ignorance, had tortured and depraved the race—and such a shift from sacred to remediable sources of social ills he felt would be of value, even to religion itself.

George did not, as is so often the fashion with social reformers, launch into a sweeping denunciation of religion; nor did he demand that religion and economics be kept in carefully insulated compartments. Instead, his demand was that religion, being the alleged interpreter of the divine plan and the defender of its wisdom, be called upon to explain the persistence of the misery and suffering born of poverty. Religion, he felt, must address itself to that problem, not because it was at all expert in economic matters, but because the sin and evil that did constitute its particular province could not be dissociated from that economic paradox of poverty and wealth. This was a diseased and malformed social order, and if religion, ignoring any fundamental consideration of its structure, treated pathological symptoms as the normal attributes of a sane and healthy God-directed society, then perhaps herein was "the reason why the working masses all over the world are turning away from organized religion." His own system of thought, George believed, did direct its attention to this enigma. It did attempt to locate the source of social misery in a humanistic and not in a transcendental realm.

The following passages may fittingly close this chapter, for they exhibit vividly George's conviction—his most fer-

vent religious conviction—that it was man and not God who was responsible for the world's wretchedness. And that conviction, stripped of its religious trappings and translated from theology to the social sciences, remains a direct challenge to all forms of intellectual smugness.

Though it may take the language of prayer, it is blasphemy that attributes to the inscrutable decrees of Providence the suffering and brutishness that come of poverty; that turns with folded hands to the All-Father and lays on Him the responsibility for the want and crime of our great cities. We degrade the Everlasting. We slander the Just One. A merciful man would have better ordered the world; a just man would crush with his foot such an ulcerous anthill! It is not the Almighty but we who are responsible for the vice and misery that fester amid our civilization. The Creator showers upon us His gifts—more than enough for all. But like swine scrambling for food, we tread them in the mire—tread them in the mire while we tear and rend each other!<sup>72</sup>

It is the fool that saith in his heart there is no God. But what shall we call the man who tells us that with this sort of a world God bids us be content?<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> *Progress and Poverty*, pp. 546-547.

<sup>73</sup> *Social Problems, Works*, Vol. II, p. 69.