

Charles Johnson Post

To the Editor, Henry George News:

The essay of Ernest Leogrande in the relation of Father McGlynn to Henry George and George's philosophy of taxation should be an important contribution to the history and analysis of the past. Many ex Catholics were bitterly opposed to Father McGlynn and many, though less, have been his fervid adherents. Protestants, though it was none of their business, have likewise been divided. Thus the facts, in all their neutral nakedness, become important.

Unfortunately Mr. Leogrande premises his essay upon an assumption that is not a fact. His interest was excited by the statement that Father McGlynn "was excommunicated from the Catholic Church for supporting Henry George's theories and later was reinstated." The effect is to suggest that first the Catholic Church excommunicated Father McGlynn because he believed in George theories and that later the Church accepted George's theories as ecclesiastically sound!

The plain fact is, by historical record, that Father McGlynn was not excommunicated for believing in Henry George's theories, but for defiance and disobedience of the ecclesiastical order and directives of his ecclesiastical superiors. He was directed by Archbishop Corrigan not to take part in the political campaign to elect Henry George as Mayor of New York City. He defied this and did take an active part in speaking from public platforms for George; the issue was not of Father McGlynn's right to a belief, but his defiance of his ecclesiastical superior who is the authorized director of the priesthood. Whether it was a proper order and directive ^{was} ~~is~~ not the question; the fact of disobedience to ~~an order in lawful ecclesiastical procedure~~ an order in lawful ecclesiastical procedure was, and is.

Later Father McGlynn was directed from Rome to proceed to Rome where he would have the issue joined and he could defend himself. Father McGlynn again defied the Church authority in Rome and refused to go.

I am quite aware of the private reasons for Father McGlynn's refusal to go to Rome when summoned -- and they have little or nothing to do with the case. The case is that ~~xxx~~ he defied an order of his Archbishop, and then defied a summons to Rome from the highest authority of his Church. Such defiance of the constituted authority he had voluntarily accepted in his priesthood is, in other channels, termed mutiny. And it was for this mutiny against the authority of his own Church that he was excommunicated.

That Father McGlynn believed in the philosophy of Henry George is not the question; nor is the question whether the Church did or did not believe in Georgian philosophy. Probably Archbishop Corrigan did not, even if he knew what it was about. Father McGlynn was an able man in the field or oratory; and he loved power and ~~leadership~~ leadership without ever quite understanding the elements of leadership -- applause was his measure and he was easily influenced by those who were near to him. His parish, St. Stevens was one of the largest in New York City. When the Anti-Poverty Society was formed and it was at one of these Anti-Poverty meetings in the Academy of Music, New York City, that Father McGlynn in the climax of his speech as chief of the Society said: "The Pope -- who is the Pope? A poor old bag of bones, just ready to drop into the grave!"

Then came the inevitable break with Henry George. Father McGlynn fell into the hands of some shrewd Republican guerillas and was persuaded intrigued into trying to ~~persuade~~ Henry George to come out for the ~~Republican~~ ~~xxxxx~~ United Labor Party, one of those splinter parties who would draw votes from the Democrats while leaving the Republicans intact. George was for Cleveland, because Cleveland was on the road for freer trade and against the tariffs. George resigned from the Anti-Poverty Society and it was at that Society meeting that Father McGlynn in a burst of bitter oratory against Henry George that Father McGlynn said: "And if Henry George comes back he will have to take a much humbler position than that which he heretofore held!"

It is true that, later, Father ~~mcg~~ McGlynn ~~was~~ made his peace with the Church by the process they imposed and was re-instated in a small parish up the Hudson. It is also true that that Father McGlynn once more in his life stood on the same platform with Henry George and met him for the first time since he demanded humility from Henry George. This was at the Single Tax Conference in Chicago in 1893. Father McGlynn read his speech -- and he had theretofore always spoken extemporaneously. George shook hands when they met. He told my father about it afterward. I did not want to meet him, he said, and I did not intend to. But Annie wanted it. Annie was Mrs. Henry George, and she was ~~a~~ devoted Catholic. And he was devoted to Mrs. George.

Father McGlynn's oration at the funeral of Henry George was magnificent. Many hold that it atoned for his lack of works in the Georgian field; perhaps he never understood George, in reality. He was a priest, trained in the supremacy of ^{himself in} his parish over the laity; he could suffer neither ecclesiastical yoke nor understand the superb mind of George, nor George's understanding of tactics and realism. He wanted George to go overboard for the Chicago ~~anxx~~ anarchists and lead Georgian' s into they misconspation that they were anarchists! He dragged George out of his bed after a day's campaigning to look at the bloody head of a young East side tough who had been tunked on the head by a policeman after one of George's meetings; and nothing that anyone could say would let Father McGlynn leave George for the rest he needed.

It has been said that McGlynn was an egocentric, and exalte. ^{Gaelic} who was Irish first (they sang songs in ~~xxxx~~ at the 'Anti-Poverty Society') a Priest second, and the rest of him filled with and indiscriminating sociological sympathy that filled him with a magnetic oratory.

These are the historic, and documented facts as to Father McGlynn and his perfervid orbit. Stephen Bell's so-called biography

is simply the tribute of an enthusiastic parishioner.

Other priests

have believed in Geroge's philosophy, but they have not defied ecclesiastical

~~taxes~~ directives or placed the Church second to their oen opinions.

(signed) Charles Johnson Post