



Henry George, Fr. Edward McGlynn, and Pope Leo XIII

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1. Turbulent times

It was a different time, but often the same place (Cooper Union) in American history. It wasn't radio, but the age of spellbinding orators. Two of the best were Henry George and Fr. Edward McGlynn, who came together in 1886 to roil the waters of American politics and ideology. Through the Irish and Vatican connections, they also roiled world politics and ideology.

It was a time when the Republican Presidential candidate of 1884 (James G. Blaine) could be nominated by a professional atheist (Robert G. Ingersoll); and lose New York's Irish Catholic voters, and the election, for a casual slur accusing them of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion."

It was a time when Fr. Edward McGlynn, the most popular Catholic priest in NYC and the nation, could dispute the Pope and support public schools, marriage for priests (this point is disputed), the Fenian raids, abolishing poverty by public action, Henry George, and the single tax. His Parish, St. Stephens, was the largest and most influential in the U.S.

It was a time when the two leading candidates for Mayor of NYC in 1886 both declared they did not want the job.

Henry George was told Tammany would not let him win and he could "only raise Hell"; he replied he would run, to raise Hell. Abram Hewitt said he only wanted to prevent the election of Henry George, "the greatest possible calamity." Hewitt's later conduct in office, after winning by fair means or foul, demonstrated he had, indeed, little interest in the office itself. In eulogizing George in 1897, Fr. McGlynn said it was a blessing George lost, so he could devote his life to more important things. What was going on? Both candidates recognized the office as an extraordinary bully pulpit from which to broadcast ideas, as well as a commanding height with a great balance of power in the U.S. Electoral College.

It was a time of class warfare, when hundreds of thousands of workers were on strike.

2. Heritage of those times

It's been said that "All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today." If so, it follows that the flowers of today were in the seeds of yesterday. Professor Nic Tideman has recounted how his great grandfather from Sweden learned English by reading Henry George, and began a long Georgist dynasty. Drew Harris has told how he was sixteen before he realized that not all Quakers routinely discuss Georgism at dinner.

The exploitation of Ireland by offensive alien landlords produced the core, or at least the bulk, of Georgism in the U.S. I am a product of that, although, unlike Harris, I was past my

teens before I began to piece it together. My father's professional survival had demanded he be discreet before blabbering kids. His father had been an active Fenian, joining the raids on

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Oregonians Wake Up and Smell the Taxes

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It was front-page news. On October 19, Sunday (the day of largest circulation), Portland's major daily, The Oregonian, lead off with "Crowds overflow anti-growth conference". People came from as far away as Canada and the Frisco Bay area. Over 650 were registered for the rally/symposium at Portland State University; at least another 50 were turned away at the door (fire code permitted only 500 at one time in the ballroom, the plenary meeting room). Sponsored by dozens of local groups and agencies, "Alternatives to Growth" featured over 30 workshops with specialists.

Big names in the environmental movement addressed the sympathetic crowd. Alan Thein

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Ontario. Pope Leo XIII, needing English support in Italy, condemned the Fenians as he did all serious Irish rebels, but Fr. Edward McGlynn praised them: he defied his Archbishop, Michael Corrigan, and the Pope on this as on many other matters. Not until this year did I discover by happy chance a long-lost cousin named Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., a law professor. Ed's father had introduced land-tax bills in Sacramento, as a State Assemblyman from San Francisco. His uncle, Dr. Matthew T. Gaffney of Newark, was a single tax leader there. Some of this spirit trickled through to me.

My mother was of traditional Yankee stock. She was related to John Henry Cardinal Newman, appointed to the post by Leo himself. Newman never showed favor towards George, and feuded with Cardinal Manning, who did. Her uncle Selah Merrill Clarke edited the New York Sun, which opposed George and McGlynn. However, she later worked for Louis F. Post in the U.S. Dept. of Labor, and picked up his influence. It was she who brought me my first book on Henry George, although she never admitted to accepting his ideas.

I offer this gratuitous autobiography to apprise the reader of my bias, if any. I am not now, nor have I ever been a member of the Catholic faith, but a typically tepid generic liberal Protestant, no longer very observant, and somewhat philo-Catholic, especially after 1961. In the heady days of JFK, John XXIII and M.L. King, Jr., I was thrilled to find myself marching in demonstrations hand-in-hand with nuns and priests, who had always seemed so distant before. Whether that makes me more biased, or less, I leave to others. I have tried to compensate by reading works on the period by Catholic scholars, including John Molony, Emmett Curran, Alfred Isacson, Stephen Bell, John Tracy Ellis, James Gilhooley, and Arthur Preuss. I hope to find a Catholic collaborator on this work.

3. Neglect of Catholic economics in Gaffney and Harrison, Corruption of Economics.

In the above work I undertook to show how neo-classical economics evolved as a reaction and an antidote to Henry George. In haste, I omitted Catholic economics, which ran parallel to neo-classical economics, but with a life of and special twists of its own. The main Catholic reaction to George was Leo's 1891 Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, (henceforth R.N.) R.N. was a watershed document: the "first far-reaching formulation of Catholic teaching" since the Council of Trent in the 16th Century, according to Molony. It was a new venture into social theology. It recycled Thomist economics, in which Leo was thoroughly steeped, but with special reference to "the worker question," and with refuting false modern doctrines advanced by George and McGlynn.

4. Wide and sustained influence of *Rerum Novarum*.

The influence of R.N. has echoed through the following Century. One important American convert was Monsignor John A. Ryan (1916), "the chief theorist of social Catholicism in America" (Andelson, 1979b, p.342). Ryan as a young man was "electrified" by George, and one might expect an Irishman to remain a land reformer. However, after Leo XIII spoke, Ryan came to heel. His basic work, *Distributive Justice*, follows R.N. closely.

Another follower was Padro Juan Alcazar Alvarez (1917) of Madrid. Alcazar was endeavoring to put down what was evidently a very strong single-tax movement in Spain of that era (Busey, 1979, p.326) - a movement that had been aborted in England by shipping the flower of its young men off to die in Flanders' Fields. Alcazar's positions are similar to those of Cathrein, although considerably more extreme, so as to seem ludicrous today, as perhaps they also were then outside of Spain. In any case, he received considerable reinforcement from R.N. The Spanish single-tax movement remained a force clear until the accession of Francisco Franco.

Several succeeding pontiffs have reaffirmed the doctrines of R.N. in their Encyclicals, e.g. the

Quadragesimo Anno of Pius XI, 1931. One can't help wondering if the Vatican's wretched record of response to Hitler and Mussolini and Franco and Pavelic (in Croatia) might have been corrected by some different thinking at that critical time. As it turned out, the anti-Communist obsession of Pius XI's protege and successor, Eugenio Pacelli, inhibited the Vatican from overt anti-fascism, and even led it to aid and abet the escape of many fascist leaders after 1945 (Aaron and Loftus; E.M. Gaffney, Jr.). As I write, European Catholics, including Pope John Paul I I himself, are finally acknowledging the Church's derelictions - a cynic might say, after the time has passed to punish those responsible.

Later reaffirmations of R.N. have been *Mater et Magistra* (1961) by John XXIII, and *Centissimo Anno* (1991) of course) by John Paul II. Philosophers like Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson have carried Leo's ideas forward into our times.

The leaders of Christian Democratic parties in postwar Europe were nurtured on R.N. These include Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Carlo Sforza, and Luigi Einaudi. Through these and many others, R.N. became part of the history of modern Europe.

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5. Leo's outlook

Leo was a thorough Thomist. In 1879, the year George published *Progress and Poverty*, Leo had the works of Aquinas declared to be the official Catholic philosophy. This included the economics, with the ideas of just price based on cost of production (in practice, price ceilings), criticism of usury (in practice, a ceiling on the interest rate), private property, minimum wage (a very low minimum, in Leo's view), and modernized guilds (morphing into labor unions).

R.N. also reduces "equal rights" to equal rights to enjoy eternal life hereafter. This is vintage Aquinas. To Leo's critics, the last point meant "You will

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eat by and by, in that glorious land beyond the sky; work and pray, live on hay, there'll be pie in the sky when you die" (words attrib. to Joe Hill, union organizer).

Leo opposed "liberalism," but in both meanings, i.e. the Manchester School meaning and the egalitarian meaning. Even then, the term had both meanings at once, and one must judge from context which liberalism he is excoriating in a particular passage. This of course put him doubly at odds with Henry George, who generally favored liberalism in both meanings, and sought to reconcile and compose them into a harmonious whole. It did not help that George quoted sympathetically from Mazzini, who had played an important role in stripping the Papal States from the Church. It was Kismet that Leo and George should collide.

The upper hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church was mostly of the landed classes. Leo, born Vincenzo Pecci, was of the minor nobility, and considerable wealth. Across the water, Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York was also wealthy, but a complete arriviste, lace-curtain Irish, scion of a bartender who rose through liquor dealing to real estate, leaving a small fortune. (As we will see, he lacked old-world subtlety; his scheming was wily yet transparent to many, and damaging to the image of the church.) In addition, the R.C.C. in Europe had owned vastlands for centuries, and its bureaucrats naturally developed a protective attitude toward the ultimate source of its power and wealth. They were hypersensitive to the point, owing to the power of anticlerical movements that had stripped them of many lands, even in Catholic nations like France, Italy and Mexico.

It was in character, then, when in 1888 Leo condemned Irish peasants who were agitating for land. Many Irish proletarians thought him a Judas. R.N., when it came out, did not help. It is remarkable that the R.C.C. survived as well as it did in Ireland. Many Irish-Americans (like my grandfather) left the Church at this time, but most recognized their ethnic interest in the American Catholic Church which, to a remarkable extent, was controlled by Irishmen. The Irish priesthood had remained much closer to the communicants themselves than had those of other extraction - Edward McGlynn being typical in this respect (Molony, p.49).

6. Evidence of anti-Georgist intent

How do we know that R.N. was directed against George and McGlynn? They thought it was, and George (1891) even penned an open letter to Pope Leo in reply; but who were George and McGlynn to debate the Pope himself? It is often alleged that George was a paranoid pipsqueak next to Leo: why would a V.I.P. like the Pope lower himself to refute such a cipher? There is ample evidence, presented herewith, that this was a posture used consciously to belittle George, and avoid the boomerang effect of a direct criticism. There is also evidence of great scurrying and rustling of papers in The Vatican in reaction to the power shown by George and McGlynn. This is found in works by Isacsson, Ellis, Bell, Molony, Curran, Gilhooley and Preuss.

Foreshadowing R.N., Fr. Victor Cathrein (1889) had already attacked George, stigmatizing him as an "agrarian socialist," along with Emile de Laveleye. The label did not fit George, who was neither an agrarian nor a socialist, but a free-market urbanist. However, it may help explain R.N.'s slurring references to generic "socialists," a fungible lot to Leo, obviously intending to encompass George with Marx.

What particularly exercised Cathrein about George and de Laveleye was their observation that privatized, commercialized land tenure hardly existed in pre-industrial societies other than the Roman, and recent privatizers had reinvented it only recently by resurrecting Roman Law (Hudson, 1994; Andelson, 1979a). Cathrein supported the idea that "natural law" prescribes private property inland, an idea also expressed in R.N., refuting George's position.

George, by stressing ideas of "natural rights" and "natural law," touched on areas that remained more central to Catholic social philosophy than they did to more secular thinkers (De Concilio). Where Marx alienated Catholics by atheism and anti-clericalism, the overtly Christian George offended some of them more by accepting the Catholic concept of natural law, in ways competing directly with certain Catholic views thereof (depending on which Catholic).

In Cathrein, the idea of equal rights became an empty shell hollowed out by an artful twist of wording to mean only rights to buy land from its rightful owners. Andelson (1979a, p. 132) shows how this idea moved right from Cathrein's attack on Henry George into R.N.

Cathrein also anticipates the R.N. position that the rich need the poor in order to test their character by giving them chances to perform Christian charity (Andelson, 1979a, p.134). What a roar of derision that allegation would have provoked before most audiences in the last 50 years! Yet now, again, it seems to be back in style - without the Christianity.

Cathrein's work, originally in German, was translated under the apparent aegis of Abp. Bernard J. McQuaid of Rochester and Bishop Stephen Ryan of Buffalo (Hudson, 1994, and personal interview, 1997; Zwierlein, 1946, should be consulted). McQuaid was a mentor of and staunch roofer for Abp. Michael Corrigan of New York City. Corrigan was a major instigator of R.N., as we will see, so we may assume that the drafters consulted Cathrein's recent attack on Henry George.

Cathrein is not covered in *The New Palgrave, a Dictionary of Economics*. Neither are Aquinas, nor Leo XIII, nor *Rerum Novarum*, nor John Ryan, nor Alcazar, nor natural rights, nor many other exemplars and concepts of Catholic economic thought. Even Henry George, whom they criticized, is given very little space. While this might suggest that these writers have been shouldered aside by modern economists, it is worth noting that there are hundreds of millions of Catholics, and only few economists, so it is worth asking which group is the island, and which is the main? Prudence alone would dictate that economists give more

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heed to what Catholic philosophers have said, and are saying.

As to natural rights, quite apart from Catholic doctrine, they are enshrined in the English Bill of Rights (1689), the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1946). Again, are economists in touch with the hundreds of millions of people who endorse those statements?

John Molony (1991) was a history professor at Australian National University who spent years in Rome researching the composition of R.N. He had access to some Vatican Secret Archives, along with other standard Vatican sources. His writing shows sympathy for Leo, and a propensity to belittle George and McGlynn, so we may assume his bias, if any, is not to magnify George or McGlynn. He does so, nonetheless, by frequent references to the importance of putting down this new heresy.

In his index we find 21 page references to George, and 16 to McGlynn. In contrast, there are 9 to Aquinas, 8 to Marx, 5 to Christ, 4 to usury, one each to Newman, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, and none to Cavour or Victor Emmanuel. The last four were Leo's arch-enemies who had nationalized the Papal States and made the Pope a "prisoner in the Vatican"; Newman was Leo's appointee as Cardinal.

Here are some of Molony's comments.

"... there was one American theoretician, Henry George, whose writings were of particular interest in the Vatican, and whose ideas had a decisive effect on the timing of R.N. and, to some degree, on its contents." (p. 50)

"In the Vatican, not much interest was shown in George until its attention was drawn to the fact that one of his main followers in America was the pastor of New York's most important parish, St. Stephen's." (p. 51)

"The blackest mark against McGlynn ... was that he had begun to espouse with fervor the ideas of Henry

George. ... his words were taken careful note of in Rome." (p. 52)

"Throughout the 1880s, considerable attention was paid to George and McGlynn by the Vatican authorities." (p. 53)

"Cardinal (Camillo) Mazzella ... derided the priest (McGlynn) as one who held that, rather than Leo, George was the 'Redeemer of the poor' and his personal 'Holy Father.'" (p. 57)

The last point echoes Cathrein's resentment of George as a direct competitor. George spoke the language of religion, and evoked a quasi-religious fervor in some followers. Secular modern critics have faulted and even sneered at this "emotionalism," but to religious leaders themselves it posed direct competition. In 1890 in Australia, "... converts, fired by enthusiasm, went about like the early Christians preaching their gospel" (PM "Billy" Hughes, cit. Molony, p. 59).

As to Mazzella, it was he who recommended excommunicating McGlynn, which Leo soon did; and putting all the works of Henry George on *The Index*. (p. 58). Mazzella was soon to help write R.N. in 1891.

In R.N., George was lumped as a "socialist," and treated anonymously as an "upholder of obsolete notions," and one of "a few dissidents," a "mere utopianist whose ideas were rejected by the common opinion of the human race." "The thoughts of Henry George ... were reduced to their utmost simplicity and rejected out of hand." (pp. 91-92).

"Unnamed (in Zigliara's draft), ... both McGlynn and Henry George were given fuller treatment and their opinions, summed up as 'the discordant voices of a few utopians,' were rejected out of hand as contrary to common sense, the natural law and, finally, the divine law itself." (p. 79)

The following is included in R.N. itself.

"The State would act in an unjust and inhumane manner were it to exact more than is just from private owners (of land) under the guise of a tax." (pp. 98, 194)

The tone of R.N. was also tailored to George and McGlynn. The first draft

of this Encyclical, by the Jesuit Matteo Liberatore, was "The Worker Question." Its focus was on the condition of labor. As it evolved through 6 drafts, under Leo's supervision, it became an attack on critics of private property in land; it virtually blamed the poverty of labor on the critics of poverty, all lumped as "socialists." A major influence was the team of Cardinal Camillo Mazzella and Cardinal Zigliara, the same pair who had recommended excommunicating Fr. Edward McGlynn, and putting George's works on *The Index* of forbidden books.

Accordingly, the title was changed. Encyclicals are known by their first words. *Rerum Novarum cupidus* ... (The unseemly lust for change ...) was a put-down, well understood as such by Latinists of the time, of which Leo XIII was a paragon. It referred to what today a Tom Wolfe might put down as "radical chic," or "politically correct," while also implying a taste for violence and plunder, playing on the fear of revolution.

The actual phrase came from one of Abp. Michael Corrigan's relentless Philippic against McGlynn and a loyal friend, Edward McSweeney, fired off in 1888. "Thus New York, the Vatican and the late Roman Republic were bound up in the first line of the encyclical" (Molony, p. 115). He might have added the potato patches of the Emerald Isle.

Above all, about one-third of the text of R.N. consists of upholding private land ownership, upheld by police power, and taking nasty digs at the motives of nameless persons who believe otherwise. These are "wily and restless men," they "take advantage of confusion ... to cloud judgement and agitate the masses, ... stirring up hatred of the rich among the poor ... which would do no other than harm the workers themselves. Moreover it would be unjust because it would set aside the rights of legitimate owners, ... and throw the whole community into disorder. ... swayed by false principles ... they try at any cost to stir up the masses and move them to violence.) The authority of the state must inter-

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vene to rein in such agitators," Etc., etc., etc. The tendentious, slurring nature of these remarks clearly purports to ban any honest consideration of the matters discussed.

As to private property, R.N. refers again and again to land. "... land is simply his (the buyer's) wages in another form." ... "Nature has given to man the right to stable and permanent possessions, ... to be found only in the earth ..." "The gift of the earth was not meant as a kind of common and indiscriminate form of property. ... but it was left to the industry of man and the special laws of individual nations to determine the manner in which it would be divided up. ... Those who do not own land do their part by their labour ... the right to private property is in agreement with the law of nature. ... When a man uses his mind and body to obtain the goods of the earth, ... he is justly able to claim it as his own, ... the right to private property has been recognized as pre-eminently in conformity with human nature. The seal of the divine law also authorizes that right and goes so far as to forbid, in severe terms, even the desire to possess that which belongs to another. Thou shalt not covet ... it is the duty of public authority to safeguard private property by the power and strength of law. " Etc., etc., etc. Notably lacking is any reference to the teachings of Jesus.

These words are aimed like speeding arrows at Henry George. Whom else do they target so directly?

7. The silent treatment

Abp. Michael Corrigan of New York harassed and persecuted McGlynn avidly, relentlessly. He had a high degree of flow cunning for planting rumors and bearing gossip, but most of his attack was blunt, confrontational, overt and public, and widely perceived as personal and spiteful. In the process he alienated masses of McGlynn's loyal parishioners, and sympathizers around the country, as other hierarchs looked on aghast in helpless dismay. The flow of Peter's Pence to Rome was cut sharply, attracting curial attention in a most compelling way.

Several other hierarchs, both in the U.S. and Europe urged a different course. Prominent among these was James Cardinal Gibbons, Abp. of Baltimore. Gibbons through his rep. in Rome, Denis O'Connell, saw danger in making martyrs of George and McGlynn, "which might make George a hero of the Roman Inquisition, ..." He urged silence, and "demanded absolutely that George be left in oblivion."

"It would be undignified for Rome to notice George with a condemnation." (Ellis, p. 580-82)

Gibbons urged instead that Leo issue an encyclical.

"(Gibbons) told the Pope by letter that he did not pretend that the false theories of George should be tolerated by the Church, but ... in his different encyclicals, the Pope had ... convinced readers (on other matters).

... A similar instruction in the same form ... on matters touching the right of property, would bear the same authority." (Ellis, p. 582).

The same sentiments flooded in from other quarters, including the voices of Zigliara, Mazzella, and Abp. Ireland of St. Paul (Molony, pp. 79, 85, 108). George was to be made a non-person, *semper infra dig.*

Symptomatic of this tack was the amazing stratagem of placing George's works on The Index, but then keeping that fact from the public! This would seem to defeat the whole purpose of The Index, unless the idea was to pass the word quietly to a few insiders with clout, and highly developed skill in quietly spreading slander.

Another ploy was to play dumb about what George really said. Neither Leo nor any of his stable of erudite, advanced scholars ever seemed to get what George was saying. They persisted in treating him as a kind of open-range commonizer, whom they lumped with all "socialists," although neither George nor most socialists held such a view.

The Vatican intellectuals did not arrive there by being stupid. It is hard to be generous and interpret their slow learning as being sincerely simple. Back in New York, Michael Corrigan was indeed a bit thick, and in any case

was too carried away by power anxiety and personal spite to think clearly. The Jesuits and Dominicans of Rome, on the other hand, were highly educated, learned men, far from the scene of George as a political threat. Being multi-lingual they were above semantic naivete. Mazzella and Zigliara had studied all of George's works in the process of excommunicating McGlynn, and consigning George to The Index. Leo was a renowned Latinist and a deep student of Aquinas. These were not dull oafs, but highly literate readers, capable of understanding and interpreting words accurately. They can only have chosen to play dumb to trade on the presumed naivete and credulity of their readers.

Finally, they emerge from the cover of confusion long enough to condemn George's policy in R.N. itself, while keeping his name out of it. Under "Unjust Taxes" R.N. warns that "excessive taxes" will render real reforms impossible by exhausting private means. Zeroing in on the target they write:

"The State would act in an unjust and inhumane manner were it to exact more than is just from private owners (of land) under the guise of a tax."

Take that, nameless wily covetous utopian with obsolete notions seeking to stir up the masses with false doctrines and move them to violence. One has to wonder why the authors of R.N., who seem so incapable of grasping the essential Georgist position, suddenly can state it so simply and clearly.

It took a few decades, but mainline economists slowly learned from the Catholics. As documented in Gaffney and Harrison (1994), they gradually stopped attacking George and McGlynn, and gave them the silent treatment. This has been depressingly effective: few people today have even heard of George and McGlynn.

8. Excursions and alarums

George had made much of everyone's right of access to land. R.N. subtly twists this around: the "right to property" means that everyone has a

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right to buy someone else's property with nothingsaid about "just price." "Worker savings" were urged, to enable workers to buy land, and "thus to canonize the concept of private property" (Molony, p.96). Yet, at the same time, the authors of R.N. decided that a "just wage" was one high enough for the subsistence of the worker, but not of the worker's family (p. 120). It was not explained how the workers might save from such a wage.

The spectre of bloody revolution was waved at Henry George by referring in R.N. to the "spirit of revolutionary change," as expressed by Karl Marx. As neither one is named in R.N., but George's land tax is specified, it is fair to infer that the tar brush was aimed at George, a man who never touched any weapon but the ballot box.

9. Conclusion

Certain hierarchs perceived Henry George and Fr. Edward McGlynn as dangerous threats to the R.C.C. This was not just in spite of George's and McGlynn's deep religiosity, but in part because of it. Their fault lay in using religious concepts like morality and natural law to dispute the philosophical basis of private property in land, in which the hierarchs showed themselves to have a paramount interest, and to advance a practical means of doing something about it.

In response, Pope Leo XIII issued R.N., which redefined Catholic social doctrine from 1891 to the present. This encyclical manifests an obsession with

upholding private property in land, to which it subordinates its ostensible goal of showing concern for the working poor and the unemployed. Detailed analysis of its provenance, made available by modern Catholic scholars, reveals it to be primarily a reaction to the ideas of Henry George, and their

injection by Fr. Edward McGlynn into R.C.C. doctrines. The sources also reveal a conscious strategy of countering George and McGlynn by traducing their motives, misstating their ideas, and suppressing their names. In this respect, it seems to provide a model for the stratagem gradually

adopted over the next 40 years by the economics profession, as outlined in Gaffney and Harrison (1994), *The Corruption of Economics*.

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