

# Edward McGlynn, the determined doctor

Father Alfred Isacson, author of the recently published book about Rev. Dr. Edward McGlynn, on August 7 spoke to those attending the CGO Conference in So. Plainfield, N.J. Fr. Isacson is a member of the Order of Carmelites in the Roman Catholic Church and is pastor of Transfiguration church, Tarrytown, N.Y. He spent almost seven years doing his research, including in the archives in Rome. A synopsis of his remarks follow.

Henry George had been in Ireland meeting with Michael Davitt, the land reformer. Davitt told George he didn't make a good public appearance, and that he needed someone dynamic, the evangelic type, who would preach his message. Davitt suggested McGlynn because Davitt had met McGlynn on his trips to the United States. In 1882, A. J. Steers, who worked in a publishing house in New York, brought Henry George to the rectory of St. Stephen's and introduced him to Dr. McGlynn. From 1882 when they met until 1886, there was almost no contact between the two of them, because Henry George was in England, Ireland, and Scotland, preaching his message for long periods of time.

When McGlynn gave the nominating speech for Henry George in 1886 at Chickering Hall for that mayoral election, Archbishop Corrigan of New York suspended him for two weeks from priestly functions. The reason was that he had been told not to get involved in politics and he had been disobedient. McGlynn said I

have to; I have already committed myself. When McGlynn's suspension was about to run out on Nov. 26, he gave an interview to the Tribune in New York. The subject was about working women and their rights and, in particular, a Mrs. Campbell who was running a society to help promote the cause of working women. In the last two paragraphs, McGlynn was quoted as saying this is only helping someone right now; you are not getting at the cause of poverty. If everybody would read Progress and Poverty, the cause of poverty is explained. Archbishop Corrigan suspended him again for that, until the end of the year. Corrigan said the teachings of Henry George are against the teachings of the Catholic faith.

McGlynn was suspended Jan. 1887 until July of that year, when he was excommunicated for refusing to go to Rome to explain his teachings about Henry George. During this period McGlynn is very active. The Anti-Poverty Society was formally instituted that March. He gave his New Crusade speech during May. McGlynn spoke each Sunday at the meetings of the Anti-Poverty Society. He went on tours through the United States. The purpose of the anti-Poverty Society was to promote the teachings of Henry George. George did a lot to promote the work of the Society by publishing McGlynn's speeches in his Standard, and he was present at all these meetings, which attracted a lot of people. The Anti-Poverty

Society was such a support of the Standard that when Henry George resigned from the Anti-Poverty Society, the circulation of the Standard begins to fade and eventually will end in its demise.

Rome never passed any judgements on the teachings of Henry George, even though his work was placed on The Index. The Index in those days was essentially a form of censorship. The Index says nothing about the content of a particular book, whether that book is against the teachings of the Catholic faith or not. Henry George's teachings were never condemned. Placing that book on The Index was strange. One of the principles that goes back to Roman law, as long as you follow the church law, and I think the civil law in the United States today, is that a law must be promulgated. The decision to put George's book on The Index was put out with the injunction that it not be promulgated. It is a contradiction. People like Corrigan who are looking for Henry George's head got it. But at the same time people that might be influenced by Henry George are in blissful ignorance that this book is on The Index. It was a clever way of getting out of a difficult situation.

Henry George, indeed, influenced Edward McGlynn. But there was a big difference between them. Henry George did not want to confiscate people's property and give them nothing in return. McGlynn would confiscate everybody's property because they had no right to this property. Henry

George wanted property to become commonly owned, but he would do that through the taxation process.

In May 1891 Pope Leo XIII issued the encyclical Rerum Novarum. People who endorsed the teachings of Henry George influenced him, among them the Archbishop of Meath and Cardinal Manning of England. One of the main thrusts of the encyclical was the defense of private property, and besides his own authority, he used four arguments. The encyclical was not written for New York but for the church throughout the world.

Five months after the encyclical came out, Henry George published a book called The Condition of Labor. It is a very respectful open letter to Pope Leo XIII. George simply presents his opinion there is no real right to private property. At the time the encyclical came out, McGlynn is not reconciled to the church. Finally Rome sends Archbishop Satolli to reconcile McGlynn, who only has to accept Rerum Novarum. Later McGlynn told George I presented your teachings in my words. Henry George's teachings were in that document.

George's support in 1888 of Grover Cleveland for President and of Cleveland's lowering of tariffs platform created conflict between him and McGlynn. McGlynn recommended that the tariff be left out of the election. George was trying to promote the lowering of tariffs through the Standard. Then McGlynn took the Anti-Poverty Society out of the United

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Labor Party, and there was a movement among the Anti-Poverty Society members to force George out. George resigned from the Society, and from 1888 until 1892 there were four years when George and McGlynn would be at the same meetings but not speak. Finally, an Episcopal priest, Father Dawson, mentioned to Henry George how happy he was McGlynn was reconciled to the church and Archbishop Corrigan did not get his way. McGlynn then wrote to George to say he was glad George was happy. They became friends again.

McGlynn performed the wedding for George's daughter, Jenny. In those days

the priest was recognized not only as a religious minister but also as a civil minister. Two years later when Jenny died suddenly, McGlynn did the funeral service for her.

The next contact they had was when George was running for mayor of New York in 1897. McGlynn was stationed 60 miles away in Newburg then. McGlynn did come down to visit George at his headquarters and, in a newspaper interview, said he would not participate because it might hurt Henry George's cause and because of his distance away.

A few days before Henry George died Oct. 28, 1897, he said if there was anyone he wanted at his death bed it was Dr.

McGlynn. George died during the night. McGlynn came from Newburg the next morning and conducted the funeral service at the packed Grand Central Palace. On that occasion McGlynn referred to Henry George as a "messenger sent from God whose name was Henry George."

*(Editor's note: The Determined Doctor The Story of Edward McGlynn, by Father Alfred Isacsson, was published in 1997. It is available for \$15 from Schalkenbach Foundation, 41 East 72nd St., New York, NY 10021. Henry George, Rerum Novarum — and The Controversy Concerning Private Property in Land, by Dr. Jack Schwartzman, is available for \$1.50 from Schalkenbach.)*