

REBEL, PRIEST AND PROPHET

THE PUBLICATION of a life of Father McGlynn* fills an important gap in the history of the land reform movement in the United States. It is more than that. The story of his controversy with the authorities of the Catholic Church including his excommunication and ultimate reinstatement is a chapter of world history. The greater part of Mr Stephen Bell's biography is naturally taken up with these events.

Edward McGlynn was born in New York in 1837. At the age of 14 he was sent to Rome to be educated for the priesthood at the Urban College of the Propaganda. Here he remained for nine years, being ordained in 1860. He was remarkable for his sincerity and modesty of character as well as for his intellectual attainments. He learned to speak and read Italian like a native, and Latin, too, he spoke with extraordinary fluency and elegance. His fellow student, Dr Howley, said: "He kept no portfolio and took no notes, as the rest of us did. He simply thought and meditated his way into the front rank. He never put questions or proposed difficulties to the professors, as many inferior men were accustomed to do, ostentatiously. He never spoke till asked to do so, but then he spoke profoundly and to the purpose. In his own undemonstrative way, he was at once an ascetic within and an unrivalled athlete without the college walls."

Before his ordination the American College was opened and Dr McGlynn was appointed Vice-Rector. He graduated with the highest honours, receiving the gold medal for proficiency in all his studies, and obtaining the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Sacred Theology at the age of twenty-three.

Returning to the United States in 1860 he served in several parishes in New York until at the age of 29 he was assigned to St Stephen's, a parish with 25,000 souls and one of the most important in the whole country. He was noted for his incessant attention to the duties of his office, the beauty and adornment of the church, and most of all his care for the poor and needy. Life began to be a burden to him because of the never-ending procession of men, women, and children who came to his door *appealing for an opportunity of working for their daily bread*. He asked himself: "Is there no remedy? Is this God's order that the poor shall be constantly becoming poorer in all our large cities, the world over?"

About 1881 Mr A. J. Steers (a young man who also performed the notable service of persuading his employers, D. Appleton & Co., to publish a dollar edition of *Progress and Poverty*) presented a copy of Henry George's masterpiece to Dr McGlynn. In one of his speeches he described his reaction to the book: "I became all aglow with a new and clearer light that had come to my mind in such full consonance with all my thoughts and aspirations from my earliest childhood, and I did as best I could, what I could to justify the teachings of that great work based upon the essence of all religion—the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man."

It is not possible within the space of a review to follow the details of Dr McGlynn's disagreements with his ecclesiastical superiors which arose from his outspoken advocacy of the proposals of Henry George. Mr Bell throws much new light upon the matter and shows how

in the beginning the issue was intertwined with the attitude of the church to several of the most important political controversies of the time. As early as 1870 Dr McGlynn had been a supporter of the public schools as against the parochial schools. He held the view that "it is not necessary that secular instruction should be imparted by the same person, in the same room, or on the same day of the week, as religious instruction."

The land question, too, was mixed up with the Irish nationalist movement. Henry George's views were making progress in Ireland. The Right Rev Dr Thomas Nulty, Bishop of Meath, in a letter to the clergy and laity of his diocese had expressed similar opinions. Catholic landowners and their sympathizers in England had been complaining of what they called a communistic and revolutionary movement. The controversy spread to the United States with its large Irish population.

America had in addition its own political problems. Some of the clergy condemned the Knights of Labour, the dominating labour organization of the United States and Canada as hostile to religion. The Knights enthusiastically took up and approved the land philosophy of Henry George. Attempts were made to ban the organization and to place *Progress and Poverty* on the Index, but the Vatican refused to condemn either the order or the book.

Mr Bell's life brings into a clear perspective the facts of the controversy in the McGlynn case. It shows that it profoundly affected the whole Catholic Church in the United States and influenced opinions in other parts of America and in Europe also. It shows also with what magnificent foresight, tenacity, and self-sacrifice Dr McGlynn kept the controversy to the main question, whether the views of Henry George and himself on the land question were contrary to the fundamental doctrines of the Church or not.

It makes it clear that when Cardinal Satolli was sent to America as the Pope's Ablegate, he came with express instructions and with full power to settle the controversy on its merits and not upon side issues as to whether Dr McGlynn had been lacking in obedience to his superiors. It was for that reason that Dr McGlynn was invited to submit in English and in Italian a statement of his views on the land question. This was examined by four of the most eminent theologians, professors of the Catholic University of Washington, who declared it "not contrary to the doctrine constantly taught by the Church, and as recently confirmed by the Holy Father in the Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*." Thereupon Mgr Satolli declared Dr McGlynn "free from ecclesiastical censures and restored to the exercise of his priestly functions."

It is sometimes suggested that Dr McGlynn made some retraction or qualification of his views as a condition of his reinstatement. In the light of his character as revealed in this book such a story is fantastic, but in any case it is contradicted by Dr McGlynn's express statement at the time and by the fact that he continued freely to express the same opinions. If any further confirmation were needed it is to be found in the book by Mr Arthur Preuss entitled *The Fundamental Fallacy of Socialism* which is devoted entirely to the land question and to the McGlynn controversy. Mr Preuss holds that Cardinal Satolli and the professors made a fatal mistake in their decision, and his evidence is therefore all the more valuable that the tenets of Henry George

* REBEL, PRIEST AND PROPHET, A Biography of Dr Edward McGlynn. By Stephen Bell. The Devin-Adair Company, New York. (The published price is \$3, but by special arrangement with the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, copies may be obtained from 94 Petty France, for 10s. 6d.).

and Dr McGlynn are "essentially the same" and that Dr McGlynn "was absolved from censure by Mgr Satolli without being requested to retract his former teaching."

That Pope Leo XIII was well informed about the controversy at the end (though perhaps not in its early stages when Dr McGlynn was excommunicated) is made apparent by the interview which Dr McGlynn had with him after his reinstatement. It may be well also to dispel the idea which has been created in certain quarters that in this conversation Dr McGlynn conveyed the impression that he regarded property in land and property in other things as on the same footing. In reply to the Pope's question: "But surely you admit the right of property?" he said: "Why, of course I do, and we would make absolutely sacred the right of property in the products of individual industry."

This brings us to a point to which Mr Bell several times recurs—the ambiguities in the meaning attached to the word property. Henry George in the mid point of the argument of *Progress and Poverty* says in an italicised passage: "We must make land common property." The meaning which Henry George intended to attach to this phrase is abundantly clear to those who will read the book as a whole. It is to take the economic rent of land for public revenue, and to leave the secure possession of land in the hands of individuals.

In *Progress and Poverty* Henry George was writing as an economist and not as a lawyer. In condemning private property in land he was really condemning private appropriation of rent, and he expressly explains that he does not propose to interfere with those rights of possession which to the jurist constitute the essence of property. In later years he had occasion to look at this matter from another aspect when replying to Herbert Spencer, and in *A Perplexed Philosopher* (Part III, Chapter XI) he crystallizes his view in these sentences: "In truth the right to the use of land is not a joint or common right, but an equal right; the joint or common right is to rent, in the economic sense of the term. Therefore it is not necessary for the State to take land, it is only necessary for it to take rent."

In another passage of this book (Part I, Chapter IV) Henry George says: "Labour can, of course, produce nothing without land; but the right to the use of land is a primary individual right, not springing from society, or depending on the consent of society, either express or implied, but inherent in the individual, and resulting from his presence in the world. . . . Society itself has no original right to the use of land . . . the function of society with regard to the use of land only begins where individual rights clash, and is to secure equality between these clashing rights of individuals."

If we compare with this the Catholic position as stated by the Rev John A. Ryan, D.D., associate professor of political science in the Catholic University of America and professor of economics in Trinity College, it will be seen that the agreement is complete. Dr Ryan says in his *Distributive Justice*:

"The official teaching of the Church on the subject is found in the Encyclical 'On the Condition of Labour' by Pope Leo XIII. In this document we are told that the proposals of the Socialists are 'manifestly against justice'; that the right of property in land is 'granted to man by nature,' that it is derived 'from nature, not from man, and the State has the right to control its use in the interest of the public good alone, but by no means to abolish it altogether.' These statements the Pope deduces from a consideration of man's needs. Private property in land is necessary to satisfy the wants, present and future of the individual and his

family. Were the State to attempt the task of making this provision, it would exceed its proper sphere and produce domestic and social confusion.

"While Pope Leo defined the natural right of private ownership as incompatible with complete socialism, that is collective use as well as collective ownership, his statements cannot fairly or certainly be interpreted as condemning the Single Tax system, or any other arrangement which would leave to the individual managerial use and secure possession of his holdings together with the power to transmit and transfer it, and full ownership of improvements."

It may be added that Henry George himself expressed the warmest approval and admiration of the doctrinal statement presented by Dr McGlynn to Cardinal Satolli, and there can therefore be no doubt, as Mr Preuss admits, of the identity of the views of Dr McGlynn approved by the Church with those of Henry George.

Mr Bell is to be congratulated on what is not only a readable book but an important contribution to the literature of social reform.

F. C. R. D.

[*Rebel, Priest and Prophet* ERRATA. Mr Bell calls attention to the following necessary corrections in the text: Page 221, third line from bottom for "Archbishop of Boston" read "Bishop of Richmond." Page 178, line 12, for "Anti-Poverty meeting" read "Anti-Corrigan meeting." Page 286, fifth line of the verse, for "know" read "knew."]

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ON LAND MONOPOLY

IN A LETTER to Mr Gridley, of the firm of Davis, Lincoln and Gridley, Attorneys, Bloomington, Ill., Abraham Lincoln wrote:

"If I made the investment it would constantly turn my attention to that kind of business; and so far disqualify me from what seems my calling and success in it and interfere with the public or half public service which I neither seek nor avoid.

"I respect the man who properly named these villains land sharks. They are like the wretched ghouls who follow a ship and fatten on its offal.

"The land, the earth, God gave to man for his home, sustenance and support, should never be in the possession of any man, corporation, society or unfriendly government any more than air or water—if as much. An individual or company, or enterprise, acquiring land should hold no more than is required for their home and sustenance, and never more than they have in actual use in the prudent management of their legitimate business, and this much should not be permitted when it creates an exclusive monopoly. All that is not so used should be held for the free use of every family to make homesteads and to hold them as long as they are so occupied.

"The idle talk of foolish men, that is so common now, will find its way against it, with whatever force it may possess, and as strongly promoted and carried on as it can be by land monopolists, grasping landlords and the titled and untitled senseless enemies of mankind everywhere.

"On other questions there is ample room for reform when the time comes; but now it would be folly to think we could take more than we have in hand. But when slavery is over and settled, men should never rest content while oppression, wrongs and iniquities are enforced against them."

Quoted by Robert H. Browne, M.D. in his two volumes of "Abraham Lincoln and the Men of his Time."