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A Statement Relating to the now "historical"
"Father McGlynn Incident"

Explanatory: By Noah D. Alper

In 1935, there appeared in Land and Liberty, an English publication devoted to the economic and social philosophy of Henry George, a reference to Rev. T. Dawson, House of Retreat, Inchiore, Dublin. Recalling the fact that when Henry George visited Ireland to study and report the great social disturbances arising out of the relations of the Irish people to the English landholders of Land in Ireland, then referred to as "The Irish Land Question", he had met and become close in friendship with Father Dawson, I felt impelled to write Father Dawson.

Some months later I received a reply from Father Dawson, with which he enclosed a personal letter to Mrs. Anna George de Mille, together with the following document which is of special interest to all who would accomplish a greater measure of justice on this earth than now exists.

In his letter to Mrs. de Mille, Father Dawson said:

"It is an honour to me to be known as a friend of Henry George, or even as one who understands and shares the views in which he was my chief instructor.".....

....."Many weeks ago, I received the enclosed letter and some printed matter from . . . N. D. Alper. I am very sorry to have been so long without even acknowledging this very friendly communication. The reason of the long delay is that I have been wanting to say some such useful thing as seemed desired. . . And now that I do wish to deal with the subject I think it better to address myself to you."

---O V E R---



I can well understand the regret that is felt, by those who understand this Social Problem, when they consider how little is done by the Catholic Church to bring things round to a good and just conclusion. Of course Justice does come before Charity. Of course it would be to make Religion an opiate if it were used to hinder or to delay the doing of justice in this world. But we ought to acknowledge what really has been done by Church authority, and what enormous difficulties stand in the way of doing more.

More than half a century ago, Henry George himself foresaw that the truth which he perceived and made plain would "not find easy acceptance." You may remember that I was astonished to hear how hopefully Mr. (now Lord) Snowden had spoken to you in Downing Street in 1929. But evidently he is a man of great courage and resource, as well as a lover of justice. In 1931, somehow or other, he succeeded in having legal effect given to a plan for the taxation of valuable land. It was a mild measure, quite considerate of the private interests of the lords of land. But by slow working, and in the course of years, it would have lessened the evils of the landlord system, and eventually would have made it possible for all industrious persons to provide for their own needs. But the "Vested Interests" prefer the present system of the Dole. They prefer that multitudes of men should remain unable to work without some man's permission, although God Almighty has given more than permission. Snowden's colleagues would not allow his plan to work, and very soon they removed it altogether from the Statute Book. In a letter published at the time they acknowledged that they were acting on behalf of the Vested Interests. But the persons unwilling to touch vested interests are very numerous. They are not merely Society and Fashion. Not merely agents and stewards, and solicitors and clerks, and all salaried officials, including the politicians, and prosperous shop keepers. Indeed, of all people who are fairly well off, not one in ten will take any interest in improving the condition of others. They tell a story in England about some nobleman whose account books had grown rather confusing, and who asked a friend to look into matters. In a little while the friend said, "Duke, there is really great extravagance in this establishment of yours: I find, for instance, you have two confectioners." "Well, a fellow must have a biscuit," said the other. Now one may very easily suppose that the two confectioners would feel no eagerness to vote for any project which might be contrary to the wishes and the interests of His Grace. And the whole number is very great of those who are hangers-on to the existing long-established order of things. Moreover the greatest and the strongest vested interest is that of the money-lenders called bankers. They prefer that many people should remain needy.

It is a very simple, if pardonable, idea that extortions and condemnations by the Authorities of the Church would be able to put an end to man's unjust dealings with their fellow-men. This is like the notion that the Pope has it in his power to prevent the beginning or the continuance of what is called war. The Church or its Head has no more power to prevent public crimes than to prevent the many other mortal sins which are committed in private. Men who, as often as they choose, protest against clerical interference in affairs of State, and declare that the Church must not preach politics; men who would never think of submitting any matter to papal arbitration; men whose whole official existence is a prolonged protest against papal authority, will have the effrontery, on some particular occasion, to call upon the Pope to do his duty by declaring that they alone are reasonable and just in their decisions concerning affairs of State.

Those who would like the Pope to solve the Social Problem by one word are not so faulty or foolish as the persons to whom I refer. They may ask only, Why be content to preach that we ought to be just, and that a wage or price ought to be just? Why not point out some particular unjust act, and show the reason why an unjust wage has to be accepted?

Well, those who so question, though not thoughtless and unreasonable, are not thoughtful and reasonable enough. They do not consider the difficulties (as already named) in the way of making any change of great importance. Sometimes a change is made or attempted by a revolution, which means a second state worse than the first. And the suffering people, who by quietly combining in unity could bring about the needed and beneficial changes, prefer to be divided. Sometimes they even wish to have, in their Governing Assembly or Parliament, a separate party for such or such a trade. As if the promotion of the common weal by all were not the very thing that is best for every lawful trade or occupation! As if the first condition of all needed reforms were not the loyal union of all the popular forces!

Furthermore, it has to be said that those who are impatient because needed reforms do not "find easy acceptance," seldom make any account of the great help that has been offered to them by the doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church, that is to say, by the preaching of the sound general principles which ought to guide all honest reformers.

Let us just consider what has really been done: --

1. In 1891, soon after Cardinal Manning in England, and Bishop Nulty in Ireland, had explained the meaning of the Land Question, Pope Leo XIII published to the whole world an Encyclical Letter on The Condition of Labour (usually quoted as Rerum Novarum). In the latest republication of this document, an editor fairly enough calls it "The Workers' Charter." In 1891 that distinguished journalist, the late W. J. Stead, then editing the Pall Mall Gazette, published the Encyclical, with remarkable comments of his own, in a pamphlet with the title The Pope and the New Tax. The title was his own very good choice, in preference to a suggested one, The Church and the Revolution, or The Church is not the Counter-Revolution.

2. In the Encyclical of 1891, this splendid Charter of the Workingmen, this long elaborate defense of the dignity and rights of labour, of the rights and privileges of the individual, of the sacredness of the family home and homestead, there was a little passage which caused some alarm. These 3 or 4 lines seemed to say that Henry George, in his teaching concerning public rights, that his insistence on the over-riding claims of the Common Weal was not quite in agreement with the ordinary reasonable and Catholic teaching on the same subject.

3. Thereupon, in the same year 1891, Henry George, in order to explain himself very fully, wrote a little book which he called The Condition of Labor, republishing within its covers the whole of the Papal Encyclical. Of this book he sent to Rome a specially bound copy to be presented to the Holy Father, Pope Leo. Shortly afterwards, he received (as he told me himself) an assurance from a friend in Rome that his book had been "received, and read, and understood," and that he need not be afraid of hearing any more on the subject.

4. In 1892, the representative in America of the Holy See made a very precise examination of the Henry George Doctrine concerning private property in land, calling into council with himself four learned American priests, professors in the Catholic University at Washington. The decision of the Papal Delegate (afterwards Cardinal Satolli) was to the effect that in that doctrine there was no contradiction of the ordinary doctrine of the Catholic Church, such as set forth lately in the Rerum Novarum. That decision of Cardinal Satolli was never appealed against, was never called into question.

5. In 1931, the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, issued the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, dealing with the same subject as the Encyclical of 1891. In this new pronouncement the few lines mentioned above are not repeated, but stress is laid upon the fact that the Church has always sought to promote the best interests (even temporal interests) of the whole people and to protect the private rights of individuals. Private lawful progress or prosperity is always helpful to the neighbours, and to all the people. And from the public prosperity (not wickedly made private) advantages in abundance flow freely into private life.

But Pope Pius XI lays down here a great principle which has not yet been taken to heart by those who are, as they are bound to be, really interested in the Condition of the Common People. The Pope proclaims that Monopoly is the enemy - the enemy of the Common Weal, There is a certain "domination," or lordism, which is necessarily hurtful to the interests of the public. This has special referende to the Banking system. But besides, there is the general principle that "certain forms of property must be reserved to the State, because they carry with them a lordism too great to be left to private individuals."

Now even if we simply consider the Banking or Money System, we shall easily be led on to discover that special lordism which is a radical cause of poverty amid plenty. Why do so many people need to borrow? Why can they not support themselves by their own exertions? Is not money, whether paper or metal, a mere token, a mere I.O.U., worthless without real good things, "goods", at its back? Why is not the Bank (issuing money) on the same footing as the Mint? These are some of the important considerations to which all serious students of the Social Problem, and of the Pope's words ought to direct their thoughts.

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The Doctrinal Statement, prepared by The Rev. Dr. McGlynn, and Approved by The Papal Ablegate Mgr. Satolli, may be secured by writing the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 50 East 69th Street, New York 21, N.Y.

Information may be had about a "free" course in basic economics and social philosophy, based on the famous book, Progress and Poverty, by Henry George, by writing Henry George School of Social Science, 915 Olive St., St. Louis 1, Mo. or to Henry George School of Social Science, 50 East 69th St., New York, N.Y.

By writing the New York Headquarters locations of extension schools in the United States and Canada may be secured.