

Not Without Honor

By FATHER CLARENCE E. DUFFY

[Remarks made at the grave of Henry George at Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, on November 1, 1952.]

FIFTY FIVE years ago today the body of Henry George was laid to rest in these beautiful surroundings in which we are gathered to pay tribute to his memory and to his ideas. During those fifty five years the U. S. A. has gone through several depressions of a major and minor nature; it has experienced labor strife of a serious kind; it has gone through three major wars, two of them of world proportions, and after all these depressions, strife and wars it is now faced with the prospect of another and greater depression or another and greater war.

The reason for this sad state of affairs is that the people of the United States and particularly their leaders have ignored the basic ideas and fundamental principles recognized and announced by Henry George, ideas and principles rooted in the Old and New Testaments and set forth by Henry George in a speech delivered in New York in 1887, part of which was as follows:

"What we aim at is the abolition of poverty. We propose to accomplish this by abolishing injustice, and our particular aim is to abolish that fundamental injustice which deprives so many human creatures — aye, in cities like this, the majority of the population — of their natural right to the land which the Lord their God has given them. The relation between man and the land he inhabits is fundamental, and the laws which affect the tenure of land, the relation between man and the land on which all must live, are the most important of all laws. We do not mean to say that there are not many other wrongs to be righted, that there are not many other things to do, but we do say that the fundamental injustice which deprives men of their natural right to the element from which and on which all must live is most important, and is the one with which we ought to begin. Until we do away with that injustice we cannot abolish minor wrongs or make minor improvements that will effect any permanent good. We do not say this is the only thing to do, but we say this is the *first* thing to do."

The Natural Law

Henry George recognized the fact that the "earth is the Lord's" and that He made it for the use and benefit of *all* His creatures for all time leaving to them (and to the intelligences, consciences and laws of justice and charity which He gave them) the equitable disposition

or distribution of the land and its natural resources. He knew that God did not, and does not approve or sanction landlordism in any form, and that people who hold more land than they need while others are deprived of their natural right to own land, or who exploit or make money unjustly out of land, are acting contrary to the laws of God.

We here today are a small group, but in the future of this country and of the world we are an important group because of the things we believe in, things associated with, personified in, and for many of us emanating from Henry George, a prophet not completely without honor in his own country but fifty years at least ahead of his time. We are not ahead of *our* times. If we do not have an era of justice and the peace that comes from it we are threatened

with annihilation. We must have justice or perish, and the enforcement of that indispensable justice must begin, as Henry George well said, on the land in every country in the world. For us here, and through us, it must begin in the U. S. A. We must initiate a cry that will be heard from one end of the country to the other, from San Francisco to New York, a cry that will be heard and heeded in every home as well as in the halls of Congress: "*We Want Land!*"

How do we get it, the land created for us by God, the land that is our birthright, how do we take it or rightful portions of it from land-grabbers who now legally hold excess quantities of it to which, by natural and divine laws, they are not entitled? By legally taxing with a special tax, and until the taxation hurts to the point of disgorging, all usable land now lying idle and all lands above and beyond the just needs of present occupiers. Sixty years ago Henry George realized and advocated the need for a form of land taxation that would put an end to land exploitation and bring about an equitable distribution of land. Irrespective of whether or not people agree with his *single* tax theory, they must see the justice in the basic proposal to tax land and recognize it as the practical and constitutional means of restoring the land to the people.

I am very happy to have the opportunity to honor Henry George and while doing so I would like to mention another great man, a contemporary of his and a hero and martyr in the fight for the recognition of the ideas for which George lived and died—for he died in the fight and because of it. I refer to Father McGlynn, the *Rebel, Priest and Prophet* of New York, who in the name of God and for His honor and glory, for the furtherance of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, took up the

cudgels for the dispossessed and exploited people in cooperation with Henry George at the end of the last century.

Today *we* must take up, renew and pursue to a final successful conclusion the fight ini-

tiated by these great men. We must help the people realize that they *need* the land, that it belongs to them and that they will enjoy neither peace nor happiness until they own it on an equitably distributed basis. In many quarters we will most likely be called Communists by people who, in the words of St. Augustine, "possess the goods of others" and do so in the name of Christian morals and while professing to be Christians! What we advocate and believe in is simple justice based on Christian principles and democracy as envisaged by Thomas Jefferson.

In conclusion I would like to quote a few lines from the eulogy of Father McGlynn at the funeral of Henry George. They are as follows:

"We hope and pray for that reign of peace foretold by the prophets, the kingdom of heaven. That surely must be preceded by the kingdom of God on earth. On that day all will honor the patriotism of this man, and the name of Henry George will be revered. Then there will be a parliament of men. There will be praise for those who brought about the reign of brotherhood, the reign of peace, and in a niche of one of the halls of that parliament of nations there shall be found honored, loved and revered the name of Henry George."

Other Tributes

Robert Clancy said, "We are here not only to honor George, but to honor members of his family buried here, and Tom L. Johnson, whose last wish was to be buried next to the grave of his master." Miss V. G. Peterson paid a brief tribute to Tom L. Johnson, as did Mrs. Robert Baker, whose husband was one of the first Georgist members of Congress along with Congressman Johnson.

Agnes and Margaret de Mille brought flowers for their mother, the late Anna George de Mille, first president of the Henry George School; and laid a commemorative wreath at the foot of their grandfather's grave. This ceremony of remembrance was witnessed by about 50 persons.