

FATHER McGLYNN

“EVER SINCE reading your books I have ardently wished that you could see your way to some measures for more extensively circulating your views on political and social reform; and I cannot refrain from expressing my great gratification at seeing in the *Pall Mall* a notice that you are starting a paper for this purpose. I wish you God speed, and though my peculiar position forbids my public advocacy of your views I shall not fail in private circles to recommend your paper wherever I can.

“I believe you have found the true solution of our greatest social difficulties, so far as any temporal solution can avail; and although the task before you might well appall and discourage a Gabriel I believe if you are true to the interests of righteousness in the conduct of your paper, God will gird you for the battle and let you live to see (at least) the beginning of victory.”¹

This was one of many letters of encouragement which were received by Henry George when, in fulfillment of a lifelong ambition, he launched his own weekly newspaper. It was *The Standard*. And the letter came from Mrs. William Booth, of Salvation Army fame, in London.

Money for the new enterprise came from subscriptions paid in advance and from a \$500 loan by Thomas Briggs of London. With George as editor, William T. Croasdale as managing editor, and Louis F. Post as editorial writer—a staff in all of eleven men, besides the compositors—*The Standard* first appeared on January 8, 1887. In his salutation George wrote, “I shall endeavor to be fair to opponents and true to friends. I do not propose to make everything that shall appear here square to my own theories, but will be willing to give place to views which

may differ from my own when they are so stated as to be worthy of consideration.”²

The outstanding feature of the first issue was his own eight and one-half column article on “The McGlynn Case.” It proved to be a sensation.

The Roman Catholic church had not allowed its criticism of George to end with Monsignor Preston’s statement³ before the election that the economist’s teachings were “unsound and unsafe.”⁴ Archbishop Corrigan attacked him in a pastoral letter a few weeks after the election.⁵ Believing it his duty “to be quick in discerning dangerous movements and prompt in sounding timely alarms,”⁶ he commended Catholics to be “on guard against certain unsound principles and theories which assail the rights of property.”⁷

The attack did not name George but it was pointed squarely at him. Father McGlynn, who had been staying clear of politics, felt compelled to respond. In an interview in the *New York Tribune*⁸ he defended the principles which the Archbishop had condemned, saying they were not contrary to the teachings of the church.

The Archbishop promptly struck back. He suspended McGlynn for the remainder of the year and wrote to Rome.⁹ Father McGlynn was ordered to come to the Vatican.

The priest replied that several grave reasons, among them heart trouble (which, with other complications, ultimately was the cause of his death), prevented him from complying. Anyway, his doctrines about land had been made “clear in speeches, in reported interviews and in published articles.”¹⁰

The Archbishop then extended McGlynn’s suspension until either Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Propaganda, or the Pope himself should act. George had written an open letter in answer to the Archbishop’s attack.¹¹ Now he made a long and full statement of the case in *The Standard*, where he said in part:

Let it be observed that there can be no pretense that Dr. McGlynn in taking part in politics has done anything inconsistent with his duty as a Catholic priest. . . . The Catholic Church does not deny the propriety of the priest exercising all the functions of the citizen. To say nothing of the past when bishops and cardinals held the highest political offices, in Germany and France and Italy, the Catholic clergy have been in recent times energetic politicians and sometimes held elective office. . . .

In the last Presidential election Dr. McGlynn made some vigorous speeches in behalf of the Democratic candidate without a word or thought of remonstrance.¹²

While George refrained from attacking the church, he condemned what he called the "Bourbons" in its fold, asking in reference to the call to Rome, "What chance would a simple priest—a suspended priest at that—with his own Archbishop against him, have before a tribunal where united Ireland could barely get consideration?"¹³

The article appeared in the first number of *The Standard*. It attracted so much attention that two extra editions of the paper had to be printed. Seventy-five thousand copies were sold. Few other New York papers backed Father McGlynn; practically all of them sided with the Archbishop.

George fought on. "Is it not time," he asked, "that we should demand that American priests should be released from the abuse of ecclesiastical authority which makes them political slaves?"¹⁴ He asked the further question, "Is an American citizen, because he is also a Catholic priest, to be held to answer before a foreign tribunal, because of his actions in American politics?" This was answered, it would seem, by Father Sylvester Malone, who said, "Archbishop Corrigan has no right whatever to interfere with Dr. McGlynn in the exercise of his political opinions, freedom to express which his American citizenship entitled him. . . ."¹⁵ He is not accountable to Rome for his opinions on political economy."

On January 14, Father McGlynn was removed from St. Stephen's. Father Arthur Donnally (brother-in-law of a former treasurer of Tammany Hall) was appointed to succeed him. The new priest took possession without any notice, even attempting against the resistance of two maids to install himself in the private room which McGlynn had used for twenty years and giving the banished rector no time to remove his books, papers, and personal effects.

Not only that, but Father Donnally proceeded to remove Father McGlynn's name from his confessional and, attended by a police captain, ordered two of the eight assistant priests who had been hearing confession, and those parishioners who had come for devotion, out of the place.

Feeling ran high in the parish of St. Stephen's, where Father McGlynn was immensely popular. "Archbishop Corrigan has

done his worst and has done his worst in the worst possible way," wrote George. "Dr. McGlynn has been removed from the church he has helped to build up, and from the people to whom he was the very ideal of all that a pastor ought to be: and the removal has been accomplished by circumstances calculated to scandalize the church, outrage the priest, irritate the congregation and disgust the public."¹⁶

Mass on the first Sunday¹⁷ of Father Donnally's pastorate was held under difficulties. The church was bitterly cold, for the engineers had refused to make the fires. The choir and the altar boys also had gone on strike.

The anger of thousands of Catholics boiled up at a meeting in Madison Square Garden which was called to honor Michael Davitt but which was turned into a protest on behalf of McGlynn.¹⁸ Through most of this excitement the suspended priest maintained a dignified silence. But on March 29, he held a meeting at the Academy of Music and delivered a fiery address on "The Cross of the New Crusade" to a large audience composed chiefly of his old parishioners.

Following this meeting a group formed to educate the public on the land question and to promote social justice. It had its inception in the mind of Thomas L. McCready of *The Standard* staff. Its name was the Anti-Poverty Society. As George explained:

The purpose of the Anti-Poverty Society is not that of forming a new church. It will welcome to its ranks those of all creeds who desire to join it. It is not a political society, for though its aims may be practically realized through politics its purpose is that to which political action is secondary—to arouse conscience and excite thought. It is not a class society. Its object is to secure justice to all—to the capitalist as to the workman, to the employer as well as to the employed, to the rich as well as to the poor. It is not a charitable society. It does not propose to give alms or to attempt to alleviate poverty by half-way measures. It declares war against the cause of poverty itself. . . . On this broad platform men of all classes and all creeds may stand.¹⁹

Father Edward McGlynn was chosen president and Henry George was named vice president. The first public meeting was held at Chickering Hall on the night of May 1, 1887. Thousands unable to enter were turned away. McGlynn made the chief address. George wrote of it in *The Standard*:

The significance of the great meeting of the Anti-Poverty Society at Chickering Hall is the marriage again of what too long have been severed—the union of a religious sentiment with the aspiration for social reform: of the hope of heaven with the hope of banishing want and suffering from the earth. . . .

The simple words, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, *on earth* as it is in heaven," as they fell from the lips of a Christian priest who proclaims the common Fatherhood of God and the common brotherhood of man; who points to the widespread poverty and suffering, not as in accordance with God's will but in defiance of God's order, and who appeals to the love of God and the hope of heaven, not to make men submissive of social injustice which brings want and misery, but to urge them to the duty of sweeping away the injustice—have in them the power with which Christianity conquers the world.²⁰

On the following Sunday the Anti-Poverty Society met in the Academy of Music with Henry George as the chief speaker. The attendance was heavy, with many enrolling as members. Denunciation and ridicule meted out by the press only served to advertise the weekly gatherings (for the Society now met every week) and to stimulate the growth of the audience.

Early in May, Archbishop Corrigan informed Father McGlynn that he had been summoned to Rome and that he had forty days to comply or be excommunicated. McGlynn stoutly refused, citing his former reasons. A giant parade (estimated at upward of 75,000) composed mostly of Catholic workingmen was held in protest at the order.²¹

Forty days later, on July 3, the church he had served for twenty-five years excommunicated Father Edward McGlynn. Nor was this all. Other priests who had sympathized publicly with him were shifted to other parishes or demoted. Archbishop Corrigan went so far as to deny burial in Catholic cemeteries to two persons who had attended the Anti-Poverty Society meetings.

In the meantime Henry George maintained his active interest in politics. On August 17, a New York state convention of the United Labor party, organized in the winter of 1886-87, was held in Syracuse. The Socialists, who had supported George and his platform the year before, now tried to swing the party in their direction. Just as in England George had refused to accept the socialistic dictum of state regulation, so now in Amer-

ica he must reject it. The majority of the United Labor party sided with him in refusing to advocate the nationalization of capital or the abolition of all private property in the "instruments of production." After a bitter session, which Louis F. Post had opened as temporary chairman, the Socialists withdrew from the convention.

George was urged to accept the nomination for secretary of state, the chief state office in New York below the governorship. After some misgivings he agreed—perhaps because of implied criticism that he feared another defeat at the polls. Accepting the nomination,²² he said, "For my own part it concerns me little what the result shall be. All that concerns me is that I shall do my best. For no matter what the setbacks, no matter what the temporary defeat, in the long run the good will triumph."²³

He waged an active campaign all through the state, accompanied by several reporters who, early in the trip, complained to Mrs. George that since the candidate spoke extemporaneously and never repeated a speech, they had to keep on the alert and could get no rest.

This campaign brought to the forefront the scholarly publicist, William Lloyd Garrison, son of the great abolitionist. He had been won to George's doctrines through reading *The Peer and the Prophet*, and now was spreading it from the lecture platform.

Father McGlynn, Louis Post, the Reverend Hugh O. Pentecost, minister of a large Congregational church in Newark, New Jersey, Judge James G. Maguire of San Francisco, one of the first of George's converts, and others traveled over the state, campaigning for what was then beginning to be known as the "Single Tax" movement.

This term was first used as the title of an address delivered before the Constitution Club of New York²⁴ by Thomas G. Shearman, who took it from Book VIII, Chapter 4, of *Progress and Poverty*. It was there that the author suggested "substituting for the manifold taxes now imposed a single tax on the value of land." The label came into wide use although Henry George and many of his followers knew it did not describe their philosophy of freedom but only indicated the fiscal means for applying that philosophy.

Money for the campaign was scarce. However, enough was collected at meetings, from small outside donations, and from a huge Labor Fair held for three weeks at Madison Square Gar-

den, under the auspices of the Anti-Poverty Society, to pay for the distribution of nearly a million tracts and to carry on widespread and effective propaganda.

But all of this was to no avail. George drew only 72,281 votes as against a total of nearly one million for his Republican and Democratic opponents. One of the disappointments of the campaign was the defection of Patrick Ford, who in three successive articles in the *Irish World* took the part of church authorities against George, making no distinction between priests as men with political preferences and as spiritual teachers.

Ford seemed to have forgotten that five years before it was he who had invited Father McGlynn into the Land League fight at the time when Michael Davitt had come over from Ireland and when the priest had made speeches that brought upon him his first ecclesiastical censure.

As usual, George had attracted few "respectable" personages. Chauncey M. Depew sneered at "the strange and extraordinary theories of Henry George"²⁵ and Theodore Roosevelt delivered a speech against the "utterly cheap reformer"²⁶ in which he said "it is only a step from land confiscation to anarchy."²⁷ (Roosevelt was just then getting in stride.) Henry George never advocated confiscation of land and, at that time, to link him with "anarchy" implied contempt.