

Story of Father McGlynn

By RAYMOND MOLEY

Pessimists who doubt the growth of tolerance in the United States might consider the years 1928 and 1967.

Thirty-nine years ago, many thousands believed the rumor that if Alfred E. Smith were elected president, the Pope or a representative would move into the White House.

But during the Christmas season in 1967 an American president traveled halfway around the world to visit the Pope.

Intolerance has so greatly subsided in the United States and in other Western nations, The Roman Catholic Church, itself, has shown a remarkable capacity to adjust itself to new knowledge and conditions. The recent alterations in attitudes and doctrines is not a new phenomenon. The very durability of the Church over the centuries is due to capacity to review decisions.

One example was the celebrated case of Fr. Edward McGlynn of New York City.

In 1886, he became pastor of St. Stephen's Church in a poor parish. The compassionate priest had read Henry George's "Progress and Poverty" shortly after it appeared in 1880. He had listened to the impassioned oratory of this famous reformer.

Inspired by the belief that Henry George was correct in asserting that progress and increasing wealth were accompanied by more and more poverty and the remedy lay in making land "common property," Father McGlynn founded an Anti-Poverty Society. He went beyond George by claiming private ownership of land was sinful.

When Henry George ran for mayor of New York in 1886, Fr. McGlynn was a vociferous supporter. This irritated Archbishop Michael Corrigan, who sought to maintain the Democratic status quo in New York. He ordered Father McGlynn to stop speaking about land reform and appealed to Rome.

Pope Leo XIII ordered the priest to present himself in Rome, but Father McGlynn disobeyed the order. He was excommunicated.

Six years later, the Holy See sent Monsignor Satolli to New York to investigate the McGlynn Case.

The priest submitted a comprehensive statement of his views on the land question. Monsignor Satolli and five other theologians stated there was nothing in the McGlynn philosophy contrary to the Christian faith and Catholic doctrine. This was announced in 1892, and the pastor was restored to his priestly status and his parish.

In the years since, the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine on land has radically changed. Pius XII in 1943 and 1944 made it clear the common right to possess land had precedence over private right of possession.

In 1966, the Vatican Council ranged the church on the side of land reform.

Pope Paul stated: "God intended the earth such a way that the goods of creation should abound in the hands of all, according to the dictates of justice, which is inseparable from charity. Whatever the forms of ownership, adapted and all things in it for the use of all peoples, in to the lawful institutions of the peoples and in accordance with divers and changing circumstances, this universal apportionment of goods must be borne in mind at all times."

The world changes. So does the Roman Catholic Church. One such change is the growing realization that the gripping problem of emerging nations is land monopoly. The church recognizes, therefore, that the best answer to communism is land reform.



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