

The McGlynn Case

BY HON. P. J. O'REGAN*

ALTHOUGH Mr. Stephen Bell's book "Rebel, Priest and Prophet" is a timely contribution to the literature of our movement, I venture to say that the title thereof is incorrect. Father McGlynn was no rebel, though he was denounced as such by his opponents, and doubtless there are certain of his co-religionists—some of them in high places—who still would so describe him. The McGlynn case is one of many similar controversies in the long history of the Catholic Church, though, as Newman has said, since the Reformation the Church has necessarily been obliged to maintain a defensive attitude, and so there has been less of internal discussion than in the earlier ages. There were many bishops who opposed St. Francis of Assisi, but he secured the approval of the Pope, became the founder of one of the greatest religious orders, and in due time was accorded the signal honor of canonization. When he opposed the pretensions of Henry II, St. Thomas of Canterbury found his most influential opponents among his fellow-bishops. Nevertheless it is the verdict of history that he was not merely a great churchman, but one of the sturdiest champions of popular freedom. More and Fisher found scant sympathy—active opposition in fact—from Court theologians when they opposed Henry VIII and the panders who acclaimed him as head of the Church. Like Thomas of Canterbury, however, they have long since been vindicated, and recently they were included in the great calendar of the canonized. History contains no name more magnificent than that of Las Casas, the illustrious Dominican who opposed the enslavement of the aborigines of Latin America. From the earliest ages the Church had ameliorated the lot of the slave, and finally she secured the abolition of slavery in Europe. Still there were churchmen who defended the enslavement of colored men. Las Casas, however, maintained that all men were born free and that heathen had natural rights which even their conqueror was bound to respect. Non-Catholic historians, like Robertson and Prescott, have extolled Las Casas and his work equally with Catholic writers like Chateaubriand. It remains a fact, however, that he had to face powerful opposition from co-religionists, though now-a-days no one would question the soundness of his teaching. Long ago the illustrious priest, Lacordaire, counselled his countrymen to accept the French Republic and to refuse the overtures of Royalist pretenders. Lacordaire found little support among

the French Bishops, but years later Pope Leo XIII gave the same advice. One of the greatest Catholics of the last century was John Henry Newman, the author of that monumental work "The Development of Christian Doctrine." Long after he had entered the Catholic Church Newman maintained that there was in reality no conflict between the teaching of the Church and scientific discovery, and that Genesis must be read in the light of modern knowledge, and the "days" of creation regarded as geological periods. There were critics among his co-religionists who called him a "minimizer of Catholic doctrine," and though he took little notice of them it is beyond question that he felt their attacks keenly. Newman had a matchless knowledge of history, and doubtless he was well aware that away back in the fifth century St. Augustine had said very much the same thing. The great Bishop of Hippo did not have the benefit of modern geological knowledge, but in his "Confessions" he pointed out that the "days" of Genesis could not mean days as we know them in that a day could not occur before the work of creation had been completed. The best commentary on the life and work of Newman is that he was raised to the Cardinalate. Today nobody questions his greatness, his insight or his Catholic orthodoxy, and he is well remembered while his critics are forgotten.

That Father McGlynn was no rebel is evident from the facts. After his excommunication he remained fully confident of the real strength of his position. He did not attempt to found a new sect. He did not have recourse to non-Catholic pulpits. That he had not merely a large measure of popular support, but the sympathy of not a few ecclesiastics and fellow-priests is clear. The huge procession of protest in New York and the protesting cable message from the Bishop of distant Florida is evidence of all this, and there are the crowning facts that after he had written a statement of his principles, the ban of excommunication was lifted by the Papal Alegate, that he had audience with the Pope and received his blessing, and that Monsignor Satolli himself was made a Cardinal.

But there is other evidence of the soundness of Father McGlynn's position, and soundness is incompatible with rebellion. Readers of this article will remember the Knights of Labor, one item of whose programme was a declaration that the whole of the unearned increment of land belongs to the community. Naturally there were many followers of Henry George who joined the Knights, hoping thereby to influence them in the right direction. Necessarily there were many Catholics in it, and in 1889 invisible but powerful forces got to work to have the Order interdicted by the Pope as being a secret society. As a matter of fact Cardinal Taschereau of Quebec had already banned the Order within his own jurisdiction. At or about the same time the same agencies got to work to have "Progress and Poverty" placed on the Index

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of forbidden books. Now, we know from their biographies, meagre as they are in this connection, that two doughty opponents of both proposals were Cardinals Gibbons and Manning. In the result the Knights of Labor were not condemned, Archbishop Taschereau was obliged to remove the ban in Canada, and "Progress and Poverty" was not placed on the Index. Assuredly, all this is relevant to the case of McGlynn, and is strong evidence of the validity of his position from a Catholic point of view. Incidentally, it is no mean tribute to Henry George that two princes of the church, particularly men so eminent as the Archbishops of Baltimore and Westminster, took such an attitude when it was sought to condemn his masterpiece.

Mr. Bell comments on the meagre records of the McGlynn case in the Catholic Encyclopædia. This reminds me that there seems to have been so far a studied attempt to minimize the case and to obscure it. There is a lengthy reference to it in the biography of Cardinal Gibbons, whence it is plain, though the fact is not emphasized, that the Cardinal did not approve Archbishop Corrigan's conduct, and notwithstanding that the final vindication of Father McGlynn is mentioned, it is dismissed with a couple of sentences! A two-volume biography of Cardinal Manning—little better than a caricature in my opinion—has been written by Purcell, wherein no mention is made of the McGlynn case. The author does record that Henry George had an interview with the Cardinal, but he omits the fact that he was introduced by Wilfred Meynell, a distinguished Catholic publicist, and he betrays his ignorance of George's principles by calling him an advocate of land nationalization and a Socialist. In a later biography of the great Cardinal by Shane Leslie there is a chapter headed "The Coming of Democracy" in which there is extensive reference to the McGlynn case. The author is plainly infected by a strong bias against Father McGlynn, and he tells a garbled story in that there is very little to indicate what the Cardinal's view was, while not a word is said to inform the reader of McGlynn's ultimate vindication by the Papal Ablegate! Further, an extract is given from a letter written by Archbishop Walsh of Dublin to the Cardinal, the most significant portion of which is suppressed. I have taken the trouble to peruse the biography of the Archbishop of Dublin, however, and there the letter is printed in full as well as several others on the case of Father McGlynn. Dr. Walsh expresses the opinion that "Progress and Poverty" is "a singularly interesting as well as ably written book". He adds: "It is very plain, very painfully so indeed, that the Archbishop of New York whose pastoral condemns it so strongly, cannot have read it at all." It would be interesting to have the Cardinal's reply, but I have no doubt what his view was, and when a proper and adequate biography of the man is written, the whole truth will be told. We are

in possession of evidence sufficient, however, to justify the conclusion that there is a studied endeavor on the part of a few obscurantists to stifle discussion of the McGlynn case and to misrepresent it and minimize its importance.

Finally, may I say that the McGlynn case, coupled as it must be with the Pope's refusal to interdict the Knights of Labor, or to condemn "Progress and Poverty," is a magnificent tribute to the Catholic Church. Only a Catholic priest would have accomplished what Father McGlynn did, and his achievement was due to the august and historic tribunal with which the church is provided for the settlement of disputed questions. A clergyman of any non-Catholic denomination might have been as resolute as Father McGlynn, but he could never have achieved a result of such deep and world-wide importance. I entertain the fullest confidence that men will yet arise in the church to pursue the path indicated by Bishop Nulty and Father McGlynn, and when Henry George's proposal shall have been realized in practice, the courageous New York priest will be appraised at his real worth—as one of the best and bravest men of his time.

H G S S S Activities

FRANK CHODOROV, Director of the School, has just made his annual report to the Board of Trustees for the current year. In a most restrained manner, it sets forth the glowing attainments of the noblest experiment yet undertaken for the advancement of the Georgerist philosophy. The report contains a concise history of the founding of the School by the late Oscar H. Geiger, and proceeds with the story of its growth and the acquisition of its school building. It contains also a financial statement of assets and liabilities as well as a statement of income and expenditures. All together it is most illuminating and a complete justification for the continued loyalty of its generous financial supporters and volunteer workers alike.

The phenomenal growth of the school toward almost institutional proportions, may be more easily appreciated in mentioning that the expenditures for the fiscal year, 1939, amounted to \$30,710.79. Plans are well under way to carry out the envisionment of an increased expenditure for the ensuing year, in order to accommodate 3,000 additional students per term, for a total enrollment of over 10,000 per year. To reach this goal will necessitate the renovation and equipment of the two upper floors of the building, in order to accommodate applicants now being turned away. This work is estimated to cost \$7,000 and is worthy of liberal support.

The Lecture Forum started its 1939 season on October 8, and has been held each Sunday, instead of once each