

Edward McGlynn: A Missionary Priest and His Social Gospel

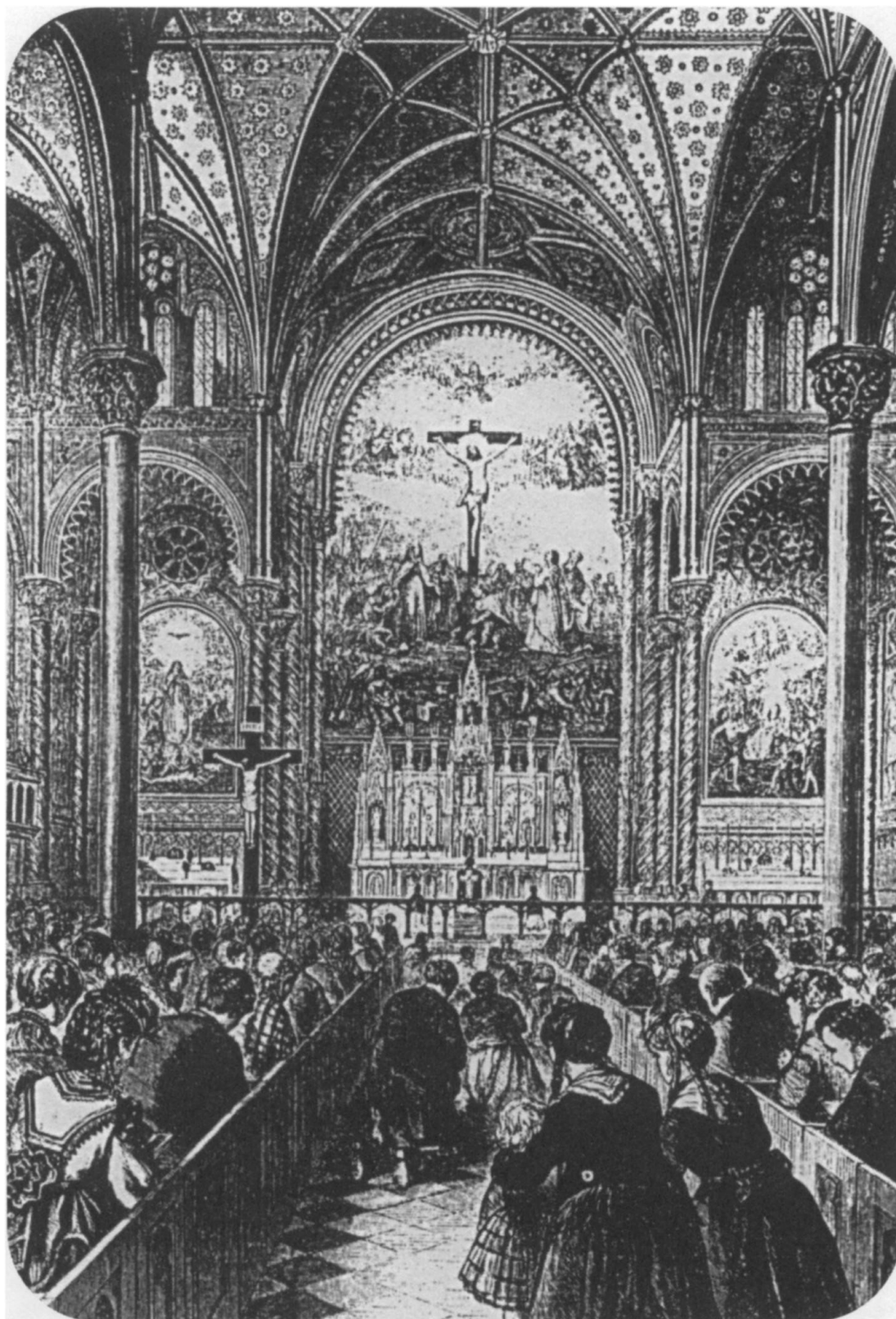
— Manuel S. “Jeff” Shanaberger

The Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn (1837-1900), pastor of St. Stephen’s Church, New York City, from 1866 to 1887, was one of the earliest and most vocal advocates among American Catholics of the social gospel. He is most often remembered today because of his dispute with Archbishop Michael Corrigan, his subsequent excommunication, and the role he came to play in the Americanist crisis in the 1880s and 1890s.¹ He is also significant, however, in that his social gospel stance, which called for greater state intervention in the social and economic spheres, helped to prepare American Catholics to renounce the excesses of laissez-faire capitalism. It is certainly not novel to place McGlynn within the ranks of social gospel advocates.² Nevertheless, it is important, if one is to understand how he came to this theological position, to examine the reality of his identity as a zealous missionary apostolic trained at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide in Rome and serving in what was then a missionary country.

Except perhaps for Isaac Hecker, Edward McGlynn was the most prominent priest in New York City from the mid 1860s until his excommunication in 1887. On October 27, 1868 Edward F. X. McSweeney, one of McGlynn’s assistant pastors, wrote to Cardinal Barnabò, Secretary of Propaganda, stating that he was happy to find himself serving as an assistant pastor in a very busy parish in the Metropolis of New York, St. Stephen’s, which was “now adorned by the virtue and work of another alumnus [of Propaganda College], Dr.

1. For thorough accounts of the McGlynn affair see: Robert Emmett Curran, *Michael Augustine Corrigan and the Shaping of Conservative Catholicism in America, 1878-1902* (New York: Arno Press, 1978); Robert Emmett Curran, “The McGlynn Affair and the Shaping of the New Conservatism in American Catholicism, 1886-1894,” *The Catholic Historical Review* (April 1980):184-204; Gerald P. Fogarty, *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy from 1870 to 1965* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, Verlag, 1982); and Manuel S. Shanaberger, “The Reverend Dr. Edward McGlynn: An Early Advocate of the Social Gospel in the American Catholic Church, An Intellectual History,” (Ph.D. diss., Religious Studies, University of Virginia, 1993).

2. Margaret Mary Reher described McGlynn as such in “A *Call to Action* Revisited,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, I, no. 2 (Winter-Spring 1981), 54-60.



St. Stephen's Church, New York, in 1870

McGlynn, 'easily the chief,' as many say about him, among the priests of the metropolis."³ McSweeney went on to recount that in addition to their twenty-thousand parishioners "many heretics with some Jews are attracted by the magnificence of the building, tasteful music, the fame and eloquence of the pastor."⁴

McSweeney also recounted that St. Stephen's catechism school numbered 1500 children with 200 instructors. Furthermore, during the past year a mission had been given there by the Redemptorists in which there were "about 21,000 confessions, 2,800 anointings, etc., [with] 24 priests of the entire United States [lending] their services, and the same will be repeated next month."⁵ The historian John Gilmary Shea recorded that in announcing this mission to his parishioners McGlynn said,

I take this opportunity of repeating my most anxious wish and prayer that none of the people of the parish will allow this time of special grace and blessing to pass away unimproved, reminding all that they may never again have so good an opportunity, as there will be some eighteen or twenty Redemptorist Fathers devoted exclusively to their service during the whole time of the mission.⁶

Shea also noted McGlynn's eminence.

Devoted as a priest, far seeing, quick to perceive the wants and needs of his flock, he is prompt and decisive in his measures. As a pulpit orator or lecturer he is singularly effective, combining with great ecclesiastical and general learning a retentive memory, a systematic mind, a felicity and readiness of expression, and great persuasive power.

In that same year Shea published his *Lives of the Saints* for which McGlynn wrote the preface.⁷

McSweeney's letter indicated many of the primary issues that would concern this zealous missionary priest, e.g., keeping Catholic immigrants within the fold of the Church as well as Americanizing them, caring for the poor, meeting the spiritual needs of the people and winning non-Catholic Americans to the Catholic Church. McGlynn's zeal, self-sacrifice and eloquence would

3. Edward McSweeney to Barnabo, October 27, 1868. Archives of Propaganda Fide, SCAMerCent.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.* The Redemptorists or Liguorians are a missionary order founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori. Isaac Hecker had been a member of this order until he founded the Paulists. A "mission" was similar to the Protestant revival service. See Jay Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience 1830-1900* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).

6. John Gilmary Shea, ed., *The Catholic Churches of New York City With Sketches of Their History and Lives of the Present Pastors* (New York: Lawrence G. Goulding Co., 1878), 665-666.

7. Shea, *The Catholic Churches of New York.*, 672; Shea, *Pictorial Lives of the Saints With Reflections For Every Day of the Year* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1878).

win the hearts of much of New York City. As he tried to carry out this apostolate, his path ran against the more conservative strictures within much of the hierarchy that he would consequently hold in contempt. His attitude and consequent actions would do much to prevent him from moving up into the episcopal ranks as well as create an ever-present antagonist to his efforts of reform of both Church and society. Indeed, twenty years later many within the hierarchy of the Archdiocese of New York would view this “chief” of New York priests as very dangerous to his fellow priests. Bernard McQuaid, bishop of Rochester, wrote to New York’s Archbishop Corrigan two days after Christmas in 1886 regarding McGlynn’s “madness” in disobeying the archbishop by supporting the theories of the economist, Henry George. McQuaid said that he would never have thought McGlynn to be capable of such insanity. He encouraged the archbishop to expose McGlynn’s rebellion and promptly end his power for mischief for “[t]he Doctor was leading many young priests astray by his [illegible] ability to fascinate them. They knew his intellectual gifts, his moral life and devotion to his work, and were therefore ready to yield to his sway.”⁸ Despite McQuaid’s disdain for McGlynn he witnessed to the power of McGlynn’s ministerial influence and therefore his prominence in New York.

While one must acknowledge his prominence, it is also true that McGlynn was very much a man of his times. As a priest within the American Catholic Church of the second half of the nineteenth century, he shared with many other priests of the Atlantic seaboard a major concern for the future of the hundreds of thousands of Catholic immigrants. He often chafed at what appeared to him and his peers as the lack of concern on the part of the hierarchy about the spiritual and material needs of immigrants. McGlynn certainly wanted to keep them in the Church, to keep them from losing their faith if they had faith to begin with, and, if they were not of the faith, to win them to the care of the Church.

The intensity of this concern can be explained in part no doubt because of his theological training at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide in Rome. McGlynn had gone there at age thirteen in 1850 with the help of the founding pastor of St. Stephen’s, Jeremiah Cummings, (d. 1866) and Archbishop John Hughes (d. 1864). He returned home to New York City in 1860 with a doctoral degree. He served in several different parishes until 1866 when he succeeded Cummings at St. Stephen’s. The Urban College had as one of its primary purposes the training of missionary priests for spreading the gospel to the whole world. This evangelical formation no doubt deeply strengthened the ardor of his concern. In November of 1891 McGlynn recounted his vision as a mission-

8. McQuaid to Corrigan, December 27, 1886, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York (hereinafter cited as AANY), C-16. Actually Corrigan would come to see McGlynn’s close friend and ally Richard Burtzell as the greater threat because of his knowledge of Canon Law.

ary apostolic trained at Propaganda:

As a pastor, to which position I was promoted at a very early age, of a church in this city, with the larger field that came to me, I felt all the more the difficulties and the obstacles in the way of the perfect fruitfulness of my ministry. I fain, coming out from the Propaganda a missionary apostolic to preach the gospel to every creature, would have converted my country, converted the whole world.⁹

Thus, the common pastoral concern to keep the faithful within the fold of the Church was certainly in part a product of his theological training. This concern, however, extended beyond merely keeping many nominal Catholic immigrants within the fold of the Church. Propaganda also gave to him a strong sense of purpose in the conversion of non-Catholics in the United States and in the whole world to the true faith. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that McGlynn shared with his older contemporary and Society of St. Paul founder, Isaac Hecker, the hope of converting all of America to Catholicism.

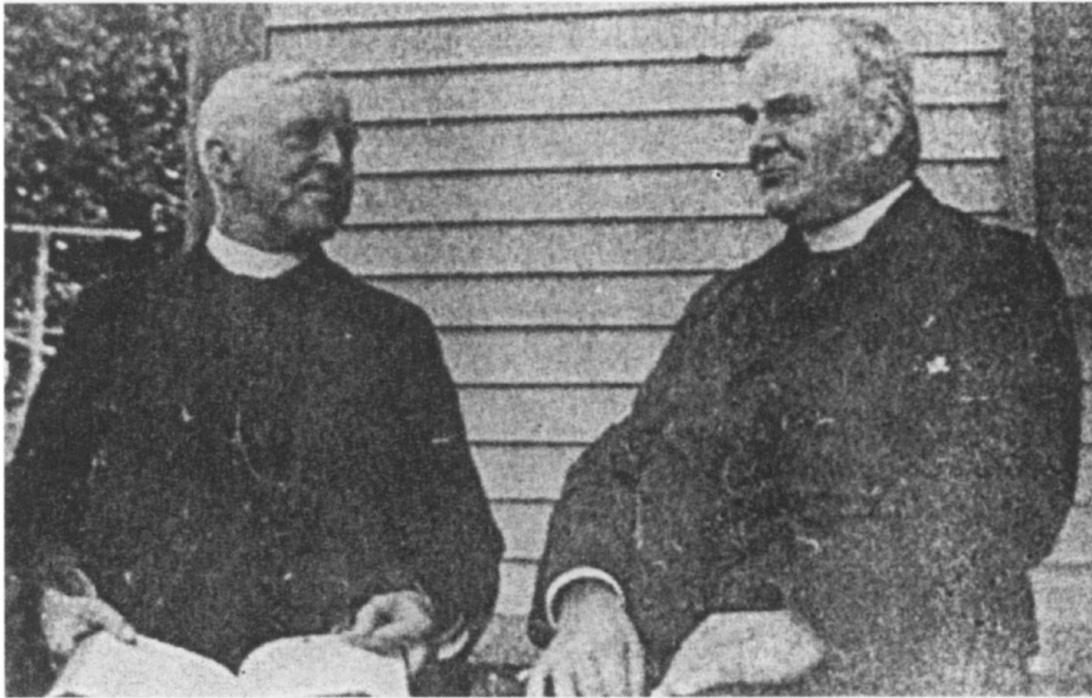
McGlynn was, no doubt, influenced to some degree by Hecker; however, it was another Protestant convert to Catholicism and one of its great apologists, Orestes Brownson, who played an even greater role in strengthening and channeling the ardor of McGlynn and many of his peers. One can trace this influence originally to McGlynn's involvement in a group of priests that was known in the official New York archdiocesan circles of the chancery as the "Accademia" and which those circles described as a "cabal of liberalism."¹⁰ In addition to McGlynn members of this group, which began meeting in 1866, included his best friend Richard Burtzell, and Patrick McSweeney, Sylvester Malone, James Nilan, Thomas McLoughlin; Thomas Farrell was their leader. Also associated with this group were Bishop John Moore of St. Augustine, Florida, the Paulists Isaac Hecker and Augustine L. Hewitt, and the rector of St. Charles Boromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, James O'Connor.¹¹ This group was a successor to a short-lived one that had been established by Jeremiah Cummings a year earlier.

The *Accademia* met in a formal way for only a few years. Its primary pur-

9. Edward McGlynn, *Anti-Poverty Society Addresses*, November 28, 1891, 4. Photocopy in R. Emmett Curran files from Mount Saint Mary's Archives (MSMA).

10. R. Emmett Curran, "Prelude to 'Americanism': The New York Accademia and Clerical Radicalism in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Church History*, XLVII, 49.

11. Nelson J. Callahan, ed., *The Diary of Richard L. Burtzell, Priest of New York: The Early Years, 1865-1868* (New York: Arno Press, 1978), November 20, 1866, 333. Hereinafter this is cited as Callahan, *Early Diary*, giving page number as well as date. Later years of the diary will be cited as *Burtzell Diary* using dates only. The complete extant diary of Burtzell spanning the years from 1865-1912 is in the Archives of the Archdiocese of New York at St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, NY. The use of the colon (:) in any quotations from the Callahan, *Early Diary*, are as they appear in that edition. Curran does not mention O'Connor as associated with this group; however, it is evident from Burtzell's diary that O'Connor at that time sympathized with their concerns and aspirations.



Fathers Richard Burtzell and Edward McGlynn

pose seems to have been a means of continuing education and frank discussion of issues facing the Church. Most of what we know about their meetings comes from the extant diary of Richard Burtzell which provides a “window into the soul” of these men. From this diary it is evident that they indeed held very liberal ideas for Catholics of their time: support of the abolition of slavery, doubts about the inspiration of scripture as well as the promulgation of papal infallibility and the pope’s temporal power; they wished the vernacular in the liturgy; they questioned the efficacy of celibacy and were disgusted with the centralization of the Church’s hierarchy. There was apparently not always a consensus of thought on these issues but there was much forthrightness of discussion nevertheless. Burtzell mentioned they were reading such authors as Colenso, Renan, Newman, Brownson, Manning and Gioberti.¹² The formal meetings of this group came to an end in the early 1870s although many of them continued to meet informally to discuss theological and ecclesiastical

12. British Anglican bishop and biblical scholar John W. Colenso challenged the traditional authorship and historical accuracy of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. Joseph Ernest Renan (1823-92), a French philosopher, theologian and orientalist who, in his *Vie de Jesus*, repudiated the supernatural element in the life of Jesus. Cardinal John Henry Newman (1801-90) had converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1845. Soon after his conversion he published his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* to defend his departure from the Church of England. Henry Edward Cardinal Manning (1808-92) was, like Newman, a convert from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1851. He became archbishop of Westminster in 1865, wrote several books on the Holy Spirit and was active in social work. Vincenzo Gioberti, (d. 1852) was an Italian philosopher who was condemned for his pantheistic and ontologistic writings. He was also deeply involved in political movements for a free Italy.

matters.

What these priests were most concerned about was how what they called the “old-fogeyism” of the Church’s hierarchy was hindering the progress of the Church in America. McGlynn and Burtzell were especially dismayed that their archbishop, John McCloskey, (d. 1885) and many in his chancery circles did not do more during this period in the way of starting new churches for the thousands of Catholic immigrants. McCloskey, to their chagrin, was also not very positive about efforts to convert Protestants. In their zeal these liberal priests were not afraid to confront the hierarchy with their concerns and pointed criticism which of course was not well received.

Their zeal, lack of fear and their particular concerns were instilled in part by their direct and indirect relations with Brownson. Although not directly associated with the *Accademia*, he was apparently very influential within it. Archbishop McCloskey himself suggested this Brownson connection in a conversation with his secretary, John Farley, on July 5, 1875. Farley recorded in his diary for that day:

[s]ubject of conversation turned on the Young S[c]hool of Cath[olic] Clergy in NY as it was some ten years ago. F. Farrell . . . said . . . [that he] got his peculiar view of things from looking at things with a squint. Hence that oblique view of everything. He may have got it by taking the wrong side of questions for the sake of argument. Dr. Brownson was the father of that school but kept from committing himself directly in anything yet the *Animus* was there & like all providers of errors his disciples went further than ever the master intended, e.g., Jansenius.¹³

Brownson’s influence over members of the *Accademia* had begun a decade before its foundation. Jeremiah Cummings and Thomas Farrell, who both had a formative influence in McGlynn’s early life and/or career, had been enamored of Brownson since the late 1840s. Cummings was instrumental in getting Brownson to move his *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* from Boston to New York in 1855, contributed several articles himself to the *Review* and served as Brownson’s theological advisor. Both he and Farrell, who had first been introduced to Brownson’s thought while at Mt. St. Mary’s Seminary in Emmitsburg, had also helped Brownson financially during some difficult times when Brownson had come under public attack from Archbishop Hughes, McCloskey’s predecessor. Therefore, Cummings and Farrell were a channel of Brownson’s spirit to McGlynn and to the other young priests of New York. It

13. *Diary of John Farley*, AANY. As I understand McCloskey’s reference to Jansenius, he was not connecting Jansenist thought with the liberal thought of the *Accademia*. It was indeed just the opposite of Jansenism. Rather, he was either suggesting that like the disciples of Jansenius, those of Brownson went farther than their master ostensibly intended to go or that they gave external but not internal assent to correction in doctrine. He also may have been suggesting both of these possibilities.

is also evident from the Burtzell diary that both Burtzell and McGlynn met occasionally with Brownson himself and read his *Review*. One such instance of the latter occurred on June 14, 1865. Burtzell recorded that "Dr. McGlynn and I hunted up some of Brownson's reviews at the Mercantile Library, to which we are both associated: to give matter for a debate to the students of Manhattan College on the perfectibility of human nature by reason or by grace: which the Dr. . . . is superintending."¹⁴

From this relationship with Brownson, McGlynn imbibed both a special spirit, or Animus, and several consuming issues. In the period from 1855 to the early 1860s Brownson set himself against what he called the "Old Fogey" spirit within the Church, i.e., the spirit of "one who, from indolence, interest, or cowardice, refuses to push the principles he holds to their legitimate consequences, or condemns his more consistent brethren for laboring to effect those changes which are authorized by the principles which he and they hold in common."¹⁵ Brownson's spirit thus seems to have emphasized the power of reason which his critics, such as Hughes, believed eclipsed the importance of supernatural grace. As far as Brownson was concerned the Catholic Church had failed "to produce living men, active, thinking men, great men of commanding genius, of generous aims and high and noble aspirations; and hence it also [failed] . . . to take possession of humanity, and to inspire and direct its movements."¹⁶

A major issue for Brownson was the need to improve the Church's image in America so that it could win converts to the Catholic Faith. As he surveyed American Catholicism, he concluded that the major problem in the Church's image was its "ghetto" nature. He addressed this concern in his article "Mission of America" in the October 1856 issue of the *Review*. In this he stated his belief in the manifest destiny of America, that the future of the world was in America and that the Catholic Church was essential for America to realize that destiny given it by God's providence. In order for the Church to play its essential role, however, it had to prove that it was not antagonistic to the American spirit of truth and liberty. Only so could it spoil the criticism of the nativists and Know-Nothing party that the Church was an enemy of the American way and begin to win converts and gain influence in the direction of the country and in the cultivation of its culture and spirit. Brownson thus sought to end this ghetto spirit of American Catholics by which they separated themselves from the "great current of American nationality," and assumed the "position in political and social life of an inferior, distinct, or alien colony planted in the midst of a people with whom they have no sympathies."¹⁷ He

14. Callahan, *Early Diary*, June 14, 1865, 72, 73.

15. O. A. Brownson, "Uncle Jack and his Nephew: or Conversations of an Old Fogie with a 'Young American.'" *Brownson Quarterly Review*, (hereinafter cited as *BQR*), II, No. 1 (January 1854):19.

16. O. A. Brownson, "Catholic Schools and Education," *BQR* (January 1862):70, 71.

17. O. A. Brownson, "Mission of America," *BQR*, I, no. 4:414.

urged all Catholics instead to become major players in the nation's history and to make themselves "thorough-going Americans." In doing so, however, he insisted that they must understand that

to be Americans is to understand and love American institutions, to understand and love American liberty, to understand and love American principles and interests, and to use with a free and manly spirit the advantages of American citizenship to advance the cause of religion and civilization.

Whoever would refuse to be such Americans, Brownson bluntly stated,

we disown, we hold to be "outside barbarians," and not within the pale of the American order. They have no business here, and the sooner they leave us the better. They have no lot or part in our work, no part or lot in the American mission. But whoever does his best to be in this sense an American, whoever is devoted to true American interests, and is fired with a noble ambition to promote the glory of America, we embrace as a countryman, wherever he was born or reared; we hold him to be our fellow-laborer, and to him we make our appeal.¹⁸

McGlynn shared Brownson's belief in America's manifest destiny and the important role that God had given the Catholic Church in helping to fulfill that destiny. This was a role for which she was especially suited and should not refuse. McGlynn emphasized these ideas in a speech entitled "Our Religious Destiny" that he gave at the Cooper Institute in New York City on Sunday, April 28, 1867. The contents of this speech are remarkably similar to an article that Brownson published in Hecker's *Catholic World* two months prior to this address, "The Church and Monarchy." In that article Brownson had decried the Calvinistic belief in total human depravity that pervaded much of American religious thought and that apparently denied all natural liberty and virtues. Therefore, only Catholicism could form a basis for civil and religious freedom.¹⁹

Reflecting his positive view of America and the role of the Catholic Church in this nation's destiny, McGlynn propounded that

God has created this continent on a gigantic scale, and fashioned it in a gigantic mould to prepare it for a gigantic race of men not in physical but moral stature : of enterprise,

18. *Ibid.*, 443, 444.

19. O. A. Brownson, "The Church and Monarchy," *Catholic World* (February 1867):638. R. Emmett Curran credits Hecker as the author of this article ("Prelude to Americanism," p. 55) whereas Brownson's son credits his father. From the Brownson-Hecker Correspondence it is evident that Brownson was the author. {See Joseph F. Gower and Richard M. Leliaert, Editors, *The Brownson-Hecker Correspondence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 227.}

intelligence & virtue. Hence this nation ought to be Catholic to fulfill it's [sic] destiny. The Catholic church praises the works of nature. A religion that reviles or curses the work of man is not fit to exist in this country. And though we do not pretend that Catholicity is directed to bring greater comfort to the world for it teaches individual men to sacrifice their comfort for the good of others : yet it does praise the development of every talent implanted by the Creator in man : and applauds human progress, and sanctifies it's [sic] every new invention, directing it to the intellectual & moral perfection of man.²⁰

Thus, according to McGlynn, the Catholic Church was not an impediment but rather an ally to progress, which was a key word for nineteenth-century Americans. He countered against all who might disagree with his position about the Church that the Church in no way sought "to stay the oar of Progress: and he is insane who in her name dares stop it in it's [sic] onward march, wither it will tend in spite of his feeble efforts to prevent its advance." Repeating the concerns Brownson voiced in both "Mission of America" and "The Church and Monarchy," he then went on:

The Catholic Church is not foreign to this soil. It is true that the Irish and German have transplanted Catholicity to this country. . . . It must Americanise [sic] here ; and it will be in spite of us. . . . *The Catholic Church rejects the idea of totally depraved human nature, which is inconsistent with the improvement of the human mind ; and believes human nature even as it is at present to be such as God could have created it from the beginning.* [Emphasis mine] The Catholic Church with it's [sic] tendencies to Unity shows itself the only powerful link which may unite together as many states as may enter into this Union, for the preservation of which God has implanted in the American people an instinct, which has overcome immense obstacles to it.²¹

McGlynn, along with Brownson, believed that Catholicism was better suited than Protestantism to uphold and develop American democratic values because Catholic doctrine denied man's total depravity. Calvinism crippled America's potential whereas Catholicism promoted progress and directed humankind to its intellectual and moral perfection. Thus, this missionary priest was seeking to present to Catholic and non-Catholic America the image of the Catholic Church as he saw it, an ally, not an enemy, to America and her future. Indeed, the Catholic Church was essential to America's destiny. Not only, therefore, should all Americans tolerate the Catholic Church, but they should also warmly and enthusiastically embrace her.

In the spirit of Brownson, McGlynn and some of the other liberal priests of

20. Callahan, *Early Diary*, April 28, 1867, 371.

21. *Ibid.*

New York sought to be thinking men, men of integrity with noble aspirations who could enable the Church to take possession of humanity. In particular they shared one of Brownson's major beliefs: that the values of America would enable the Catholic Church to fulfill her role as the universal Church and in turn enable America and humanity to fulfill their destiny. To McGlynn's mind, however, certain actions of the Church's hierarchy, which he, as had Brownson, would refer to as evidence of a "spiritual despotism" over the human mind and spirit, continued to present a major obstacle to America's embrace of the Church. As he reflected in 1891 on his hope to evangelize America, he lamented all the obstacles to that goal which he discovered soon after he returned to New York from Propaganda College.

I speedily began to find there were all sorts of obstacles in the way; that the policies and politics, I shall not say of the church, but of churchmen, of church rulers, were such as to estrange, to alienate, to make it morally impossible for our Protestant fellow-countrymen to come and stand upon the same religious platform with us.²²

McGlynn's biographer, Stephen Bell, noted that these obstacles often depressed McGlynn greatly. McGlynn believed firmly that these church rulers were letting pass an opportunity to start a movement that would ultimately have "reunited the scattered sects of the Christian faith in one truly Christian and universal church and established a civilization worthy of the name."²³ Bell said that this thought filled McGlynn alternately with rage and grief. McGlynn therefore committed himself, as did many of his peers, to fight against this old fogey spirit that he saw within the hierarchy of the Church in order to convert it from its preoccupations with protecting its own power and privileges and to its true evangelical apostolate, especially to the poor.

In McGlynn's understanding a major part of the spiritual despotism of the Church was the stance that it had taken throughout too much of her history on the issue of poverty which came to the fore in the nineteenth century as the problem of the Social Question, i.e., how is society to go about ameliorating the perceived inequities in the social and economic spheres of life that left many in abject poverty and without hope. Such oppressive economic conditions had become omnipresent especially in the burgeoning cities during the Industrial Revolution. Up until the post-Civil War era in America both Protestants and Catholics were opposed to any solutions to the problem of poverty that might endanger the social and economic status quo such as those suggested by socialists and other radical reformers. This is not to suggest that

22. Edward McGlynn, *Anti-Poverty Society Addresses*, November 28, 1891, 4. Photocopy in R. Emmett Curran files from Mount Saint Mary's Archives (MSMA).

23. Stephen Bell, *Rebel, Priest and Prophet: A Biography of Dr. Edward McGlynn* (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1937), 197.

the churches were not concerned about the plight of the poor. Indeed they were. What concerned Catholics especially, however, was the need to prevent socialism or communism from gaining sway over the American public. In Europe socialism had proved itself atheistic and anti-religious and, thus, to the mind of the Church, it was a grave danger to humankind's spiritual as well as physical welfare.

Given this concern regarding socialism, the Church was wary of suggesting any systemic changes in the socio-economic spheres. Instead, it persisted in an insistence that the solution to the Social Question and therefore to poverty was essentially spiritual. The foundation of this emphasis was the belief that evil in society was not caused by its structure but rather because of personal sin. Only as each person came under the influence of true Christianity could structures be freed from the evil created by sinful self-interested men. Personal reformation alone, it was argued, could lead to societal amelioration. Additionally, the Church maintained the position that the poor should resign themselves to their lot in life to which Providence had mercifully assigned them. As the Catholic journalist, George Dering Wolff, described this point of view in 1878, Christianity diverts the attention of the poor

from their weary life in this world, its privations, its suffering; teaches them that if they offer up those privations, that suffering in union with the sacrifice upon the cross, they will be recompensed a hundred fold hereafter; [and it reminds them] that life on earth is short . . . that its real end is to prepare us for enjoying the Beatific Vision in the kingdom of heaven; that hatred, envy, jealousy are mortal sins; . . . The Church ever holds up the truth that those who accept poverty and bear it in the right spirit, from the love of God, will be blessed more abundantly than all others . . .²⁴

Wolff, furthermore, admonished the rich with their duty to use their wealth in a responsible way, especially in considering the poor. They should not use their wealth to grind the poor into deeper poverty but instead he urged them "to be just and generous and charitable to them; to regard them not with contempt or indifference, but to look to their interests, to sympathize with them, help them, love them."²⁵

These attitudes toward poverty and wealth guided many urban priests of nineteenth-century America, McGlynn included, in their concern for the spiritual fate of the thousands of Catholic immigrants. Out of love and their evangelical calling these clergy sought to keep the immigrant within the fold of the Church and to care for his spiritual needs. This same love also inevitably led

24. George Dering Wolff, "Socialistic Communism in the United States," *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, III, No. 11 (July 1878):560.

25. *Ibid.*, 561.

many priests, like McGlynn, to become involved in trying to meet the immigrant's temporal needs as well. By trying to ameliorate their suffering the clergy hoped that the poor might more readily and cheerfully endure their providential circumstances without loss to their souls. Through works of charity the priest sought to make the life situation of many immigrants more humane and thereby to keep them open to the gospel and the ministries of the Church. Thus, for many clergymen of the mid-nineteenth century the object was not so much to remove poverty as to make it sanctifying. McGlynn himself described his inclination to the priesthood and concern for the downtrodden in such sanctifying terms:

It was born in me, I believe to be a priest. I inherited from a sainted mother the profoundest reverence for the altar of God, a kindly and a tender feeling for the suffering among God's children. I desired to do what I could to elevate my brethren and even, if I could by making some sacrifice, to be an instrument to cheer their hearts, to clear their minds, to bring them nearer to God, to assuage their sorrows, to teach them how best to bear them and to convert the very trials and sufferings of life into so many precious counters by which to purchase the blessings of eternity.²⁶

McGlynn personally demonstrated the conviction of his desire to aid the poor by giving away much of his family inheritance as well as his annual church income. It was said of him by many that he often gave the coat off of his back to an ill-clad brother. At St. Stephen's in 1868 he established an orphan asylum operated by the Sisters of Charity. In 1871 and 1883 the church purchased or built additional homes to expand the capacity of the asylum. By 1885 some 635 children were housed in these locations.²⁷ Over the course of his pastorate he established many other agencies that met a variety of needs as a result of which, according to one historian, ten thousand people came daily to the Church.²⁸ One of these agencies was a poor school which McGlynn began in the summer of 1867 and at which he gave bread, soup, and coffee as "the principle enticement" for attendance.²⁹

Beginning in the 1880s, however, there was a growing realization both in Europe and the United States that the lot of the poor was becoming more unbearable than many could imagine God to desire. Furthermore, there was mounting concern that moral reform would not effect change quickly enough

26. Sylvester L. Malone, *Dr. Edward McGlynn* (New York: Dr. McGlynn Monument Association, 1918), 70.

27. "The Catholic Charities of New York," *Catholic World*, XLIII (August 1886):686, 687.

28. Aaron I. Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice, 1865-1950* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 31. The number "ten thousand" sounds like a pious fiction but it is at least reflective of the impression given by the charitable efforts of this parish.

29. Callahan, *Early Diary*, July 14, 1867, 391.

to avert social chaos. The pressing problems of the city thereby helped to make possible both for Catholics and Protestants the realization that poverty was not so much an issue of individual morality but rather an economic problem that was systemic in origin.³⁰

Bishop Emmanuel von Ketteler of Mainz, Germany, in speaking of the German clergy's lack of interest in the lot of the working classes, also aptly described in large measure the attitude of the majority of American Catholics before 1880. They lacked this interest, he said, "because they are ignorant of the existence and the impact of the dangers which lurk in these threatening social conditions, because they have failed to size up the character and the breadth of the social question, finally because they have no conception of possible remedies."³¹ By the early 1880s the majority of Americans had become aware of the dangers lurking among the poorer classes in the cities, but few understood fully the causes of those dangers or how to solve them other than by moral and spiritual exhortation, almsgiving, and other works of mercy.³²

For McGlynn this impasse came to light, as he described it, as many of his parishioners came to him for assistance to find work when there was none to be had. This situation led him to ask why able-bodied men who wanted to work could not find any. It also caused him great anxiety because he could see that this situation was leading many of these men to question the goodness of God and therefore the prudence of their involvement in the Christian faith. So he struggled with how to help them find work, how to explain the scarcity of jobs that paid something close to a living wage, and how to explain to them that faith in a good and loving God was still justifiable in their dire circumstances. Charity no longer seemed to him to be an adequate response. In later years he described this critical juncture in his attitude to the social question in this way:

I had begun to feel life made a burden by the never-ending procession of men, women and children coming to my door begging not so much for alms as for employment; not asking for food, but for my influence and letters of recommendation, and personally appealing to me to obtain for them *an opportunity of working for their daily bread*. I felt that, no matter how much I might give them, even though I reserved nothing for myself, even though I involved myself hopelessly in debt, I could accomplish nothing. I began

30. Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 139.

31. Emmanuel von Ketteler, "Die Fuersorge der Kirche fuer die Fabrikarbeiter," in *Kettelers Schriften*, Vol. III, J Mumbauer, ed., (Muenchen, 1924), 145-166, and quoted by Edgar Alexander, "Church and Society in Germany" in *Church and Society: Catholic Social and Political Thought and Movements 1789-1950*, Joseph Moody ed. (New York: Arts, Inc., 1953), 416.

32. Abell, 27.

to ask myself, "Is there no remedy? Is this God's order that the poor shall be constantly becoming poorer in all our large cities, the world over."³³

The answer came to him in 1881 when he read Henry George's book *Progress and Poverty* published in 1879. McGlynn said that in this book he found both a clear explanation of the cause of involuntary poverty and its remedy. George's basic idea was that poverty was caused by the unjust distribution of property in land which concentrated wealth in the hands of a few. This situation was responsible for low wages, lack of jobs, and therefore for poverty. The remedy for this unjust distribution was to levy a tax on property owners equal to the yearly increase in the value of their unimproved land. George argued that the increase in the value was the product not of the efforts of the owner but rather of the community in which the property was located. Land values increased as more people moved into the community and the demand for land rose. By taxing the full increase in the value of land George believed that speculation in land would cease and owners would put their property to more productive use that would also benefit the community. These benefits would include the creation of more jobs, the raising of the level of wages, and the greater availability of affordable land for others who had previously been landless.

George's proposal came to be known as the Single Tax theory. He believed that with a tax equal to the full yearly increase in property value no other tax would be necessary. As it was the community and not the property owner that was the true source of that increase in value, justice demanded that the community and not the owner should benefit from it. Even more important, however, was George's basic philosophical belief that the land like the air was really the common property of all and therefore could not justly be monopolized by individuals.

George emphasized this latter belief in the final chapter of his book which McGlynn greatly extolled as an utterance more like that of an "inspired seer of Israel" rather "than the utterance of a mere political economist."³⁴ From George's perspective history revealed that the evils of poverty which had hitherto ruined all previous civilizations were not the result of natural law but rather came about because of the ignoring of that law which in turn led to social maladjustments. Therefore, it was a denial of justice that embruted men and led to all the social evils omnipresent in society. If the injustice in the distribution of land and wealth could be overturned, however, and justice complied with, George argued that:

33. Bell, 23.

34. *Ibid.*, 24.

we shall abolish poverty; tame the ruthless passions of greed; dry up the springs of vice and misery; light in dark places the lamp of knowledge; give new vigor to invention and a fresh impulse to discovery; substitute political strength for political weakness and make tyranny and anarchy impossible.³⁵

To engage in such efforts to reform the land system was to George but “the carrying out in letter and spirit of the truth enunciated in the Declaration of Independence, the ‘self-evident’ truth that is the heart and soul of the Declaration” However, the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness were denied as long as individuals did not have equal access to the land and its bounty which God intended for all to have. True liberty, therefore, could not be a viable possession without justice and justice found in the natural law, “the law of health and symmetry and strength, of fraternity and cooperation.”³⁶ For essential liberty to be true, justice must be restored.

George’s theory therefore denied the argument that credited providence with the responsibility for the “suffering and brutishness that come of poverty.”³⁷ God’s will was not to blame for all the want and crime of the great cities; rather, it was society’s disobedience of God’s natural law about the individual’s right to the land. To propound the contrary was slander and blasphemy of the Holy One. However, he went on, if individuals were to embrace the full tenets of justice and liberty, utopia would soon be established.

With want destroyed; with greed changed to noble passions; with the fraternity that is born of equality taking the place of the jealousy and fear that now array men against each other; with mental power loosed by conditions that give to the humblest comfort and leisure; and who shall measure the heights to which our civilization may soar? Words fail the thought! It is the Golden Age. . . . It is the reign of the Prince of Peace!³⁸

So, with the implementation of the Single Tax theory George foresaw the certain realization of the Christian hope for the Kingdom of God on earth and the end of poverty.

For McGlynn the theory of Henry George provided an understanding of the problems he was dealing with and what appeared to be their solution. To McGlynn, therefore, George was a providential man, “the greatest, most unselfish man of this country formed by Providence to preach the new

35. Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth . . . The Remedy* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach, 1955, first published 1879), 545.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 549.

38. *Ibid.*, 552.

gospel.”³⁹ George supplied two important things for this zealous missionary priest. First, he provided a convincing theodicy to restore to the oppressed a faith in a loving God who did not impose economic hardship upon them in some arbitrary way. Second, he also furnished a soteriology and an eschatology that gave greater hope to McGlynn in regard to prospects for the speedy conversion of America to the Gospel and to the Catholic Church. McGlynn consequently began to believe seriously that the Georgian theories could very well lead to the realization of something very much like the Kingdom of God on earth. From 1881 until the end of his life McGlynn continued to promote this Single Tax theory as the essence of the Christian gospel and as the message that would turn hearts to God, to the Church, and to true brotherhood and peace the world over. George’s theory thus provided a tailor-made message for this zealous missionary priest.

McGlynn’s acceptance of the Georgian theories placed him within the ranks of the budding social-gospel thought. George was also instrumental in the movement of many Protestant clergy in that direction as well, including Walter Rauschenbusch.⁴⁰ Through these theories McGlynn came to espouse the notion that sin is just as much a social reality as an individual reality. Unless the social reality of sin is addressed by the gospel, individual sin will remain unredeemed. Therefore, he concluded that individual reformation was not sufficient to answer the social question or to put an end to poverty and vice among men. Systemic changes in the social order were essential. Mere reforms or charity were not sufficient. As he said in a letter to a Mr. Wingate,

But let us frankly confess, that the reforms that may now be brought about will be but palliative, not a cure of the disease; and let us never tire of asserting that the true remedy will be in the restoration of the land and other natural bounties to the people and that this will not merely correct the evils of the system but abolish the system itself.⁴¹

Only as society changed the system of land ownership in accord with the Georgian theories could social and individual sin ultimately be overcome.

When George decided to run in 1886 for Mayor of New York City on a Single Tax platform, McGlynn wholeheartedly endorsed him and openly supported his candidacy (as did Rauschenbusch). McGlynn did this against the

39. *Burtsell Diary*, October 1, 1886. Burtsell, who described McGlynn as getting into a rhapsody over George in the campaign speech where this quote came from, did not accept fully Henry George’s theories though he said that he tried to state them fairly, (October 11, 1886), and voted for Theodore Roosevelt, the Republican candidate for Mayor.

40. Janet Forsythe Fishburne, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), chapter 3.

41. McGlynn to Mr. Wingate, February 28, 1887. Letter in possession of Rev. Nelson Callahan, St. Raphaels Church, Bay Village, Ohio.



*Tombstone of Father
Edward McGlynn*

orders of his archbishop, Michael Corrigan, who saw George's views on land ownership as socialistic. Corrigan also probably had ties to Democratic Tammany Hall which was threatened by the Georgian candidacy. Because McGlynn disobeyed, Corrigan suspended him on October 2, 1886 from the priesthood, i.e., McGlynn was forbidden to exercise any public ministerial functions. Following his continuing defiance of Corrigan and his refusal to go to Rome to answer unspecified charges, the Holy See excommunicated him in July of 1887. Although deprived of his ecclesiastical pulpit, he continued to proclaim his "gospel" from the podium of the Anti-Poverty Society in New York City which he helped to form in May of 1887. For most of the next five years until the lifting of his excommunication in December 1892, he set forth from this platform his social-gospel message which was based primarily upon George's book: when men finally come to understand and accept the brotherhood of men and the fatherhood of God, then the prayer of Jesus that God's kingdom come on earth would be fulfilled. In other words, when men accepted the truth of George's theory and all that it implied, the kingdom would come.

In many of his public statements which reflected the animus he had imbibed from Brownson, McGlynn excoriated Corrigan and other parts of the Church's hierarchy for their attacks on George and himself and thereby their attack on

the poor of the land. Such attacks, he believed, only kept people away from Christ and from the Church. When Corrigan issued a pastoral letter in November of 1886 which quoted Leo XIII's encyclical on socialism, *Quod apostolici muneris*, reiterating the Church's admonition to the poor to see poverty as a special blessing of Christ upon them, McGlynn responded pointedly. He chided Corrigan that such was not "the doctrine which shall increase the belief in God and the followers of the Church. . . . So long as ministers of the gospel and priests of the Church tell the hardworking poor to be content with their lot and hope for good times in Heaven, so long will skepticism increase and 'Bob' Ingersoll have many believers."⁴²

McGlynn emphasized many of these same sentiments about the hierarchy as well as the main points of his soteriology and eschatology in his most famous speech, "The Cross Of A New Crusade." He first delivered this on March 29, 1887 at the Academy of Music, and he would deliver it again many times over the course of the next several years. Henry George suggested in his own newspaper that this speech was a vindication of American Catholicism against those detractors who feared foreign subjection.⁴³

In the speech McGlynn assured his audience that, based on his theological training, the new crusade to which he called them not only upheld the principles of the Georgian land theory but was also situated safely within the doctrine of the Church and the teaching of Christ. This crusade, he said, was for proclaiming the ancient truth of Christianity and indeed of all true religion, i.e., "the fatherhood of one God and the universal brotherhood of man."⁴⁴ The crusade therefore was for the enforcing of a correlative truth:

God has given an equality of essential rights to all His children just because they are his children; that for every mouth He sends into the world to be fed, He sends, with rare exceptions, a pair of hands to feed it; . . . and that any man or set of men, who shall by law or in any other way deny, impair, diminish or restrain the equal right of every human being to the possession of the general bounties of nature, the sunlight, the air, the water and the land, is guilty of blasphemy. . . . They are guilty of the monstrous crime of

42. *Daily Tribune*, November 26, 1886; quoted in Curran, *Corrigan*, 209. Robert "Bob" G. Ingersoll (d., 1899) was known as the "great agnostic." A politician as well as an orator, he popularized the higher criticism of the Bible and sought to expose the orthodox superstitions of his day. In 1887 Ingersoll published a short article, "Ingersoll on McGlynn" in which he criticized every religious sect, including Catholics, for demanding of its adherents the surrender of their intellectual freedom. The Catholic Church in particular was the friend of the rich and not of the poor as was evidenced in its treatment of McGlynn. Though he discounted the Single Tax theory, he respected McGlynn's motives and felt that McGlynn obviously could not have a place in a church that would silence him. This eight-page article is in the New York Public Library and was probably originally published in *The Truth Seeker, The Leading Journal of Freethought and Reform* (New York: Free Thought Publishers).

43. *The Standard*, April 2, 1887.

44. McGlynn, "The Cross of a New Crusade," in Malone, 21.

making hundreds of thousands, yea, millions, of God's creatures feel that this life is a wretched mistake, or worse than that -- the joke of some most hateful fiend rather than the gift of an all-wise and all-loving Father.⁴⁵

It is evident here that McGlynn's intent was to negate what he thought was the false teaching of many within the Catholic Church regarding the lot of the poor. He had felt that this false teaching was responsible for turning people away not only from the Church but also from God. He went on to say, however, that his experience had been that the preaching of the Single Tax theory had indeed brought men back to God. It had made them ashamed of the bitterness that they had harbored against the "very name of God, because God had been presented to them as a monster, . . . as a being who made laws that necessarily resulted in the poverty, the degradation and the crime of a very large portion of His children"⁴⁶ Thus, McGlynn argued, the Single Tax theory was a very effective theodicy and therefore a true means of evangelizing the poor.

He concluded the speech by emphasizing his eschatology. By this suggested change in the economic system, and not merely by the theodicy associated with it, men would be brought so close to God that a way would be made ready for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Again, this way would be prepared by men's bodily needs being met and their minds cultivated to bring to full bloom the divine image in which they were made. By this doing of natural justice, i.e., the following of God's economic laws, men would inaugurate the kingdom. He therefore entreated all who believed in God's economic laws to hasten the day when God's kingdom would come and his will be done on earth. Like most advocates of the social gospel, therefore, McGlynn held the position of a realized or post-millennial eschatology, believing

by the doing of justice, by the inculcation of the law of equality, liberty and fraternity on earth that we shall prepare the way for the glorious millennial day when it shall be something more than a prayer, and in great measure a reality -- "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."⁴⁷

This eschatology was straight out of the last chapter of George's *Progress and Poverty* in which he looked forward to the time when poverty was abolished, greed transformed into noble passions, a spirit of fraternity established among men and tyranny and anarchy made impossible. That would be the "Golden Age" and the "reign of the Prince of Peace." McGlynn would reiterate this eschatology over and over again.

45. *Ibid.*, 29.

46. *Ibid.*, 25.

47. *Ibid.*, 44.

In March of 1888, in addressing the Anti-Poverty Society, he explicated his understanding of how this change in the economy could also bring about utopia. He said that he was sure that

when God's simple laws shall be obeyed in human society and the spirit of them incorporated in all our civil laws and in our social customs and taught in all our books of political economy, then shall men naturally, instinctively take to that doctrine that God is the Father of us all, and that we are all brethren one to another. . . . When all shall see clearly that there is enough for all, greed will almost instantly cease from the world.

. . . Then will become universal throughout the world that courtesy, that love, that affection, that sense of equality, that deference, that prevails in well-bred society, that makes man the stronger defer so much to the weaker vessel, that makes man consider it the duty of chivalry, of politeness, of humanity, to be tender and considerate towards his weaker companions. The same rule that now prevails in a well-regulated family within four walls would prevail in the whole of God's family between all the seas of the world, and for the same simple reason that man would then be convinced that the whole world is one family, that it is God's family, that it is a family therefore living under the benignant sway of the wisest and the best of fathers. The whole world would be more readily convinced that its best policy, its best interest here and hereafter, is in obeying the Father's will, in doing His bidding.⁴⁸

Evident in these passages is McGlynn's belief that the understanding that God was Father of all and that all people were brothers was graven onto the hearts of humankind. Want and greed, however, had clouded humankind's awareness of those truths. The implementation of the Georgian theories, however, would remove those impediments to that awareness and then humankind would naturally and instinctively change. The end of greed and want would bring an end to sin and all societal evil. McGlynn believed that at that point a utopian-like world would be created based on the ideals of nineteenth-century Victorian society. Humankind's brutishness would be transformed into chivalry and affection with a deep sense of equality. As a result of that transformation all of the human race would become one big and happy Victorian family under the guidance of God, the best of fathers. The Kingdom of God then was in essence the universalization and inculcation of Victorian ideals brought about by the preaching of God's economic laws as revealed then through this providential man, Henry George.⁴⁹ McGlynn fancied himself as the Jawsmith of this good news, good news that evangelized not only the poor but all of nineteenth-

48. McGlynn, *Anti-Poverty Society Addresses*, March 4, 1888, 5,6, AANY.

49. Fishburne, 63.

century society.

The continued public influence of McGlynn during his suspension and excommunication was cause for Archbishop Corrigan to attempt to get the Vatican to condemn Henry George's book. Corrigan felt this was necessary to delegitimize McGlynn in the eyes of Catholics and thereby reaffirm his own authority within the archdiocese. Largely because of the intervention of Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, who argued with Rome about the opportuneness of a condemnation, the Holy Office issued only a secret condemnation in February of 1889.⁵⁰ Gibbons was especially concerned that a condemnation of George would alienate the Church from the poor and that American society would no longer see the Church as a "friend of the people."

Because a secret condemnation of George did not meet Corrigan's purposes, he began to press for a statement from the pope on the rights of private property. In 1891 Leo XIII issued his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. This encyclical was not merely a response to Corrigan but to problems related to labor the world over, especially in Europe as well as in the United States. It was a broadside against socialism but more importantly for Catholic social thought it was the first effort at so high a level within the Church to speak out on behalf of the workingman against the abuses of laissez-faire capitalism. Leo even made provision for limited state intervention in economic and social affairs in order to correct unfair conditions. Corrigan did find in this encyclical what was to him a condemnation of George while McGlynn and his allies saw only a condemnation of a misrepresentation of George. It is clear today that a direct refutation of George was intended by the pope but it is an open question as to whether he really understood the Single Tax theory and how far he wanted to go in restricting a nation's liberty in very specific economic matters, such as forms of taxation.⁵¹ McGlynn, at any rate, felt he could give adhesion to this encyclical as one of the requirements of his restoration in December 1892 without violating his conscience or his beliefs about the Single Tax theory.

Given the harshness of the criticism that McGlynn launched at the hierarchy throughout the period of his suspension and excommunication, it is somewhat surprising that his restoration took place with only the submission of a doctrinally acceptable statement of his teaching on public economy and an adhesion to the truth of the teachings of the Catholic Church. He also had to agree to go to Rome to meet with the pope. These conditions were set forth by the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Francesco Satolli, who may have exceeded his

50. "Cardinal Gibbons Opposes the Condemnation of the Works of Henry George," February 25, 1887, in John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1956), 473-476.

51. C. Joseph Nuesse, "Henry George and *Rerum Novarum*: The Evidence for Influence," (Paper presented at a symposium on "Father McGlynn and Henry George" at the Henry George Institute, New York, November 5, 1983, copy in the Archives of the Catholic University of America), 15.

authority in McGlynn's absolution. Nevertheless, this absolution was accepted by Rome and nothing more of substance was required beyond his visit.

This visit to Rome took place in late May of 1893. In an article for *The Forum* McGlynn later described his meeting with Leo XIII as very cordial. According to him, during this meeting the pope made no demand for McGlynn to recant or to apologize for his actions or statements. McGlynn depicted Leo as growing stronger and broader as he grew older such that he was now able to recognize the damage being done to the cause of the Church in America by the antagonism of many prelates to "the legitimate aspirations of masses of men for improved social and economic conditions . . ."⁵² McGlynn also recounted that Leo strongly protested that he could not be deceived by the intrigues of the American bishops to dupe him as to the true conditions of the Church in America or the true motivations of certain priests which these prelates had condemned, such as McGlynn.

Naturally one is skeptical of McGlynn's account as it favored the more liberal faction of priests and bishops of the United States, i.e., those associated with the movement known as Americanism, in their opposition to the more conservative clerics who were led by Archbishop Corrigan. Nevertheless, given our knowledge of the special concerns of Leo XIII for the role he would play in the world, he and McGlynn may indeed have had a cordial visit as they both recognized in each other a kindred spirit. The world plan of Leo XIII coincided to a marked degree with the impetus of McGlynn's life and mission. Leo sought to restore the power and prestige of the Church in the world, especially vis-a-vis other world powers. In a world of turmoil he wanted to restore order by reconciling the modern world with tradition and, therefore, reassert the influence of the Church, especially through his person. He basically set out then to restore the harmony that had existed before the Enlightenment between the Church and culture. By means of his social and political encyclicals that addressed European and American economic and political unrest, his reclamation of Thomas Aquinas to counter the indifferentism to religion that he saw as engendered by the rationalism of the Enlightenment and his involvement in world missions, he had hoped to begin a great conversion movement for the salvation of mankind.⁵³

McGlynn also hoped to be a part of a great conversion movement that would result in a new economic relationship based on God's fundamental laws that would in turn lead to universal brotherhood and peace on earth centered in the true Church of the Christ who loved the poor. The obstacle he saw was not

52. Edward McGlynn, "The Vatican and the United States," *The Forum*, XVI (1893), 17.

53. Oskar Kohler, "The World Plan of Leo XIII: Goals and Methods," in *The Church in the Industrial Age*. Volume IX of *History of the Church*, edited by Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 24, 25.

the rationalism of the Enlightenment but the loss among too large a section of the Church of the spiritual mission Christ had given to his followers. In its overemphasis on the necessity of temporal power and wealth the Church had almost completely lost its true identity. McGlynn, therefore, sought to recall the Church to this mission given her by her Savior, to “go out into the whole world and preach good things . . .” McGlynn was sure that if only the men of the Church

would go out into the world . . . with a little more simplicity, free from all those entanglements of temporalities and land-grabbing in the matter of temporal thrones, in the matter of education, in the matter of those vast charities which frequently cease to be charities; if they could go out with the original spirit of the Master they would preach with the same efficacy as of old. . . . They should be on the side of the masses of men against the privileged classes. If they went out to preach with the same magnificent, divine enthusiasm as their predecessors did, speedily they would convert the whole world to a belief in the teaching of Christ.

He believed this conversion of the whole world would be possible because

[t]he hearts of men everywhere are hungering for the divine food, seeking eagerly closer communion with the invisible world, desiring to know more of the Father, to have removed the veil that hides His face from His children, with hearts hungering for the heavenly medicine, thirsting for the blessed tidings of pardon for sin. Men everywhere would welcome the glad tidings, would pronounce them extremely beautiful, would drink in with avidity the blessed message, would open their hearts to receive the heavenly word.⁵⁴

McGlynn’s restoration was perhaps, however, only a Pyrrhic victory for him as well as his allies among the liberal faction of the American hierarchy. Corrigan refused to reassign him to St. Stephen’s and waited until 1895 to appoint him to another parish, shipping him quite literally up the Hudson River to Newburgh and St. Mary’s Church. In 1899 Leo XIII issued his apostolic letter *Testem Benevolentiae* to the American hierarchy which was an indirect condemnation of the liberal faction and of many of the ideals that McGlynn, following in the steps of Brownson, had espoused. McGlynn obviously had been too naive in the years after 1892 about how much the pope had sympathized with his particular concerns.

This missionary priest died on January 7, 1900. Despite the Pyrrhic nature of his victory over the “spiritual despotism” of his archbishop, he was able to reach his end satisfied that he had not been indolent or cowardly in pursuing

54. McGlynn, *Anti-Poverty Society Addresses*, October 28, 1888. AANY.

his principles and his particular vocation. Regardless of the consequences to his personal status within the organization of the Church, he had sought to recall the Church to the task which he had been taught was given to it. Here in America that task, he believed, was the providential one of ensuring the fulfillment of America's manifest destiny especially through the faithful preaching of the good news both to the poor and to the systems which kept them in poverty. As a social gospel advocate, therefore, he was not merely concerned just to hold the allegiance of poor Catholics to the Church; but more, to win the whole world to Christ's Church and help inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth in the terms of ideal Victorian society. The positive responses to his life's work from many Catholics and non-Catholics, such as the comment of one of his Presbyterian admirers that McGlynn had proven to him that a Catholic could be as manly and stand up for the right as well as others, no doubt had given McGlynn reason to believe that he had been somewhat successful in reforming the image of the Catholic Church within America.⁵⁵ Although one might judge him to have had too great an ego and to have been something of an ultraist in the fashion of some other radical reformers, he was a man deeply imbued with the principles of a young nation. With those principles engraved in his heart he sought to be faithful as well to his Catholic religion which, he believed, in its purest form was the hope of the world. Rome, perhaps somewhat ironically, had trained this missionary apostolic very well.

55. *Burtzell Diary*, November 8, 1893.