

Henry George
Dr. Edward McGlynn
& Pope Leo XIII

by Mason Gaffney

THE STORY OF HOW CLERICAL HIERARCHS PERCEIVED
A PROGRESSIVE ECONOMIST AND A POPULAR IRISH-
AMERICAN PRIEST AS DANGEROUS THREATS TO
THE CHURCH — AND HOW THIS LED TO
THE WATERSHED PAPAL ENCYCLICAL
THAT SHAPED ROMAN CATHOLIC
SOCIAL DOCTRINE FROM
1891 TO THE
PRESENT
DAY.

HENRY GEORGE, DR. EDWARD MCGLYNN, AND POPE LEO XIII

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1. TURBULENT TIMES

IT WAS A DIFFERENT TIME, but often the same place (Cooper Union) in American life. No, it wasn't radio, but the age of orators. One of the most spellbinding was Dr. Edward McGlynn; another good one was Henry George, who also wrote great books. They came together in 1886 to roil the waters of American politics and ideology. Through the Irish and Vatican connections, they also roiled world politics and ideology.

It was a time when a Republican Presidential candidate (James G. Blaine) could be nominated by a militant atheist (Robert G. Ingersoll). Blaine could lose New York's key Irish Catholic voters, and the election, for a supporter's casual slur accusing them of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion." The slur was transient; the revelation of electoral power was permanent. New York State held the balance of power nationally; New York City held the balance in the State; and the Irish were a majority in the City (Curran p.195).

It was a time when Dr. Edward McGlynn, the most popular Catholic priest in NYC and the nation, could dream of modernizing the American Catholic Church, leading it to shake off medieval trappings and old-world control, and leading the U.S. to genuine unity. McGlynn could dispute the Pope, question Papal infallibility, temporal power, vestments, Latin Masses, celibacy¹, and auricular confession (Curran p.172; Gilhooley, p.205). He could make his points in blunt, eloquent language such as that reading the Bible in public schools is "maintained as a kind of fetish ... because it gratifies a certain pharisaical sense of religiosity, ... " (Bell, p.21). "The Church of Christ has largely been ruined by the ... ecclesiastical machine" (Bell, p.177).

He could support rebellion in Ireland, public schools, radical reconstruction, the Fenian secret revolutionary society and its invasion of Canada (Curran p.172; Isacson, pp.32-35 et passim), abolishing poverty by public action, the Republican Party, the single tax, and Henry George for New York's Mayor (Post and Leubuscher pp.128-49). In the last matter, this Catholic priest joined forces with the militant agnostic Robert Ingersoll, another brilliant orator (Post and Leubuscher p.116), the same who had nominated Blaine in 1876. To McGlynn, charity was no substitute for a just distribution of land, which he supported by various citations to church patriarchs and The Bible (Isacson, p.78; Geiger pp.357-58, n.33). His Parish, St. Stephens, was the largest and most influential in the U.S. He found it wealthy and socially "fashionable"; he made it a hub for the poor (Isacson, p.18).

It was a time when the two leading candidates for Mayor of NYC in 1886 both declared they did not want the job. A Tammany envoy, William Ivins, told Henry George the machine would not let him be counted in; by running he could "only raise Hell" (Speek pp.76-77). George replied he would run, because raising Hell was what he wanted. Abram Hewitt² said he did not want the job for its own sake, he only aimed to prevent the election of Henry George, "the greatest possible calamity" (Young, p.99).

Hewitt's conduct in office, after winning by fair means or foul, verified his self-appraisal. In eulogizing George in 1897, Dr. McGlynn said it was a blessing George lost, so he could devote his life to more important works. What was going on? Both candidates recognized the office as a bully pulpit, as well as a commanding height with key leverage and a great balance of power in the U.S. Electoral College system.

It was a time of class warfare, when hundreds of thousands of workers were on strike.

2. HERITAGE OF THOSE TIMES

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT "All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today." If so, it follows that the flowers of today were in the seeds of yesterday. Professor Nic Tideman has recounted how his great grandfather from Sweden learned English by reading Henry George, and began a long Georgist dynasty. Drew Harris has told how he was sixteen before he

realized that not all Quakers routinely discuss Georgism at dinner. Agnes George de Mille never forgot her grandfather Henry.

The exploitation of Ireland by offensive alien landlords produced the core, or at least the bulk, of Georgism in the U.S. I am a product of that, although, unlike Harris, I was past my teens before I began to piece it together. My father's professional survival had demanded he be discreet before talkative children. His father, once steered toward the priesthood, had been an active Fenian, joining the raids on Ontario.³ Pope Leo XIII, needing English support in Italy, condemned the Fenians as he did all serious Irish rebels (Isacson, pp.80-81; Curran, pp.181, 183; Bell, p.126; Geiger p.346). Dr. Edward McGlynn praised them: he defied his Archbishop, Michael Corrigan, and the Pope on this (as on some other matters). Not until this year did I discover by happy chance a long-lost cousin named Edward McGlynn Gaffney, Jr., a law professor and a prominent Catholic layman. Ed's father had introduced land-tax bills in Sacramento, as a State Assemblyman from San Francisco. His uncle, Dr. Matthew T. Gaffney of Newark, was a single tax leader there. Some of this spirit trickled through to me.

My mother was of traditional Yankee stock. She was proud to claim a distant relationship to John Henry Newman, who had been appointed a Cardinal by Leo himself. Newman never showed favor towards George, and feuded with Cardinal Manning, who did. Her uncle Selah Merrill Clarke edited the New York *Sun* during the latter part of George's career — but his paper opposed George and McGlynn. However, she later worked for Louis F. Post in the U.S. Dept. of Labor, and picked up his influence. It was she who brought me my first book on Henry George, although she never promoted his specific ideas.

I offer this otherwise gratuitous genealogy in the spirit of disclosure, to apprise the reader of my bias, if any. I was not raised a Catholic, but a generic liberal Protestant, and am no longer very observant. I became philo-Catholic after 1960 in the heady days of JFK, John XXIII and M.L. King, Jr. I was thrilled then to find myself marching through Milwaukee in demonstrations hand-in-hand with nuns and priests, who had always seemed aloof before. Little did I realize that that "distance" was the product of what Catholics call "Ultramontanism," i.e. the domination of American churches by Rome (Curran pp.32-33); and that Rome had imposed Ultramontanism, and American conservatives had welcomed it, in order to

avoid another radical uprising like that Edward McGlynn had led (Gilhooley p.207).

Whether that background biases me, others will decide, according to their own biases. I have tried to compensate by studying works on the period by Catholic scholars, including John Molony, Robert Emmett Curran, Alfred Isacson, Stephen Bell, John Tracy Ellis, James Gilhooley, and Arthur Preuss.⁴ I hope to find a Catholic collaborator or critic on the present work.

3. NEGLECT OF CATHOLIC ECONOMICS IN GAFFNEY AND HARRISON (1994), *CORRUPTION OF ECONOMICS*.

IN MY PART OF THE ABOVE WORK I undertook to show how neo-classical economics evolved as a reaction and an antidote to Henry George. In haste, I omitted Catholic economics, which ran parallel to neo-classical economics, but with a life of and special twists of its own. The main Catholic reaction to George was Leo's 1891 Encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, (henceforth just *Rerum*). *Rerum* was a watershed document: the "first far-reaching formulation of Catholic teaching" since the long Council of Trent in the middle of the 16th Century, according to Molony. It was a new venture into *social* theology. It recycled Thomist economics, in which Leo was thoroughly steeped, but with special reference to "the worker question," and with refuting false modern doctrines advanced by George and McGlynn. Later commentators have given it a reputation, ill-deserved, for criticizing "capitalism," and upholding the interests of poor workers (Barker p.571). Actual reading shows it to give priority to championing private property in land against various attacks, real and imagined, and specifically against Georgist land taxes. It was the Catholic counterpart of the attacks on George led by sanctimonious Protestant laymen and academicians like John B. Clark and Richard T. Ely.

4. WIDE AND SUSTAINED INFLUENCE OF *RERUM NOVARUM*.

THE INFLUENCE OF *RERUM* has echoed through the following Century. It "has become established in the 20th Century as the fundamental document of Catholic policy toward capital and labor under the industrial system"

(Barker, p.572). One important American convert was Monsignor John A. Ryan (1916), “the chief theorist of social Catholicism in America” (Andelson, 1979b, p.342; cf. Barker p.577). Ryan as a young man was “electrified” by George, and one might expect an Irishman to remain a land reformer. However, after Leo XIII pontificated, Ryan came to heel. Ryan thought that George “was explicitly condemned by Rerum” (Isacson, p.297). Ryan’s basic work, *Distributive Justice*, follows Rerum closely. (Barker, p.577, sees Ryan shading his views a little in favor of George; Andelson does not.)

Another follower was Padre Juan Alcázar Alvarez (1917) of Madrid. Alcázar was endeavoring to put down what was evidently a strong single-tax movement in Spain of that era (Busey, 1979, p.326) — a movement that had been aborted in England by shipping the flower of its young men off to die in Flanders’ Fields. The Spanish single-tax movement remained a force clear until the accession of Francisco Franco. Alcázar’s positions are similar to those of Cathrein, although considerably more extreme, so as to seem ludicrous today, as perhaps they also were then outside of Spain. In any case, he received considerable reinforcement from Rerum.

Several succeeding pontiffs have reaffirmed the doctrines of Rerum in their Encyclicals, e.g. the *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI, 1931. One can’t help wondering if the Vatican’s wretched record of response to Hitler and Mussolini and Franco and Paveli (in Croatia) might have been corrected by some different thinking at that critical time, and for years thereafter. As it turned out, the anti-Communist priority of Pius XI’s protegee and successor, Eugenio Pacelli, inhibited the Vatican from opposing fascism, and even led it to collaborate in the escape of many fascist leaders after 1945 (Aarons and Loftus; E.M. Gaffney, Jr.; Cornwell; McCabe). It was only a large bribe from U.S. President FDR that restrained Pacelli from blessing Hitler’s invasion of Russia (Miner).

FDR, meantime, had allied with the radio priest, Charles Coughlin, during the Presidential campaign of 1932. When FDR spoke in Detroit, 2 Oct 32, he borrowed rhetoric that Coughlin had taken from *Quadragesimo Anno* and *Rerum Novarum* — to steer a course between socialism and laissez faire. Thus, FDR’s New Deal was in part derived from Rerum. Coughlin had long acknowledged a deep debt to these two documents for his economic and social philosophy, absorbed early on during his education as a priest. This education (in his native Canada) was shaped by teachings

of the Basilian order, founded in France in the early 19th Century. These beliefs were anti-commercial, marked by nostalgia for the medieval socially integrated (organic) community. Donald Warren, Coughlin's biographer, likens this mindset to *Rerum Novarum*, and traces it back to Aquinas (Warren, pp.11, 43-45). Coughlin won monetary support by preaching against the dangers of socialism and communism, cleverly combining this with populist levelling doctrines — the heritage of *Rerum*, visible in *The New Deal*.

Coughlin helped elect FDR in 1932, and became a power in his early administration. As Coughlin's star rose, he became the new Catholic spokesman, replacing the Catholic Governor Al Smith, he who had signed the 1921 Georgist law letting New York City exempt new homes from the property tax for 10 years (Post, 1984, p.1). (According to Ben Marsh, Smith had to overcome heavy pressure from the R.C.C. hierarchy, allied with Met Life and the NY Real Estate Board, to do this.) Raymond Moley and Coughlin together wrote FDR's 2nd Inaugural, including "Let us drive the money changers from the temple." Moley, a strong and well-wired Catholic, later became adviser to David Lincoln, and helped sway him from using the Lincoln Foundation's vast wealth to support the Henry George movement.

In America, Pacelli (Pius XII) made Francis Spellman Archbishop of New York, and then Cardinal. Spellman did not care for Coughlin, who by then was discredited and spent (Warren, p.201). Spellman cooperated in the fascist escapes (Aarons and Loftus, pp.132, 138), using his influence with the politically puissant National Catholic Welfare Conference to bend the U.S. State Department his way. He became a leading Cold Warrior, supporter of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and instigator of the American invasion of Viet Nam.

Spellman's antipathy to McGlynn's beliefs was not just indirect. He ordered McGlynn's portrait removed from the wall of St. Stephens, McGlynn's old parish (Isacson p.viii). Not even Archbishop Corrigan had been so mean. Spellman also had materials on the struggle between McGlynn and Corrigan removed from the archives of the Archdiocese of New York (Isacson pp. iii, viii n.5, 126 n.2), reaching back 75 years to push more history down the memory tube.

Later reaffirmations of *Rerum* have been *Mater et Magistra* (1961) by

John XXIII, *Populorum Progressio* (1967) by Paul VI, and *Centissimo Anno* (1991) by John Paul II. Philosophers like Jacques Maritain and Étienne Gilson and Mortimer Adler have carried Leo's ideas forward into the intellectual life of our times.

The Catholic leaders of Christian Democratic parties in postwar Europe were nurtured on *Rerum*. These include Alcide de Gasperi, Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Carlo Sforza, and Luigi Einaudi. Through these and many others, *Rerum* became part of the history of modern Europe. In faraway Australia, the first Catholic PM, James Scullin, was an avid student of *Rerum* (Molony p.130). Thus, the anti-Georgist ideas of Vincenzo Pecci (Leo XIII) cast a long shadow through history, worldwide.

5. LEO'S OUTLOOK

LEO WAS A THOROUGH THOMIST. In 1879, the year George published *Progress and Poverty*, the new Pope Leo XIII had the works of Aquinas declared to be the official Catholic philosophy. This included the economics, with the ideas of just price based on cost of production (in practice, price ceilings), criticism of usury (in practice, a ceiling on the interest rate), private property (most emphatically and repeatedly), minimum wage (a very low minimum, in Leo's view), and modernized guilds (morphing into labor unions).

Rerum also reduces "equal rights" to the right to life hereafter. This is vintage Aquinas. To Leo's critics, it meant "You will eat by and by, in that glorious land beyond the sky; work and pray, live on hay, there'll be pie in the sky when you die" (words attrib. to Joe Hill, union organizer). Corrigan, the persecutor of McGlynn, followed the same line, preaching in a poorhouse on the virtues of patience and acceptance of God's will (Isacsson, p.85). Corrigan's Vicar General, Thomas Preston, issued this statement: "The rights of property are sacred ... by divine authority. You must not think as you choose; you must think as Catholics" (Curran, p.294).

Many Protestants preached on the same text. It was a standard line of the times. Abram Hewitt said that differences in wealth "were due to the laws of Divine Providence" and the "purposes of The Almighty" (Speak p.84). However, the R.C.C., having a heavy working class membership, had that as a specific, special reason to speak up and articulate the yearnings

of the downtrodden for justice and daily bread “on earth as it is in heaven.” This was especially true of their Irish members, oppressed both in Ireland and America.

In this duty, Leo signally failed: he was following another call. That seems to confirm McGlynn’s saying, “This is the curse of religion — that men charged with the high duty of preaching the gospel are itching ... to have authority with men in power ... to magnify their own office” (Bell, p.175). Leo either made or let his Church campaign actively for Hewitt against George.

Leo opposed “liberalism,” but in *both* meanings, i.e. the Manchester School meaning and the egalitarian meaning. Even then, the term had both meanings, and one must judge from context which liberalism he is damning in a particular passage. This put him doubly at odds with Henry George, who generally favored liberalism in both meanings. George, the “free market radical,” sought to reconcile and compose the two liberalisms into a harmonious whole. It did not help that George quoted sympathetically from Giuseppe Mazzini, who had played an important role in stripping the Papal States from the Church. Neither did it help that George’s paper, *The Standard*, counterattacked the R.C.C. hierarchy vigorously for its bullying of McGlynn (Wenzer, pp.221-37). It was Kismet that Leo and George should collide.

The upper hierarchy of the R.C.C. was mostly of the landed classes. Leo, born Vincenzo Pecci, was of the minor nobility, and considerable wealth. Across the water, Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York was also wealthy, but a complete *arriviste*, lace-curtain Irish, scion of a bartender who rose through liquor dealing to real estate, leaving a small landed fortune (Curran p.24). In addition, the R.C.C. in Europe had owned vast lands for centuries, and its bureaucrats naturally developed a protective attitude toward private rent-taking, the bastion of its power and wealth, if not of its underlying religion. George never championed putting church lands on the tax rolls, to my knowledge. The bureaucrat-hierarchs were hypersensitive to the point, also, due to the power of anticlerical movements that had stripped them of many lands, most recently in Catholic nations themselves, like France, Italy and Mexico.

It was in character, then, when in 1888 Leo condemned Irish peasants who were agitating for land. Irish Catholic rebels and reformers thought

him a Judas (Molony p.113). *Rerum*, when it came out, did not help. It testifies to the power of habituation that the R.C.C. survived so well in Ireland after these betrayals, and earlier ones that had moved Ireland into the horrors of the Coercion Act era (Bell, p.127; Curran p.180-81). Many Irish-Americans (like my grandfather) left the Church at this time, but most recognized they had an ethnic interest in the American Catholic Church which, to a remarkable extent, was controlled by Irishmen (Curran p.137), and had, at that time, some independence from Rome. The Irish priesthood had remained much closer to the communicants themselves than had those of other extraction — Edward McGlynn himself being an example (Molony, p.49).

6. EVIDENCE OF ANTI-GEORGIST INTENT

HOW DO WE KNOW that *Rerum* was directed against George and McGlynn? Archbishop Michael Corrigan, who had pressed Leo hard to issue it, took it as an answer to his plea, a “pronouncement against Henry George and his teachings” (Isacson p.296). We have seen above that Msgr. John A. Ryan took it that way, and, acting on that belief, changed his thinking 180 degrees, or at least 150. Ella Edes, veteran “inside dopester” in the Vatican, wrote from Rome to Corrigan, “... the Pope’s aim was to condemn George’s theory without condemning his books” (i.e. without mentioning his name)(Curran p.385). Historian Sydney Ahlstrum (1972, p.835) sees it that way (cit. Isacson, p.333 n.28). George did too, and published (1891) an open letter to Pope Leo in reply; but who was George to debate the Pope himself? Why would a V.I.P. like the Pope lower himself to notice and answer such a cipher — it would be *infra dig*. There is ample evidence, presented herewith, that this was a posture used consciously to slight George, and avoid the boomerang effect of a direct criticism. There is also evidence of great scurrying and rustling of papers in The Vatican in reaction to the power shown by George and McGlynn. This is found in works by Isacson, Ellis, Bell, Molony, Curran, Gilhooley and Preuss.

Foreshadowing *Rerum*, Fr. Victor Cathrein (1889) had already attacked George, stigmatizing him as an “agrarian socialist,” along with Émile de Laveleye. The label did not fit George, who was neither an agrarian nor a socialist, but a free-market urbanist. However, it showed the same mindset as *Rerum*’s later slurring references to generic “socialists,” a fungible lot to Leo, obviously intending to encompass George with bloody European revolutionaries.

Cathrein attacked George and de Laveleye for observing that privatized, commercialized land tenure hardly existed in pre-industrial societies other than the Roman. They wrote that latter-day privatizers had reinvented it only recently by resurrecting Roman Law (Hudson, 1994; Andelson, 1979a). Cathrein wrote that “natural law” prescribes private property in land, an idea also expressed in *Rerum*, refuting George’s position.

George, by stressing ideas of “natural rights” and “natural law,” touched on areas that remained more central to Catholic social thinkers than they did to more secular ones (*De Concilio*). Where Marx alienated Catholics by atheism and anti-clericalism, the overtly Christian George offended some of them more by accepting the Catholic concept of natural law, in ways competing directly with certain Catholic views thereof (depending on which Catholic). Bear in mind that George was happily married to a Catholic.

In *Cathrein*, the idea of equal rights became an empty shell hollowed out by an artful twist of wording to mean only rights to buy land from its rightful owners. Andelson (1979a, p.132) shows how this idea moved right from *Cathrein*’s attack on Henry George into *Rerum*. In *Rerum*, “By using the idea of worker savings it was possible to canonise the concept of private property” (Molony p.96).

Cathrein also anticipates the *Rerum* position that the rich need the poor in order to test their character by giving them chances to perform Christian charity (Andelson, 1979a, p.134). What a roar of derision that allegation would have provoked before most audiences in the last 50 years! Yet now, again, it seems to be back in style — without the Christianity, but as part of a powerful movement to de-finance the welfare system.

Cathrein’s work, originally in German, was translated under the apparent aegis of Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid of Rochester (Hudson, 1994, and personal interview, 1997; Zwierlein, 1946, should be consulted). McQuaid, a stronger man than Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York, was his most influential mentor and advisor (Isacsson, pp.106-07). They were very close, sharing the services of one Ella Edes as courier, spy, gossip, translator, envoy, probable forger, and potent busybody in the Vatican (Curran p.183; Isacsson pp.v, 19-20, 82, 84, 91 n.66, 102, 135, et passim). Corrigan, in turn, was a major instigator of *Rerum*, as we will see, so we may assume that the drafters studied *Cathrein*’s recent attack on Henry George⁵.

Corrigan, as Archbishop of New York, ordered McGlynn to stay out of politics and be silent, on the pretext that the Church never meddled in politics. How sincere and consistent was Corrigan about this? He had thrown the upper echelons of his hierarchy into the 1886 battle against Henry George as Mayor (Isacsson, pp.108-11; Post and Leubuscher pp.128-49). Priests who supported George were threatened with censure and retaliation and exile, which indeed were forthcoming. Corrigan had or let his Vicar General, Thomas Preston, publish a statement in all New York City churches urging a vote against George (Speek, pp.85-86; Isacsson, p.109; Curran pp.196-97; Post and Leubuscher, pp.132-33). In 1887 they “continued their strong opposition to ... Henry George and McGlynn, condemning them openly and secretly” (Speek, p.139). They pressured Irish opinion-leaders Patrick Ford and Terence Powderly to withdraw their support. Clearly, Leo’s hierarchy was not above noticing George and McGlynn, nor above lying about it.

John Molony (1991) was a history professor at Australian National University who spent years in Rome researching the composition of *Rerum*. He had access to some Vatican Secret Archives, along with other standard Vatican sources. His writing shows sympathy for Leo, and a propensity to apply slighting adjectives to George and McGlynn, so we infer his bias, if any, is not to magnify the last two.

He does so, nonetheless, by frequent references to the importance of putting down their heresy. In his index we find 21 page references to George, 16 to McGlynn, and 15 to private ownership of land (37 if we add the generic “right to private property”). In contrast, there are only nine to Aquinas, eight to Marx, six to “freemasonry,” five to Christ, four to usury, one each to Newman, Mazzini, and Garibaldi, and none to Cavour or Victor Emmanuel. The last four were Leo’s arch-enemies and obsession who had nationalized the Papal States and made the Pope a “prisoner in the Vatican”; Newman, a leading Catholic intellectual for whom today’s collegiate “Newman Clubs” are named, was Leo’s appointee as Cardinal.

Here are some of Molony’s comments.

... there was one American theoretician, Henry George, whose writings were of particular interest in the Vatican, and whose ideas had a decisive effect on the timing of *Rerum* and, to some degree, on its contents. (p.50)

In the Vatican, not much interest was shown in George until its attention was drawn to the fact that one of his main followers in America was the pastor of New York's most important parish, St. Stephen's. (p.51)

The blackest mark against McGlynn ... was that he had begun to espouse with fervor the ideas of Henry George. ... his words were taken careful note of in Rome. (p.52)

Throughout the 1880s, considerable attention was paid to George and McGlynn by the Vatican authorities. (p.53)

Cardinal (Camillo) Mazzella ... derided the priest (McGlynn) as one who held that, rather than Leo, George was the "Redeemer of the poor" and his personal "Holy Father". (p.57)

The last point echos Cathrein's resentment of George as a direct competitor. George spoke the language of religion, and evoked a quasi-religious fervor in some followers. This is part of what had attracted McGlynn, whose fervor was much more religious, as one might expect of a priest. Secular modern critics have faulted and even sneered at this "emotionalism," but to religious leaders themselves it posed direct competition. In 1890 in Australia, "... converts, fired by enthusiasm, went about like the early Christians preaching their gospel" (PM "Billy" Hughes, cit. Molony, p.59). Barker is among those who infer from the evidence that George, not Marx, "had been the great enemy in ideas, at whom Pope Leo was striking" (Barker, p.573).

As to Mazzella, it was he who recommended excommunicating McGlynn, which Leo soon did; and putting all the works of Henry George on The Index, which he also did (Molony p.58). Mazzella was soon to help write Rerum in 1891. Note in passing how strange it was to notice any of George's works on The Index. None of the usual reasons applied. George did not write specifically on religion, and all his references to religion bespeak of his strong Christian faith and family orientation. His wife was and remained a good Catholic. His background was Episcopalian, but he never baited Catholics as such, and worked harmoniously with them. He was skeptical of Darwinism. He deplored Marx's atheism as well as his statism. It is as though Leo considered the essence of Christianity to be the

privilege of *rentiers* to avoid taxes.

In *Rerum*, Leo lumped George as a “socialist,” and treated him anonymously as an “upholder of obsolete notions,” and one of “a few dissidents,” a “mere utopianist whose ideas were rejected by the common opinion of the human race.” “The thoughts of Henry George ... were reduced to their utmost simplicity and rejected out of hand” (Molony pp.91-92).

Unnamed (in Cardinal Zigliara’s draft), ... both McGlynn and Henry George were given fuller treatment and their opinions, summed up as “the discordant voices of a few utopians,” were rejected out of hand as contrary to common sense, the natural law and, finally, the divine law itself. (Molony, p.79)

The following is included in *Rerum* itself.

The State would act in an unjust and inhumane manner were it to exact more than is just from private owners (of land) under the guise of a tax. (Molony, pp. 98, 194)

According to G.R. Geiger (p.362), “The doctrines attacked are labelled ‘socialistic,’ but they are essentially those of George. ... there was so flagrant a disregard of any attempt to discriminate between conceptions which were diametrically opposed (that many interpreted *Rerum*) as a direct attack upon that (George’s) work.” Geiger cites Henry Cardinal Manning and Archbishop Michael Corrigan to that effect.

The tone of *Rerum* was also tailored to George and McGlynn. The first draft of this Encyclical, by the Jesuit Matteo Liberatore, was “The Worker Question.” Its focus was on the condition of labor. As it evolved through 6 drafts, under Leo’s supervision, it became an attack on critics of private property in land; it virtually blamed the poverty of labor on the critics of poverty, all lumped as “socialists.” A major influence was the team of Cardinal Camillo Mazzella and Cardinal Zigliara, the same pair who had recommended excommunicating Dr. Edward McGlynn, and putting George’s works on The Index of forbidden books (Molony p.57).

Accordingly, the title was changed. Encyclicals are known by their first words. *Rerum Novarum cupidus* ... (The unseemly lust for change ...) was a put-down, well understood as such by Latinists of the time, of which Leo

XIII was a paragon. It referred to what today a Tom Wolfe might put down as “radical chic,” or “politically correct,” while also implying a taste for violence and plunder, playing on the fear of revolution.

The actual phrase came from one of Archbishop Michael Corrigan’s relentless philippics against McGlynn and an ally, Edward McSweeney, fired off in 1888. “Thus New York, the Vatican and the late Roman Republic were bound up in the first line of the encyclical” (Molony, p.115). He might have added Ireland.

Above all, about one-third of the text of *Rerum* consists of championing private landownership, upheld by police power, and impugning the motives of nameless persons who might think otherwise. These are “wily and restless men,” they “take advantage of confusion ... to cloud judgement and agitate the masses, ... stirring up hatred of the rich among the poor ... which would do no other than harm the workers themselves. Moreover it would be unjust because it would set aside the rights of legitimate owners, ... and throw the whole community into disorder. ... swayed by false principles ... they try at any cost to stir up the masses and move them to violence. The authority of the state must intervene to rein in such agitators,” etc., etc., etc. The tendentious, slurring nature of these remarks clearly purports to forestall objective or thoughtful consideration of the matters at hand.

As to private property, *Rerum* refers again and again to land, hardly mentioning capital or interest. “... land is simply his (the buyer’s) wages in another form.... Nature has given to man the right to stable and permanent possessions, ... to be found only in the earth The gift of the earth was not meant as a kind of common and indiscriminate form of property. ... but it was left to the industry of man and the special laws of individual nations to determine the manner in which it would be divided up. ... Those who do not own land do their part by their labour ... the right to private property is in agreement with the law of nature. ... When a man uses his mind and body to obtain the goods of the earth, ... he is justly able to claim it as his own, ... the right to private property has been recognised as pre-eminently in conformity with human nature. ... The seal of the divine law also authorises that right and goes so far as to forbid, in severe terms, even the desire to possess that which belongs to another. Thou shalt not covet ... it is the duty of public authority to safeguard private property by the power and strength of law.” Etc., etc., etc. Notably lacking is any reference to the teachings of Jesus.

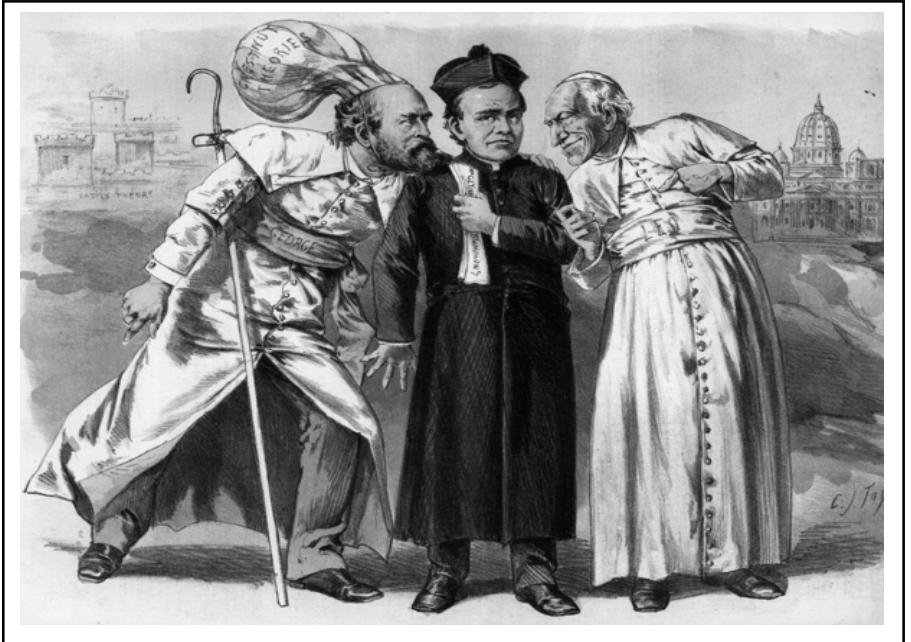
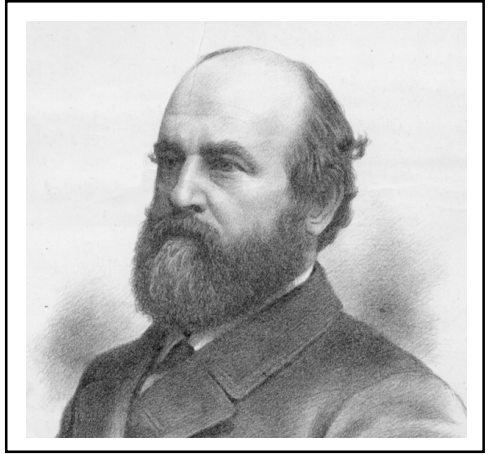
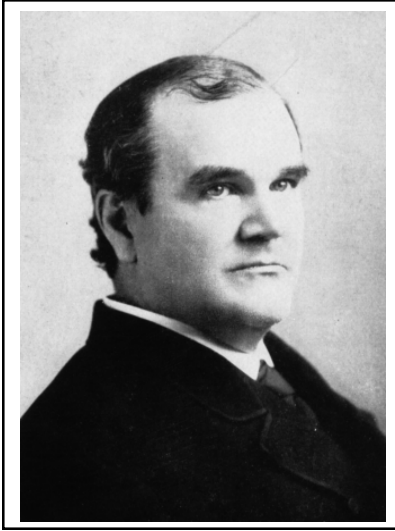
These words are aimed like speeding arrows at Henry George and Edward McGlynn. Whom else do they target so directly? Certainly not Marx, who preached always against capital, and didn't even recognize land (or the earth, or nature) as a separate category.

7. THE SILENT TREATMENT

ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL CORRIGAN of New York harassed and persecuted McGlynn relentlessly. I will not repeat the sordid history, already well told and criticized by Catholic scholars like Bell, Gilhooley, Curran (pp.196-214), and Isacson. A Roman envoy, Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni, head of *Propaganda Fide*, had given Corrigan the green light as early as 1882 (Curran p.183; Geiger p.345), after which Corrigan willingly played the "bad cop." Leo, the "good cop," laid back issuing Delphic riddles while the two Irish-American innocents destroyed each other, opening the way for the crafty Leo to expand his power over the American Church, years later. Corrigan was also thick with Tammany, indulgent of its corruption, and dazzled by its connections with the rich and famous (Isacson, pp.108, 110, 289, et passim). Leaders of Tammany feared McGlynn because he contested their control of the Irish-American vote.

Corrigan, by most accounts, had a high degree of low cunning for inventing and planting rumors, press-leaking, spying, and gossiping (Isacson, pp.274 ff., 302, 304, 315, et passim), but most of his attack was overt and public, and widely perceived by Catholics as personal and spiteful. After getting McGlynn excommunicated, he systematically weeded out McGlynn's supporters and disciplined, exiled, or demoted them (Bell, pp.128 ff.; Isacson, pp.294 ff.) He circulated a pledge against McGlynn, which became a loyalty oath: non-signers were screened out of promotions (Curran, p.241). In the process he alienated masses of McGlynn's loyal parishioners, and sympathizers around the country, as other hierarchs looked on in helpless dismay. He gave arms to those who opposed General Philip Sheridan for U.S. President on the grounds that a Catholic would take orders from the church machine and a foreign potentate (Isacson p.278). "Most bishops considered his administration a disaster" (Isacson, p.303). The flow of Peter's Pence to Rome was cut sharply. Cardinals all had their salaries lowered, compelling curial attention (Bell, p.242; Isacson p.327).

HENRY GEORGE, DR. EDWARD MCGLYNN, AND POPE LEO XIII





Illustrations counterclockwise:
Henry George; Dr. Edward McGlynn;
Puck cartoon of McGlynn caught between "Two Popes"
(George and Leo XIII); Puck cartoon of George and
McGlynn's "Anti-Poverty Society Show".

Several other hierarchs, both in the U.S. and Europe urged a different course. Prominent among these was the most senior of American bishops, James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore (Curran p.383). Gilmour of Cleveland took the same tack (Curran, p.384). Gibbons through his agent in Rome, Denis O'Connell, saw danger in making martyrs of George and McGlynn, "which might make George a hero of the Roman Inquisition, ... " He urged silence, and "*demanding absolutely that George be left in oblivion.*"

It would be undignified for Rome to notice George with a condemnation. (Ellis, p.580-82)

Gibbons urged instead that Leo issue an encyclical.

(Gibbons) told the Pope by letter that he did not pretend that the false theories of George should be tolerated by the Church, but ... in his different encyclicals, the Pope had ... convinced readers (on other matters). ... A similar instruction in the same form ... on matters touching the right of property, would bear the same authority. (Ellis, p.582)

The same sentiments flooded in from other quarters, including the voices of Zigliara, Mazzella, and Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, and even Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland, Corrigan's friend and fellow turf defender, the very one who had warned, "The assault will begin with wealth and end with authority" (Gilmour to Corrigan, 1888, cit. Curran p.316; Molony, pp. 79, 85, 108; Isacson pp.253-55). George was to be made a non-person, *semper infra dig*. The preferred strategy was to declare his ideas to have died — a reverse bandwagon psychology, one that professional economists have later used so effectively.

Symptomatic of this tack was the enigmatic stratagem of placing George's works on The Index, but then keeping that fact from the public. Rome forbade people to read the books, then forbade its people to tell anyone of the ban! This would seem to defeat the whole purpose of The Index, unless the idea was to pass the word quietly to a few insiders with clout, and highly developed skill in quietly spreading slander.

As to McGlynn, Corrigan took great pains to build a multi-pronged case against him, inventing evidence, planting spies and *agents*

provocateurs (Isacsson p.84) to lay traps and a long paper trail, after the manner of mediocre bureaucrats in every age and clime. Some people still believe that the central grievance against McGlynn was his support of public schools. However, the issues are closely linked. Opposing public schools allied the R.C.C. with other enemies of property taxation (just as opposing public power linked the foes of property taxation with private power companies from 1920 to the present).

Bell, Gilhooley, Curran and Isacsson leave little doubt, though, that McGlynn was only a minor annoyance until he adopted George's cause. It was this that triggered the drastic act of excommunicating him. There was no prior action against McGlynn for his many encounters with authority over 20 years, including his refusal to build a parochial school (Isacsson, p.70). Church authorities never objected when McGlynn, a Republican, hit the campaign trail for Cleveland in 1882 when he ran for Governor, opposed by Tammany, ally of the R.C.C. in New York (Speek, p.102 n.35; *New Columbia Encyclopedia*).

It is tempting to ascribe clerical anti-Georgism to a fear that church lands would be taxed, but these seem to be separable issues. George never, to my knowledge, challenged the existing exemption of church lands from the property tax (although others have). The singletax would only hit the church as an institution by raising the rate on taxable income properties held for investment; and it would offset this by exempting the improvements on such lands. It is rather non-property taxes, which George opposed, that anti-clericals push, in order to get revenue from churches that pay no property tax.

Rome even considered excommunicating the whole 700,000 members of the Knights of Labor "as a secret society" — but not until 1886. This was "because of the Knights ... support of George's candidacy" (Isacsson, p.104). Actually, the Knights had been a secret society, uncondemned, from 1869-81, and in 1881 dropped the secrecy, so the "secret society" rationale does not wash at all (*New Columbia Encyclopedia*). The anti-Georgist rationale fits like a wet tee-shirt. "The apparent support of the singletax by organized labor made it ... 'dangerous.' This explains the alarm of ... the authorities of the Catholic Church in New York ... and the excommunication of Father McGlynn, in particular" (Speek, p.156).

Again, The Church never disciplined the outspoken, politically active Fr. Sylvester Malone, and why not? "Because he was ... not as

economically radical as Edward McGlynn” (Isacson, p.49, n.25). The rest of the case against McGlynn was a pretext, a cover story. When, years later, Leo let the aged, ailing McGlynn back into the communion it was on condition that he “put Georgism out of the picture” (Isacson, p.355). Even then, Leo let the vengeful Corrigan exile McGlynn to a small remote parish, out of the loop.

Even that was not enough for Leo, however. McGlynn in exile became a powerful legend; his former parishioners in the confessional quizzed new priests, “Be you with or agin Dr. McGlynn?” Firmer central control was needed. McGlynn and his supporters had been pleased when Leo sent Francesco Satolli over with authority to “re-communicate” McGlynn in an apparent gesture to the liberals and a snub to Corrigan. Leo seized this opportunity quietly to make Satolli the first *permanent apostolic delegate* to the U.S., with liberal approval (Curran, p.394).

Next, when his pawns and bishops were aligned, the patient, wily European made what Fr. Gilhooley considers his big move. “... Leo XIII denounced Americanism in his landmark encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae* (1899)” (Gilhooley, p.207). Too many Americans had opened the door when a visitor said “I’m from The Vatican, and I’m here to help you.” The weak Corrigan had opened up first by heeding Cardinal Giovanni Simeoni’s behest to silence McGlynn, and then by so often turning to Rome for validation and support. McGlynn had opened up later by accepting support from the Pope’s delegate, Francesco Satolli. Terence Powderly and Patrick Ford had succumbed as early as 1887 when they abandoned George and McGlynn, seeking Roman acceptance and “respectability.” McGlynn’s allies, even Henry George, had opened up later by viewing their hero’s refrocking in 1892 as a triumph. George concluded from this act that Leo was “a very great man.” American media had opened up, too. The New York *Evening Post*, the *Times*, the *Sun* and the *Herald* all opposed foreign Catholic power in U.S. politics, but had turned around and praised Pope Leo for excommunicating McGlynn in 1887 (Bell p.124).

Indeed, Leo did abate his hostility to all things Georgist, whether from conviction or a political imperative. He substituted an inscrutable ambiguity (Barker, p.577). He sacrificed Corrigan’s feelings in the process, yet left him with great powers of petty tyranny, which Corrigan used to exile McGlynn and his supporters. In the end, Leo imposed “Ultramontanism” — Roman control. In Gilhooley’s view, “The American

church was slouching toward ‘theological hibernation’” (Gilhooley, p.207), which lasted most of this Century.⁶ The powerful Irish ethnic political bloc was confirmed in its introverted machine politics, and split away from Georgist reform. The Church was returned to “prudent and safe men” who left their members “inert” (Curran, p.172). Its most reactionary elements took power, as exemplified by Francis Cardinal Spellman, he who tore down McGlynn’s portrait and expunged his records from the archives.

Spellman’s concerns were rather overtly pecuniary and political. In 1958 he stated, “Next to Jesus Christ the greatest thing that has happened to the Catholic Church is Bernardino Nogara.” Nogara was financial adviser to The Vatican, who had placed it in *Società Generale Immobiliare*, a huge construction company and real estate owner that has major hotels in Italy, and real estate around the world. In 1963, Spellman advised Pope Paul to hire Paul Marcinkus, a big burly priest from Cicero who evolved into a bodyguard, and then into a financial adviser. It is an ugly picture. He and Michel Sindona, a financier, were known as “The Gorilla and the Shark.” They took over control of Vatican finances. A major aim of theirs was to eliminate taxes on church property (Yallop, pp. 112, 118). This, by apostolic succession, is the modern heritage of *Rerum Novarum*, the anti-Georgist tract.

As to Spellman’s politics, he was a leading cold warrior. In 1948, U.S. security agencies were testing new techniques in Italy, techniques of propaganda and political manipulation that later came into widespread use, “including inside the U.S. itself” (Simpson, pp. 89-91). Spellman was a “crucial go-between in CIA-Vatican negotiations.” The U.S. gave the R.C.C. large sums of “black currency” — from sales of captured Nazi loot. The CIA established close ties with the R.C.C. hierarchy in Rome, and also with *Intermarium*, a Catholic lay organization operating under protection of the Vatican. *Intermarium* became a mainstay of Radio Free Europe, “and scores of other CIA-sponsored clandestine operations during the next two decades.”

Returning to 1891, another ploy was to play dumb about what George really said. George’s tax proposal, reduced to its practical application, is simple and direct. It’s just a matter of raising the property tax rate, and exempting improvements — full stop. Yet, neither Leo nor any of his stable of erudite, advanced scholars seemed to get it. They persisted in characterizing him as a kind of open-range commonizer, whom they

lumped with all “socialists,” although neither George nor most socialists held such a view.

Vatican intellectuals did not arrive there by being stupid or illiterate. It is hard to interpret their slow learning as sincere simplicity. Back in New York, Michael Corrigan was perhaps a bit thick, and in any case was a “control freak,” too carried away by Tammany politics, turf patrol, and personal spite to think clearly. Yet even Corrigan understood the essence and cutting edge of George’s proposals, for Corrigan had recently interceded in a New Jersey election to oppose a property tax bill that he (mistakenly) thought would hit Church lands (Isacsson, p.109). He was skilled at avoiding inheritance taxes through incorporating churches (Curran, p.44).

The Jesuits and Dominicans of Rome were literate, learned, and leisured, far from the threat of George as a New York political force. Being multi-lingual they were above semantic naïveté. Mazzella and Zigliara had studied all of George’s works in the process of excommunicating McGlynn, and consigning George to The Index. Leo was a renowned Latinist and a deep student of Aquinas. These were not dull oafs, but fully capable of understanding and interpreting words accurately. They can only have chosen to play dumb to trade on the presumed naïveté and credulity of their readers. Modern academic economists either learned at their feet, or rediscovered the same technique.

Finally, they emerge from the cover of feigned confusion to condemn George’s policy itself, while keeping his name out of it. Under “Unjust Taxes” *Rerum* warns that “excessive taxes” will render real reforms impossible by exhausting private means. Zeroing in on the target they write:

The State would act in an unjust and inhumane manner were it TO EXACT MORE THAN IS JUST FROM PRIVATE OWNERS (OF LAND) UNDER THE GUISE OF A TAX.⁷
(Emphasis supplied)

Take that, Dr. Edward McGlynn and Mr. Henry George! One has to wonder why the authors of *Rerum*, who seem too dull to grasp the essential Georgist position, now state it so simply and clearly.

It took a few decades, but mainline economists learned to follow the R.C.C., with its centuries of experience combatting heresies and bending minds. As documented in Gaffney and Harrison (1994), they gradually stopped attacking George and gave him the silent as well as the dumb treatment. This has been effective over the decades. In 1915, Speek could write "... the theory itself is gaining in popularity. ... There is a marked tendency ... to tax unimproved land higher than improved" (p.23). "There is hardly a standard textbook ... in which the singletax theory of Henry George is not treated ... " (p.21). In 1960 that was still true, however shabbily it was treated. Today, there is mainly silence.

8. EXCURSIONS AND ALARUMS

GEORGE HAD MADE MUCH of everyone's right of access to land. *Rerum* subtly twists this around: the "right to property" means that everyone has a right to *buy* some else's property — with nothing said about "just price." "Worker savings" were urged, to enable workers to buy land, and "thus to canonize the concept of private property" (Molony, p.96). Yet, at the same time, the authors of *Rerum* decided that a "just wage" was one just high enough for the subsistence of the worker alone; the so-called "family wage" was too generous (Molony, p.120). It was not explained how the workers might form good Catholic families from such a wage, let alone save to buy land.

The spectre of bloody revolution was waved at Henry George by referring in *Rerum* to the "spirit of revolutionary change," as expressed by Karl Marx (Molony p.103). As neither one is named in *Rerum*, but George's land tax is specified, it is fair to infer that the tarbrush was aimed at George, a man who never brandished any weapon but the ballot box.

9. CONCLUSION

CERTAIN HIERARCHS PERCEIVED Henry George and Dr. Edward McGlynn as dangerous threats to the R.C.C. This was not just in spite of George's and McGlynn's deep religiosity, but in part because of it. Their fault lay in using religious concepts like morality and natural law to dispute the philosophical basis of private property in land, in which the hierarchs showed themselves

to have a paramount interest; and to advance a practical, ready means of doing something about it.

In response, Pope Leo XIII issued *Rerum*, which defined Catholic social doctrine from 1891 to the present. This encyclical manifests an obsession with upholding private rent-taking, free of taxation, to which it subordinates its ostensible goal of showing concern for the working poor and the unemployed. Detailed analysis of its provenance, made available by modern Catholic scholars, reveals it to be primarily a reaction to the ideas of Henry George, and their injection by Dr. Edward McGlynn into R.C.C. counsels. The sources also reveal a conscious strategy of countering George and McGlynn by impugning their motives, slighting and traducing them, misstating their ideas, and finally erasing their names. In this respect, it seems to provide a model for the stratagem gradually adopted over the next century by the economics profession, as outlined in Gaffney and Harrison (1994), *The Corruption of Economics*. An important by-product was to impose Vatican control, mostly reactionary, over the American Catholic Church for most of the 20th Century.

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NOTES

- ¹ Gilhooley and Curran (p.21) are the sources; Isacson (p.34, and p.47, n.7) disagrees.
- ² Hewitt was one of the wealthiest Americans. As Congressman he had led the fight against Republican Reconstructionism. He managed Tilden's campaign in 1876.
- ³ The Fenians were a secret society of Irish-American blooded veterans from the Civil War, led by John Devoy and General Wm. Sullivan. One of their projects was to take Ontario and trade it back to Britain for the freedom of Ireland. It did not seem as Quixotic then as it sounds today: Canadians had long feared that a

victorious G.A.R. might next be turned on them. Washington was apparently of two minds on the matter, first tolerating the invasion and then helping the Canadians repel it. There are some parallels with the Bay of Pigs affair, later, and a secret history yet to be written of intrigue and double-dealing in the war office. American historians trivialize it, but Canadians still take it gravely: it triggered their unification in 1867. Pope Leo XIII, in character, condemned Fenianism in 1871 (Isacsson, p.33).

⁴ I have never been a “Mason” in the secret society sense condemned by Pius IX and Leo XIII - it’s just a family name. The radical anti-clerical leaders of Italy’s *Risorgimento*, Mazzini and Garibaldi, were “freemasons,” as were Washington, Franklin, and many Founding Fathers. The only secret society in my family background was the Fenian, from an age long past.

⁵ Cathrein is not covered in *The New Palgrave, a Dictionary of Economics*. Neither are Leo XIII, nor *Rerum Novarum*, nor John Ryan, nor Alcázar, nor natural rights, nor many other exemplars and concepts of Catholic economic thought (except for a good article on Scholasticism). Even Henry George, whom they criticized, is given minimal space; likewise Aquinas, whom they revered. That might suggest that modern economists have shouldered these writers aside. However, there are hundreds of millions of Catholics, and only few economists, so it is worth asking which group is the island, and which is the main? Prudence would dictate that economists give more heed to Catholic philosophers, whether to agree or not.

As to natural rights, apart from their role in Catholic doctrine, they are enshrined in the English Bill of Rights (1689), the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789), the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution, and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1946). Again, are economists in touch with the hundreds of millions of people who endorse those statements?

⁶ A fuller account would have to deal with conflicting sources on the sainted Pius X, 1903-14. Some stress his concern for the poor; others stress his reaction against Leo’s social activism. Conflict among sources arises in part because many of them characterize a person in stereotypical or *Gestalt* terms, inferring his total character from his position on a few issues.

⁷ The wording is from Molony’s new translation, p.194. It comes at the end of para. #51 from the official translation, as reproduced in George, rpt. 1934, p.187, and in George, rpt. 1941, p.141. Molony’s wording is slightly different, without changing the meaning. In addition, Molony deleted the earlier paragraph numbers, in the process of changing the paragraph breaking points themselves.

Dr. M. Mason Gaffney is Professor of Economics at the University of California, Riverside, and the author of numerous articles in the field. His essay on “Henry George, Dr. Edward McGlynn, and Pope Leo XIII” will be published in the forthcoming book, **Henry George and the Gilded Age**, edited by Ed O’Donnell and published by the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation.

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