

EDITORIAL

THE FLOOR GRANTED TO THE REV. McGRADY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ELSEWHERE in this issue will be found a despatch from Cincinnati, O.,¹ giving an open letter by which the Rev. T. McGrady of St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church of Bellevue, Ky., calls Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan of New York to account for issuing a certain letter on last September 14, apropos of the Buffalo assassination,² requesting the clergy "to impress on the faithful the constant teachings of our Holy Father Leo XIII. against the errors of Socialism," and challenges the Archbishop to a public debate.

To unthinking men, who, sympathizing with, and wishing to see Socialism established, yet fail to realize that a structure, whether social or otherwise, cannot be raised upon false foundations, the most valuable passage in the Rev. McGrady's letter of challenge would seem to be that in which he asserts:

"The Catholic Church championed Socialism for four hundred years, until capitalism succeeded in winning the high places and poured its corrupting gold into her coffers."

This passage, however, is far from being the most valuable. In fact, it is the least valuable because it bristles with false economic, false sociologic and, consequently false historic allegations.

Socialism is a social system grounded on compulsory co-operative labor; compulsory co-operative labor is, in turn, predicated upon the existence of gigantic tools of production. The gigantic tool cannot be operated by individual effort. To be operated at all it must be operated collectively, large masses co-operating to one end. A conflict, the simmerings of which are yet perceptible, arose between collective and individual labor. Collective labor merges the individual in the species. The fascination—corrosively selfish, barbaric, and self-destructive—of individual

¹ ["Press and Archbishop: The Rev. McGrady Challenges Archbishop Corregan {sic} to a Debate," *Daily People*, Oct. 11, 1901. See page three, below.]

² [The assassination of President William McKinley.]

prowess, resisted the merging process. The issue of the conflict was the victory of collective labor. Such was inevitable. The aim of labor is to produce the material things needed for life. The fact that collective labor made possible the production and distribution of such material things in quantities so large and with a consumption of time so small that life, intellectual and spiritual, could bound upward, crushed the small tool of individualistic production, and thus compelled man, obedient to the laws of his mission, to abandon the narrow path of individualism and strike the broad road of collectivism; to operate, not as single beings, but as the human species. Capitalism is that transition stage in the career of the race where the roads fork. Collective labor is established, but individual ownership continues in the tools that compel collective labor. Capitalism consists in the social-economic contradiction of COLLECTIVE labor by means of INDIVIDUALLY owned tools of production. From this absurd condition, typical of transition periods, where the child aborning breathes neither quite through its navel nor quite through its lungs, flow all the heinous evils of modern society that every good-hearted man rebels at.

Accordingly, the Catholic Church could not, in its early centuries have championed Socialism for the simple reason that there was not then any Socialism to champion; and there was no Socialism then for the simple reason that the material conditions were absent to make Socialism possible. For the same reason capitalism could not then “win the high places in the Catholic Church” and “pour its corrupting gold into the Church’s coffers”: there was and there could be no capitalism in existence to do the winning and pouring.

While allowing credit to the Rev. McGrady for his good intentions, these may not be allowed to work evil. In confusing patriarchal benevolence with Socialism, he places the modern Social Question on false foundations. He incurs an anachronism. Capitalism and its sequence, Socialism, are recent developments of the race. It is the duty of the Socialist to point out the fact. The structure reared on loose ground stands at the mercy of the first blast that comes along: the ground breaks under it and it falls together. The structure reared by the Socialist Labor Party is to be proof against all blasts.

Not, however, by reason of these serious errors, contained in the Rev. McGrady’s letter, is it to be wholly dismissed as worthless. Not at all. Tho’ uninformed on economics and sociology, the Rev. McGrady is certainly well informed on the internal mechanism of his own hierarchy. That is his department.

His letter contains a passage that falls under that head. It is this:

“The Pope’s encyclical (against Socialism and alluded to in Archbishop Corrigan’s letter) IS NOT THE WORK OF LEO XIII., proclaiming a doctrine of faith and morals, BUT MERELY THE OPINION OF JOACHIM PECCI, AS A WRITER ON SOCIAL ECONOMICS.”

THIS is the important, THIS is the valuable part of the Rev. McGrady’s challenge.

Archbishop Corrigan headed the Anarchistic mob of capitalist Editors, preachers and politicians, who recently sought to lash the rabble of the country to deeds of violence against the Socialist Labor Party. In the pursuit of their double immoral purpose—immoral because it was sustained by deliberate falsehood, and immoral because it was intended to protect the reign of the brigand Capitalist Class,—the Editors, preachers and politicians aforesaid, with one exception, placed their “arguments” upon their own “merits.” The exception was Archbishop Corrigan. He justified himself with the “teachers {teachings?} of Leo XIII.” Evidently from the Rev. McGrady’s statement, last quoted, the Archbishop uttered in this a forgery: it was as if he signed the name of one man to the words of another.

Now, then, the question is, What means does the Roman Catholic machinery of government provide for putting the snuffer on a forger within its own ranks, and to stop such a scandal to good morals? If there is any such measure, has the Rev. McGrady set it agoing? If not, why not?

PRESS AND ARCHBISHOP.

The Rev. McGrady Challenges Archbishop Corregan {sic} to a Debate.

Cincinnati, O., Oct. 10.—Father T. McGrady of St. Anthony’s Church of Bellevue, Ky., wishes to debate on socialism with Archbishop Corrigan. The cause of the challenge is the Archbishop’s recent warning against socialistic doctrines being spread among members of the Catholic Church. The challenges issued by Father McGrady is an open letter as follows:

“Your Grace: While sincerely grieving over the murder of President McKinley with the great body of socialists in America, I cannot, in justice to the truth, pass by the unfair inference of your letter of the 14th inst., which is in a sense a public document by reason of its wide diffusion in the daily papers. To the average reader

of that letter you seem to implicate socialism in the crime against the President, when you request your clergy to impress on the faithful the constant teachings of our Holy Father Leo XIII. against the errors of socialism.

“I therefore respectfully {respectfully?} challenge your Grace to show wherein socialism errs. The Catholic Church championed socialism for four hundred years, until capitalism succeeded in winning the high places and poured its corrupting gold into her coffers. The Pope’s encyclical³ has no dogmatic value in view in view of the fact that it is not the work of Leo XIII., proclaiming a doctrine of faith and morals, but merely the opinion of Joachin Pecci,⁴ as a writer on social economics.

My love of the Catholic Church is too profound to allow me to keep silent when such a distinguished representative of the lowly Nazarene condemns a righteous movement for the liberation of the toiling masses from the bondage of industrial serfdom.

“I will go to New York and pay the rent of the hall on any date it may suit your Grace’s convenience to debate this vital question.

“Trusting that your Grace will not shrink {from} the issue, I am respectfully {respectfully?} yours,

“T. McGRADY,
“Pastor St. Anthony’s Church.

“Bellevue, Ky.”

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

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³ [*Rerum Novarum, Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor.*]

⁴ [Pope Leo XIII was born Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci.]