

**“Comrade Father Thomas McGrady: A Socialist Priest’s Quest  
for Equality through Socialism”**

**By Jacob H. Dorn**

A revised and significantly longer version of this address appeared as “Comrade Father Thomas McGrady: A Priest’s Quest for Equality through Socialism,” in *Fides et Historia: Journal of the Conference on Faith and History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer/Fall 2014): 1-27.

The congregation of St. Anthony’s parish in Bellevue, Kentucky, just across the river from Cincinnati, was stunned on Sunday, 7 December 1902, when Father Thomas McGrady, its beloved pastor, announced his resignation. According to the fullest newspaper account, “there was bowing of heads, women and children wept.” With great affection, the account continued, “almost all of the congregation lingered and crowded around their beloved pastor, weeping and pleading with him not to leave them.” He told them he would remain in the community, “only not as their priest.”<sup>1</sup>

McGrady had been a socialist for about two years, and his socialist activities and writings were undoubtedly a factor in his decision to leave his ministry at St. Anthony’s. Though socialists were often quick to say that a clergyman had been dismissed or fired simply for his politics, the records in McGrady’s case are such that we should tread warily.<sup>2</sup> Three factors converged in an intensifying conflict between McGrady and his bishop, Camillus Maes: one was, naturally, his espousal of socialism; but McGrady’s objections to the undemocratic polity of the Catholic Church and his very assertive personality were also involved. Each of these three factors shaped his behavior and speech as he and the Church he loved collided.

Thomas McGrady was one of very, very few members of the Roman Catholic clergy to espouse socialism in early years of the twentieth century, when a vibrant Socialist Party of America (SPA) achieved its greatest impact on American society. In these years, by one estimate, at least three hundred Protestant ministers joined the party, and a Christian Socialist

Fellowship (CSF) carried on organizational and educational work in loyalty to it. In contrast, the only priests who get an occasional nod from historians were McGrady and Thomas J. Hagerty.<sup>3</sup> Their experience was exceptional, but for that very reason worthy of close scrutiny.

It is risky to generalize about the numbers of party leaders or voters who were Catholic scrutiny, and consequently the involvement of American Catholics in the SPA has received little attention.<sup>4</sup> There were certainly more than two socialist priests.

Catholic laypeople were readily drawn to the SPA's political and economic agenda. Marxist philosophy was not the issue for many; capitalist exploitation, as socialists explained it, was. One did not even have to swallow Marx's economic analysis whole.

If Catholics, both clerical and lay, were deeply involved in the socialist movement, it was in defiance of their church's position, as defined by the hierarchy, that Catholicism and socialism were irreconcilable. Almost from the beginning of Marxist socialism, the Vatican took that position. Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), included a brief paragraph condemning "socialism, communism, secret societies, biblical societies, [and] clerico-liberal societies."

Pope Leo XIII is best known for *Rerum Novarum* ("On the Conditions of Labor," 1891), but he opposed socialism in two encyclicals in the first year of his pontificate, 1878. In the first, *Inscrutabili Dei Consilio* ("On the evils of Society") he expressed a sweeping fear of "evils by which the human race is oppressed on every side." Although he did not mention it in this document, his concerns imply that socialism is one of the evils.

In contrast, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* ("On Socialism") is a sweeping condemnation of socialism. Here, Leo linked socialism with communism and nihilism as part of "a deadly plague that is creeping into the very fibres of human society and leading it on to the verge of destruction." What he found appalling was that these sinister forces "refuse obedience to the

higher powers,” “proclaim the absolute equality of all men in rights and duties,” “debase the natural union of man and woman,” “assail the right of property sanctioned by natural law,” and “strive to seize and hold in common whatever has been acquired either by title of lawful inheritance, or by labor of brain and hands, or by thrift in one’s mode of life.”, of reason alone.”<sup>5</sup>

Socialists came in for particular condemnation because of their commitment to equality: “Their habit . . . is always to maintain that nature has made all men equal, and that, therefore, neither honor nor respect is due to majesty, nor obedience to laws, unless, perhaps, to those sanctioned by their own good pleasure.” For the Christian “the equality of men consists in this: that all, having inherited the same nature, are called to the same most high dignity of the sons of God , and that . . . each one is to be judged by the same law . . . . **The inequality of rights and of power proceeds from the very Author of nature.**”<sup>6</sup> [bold by author]

The encyclical emphasizes that inequality is natural and essential because God ordained it: in the family, in the Church, in government, between masters and servants, and in the social and economic structure of society. Leo introduced a theme that would recur for decades in anti-socialist polemics—the theme that socialists “strive almost completely” to undermine the marital relationship. The larger point, however, was the rejection of equality, and Leo went on to counterpose, as a response to the “old struggle between the rich and poor,” the Church’s charitable work and admonitions to the rich to treat the poor kindly.

In subsequent American Catholic social thought, Pope Leo’s *Rerum Novarum*, often called the “labor encyclical,” has received greater attention than these earlier pronouncements. It repeats many of the points of Leo’s two previous letters, but it also has a more extended condemnation of the oppression of the working class and exhortation to employers to treat employees fairly.

Leo rested his argument primarily on 1) his belief that socialists would abolish private property and thus destroy the family, and 2) his conviction that inequality was grounded in nature and in the essential character of civil society. He saw no limitations in the kinds of property socialists would collectivize. For example, he asserted that socialists contended that “individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies”; that “community of goods” was the “main tenet of socialism”; and that socialists wished “to reduce civil society to one dead level.”<sup>7</sup> The “inviolability of private property,” which he argued has its basis in natural law, was “the first and most fundamental principle” for any effort “to alleviate the condition of the masses.”<sup>8</sup> His argument for this principle was pervaded by the rejection of any possibility of human equality beyond equality of opportunity, and he did not make equality of opportunity a significant part of his analysis.

In the United States, the hierarchy concentrated on the anti-socialist element in *Rerum Novarum*. One historian calls the bishops’ view a “narrow American Catholic reading of *Rerum Novarum*” that led to a “strident campaign against socialism.”<sup>9</sup> Explanations of this imbalance in emphasis usually point to the bishops’ fear of socialism’s appeal to a population that was largely immigrant and working class.

Minority voices spoke in moderate tones about socialism, but kept distance from it. Such was the case with the eminent sociologist William J. Kerby of the Catholic University. Kerby considered *Rerum Novarum* “an admirable review of the social situation, and a platform for religious, social, legal, and political reform.” Kerby believed that socialists were mistaken in thinking the entire economic system rotten, and he accepted a state of conflict between the Catholic Church and socialists. Yet he cautioned against attacking socialism for the wrong

reasons, and he saw value in an “essential socialism”—one without Marx’s materialist philosophy. The perspective of John A. Ryan was very similar. Ryan argued that Catholics could not belong to the Socialist Party, but they could support an “essential socialism” that maintained “substantial private property” and respect for religion and the family. At the same time, he doubted that such socialism would be practicable.<sup>10</sup>

Thomas McGrady became a socialist activist at the very time that the Catholic Church in the United States appeared to mount a concerted attack on socialism. This attack coincided with the promising birth of the SPA. In December 1901 the *International Socialist Review* noted a flurry of Catholic anti-socialist activity, including a sermon by Archbishop Michael Corrigan at St. Patrick’s in New York; the appearance of a pamphlet entitled “Crying Evil of the Hours,” Socialism,” in thousands of congregations; attempts to form anti-socialist societies in many parishes; and a call to Catholic workers to create Catholic unions. In 1906 the *Catholic Standard and Times* of Philadelphia corroborated the timing of such a drive by stating that, in the preceding five years, almost every bishop and archbishop in the United States had condemned socialism in pastoral letter, public interview, or sermon.<sup>11</sup>

McGrady’s embrace of socialism in the face of papal and episcopal opposition to it warrants attention to three issues: 1) the reasons he became a socialist; 2) his public work for the socialist cause; and 3) his resignation from his parish and subsequent life.

In considering McGrady’s “conversion” to socialism, we have “How I Became a Socialist,” an article he wrote in early. His explanation was simple: “I read a few books on Socialism and thought over what I had read, and then read a little more and thought a little more, and then I came to the conclusion that Socialism was based on truth and science. This article traces his clerical career, from ordination in Galveston in 1887, through brief pastorates in

Houston and Dallas, and then in Lexington, Cynthiana, and Bellevue, Kentucky, the state of his birth.<sup>12</sup> Not until he came to Bellevue in 1895 did he come face to face to industrial realities. He also stressed reading as essential to his radicalization.<sup>13</sup> His reading took him from Henry George's Single Tax; through Robert Blatchford's *Merrie England*; to wider reading in American and European socialist literature. The conviction that socialism was "the only rational solution to the industrial problem" was firm by the end of 1899. Early the next year, he wrote Father Thomas J. Hagerty, then serving a parish in Texas, to tell him that he was "a disciple of Marx," and Hagerty wrote back, "Dear Comrade, I welcome you to our ranks."<sup>14</sup>

Exposure to industrial conditions and to radical ideas were not the whole of his explanation, however. He also told *Comrade* readers that he had always sided with the underdog, even in childhood, adding, "many a thrashing I received from my youthful comrades for defending the cause of the oppressed. But I seemed to wax strong with the repeated drubbings, and I developed into a pugilist of no mean pretensions."<sup>15</sup> His family's circumstances probably contributed to a spirit of rebellion. His parents left Ireland in 1849 because of the potato famine; they settled in Kentucky where they became tenant farmers who had to work at other jobs to make ends meet.

There are several components in an exploration of McGrady's socialism. His relations to St. Anthony's parishioners come first. He maintained that, when he shared the news with his congregation, there was no opposition, and there is no contradictory evidence. Eugene V. Debs declared that "his flock closed around him, a living, throbbing citadel. He ministered to them in their suffering, comforted them in their sorrow, solemnized their nuptial vows, baptized their babes, tenderly laid to rest their dead, and they truly loved him."<sup>16</sup>

Beyond St. Anthony's, he became an advocate of socialism through lectures and writings. His platform presence was commanding, reinforced by his large frame; his message was direct and simple. Debs simply gushed when he described McGrady's appearance and style: The man was tall, he "attracted friends by an irresistible charm and held them by the same magic power," he was "an orator and a wit, a scholar and a humanitarian," possessed of "the exquisite fancy of a poet."<sup>17</sup>

When he put his pen to explications of socialist ideas, McGrady could be persuasive. His *Socialism and the Labor Problem: A Plea for Social Democracy* (1900) is a fine example. He presented socialism as "simply the substitution of the co-operative for the competitive system," denied that it was a threat to the home, family, or religion, and insisted that its program would be peaceable and gradually implemented and would protect the ordinary citizen's property. It promised a giant forward movement in human progress, "We will collect the glory of all past centuries. . . . We will follow the eagle of progress in her flight beyond the glittering stars, bands of shining angels will sing the glory of our triumphs, and the smiles of God will light up all the realm."<sup>18</sup>

McGrady was an intelligent and well-read priest, and he must have realized that he was entering a minefield. How would he balance his priestly vocation with service to the Socialist Party? How would his superiors view his statements and political behavior? Given the Church's stance, how far could he go into socialist activity? I can only guess the extent to which he anticipated trouble. Was it his self-described "pugilistic nature" that led to quixotic encounters? Was it depth of conviction that socialism was God's plan, and that he must risk all for it? One can only speculate that some combination of personality and passionate conviction drove his socialist activism.

Socialists valued McGrady's role as a cleric who would dispute anti-socialist preachments from members of the hierarchy. This was a role he was quite willing to play. In 1901 he published a critical review of *Christian Socialism* by Catholic Bishop George T. Montgomery of Monterey-Los Angeles and critiqued an article a Jesuit philosopher in England.<sup>19</sup> He took on Father John M. Mackey, the pastor of St. Peter's Cathedral in Cincinnati and appeared in controversies with Bishop Sebastian Messmer of Green Bay and Bishop James E. Quigley of Buffalo. These were not minor targets for a young priest, for in 1903 Messmer would become archbishop of Milwaukee and Quigley, archbishop of Chicago.<sup>20</sup>

An even more newsworthy action was McGrady's attempt to engage Michael Augustine Corrigan, archbishop of New York, a nationally-known traditionalist. Sermons Corrigan preached against socialism at St. Patrick's in New York in 1901 drew wide attention. According to one report on his first sermon, he rejected, as had Pope Leo's encyclicals, the possibility of equality. A fundamental of socialism, equality was, in his judgment, absurd. (Though a common humanity might imply equality, Jesus modified it by instituting a structure of authority in his church.) Corrigan also clearly linked socialism to acts like the killing of President McKinley. Incensed by such reports, McGrady issued a public challenge to Corrigan to debate.<sup>21</sup> The *Literary Digest* quoted him as saying: "There is not a single leader among the Socialists who is a Christian. . . . Religion is left out of the Socialist creed altogether."<sup>22</sup>

In his challenge, McGrady rejected the very authority of *Rerum Novarum*. Arguing that the Church itself had "championed socialism for four hundred years,"<sup>23</sup> he contended that "the Pope's encyclical has no dogmatic value 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 Joachim Pecci [Vincenzo

Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci ?] as a writer on social economics. The archbishop declined to debate McGrady.<sup>24</sup>

McGrady's troubles with his bishop, Camillus Maes, began before he espoused socialism but while his thinking was undergoing radicalization. As early as spring 1896, Maes reproved McGrady for disrespect in regard to an alms collection, referred to his arrogance, and reproved him for not following the Church's laws with respect to "Dispensations."<sup>25</sup> There was further controversy in 1897 over St. Anthony's financial situation.

By early 1899 more serious trouble was in the air that continued until the final rupture nearly three years later. In March 1899 Maes wrote McGrady about a notice for *The Two Kingdoms*, a book he had written. The fact that it lacked the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Cincinnati concerned Maes less than its threat to "faith and morals" and what the bishop considered its savage assault on the Church's structure of authority. Maes ordered McGrady to stop dissemination of both the book and further notices about it, to seek the archbishop's *imprimatur*, and to report within three days that he had done so—all under the "pain" of canonical censure.

The bishop took umbrage again when, in challenging Archbishop Corrigan to a debate in late 1901, McGrady denied that Pope Leo's encyclical was binding. Maes also objected to McGrady's characterization of Leo as a supporter of capitalism when *Rerum Novarum* proved beyond doubt that he felt deep concern for the working class. He demanded that McGrady send him a pledge to correct course and conform his statements to papal teachings within a week.<sup>26</sup> Maes found McGrady's reply insolent and chided him for not even replying to a subsequent message. He now gave McGrady a third canonical warning ("this warning to be in lieu of three") to avoid disrespectful remarks about the Church's authority and to bring his writings and lectures

into conformity with its doctrines. Maes instructed him never to leave his parish again for more than three days without written episcopal approval.”<sup>27</sup>

The situation became more complex in 1902, and the extant records leave some points in doubt. On 8 November an obviously impatient Maes directed McGrady to:

- Fulfill an obligation to take and send a collection for the diocesan seminary for both 1901 and 1902;
- Submit a repudiation of very admiring estimates he had offered of Ernst Renan, Charles Darwin, and Emile Zola in the July issue of *Wilshire's Magazine* and see that this repudiation receive comparable public attention;
- Not allow sale of any books he had published without *imprimatur*;
- Not leave his parish as often as he had done and not leave it without permission; and
- “Refrain from emitting views on socialism, either by speech or by letter, which are at variance with the teachings of our Supreme Pontiffs or of the Church.”

The transcript of the bishop’s letter ambiguously identifies itself as a “last [?] admonition.”<sup>28</sup>

To these demands, McGrady’s response appears to have been a letter on 12 November, in which he offered eight propositions “covering the entire teachings of socialism” and asked Bishop Maes to state whether he condemned any or all of the eight. Given McGrady’s reading of the first four centuries of Christianity, for Maes to object to the statements would be to repudiate the early Church, while to accept them would be to endorse socialism. According to McGrady, in a letter on 26 November Maes “dropped the question of Socialism completely, dropped the question of *imprimatur* on my books, dropped the question of my being absent from home on a lecture tour.” Instead, he continued only the demands about offerings and the repudiation of the statements in *Wilshire's*.<sup>29</sup> McGrady clearly thought he had bested the bishop.

Undoubtedly, McGrady resigned, but the alternative was certain severe punishment: at least suspension from the priesthood and possibly excommunication. In a final cryptic message

to McGrady, Bishop Maes likened the resignation to abandonment (“abdication”) of St. Anthony’s parish and offered McGrady a chance to repudiate (“retract”) his insubordination within two days to avoid suspension (“ab officio et sacris”).<sup>30</sup> The bishop declined interviews with the press, as did Archbishop William Henry Elder of Cincinnati, with the result that McGrady’s perspective dominated accounts in the papers. When asked by another reporter whether he would excommunicate McGrady, “Bishop Maes smilingly declined to discuss the question.”<sup>31</sup>

Years later, the friendly *Christian Socialist*, stated that he had “renounced the creed of his fathers. McGrady insisted at the time: “I have not abandoned priesthood. I have not abandoned the Catholic Church. I will be a better member than ever before, for I am “no longer a slave and I rejoice in my newborn liberty to bear the light of truth to the homes of the poor and lowly.”<sup>32</sup>

McGrady continued to serve the cause of socialism, but large gaps in the sources make it impossible to chart the course of his travels in detail. It is likely that he continued to travel and lecture on the party’s behalf. It is also likely that his “star power” declined because he was less fascinating as an ex-priest, rather than a priest. He was active enough in party affairs to serve as one of three delegates from Kentucky to the national convention of the Socialist Party of America in 1904.<sup>33</sup>

McGrady hung out a shingle as a lawyer and resided for several years in Newport, Kentucky. In 1905 he had warm correspondence with Debs. By early 1906 he was expressing disgust with an element in the Socialist Party that saw no place in it for intellectuals and professionals. He wrote: “The present Socialist party is waging a fierce war against the intellectuals” and “stands for ignorance and graft.” Citing his and Thomas Hagerty’s experiences, he recalled they “bore the contumely of former friends,” “severed our connection

with domestic relations,” and “buried the most sacred recollections of our lives” for the sake of socialism, only to meet “ingratitude.”<sup>34</sup>

Practicing law in San Francisco in 1907, he still spoke on occasion for the Socialist Party. The antagonism he felt the Left wing within the party had further estranged him from it, however. Writing now to Theodore Debs, he decried domination by “the hobo the tramp and the slum element,” whose “damnable and infamous despotism has inflamed my heart with hatred.” Yet, he continued, “While I may grow to detest the socialist party, and the unprincipled crew that direct its destiny, I shall ever be faithful to the Marxian philosophy, and shall always cherish the memory of my devoted friends in the movement.”

This was a low point, however, for a month later he thanked Theodore Debs for encouraging him. He was now filled with new hope and energy, and “I will don the panoply for the hour of struggle.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1907 he also worked on what would become one of his most important writings, “The Catholic Church and Socialism.” A thoughtful piece, this article focused on the question whether the Church, a “front” for the economic magnates, would hold the working class and defeat socialism, or working-class Catholics would rebel and the Church crumble. The Church’s claim to infallibility and demand for unflinching obedience was a major factor to consider when estimating its future influence among workers, he insisted, but Catholicism also had a more benevolent and humane side: “She has found a place for the ambitions of the high and the lowly. . . . She is familiar with their thoughts and desires, their woes and sorrows,” so that “only a complete religious revolution could break the dominion of the clergy.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, his conclusion was upbeat: workers would gradually turn to socialism and the Church would “ultimately go down in ignominious defeat with her capitalistic allies.”<sup>37</sup>

On 26 November 1907 McGrady, only forty-four years of age, died in San Francisco after a week of hospitalization due to a heart attack. His body was returned to Kentucky for burial in the Diocese of Lexington's Calvary Cemetery in Lexington.<sup>38</sup> Given their mutual admiration and support, it was natural for Eugene Debs to write an obituary for the *Appeal to Reason*. Reprinted or abbreviated in other socialist periodicals, it included basic biographical details; retold the story of his commitment to socialism, his congregation's outpouring of support for him despite his socialism and its grief at his resignation; described his stirring rhetoric and dramatic personality; and deplored, not only Catholic harassment of him after the resignation, but also—with intense passion—the nasty rumors and criticism he faced within the socialist movement. The McGrady Debs limned was a master of the socialist literature; “a magnificent specimen of physical manhood”; and “at the very pinnacle of his priestly power and popularity when he became a socialist.” He was so eloquent that “auditoriums, theaters and public halls were taxed to their capacity”; he was “one of the commanding figures of the American platform.”<sup>39</sup>

Debs' florid writing expressed the deepest kind of human appreciation—and repulsion at McGrady's opponents: a Catholic Church that “actively pursue[d] him,” with priests “either openly from the pulpit or covertly through the confessional,” warning their flocks “not to stain their souls by venturing near the anti-Christ”; and equally deplorable, those who called him a “grafter,” “a more atrocious slander [than which] was never uttered”; and the socialists who rejected him and other intellectuals as insufficiently “proletarian.”<sup>40</sup> Debs returned to the defense of McGrady in January 1908. Hardly dead and buried, “the vultures of superstition” were spreading rumors that he had not resigned but was removed in disgrace, and that he had come to regret leaving the Church, renounced socialism, and died in the Church's embrace. He died in St.

Mary's Hospital, Debs admitted, but he was taken there; in his last days, Debs averred, there were hints of priestly plots to "fix" him, but a few socialists sneaked in almost to his final minutes. Perhaps the priest "tortured" something out of his "death rattle," a distraught and conspiratorial Debs concluded.

Did McGrady die with the Church's last rites, or was he an unrepentant socialist to the end? Did that Dominican "fix" him? The *Catholic Telegraph* reported that a Dominican priest did attend McGrady in his last moments; it also mentioned a high mass for him in Newport, Kentucky.<sup>41</sup> Well, he is buried in consecrated ground, property of the Diocese of Lexington. One author said "his comrades erected a twenty-foot monument over his grave."<sup>42</sup> "Comrades" could only mean socialists or other radical admirers. There is a tall monument, a photo of which the cemetery caretaker took for me, and it appears that it could easily be twenty feet. But who erected it? And why is this inscription chiseled into the marker?

ETERNAL REST GIVE UNTO HIM

O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL

LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM

MAY HE REST IN PEACE. AMEN.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps a personal reflection in his "The Catholic Church and Socialism" throws light on his final choice:

I shall never forget my personal experience. I dreaded to take the final step. It meant the sacrifice of my dearest friends, and associates. I turned from the fondest memories of my childhood, and I tried to forget the sweetest recollections of my ministerial career. But they have lingered in my mind like charming dreams with visions of pleasures that were forever dead. With the memory of my anguish still fresh and green, I can sympathize with the devout Catholic who must choose between the Church and socialism. In my case it was a battle between head and heart. My reason led me forth from the sanctuary, but sentiment and affection cried out for me to remain at the altar.<sup>44</sup>

The hierarchy of his church said that he could not be both a good Catholic and a socialist. He tried to be both. He loved both Catholicism and the egalitarian promise of the cooperative commonwealth of which socialists spoke. And just as his embrace of socialism did not snuff out the Catholicism in his soul, neither did repose in sacred ground obliterate the ideals and fellowship he had found in socialism.

---

<sup>1</sup>“Father M’Grady Leaves Pulpit for Platform,” *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune* 8 December 1902, front page and page 2.

<sup>2</sup>For a brief discussion of pastoral separations, see Dorn, *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century America*, 25-27.

<sup>3</sup>There is one scholarly article about Hagerty in a historical journal: Robert E. Doherty, “Thomas J. Hagerty, the Church, and Socialism,” *Labor History* 3 (Winter 1962): 39-56. I know of two articles on McGrady, neither one in a historical journal: Toby Terrar, “Thomas McGrady, American Catholic Socialist,” *The Ecumenist* 21 (November-December 1982): 14-16, and Terrar, “Catholic Socialism: The Reverend Thomas McGrady,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 7 (January 1983): 209-235. He is also the subject of one chapter in a work of theological analysis: Dominic Pasquale Scibilia, “Edward McGlynn, Thomas McGrady, and Peter C. Yorke: Prophets of American social Catholicism” (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 1990), chap. 3, 142- 211. McGrady is not mentioned in a careful study of Catholic social thought and action in the Progressive Era: Joseph M. McShane, S.J., “*Sufficiently Radical*”: *Catholicism, Progressivism, and the Bishops’ Program of 1919* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986). He does appear in *Who’s Who in America, 1903-1905* (A. N. Marquis, 1905), 957.

<sup>4</sup> For a brief but relatively comprehensive discussion of the Catholic-Socialist relationships, see Jacob H. Dorn, “The Oldest and Youngest of the Idealistic Forces at Work in Our Civilization: Encounters Between Christianity and Socialism,” in Dorn, *Socialism and Christianity in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1998), 16-23.

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/leo\\_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_28121878\\_quod-apostolici-muneris\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_28121878_quod-apostolici-muneris_en.html). Issued 28 December 1878. Accessed 24 August 2010.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Quotations from sections 4, 15, and 17 in [http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc\\_rerum\\_novarum\\_official.aspx](http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_rerum_novarum_official.aspx).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., section 15.

<sup>9</sup>Abell, “The Reception of Leo XIII’s Labor Encyclical,” 481; McShane, “*Sufficiently Radical*, 53. McShane argues that, for Catholic leaders, even the Progressives’ “emphasis on reform by legislation and the creation of a welfare state had an alarming radical tinge.” (p. 15)

<sup>10</sup>Rev. John A. Ryan, “May a Catholic be a Socialist?” *Christian Socialist* 6 (15 February 1909): 2; reprinted from *Catholic Fortnightly Review*, 1 February 1909). In an accompanying editorial, the editors

<sup>11</sup> Editorial, *International Socialist Review* 2 (December 1901): 473-74; “A Catholic Campaign Against Socialism,” *Literary Digest* 32 (9 June 2906): 875.

<sup>12</sup>The Archives of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston have only spotty references to him; he appears in both baptismal and marriage registers for the bulk of 1887 and is listed for the first time in national Catholic directories as assistant at St. Mary Cathedral in 1888. There is a James McGrady at St. Patrick Church in Houston in 1889—1890 and no other record of any priest named McGrady in the archdiocese. Lisa May, Archivist, to Jacob H. Dorn, 9 February 2010, electronic message. My own search found McGrady listed as first resident pastor of St. Patrick, in “A History of St. Patrick Parish,” [www.stpatrickhouston.org](http://www.stpatrickhouston.org). Records of St. Edward Church in Cynthiana, Kentucky, have him as pastor there in 1891-1895. Fr. Douglas Lauer, Pastor, to Jacob H. Dorn, 9 February 2010, electronic message.

<sup>13</sup>For analysis of this point, see James R. Green, “The ‘Salesmen-Soldiers’ of the ‘Appeal’ Army: A Profile of Rank-and-File Socialist Agitators,” in Bruce M. Stave, ed., *Socialism and the Cities* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), 33-34. An entry for McGrady in *Who’s Who in America . . . 1903-1905* (A. N. Marquis and Company, 1905), p. 957, says that he studied at St. Joseph’s College in Bardstown, Kentucky, and at Kankakee, Illinois. Terrar says that McGrady probably studied at Mt. St. Mary’s in Cincinnati, and probably also at St. Joseph’s and St. Thomas’s Seminary in Louisville. See “Catholic Socialism,” 213.

<sup>14</sup>McGrady, “How I Became a Socialist,” 75-76. *Merrie England* (1893), which appeared in many editions and probably had a readership of two million or more, takes the form of explanations for a “Mr. Smith.”

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 74. He grew into a big man, at 6’3” and 280 pounds.

<sup>16</sup>Eugene V. Debs, “Thomas McGrady,” *Appeal to Reason*, 14 December 1907, in *Debs: His Life, Writings and Speeches with a Department of Appreciation* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1908), 277-82. Debs mistakenly promoted McGrady’s bishop to archbishop.

<sup>17</sup>Debs, “Thomas McGrady,” 278.

<sup>18</sup>Father T. McGrady, *Socialism and the Labor Problem: A Plea for Social Democracy* (Terre Haute, Ind.: Debs Publishing, 1901), 9, 17-18, 40.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas McGrady, *City of Angels: Review of Bishop Montgomery’s Christian Socialism and A Voice from England* (both published in Terre Haute, Ind., Standard Publishing, 1901). Interestingly, Montgomery was also a native-born American—in fact, a Kentuckian. See <http://www.archdiocese.la/about/heritage/bishops.html>. accessed 2 January 2010.

<sup>20</sup>For Messmer and Quigley, see <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/>

<sup>21</sup>“Archbishop Corrigan Discusses Socialism,” and “Archbishop Corrigan Challenged to Debate,” *New York Times*, 7 and 10 October 1901.

<sup>22</sup>“Is Socialism Antichristian,” *Literary Digest* 24 (11 January 1902): 51-52.

<sup>23</sup>It is possible that McGrady was familiar with *Catholic Socialism* (1890), by Francesco S. Nitti, an Italian economist and radical who interpreted the early Fathers' harsh statements about accumulations of private wealth as socialistic. The claim McGrady made here was echoed in much of the socialist Christian literature, along with Nitti as authority. John A. Ryan later tried to repudiate Nitti in *Alleged Socialism of the Church Fathers* (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1913).

<sup>24</sup>"An Unaccepted Challenge," *Social Democratic Herald*, 30 November 1901, p. 3. See also "Socialism Defended by Catholic Priest," *Social Democratic Herald*, 21 December 1901. Though agreeing with McGrady, whom he considered "certainly well informed on the internal mechanism of his own hierarchy, that the encyclical was not binding, ultra-Marxist Daniel DeLeon faulted him for seeing socialism in the early centuries of Christianity, when "the material conditions were absent to make Socialism possible." Daniel DeLeon, "The Floor Granted to the Rev. McGrady," *Daily People* 2 no. 103 (11 October 1901): 1-4.

<sup>25</sup>Transcript letter of Bishop Camillus P. Maes to Thos. McGrady, May ? [189]6, 4 June [189]6, and 12 June [189]6. Archives of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky. The issue of "dispensations" involved charging fees for marriage when a Protestant man married a Catholic woman. McGrady said that he did not want to charge, but did so because the bishop said he must. The explanation of Dispensations is in "Father M'Grady Leaves Pulpit for Platform," 8 December 1902, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Camillus P. Maes to McGrady, 13 October [190]1. The deadline for the declaration was 19 October.

<sup>27</sup>Camillus P. Maes to McGrady, 9 December [190]1. It is unclear when the first two canonical warnings occurred. The words are used very early in the relationship, in Maes's letter of 12 June 1896, but seem to be crossed out and replaced with a milder admonition.

<sup>28</sup>Camillus P. Maes to McGrady, 8 November [190]2. Quotation from "Father McGrady Leaves Pulpit for Platform," 2; "Refused Demand of Bishop Maes," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 December 1902. The same narrative and similar wording about the bishop's statements and McGrady's responses appear in the *Blue Grass Blade* and *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune* cited above.

<sup>29</sup>"Refused Demand of Bishop Maes," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 8 December 1902; "Father M'Grady Leaves Pulpit for Platform," 2.

<sup>30</sup>Camillus P. Maes to McGrady, 9 December [190]2.

<sup>31</sup>"Father M'Grady Resigns His Priestly Office," 7.

<sup>32</sup>"Father M'Grady States Position," *Cincinnati Commercial Tribune*, 9 December 1902, n.p.

<sup>33</sup>"Delegates to the 1904 Convention of the "Socialist Party of America," 1-6 May 1904. <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/eam/spa/spa-conv04delegates.html>. Accessed 31 December 2009; List of delegates, *International Socialist Review* 4 no. 11 (May 1904): 686-87. In "Delegates to the National Convention of the Socialist Party of the United States of America," *The Comrade* 3 no. 11 (August 1904): 231, he is not listed under a photo of convention delegates, but several are not identified.

<sup>34</sup>Thomas McGrady to J. G. Phelps Stokes, 12 March 1906, folder "Noroton Conference, March 2-5, 1906", box 25, James Graham Phelps Stokes Papers, Columbia University.

<sup>35</sup>Thomas McGrady to Theodore Debs, 6 March 1907, *Papers of Eugene V. Debs*, reel 1.

---

<sup>36</sup>Thomas McGrady, "The Catholic Church and Socialism," *The Arena* 38 (July 1907): 18-27. For this quotation, see 21-22. Coincidentally, "Why the Catholic Church Opposes Socialism" appeared in *The Arena* 37 (May 1907): 520-24, just before McGrady's article. The author was identified only a "leading socialist" of Irish stock and born a Catholic. Was it McGrady?

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-27. The article was reprinted under the same title as a 31-page pamphlet. A 14-page essay by socialist activist Frank Bohn, preceded McGrady's article. Charles H. Kerr & Company, published it in 1912 or later.

<sup>38</sup>His burial certificate actually has both November 26 and December 1, the former as the one on the grave marker, the other listed on the line for "Date of Death." Copy of burial certificate in author's possession, courtesy of Diana Moore, Calvary Cemetery, Lexington, Kentucky. The certificate lists Mrs. Alice McGrady as the lot owner (possibly his mother), and there are other McGradys buried nearby.

<sup>39</sup>Debs, "Thomas McGrady," *Appeal to Reason*, 277-82. Quotations from 278-80. See also Eugene V. Debs, "Thomas McGrady Dead," *St. Louis Labor*, 14 December 1907; Eugene V. Debs, "Comment," *Wayland's Monthly* 92 (December 1907): 3-7; Eugene V. Debs, "Rev. Father Thomas McGrady," *Christian Socialist*, 5 (1 January 1908): 2-3; and perhaps others.

<sup>40</sup>Debs, "Thomas McGrady," 280-81.

<sup>41</sup>"Diocese of Covington," *Catholic Telegraph*, 28 November 1907. Clipping in Diocese of Covington Archives.

<sup>42</sup>Terrar, "Thomas McGrady, American Catholic Socialist," 16.

<sup>43</sup>Photos and inscription courtesy of Diana Moore, telephone call, 5 January 2010, and electronic message, 29 January 2010.

<sup>44</sup>McGrady, "The Catholic Church and Socialism," 22.