

**THE CONDITION OF LABOUR, AN
OPEN LETTER TO POPE LEO XIII;
WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING
THE ENCYCLICAL OF POPE LEO XIII
ON THE CONDITON OF LABOUR**

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The condition of labour, an open letter to Pope Leo XIII; with an appendix containing the encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the condition of labour by Henry George

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HENRY GEORGE

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THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

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THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

AN OPEN LETTER TO POPE LEO XIII.

BY

HENRY GEORGE

AUTHOR OF "PROGRESS AND POVERTY," "THE LAND QUESTION," "SOCIAL PROBLEMS," "PROTECTION OR FREE TRADE," ETC.

*WITH AN APPENDIX CONTAINING THE ENCYCLICAL OF
POPE LEO XIII. ON THE CONDITION OF LABOUR*

SECOND

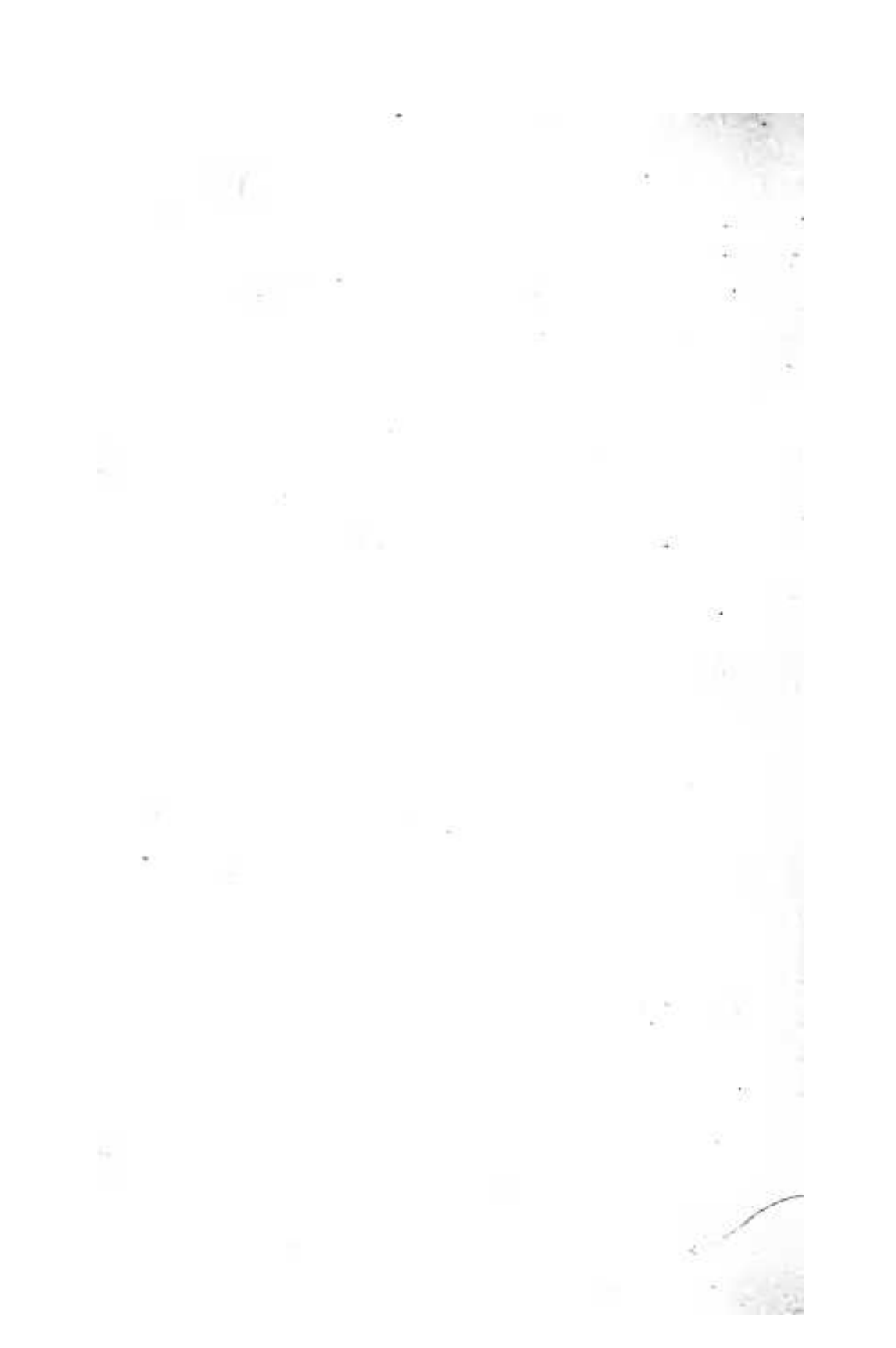


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THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

TO POPE LEO XIII.

Your Holiness,

I have read with care your Encyclical letter on the condition of labour, addressed, through the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of your faith, to the Christian world.

Since its most strikingly pronounced condemnations are directed against a theory which we who hold it know to be deserving of your support, I ask permission to lay before your Holiness the grounds of our belief, and to set forth some considerations that you have unfortunately overlooked. The momentous seriousness of the facts you refer to, the poverty, suffering, and seething discontent that pervade the Christian world, the danger that passion may lead ignorance in a blind struggle against social conditions rapidly becoming intolerable—are my justification.

▲

I.

OUR postulates are all stated or implied in your Encyclical. They are the primary perceptions of human reason, the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith.

We hold : That—

This world is the creation of God.

The men brought into it for the brief period of their earthly lives are the equal creatures of His bounty, the equal subjects of His provident care.

By his constitution, man is beset by physical wants, on the satisfaction of which depend, not only the maintenance of his physical life, but also the development of his intellectual and spiritual life.

God has made the satisfaction of these wants dependent on man's own exertions, giving him the power, and laying on him the injunction, to labour—a power that of itself raises him far above the brute, since we may reverently say that it enables him to become, as it were, a helper in the creative work.

God has not put on man the task of making bricks without straw. With the need for labour and the power to labour He has also given to man the material for labour. This material is land—man physically being a land animal, who can live only on and from land, and can use other elements, such as air, sunshine, and water, only by the use of land.

Being the equal creatures of the Creator, equally entitled under His providence to live their lives and satisfy their needs, men are equally entitled to the use of land, and any adjustment that denies this equal use of land is morally wrong.

As to right of ownership, we hold : That—

Being created individuals, with individual wants and powers, men are individually entitled (subject, of course, to the moral obligations that arise from such relations as that of the family) to the use of their own powers and the enjoyment of the results.

There thus arises, anterior to human law, and deriving its validity from the law of God, a right of private ownership in things produced by labour—a right that the possessor may transfer, but of which to deprive him, without his will, is theft.

This right of property, originating in the right of the individual to himself, is the only full and complete right of property. It attaches to things produced by labour, but cannot attach to things created by God.

Thus, if a man take a fish from the ocean he acquires a right of property in that fish, which exclusive right he may transfer by sale or gift. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the ocean, so that he may sell *it*, or give *it*, or forbid others to use *it*.

Or, if he set up a windmill, he acquires a right of property in the things such use of wind enables him to produce. But he cannot claim a right of property in the wind itself, so that he may sell *it* or forbid others to use *it*.

Or, if he cultivate grain, he acquires a right of property in the grain his labour brings forth. But he cannot obtain a similar right of property in the sun which ripened it or the soil on which it grew. For these things are of the continuing gifts of God to all generations of men, which all may use, but none may claim as his alone.

To attach to things created by God the same right of private ownership that justly attaches