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Henry George and Pope Leo XIII

Mr. John B. McGauran continues to favor this paper with his communications. From his latest epistle this extract is taken:

Editor of Columbian-Record:

You are very much in error when you state that Henry George denounced Pope Leo's encyclical "Renun Novarum." Here is what George said about it in the New York Standard, June 17, 1891:

"The encyclical will do much good. The refuge of those who disliked the discussion of the labor problem was a denial that there is any such problem. But Catholics can no longer make that pretense, and the worldwide publication of the encyclical will tend to open the eyes of men that the well-to-do cannot afford to ignore. The more the question is agitated the nearer we shall be to the remedy, and Leo XIII has made good use of the closing years of his long and active life in thus forcing the consideration of the gravest problem of the ages on the minds and consciences of Catholics throughout the world."

I have another quotation from an interview with Mr. George in the New York Herald, which is of the same tenor, but the foregoing quotation is sufficient for my purpose which is to set Mr. George right before your readers.

You say that Henry George wrote a long and bitter reply to Pope Leo's encyclical. This statement is untrue. There was nothing bitter about it. The letter was respectful and courteous throughout, and whether we agree with its conclusions or not. It contained nothing offensive.

Sincerely yours, John B. McGauran

We were not very much in error" in stating that Mr. Henry George made a long and bitter reply to Pope Leo's encyclical nor is that statement "untrue."

The reply is on our desk as we write. In length it runs to 118 pages. As to its bitterness, its insolence, its assumption that its author was competent to instruct the Pope in moral theology, and its truculent assertion that His Holiness was blundering even to the point of atheism, let these extracts, not from the Standard or the Herald, but from the "open letter" itself be proof:

"Your reasoning as to private property in land, would as well justify property in land, would as well justify property in slaves." (p. 270

"The error of our people in thinking that what in itself was not rightfully property, could become rightful property by purchase and sale, is the same error into which your Holiness falls. It is not merely formally the same, it is essentially the same. Private property in land, no less than private property in slaves, is a violation of the true rights of property. They are different forms of the same robbery." (p. 28.)

"What, therefore, your Holiness practically declares is, that it is the duty of all fathers to struggle to leave their children what only the few peculiarly strong, lucky or unscrupulous can leave — and that, a something that involves the robbery of others — their deprivation of the material gifts of God. This anti-

Christian doctrine has been long in practice throughout the Christian world."
(p.51)

"One false assumption prevents you from seeing the real cause and true significance of the facts that have prompted your encyclical. And it fatally fetters you when you seek a remedy." (p. 78.)

"When fire shall be cool and ice be warm, when armies shall throw away lead and iron to try conclusions by the pelting of rose leaves, such labor associations as you are thinking of, may be possible. But not till then." (p. 86.)

"Blinded by one false assumption, you do not even see fundamentals." (li. 90.)

"So far from there being anything unjust in taking the full value of land ownership for the use of the community, the real injustice is in leaving it in private hands, an Injustice that amounts to robbery and murder. And when your Holiness shall see this I have no fear that you will listen for one moment to the Imprudent plea that before the community can take what God intended it to take, before men who have been disinherited of their natural rights can be restored to them, the present owners of land shall first be compensated." (p. 59.)

"In the encyclical, however, you commend the application to the ordinary relations of life, under normal conditions, of principles that in ethics are only to be tolerated under extraordinary conditions. You are driven to this assertion of false rights by your denial of true rights. (p. 100.)

"What is wrong with the condition of labor throughout the Christian world, is that labor is robbed. And while you justify the continuance of that robbery, it is idle to urge charity." (p. 104.)

"If men lack bread It is not that God has not done His part In providing it. ...It is that impiously violating the benevolent intentions of their Creator, men have made land private property and thus given into the exclusive ownership of the few the provision that a bountiful Father has made for all. Any other answer than that, no matter how it may be shrouded in the mere forms of religion, is practically an atheistical answer." (p. 113.)

Yet Mr. McGauran has the assurance to say that Mr. George's letter to the Pope was not bitter and that "It contained nothing offensive." The next time that he takes The Columbian to task, he had better be more sure of the facts in the case than he was in this matter, before he plunges into print.