

Mother and Teacher

by ROBERT MAJOR

POPE JOHN's new encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, or "Mother and Teacher," is the third basic Catholic teaching on social problems, following the *Rerum Novarum* (Of New Things) issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, and *Quadragesimo Anno* (In the Fortieth Year) issued by Pius XI, at the former's anniversary.

The message of *Rerum Novarum* was that rich and poor must live in harmony and with respect for the sanctity of private property—the rich were to act benevolently towards the poor, and the state was enjoined to protect the limited rights of the poor against exploitation. *Quadragesimo Anno* taught that—because of the rapid development of monopoly capitalism and growing demands of labor—organizational reforms similar to the Fascist corporative systems were needed to enable the workers to participate in regulation of their working conditions.

Rerum Novarum elicited a response from Henry George in *The Condition of Labor*. He explained that social problems cannot be solved by patronizing legislation and charity, but only by justice. While the Catholic Church regards itself as the spiritual mother of mankind, George explained that mankind's mother is Nature, and her heritage to all men is the earth, on and out of which man has to live. Hence if the immense majority of mankind is deprived of the common privilege, while a small minority enjoys monopolistic possession of the earth and pays a monopoly price for it, the majority are virtually the slaves of the occupiers. Henry George's view was that property ownership is sacred only when it derives from one's own labor—and when it comes from

monopolistic occupation of the earth's surface it is theft.

We know that George suggested a way to solve the social problem and that the world neglected to follow his teaching. We know also the consequences of this neglect. Great progress in technology in some countries brought increase in production, the need for a mass-market to sell the products, mighty unions, and the fear of communism. In those countries the living standards were raised, but the social problems were not solved. In many of them the condition of labor is still deteriorating; and in the richest country in the world material progress is blurred by decay of the cities, waste of the country's natural wealth, high unemployment and the misery of numerous population groups.

Leo XIII condemned the immense enrichment of a few persons. What would he say on hearing that occupiers of Texas oil territories became billionaires in a few decades, that five or six oil companies share with five or six sheiks the greater part of the monopoly profits from the world's oil wells, and single mining companies still decide the fate of whole countries? What would he say about the migrations of American (and other) city dwellers as they are chased away by exorbitant site-values to two-hour commuting distances, and then—incapable of sustaining the strain—stream back to the cities, to pay a third of their salaries for rent?

It is hard to understand why a body of such wisdom as is that of these Church experts, in enumerating the world's evils, does not mention the system of taxation which overburdens the poor,

corrupts the business society and the government, and leads to economic doom in underdeveloped countries. It is strange that while they condemn exaggerated and unjust state interference they do not mention the ubiquitous, hence most pernicious, interference through the system of taxation. And while they emphasize the role of morality in economic life, they refrain from distinguishing between moral and immoral, "sacred" and "damned" property—property acquired through work—and property grabbed by monopolistic and predatory practices.

We think, the answer given by George is still valid. He wrote of Pope Leo XIII—and he could write it today—that while the Pope condemned Marxism, he himself succumbed to the basic deficiency of the Marxist theory: that is, he thought the basic social problem was the struggle between workers and employers, the basic economic problem harmonious cooperation between work and capital. They did not accept—and it seems, they still do not accept—the theory that these are secondary problems; the basic problem was, and is, the relation of man to earth.

A Book and Author Dinner

A members-and-faculty dinner on September 26th celebrated, on its date of publication, the book *Taxation's New Frontier* by Joseph S. Thompson, president of the Henry George School. Among those present were members of the board of trustees, directors of a number of Henry George School extensions, members of the faculty, and members (contributors) of the School.

Lancaster M. Greene, a close friend of the author, was the chairman, and Miss V. G. Peterson, executive secretary of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, publisher of the book, introduced Mr. Thompson with warm affection. She spoke of earlier writings by this author, which included *More Progress—Less Poverty*, an abridgement of *Progress and Poverty*; and a pamphlet entitled "Earned Income, Public and Private."

Mr. Thompson spoke briefly and informally, saying that American leadership should lead, in ideology as well as physical comforts, but "if you're going to lead the world you have to know where you're going." The first thing we should clear up would be the many obviously absurd ways of gaining income, and establish instead the principle that when the money comes from the public it should be expended for the public. The speaker lauded Noah Alper's publications which portray taxation as a pump—not a source.

Referring to free enterprise, he said this needed qualification, for peddling narcotics can be free enterprise too. Free *useful* enterprise would be more in keeping with our principles. Furthermore he was convinced after many years of study, that the revenue from land value taxation would indeed be enough to cover the nation's needs, if for no other reason than that it would lower the cost of production.

Mrs. Thompson, also a guest at the dinner, recalled to her husband that an official in the National Association of Manufacturers had read his book and enthusiastically recommended it to other members of the association.

Robert Clancy, in introducing this volume and inviting those present to have their copies autographed, said he had read the book in manuscript, in galleys, and in its printed form, and it seemed to grow better with each reading. In it, he said, Mr. Thompson had "distilled a lifetime of wisdom in words easily understandable and compelling."

He recommended *Taxation's New Frontier* highly as an introduction to the Georgist philosophy for people who might not take the time to enroll for classes. Furthermore, at \$1 a copy, he pointed out that it was an amazing bargain.