

Are We on the Road to Ruin?

by H. T. MANN

IT IS a pity that the Ten Commandments, which are the natural laws of existence, and as old as man himself, cannot be taught in the public schools (as ruled by the Supreme Court in 1952). These are fundamental principles and indifference to them still brings pain and suffering to individual, community and nation. Let us stop, at once, confusing religion with moral law and moral training.

Assuming that everyone is at least slightly familiar with these ancient laws, let us look briefly at the Fifth. It tells us not only that youth should respect age, but that the lessons of history should be acted upon in building a better world. If we followed this Commandment, we would not permit inflation, for history teaches that it has ruined every country that has tried it. We would be careful not to build up the size and power of our central government, as this, too, has always ended in disaster. It is "the law" that if we will not learn from the past we must follow others into oblivion. The penalty for breaking these laws should be impressed upon children from the early grades. Surely such teaching would lessen juvenile delinquency, to say nothing of adult delinquency.

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me," the First Commandment, is undoubtedly the greatest and most important. It is the law on which our very government is founded, for it is by this one God that, according to the Declaration of Independence, we are "endowed with certain inalienable rights, amongst which are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." It makes government the servant of the people—not people the servants of government.

By our ignorance of the great moral laws we have allowed men, who served other gods—personal power, love of money, or pride—to interpose between ourselves and our Creator, a "State," which, by means of force and exploitation is whittling away these God-given rights. Instead of demanding our moral rights, we approach this false god, the "State", hat in hand, and beg for favors or benevolences.

When men do not govern themselves by the moral laws that have been given to them, nothing can prevent them from being governed by those who seek to gratify their selfish desires. In the United States men were given a real chance to fulfill the "law," but the responsibility for personal behavior and moral training has been shirked. Both have been transferred to another god, with disastrous results. The morals of a country can be no better than the morals of individual citizens. But how much easier it is for individuals to set up an all-powerful state and shift to it the responsibility and blame, than to follow the moral laws themselves.

We must, of course, have government to protect personal rights, and it exists only for that purpose. The "State," however, is an organization requiring submission by force, and it does not hesitate to dictate hours, crops, etc. etc. It is the very opposite of government, the function of which is to protect the rights of the smallest minority against the demands of many, also the rights of the many against any one man or group of men.

The Second Commandment is "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images . . . nor bow down thyself to serve them," and it is related to the

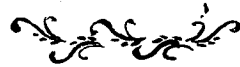
First. Yet we daily contribute to the production of a false god, the "State," from which, supposedly, all blessings flow, and we seek from it, by abject subservience, every type of special privilege. In addition, note that this Commandment makes the individual self-controlled and responsible for his own acts. He cannot shift that responsibility.

The more one studies the Decalogue and the Golden Rule the more evident it becomes that they are all equally important. The Commandments are the arch, and the Golden Rule is the keystone which sustains our civilization, our very lives. In every arch the removal or collapse of one stone causes it to come tumbling down.

"There is a force in the universe which no mortal can alter," states F.

A. Harper in *Morals and the Welfare State*. "Ignorance of the moral law is no excuse for those who violate it, because moral law rules over the consequences of ignorance the same as over the consequences of wisdom. This is true whether the ignorance is accompanied by good intentions or not; whether it is carried out under the name of some religion or a 'Welfare State.'"

To put it bluntly, we're going to have to live by the moral code that God has given us, or we're not going to live at all. That being so, we had better learn those rules ourselves, and see to it that our children do likewise. For as morals deteriorates there follows a gradual decay of the whole social order. And decay brings with it unbelievable suffering.



What a City New York *Could* Be!

New York's Mayor Wagner invited citizens to write to him suggesting new methods of taxation, since the city has reached a financial crisis and the new sales and betting taxes he proposed met with opposition. A number of Georgists wrote proposing an increased land value tax.

One writer sent a copy of H. Bronson Cowan's "Municipal Improvement and Finance as Effected by the Untaxing of Improvements and the Taxation of Land Values," and pointed out that land and improvement valuations in New York are already listed separately, thanks to Lawson Purdy's work in the tax department some years ago.

Another writer called attention to the fact that a land value tax would be more expedient than present taxes, most of which are nuisance taxes, costly to collect and subject to evasion.

"Real estate now pays a city tax of about four per cent on assessed value," he stated. "But this includes buildings as well as land. The tax on buildings ought to be lightened and the tax on land increased, perhaps at the rate of two per cent on buildings and six per cent on land. Ideally, the tax on buildings should be eliminated entirely and the tax on land value should bear the full burden." As a result builders would be encouraged to improve their holdings, and speculators would be less likely to hold valuable land idle.

This writer further promised that "there would be a reduction in many of the city's expenses—not only in tax collections, but also in the expense of enforcing the rather unenforceable building code." Referring to the success of similar measures already in force elsewhere, he stated that a proposal enabling the city to tax land and improvements at different rates would require the permission of the state legislature. The law requires that land be assessed at 100 per cent of true value, however, and in practice the assessed value amounts to only about 50 per cent of true value. It was therefore suggested that along with adoption of the land value measure, steps should be taken to assess land more diligently and scientifically.