## MATER ET MAGISTRA AND ITS COMMENTATORS

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**DUBLICATION OF** the text of *Mater et magistra* on July 14, 1961, immediately called forth an extraordinary, and in some respects unprecedented, flood of comments in every part of the world. The first wave came from statesmen and other public figures in many lands, from high churchmen and scholars—both Catholic and non-Catholic and from elements of the religious and secular press of every denominational or political persuasion.

In the ensuing weeks and months, a second wave of more thoughtful and penetrating observations began to appear in journals of opinion and scholarly periodicals. Finally, a handful of book-length studies dealing with the Encyclical and its interpretation had made their appearance by the time of this writing. The latter half of 1962 (not covered in this survey) yielded a growing number of such lengthy commentaries by students of Catholic social thought in many countries.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond question, the literature already occasioned by Pope John's social message is vast. It is the purpose of this essay to trace out and summarize, as far as limitations of time and source material permit, the principal viewpoints expressed on the Encyclical. As the appended bibliography will indicate, this roundup is based on a fair sample of publications issuing from Europe and the Americas. No effort is here made to cover editorial comments appearing in the daily press or to cite statements or speeches reported in daily or weekly newspapers. This restriction was a matter of practical necessity, since the volume of such comments and quotes borders on the unmanageable. Moreover, it is the author's judgment, based on a fairly wide reading of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>E.g., Proceedings of the Symposium on "Mater et magistra" by Pope John XXIII, edited by Mark J. Fitzgerald, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame, 1962); Martín Brugarola, S.J., et al., Comentarios a la "Mater et magistra" (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1962).

news sources, that any significant comments made elsewhere have found their way into the more formal commentaries digested in the following pages.

Though some overlapping is inevitable in this sort of survey, an effort has been made to keep it to a minimum by a grouping of comments under topical headings. The first of these embraces general descriptions or characterizations of the spirit, tone, and distinctive features of the Encyclical. A second covers comments—sometimes conflicting—on major topics treated in the body of the document. Finally, several special types of reaction to the Encyclical are explored.

#### CHARACTERIZING THE ENCYCLICAL

Initial American comments hailed the new Encyclical as "profoundly optimistic" (64, p. 5),<sup>2</sup> "warm, humane, tolerant, hopeful and constructive" (37, p. 12), and one that "has a freshness and fearlessness, an actuality and practical outlook" (31, p. 9). Others spoke of it as manifesting "calm confidence, a burning thirst for justice and an abiding sense of human compassion" (185, p. 563).

A constant refrain in comments issuing from different nations referred to the Encyclical's manifestly modern tone. Many writers pointed to its awareness of contemporary complexities (67, p. 158) and to the fact that the Pope made use "of findings, and even of the terminology, of modern sociology" (52, p. 976; 128, p. 228; 1, p. 907). Some scholars chose to emphasize the penetrating historical awareness of *Mater et magistra* (113, p. 293) and a "sharp sociological insight into modern industrial society never exhibited in any previous papal pronouncement" (3, p. 11).

These qualities and others singled out by commentators were also viewed as explaining the remarkably broad appeal of the Encyclical. Shortly after it appeared in the summer of 1961, the Paris daily *Le monde* remarked that the document stresses "action and the needs of the day. It is up-to-date and it suits the new generation, one which

<sup>2</sup> In presenting this roundup, it would be highly desirable to quote at length the various commentators cited. Anyone interested in the full context of a given author's views will find a number and page reference following many of the summary statements offered here. In each instance the number refers to the corresponding number in the bibliography at the end of this article. With the aid of this bibliography it will be possible to refer directly to the article(s) or book(s) in question.

is not interested in academic discussion and doctrinal abstraction" (100, p. 439). Similarly, it was noted that in addition to the impact of "the scope and realism of the Encyclical, and . . . its serene tone and pastoral concern," much was owed to "the eminently positive and constructive nature of its teaching" (7, p. 230). New social phenomena "are here frankly approached in a new spirit and under their positive aspects, with a sort of a priori sympathy that has contributed greatly to the friendly treatment [the Encyclical] has received in circles which are ordinarily quite reserved, not to say hostile, toward the Church's position on social and economic questions" (152, p. 911).

In seeking for the influence behind this unusual spirit of the Encyclical, more than one writer quickly saw it in the personality of its author. "Mater et magistra is marked—as a first reading reveals—by the warmly human personality of John XXIII" (9, p. 83). Now, "the style of the present Pope is characterized by its direct, familiar tone; by its concrete, realistic, positive approach to problems; by a preoccupation less with discussing doctrinal and theoretical issues than with outlining practical directives" (78, p. 203). In other words, "that which lends [this complex document] unity . . . is the personality of its author; from start to finish the Encyclical mirrors the pastoral idealism, the humanism, and the optimism of John XXIII" (173, p. 30).

In a similar vein, the French-Canadian Cardinal Léger spoke of the spirit of Pope John as one "of contact with the world based on facts and an unprejudiced examination of them. It is a youthful spirit of confidence in the future, without yearning for the past; one that strives instead to make the best use of the opportunities of the present moment" (86, p. 30). Or, as another Canadian comment would have it, "despite its frankness and unvarnished realism, the Holy Father's analysis never leaves an impression of nostalgia, pessimism, or weariness. The Church accepts with good grace the world as it is" (30, p. 233).

From Italy, too, came the observation that the modern note struck in *Mater et magistra* is summed up in these four features: "its description of social phenomena; its awareness of their natural evolution; its statement of basic sociological dynamics; its positive judgment on the human condition of history, civilization, and life" (1, p. 904). And a Polish Catholic weekly commented that "the realism of *Mater et magistra* is quite striking.... It is far removed from a doctrinaire mentality or a simplist approach" (188, p. 25).

This accent on realism emerges, too, from a noted German authority's observation that the Encyclical "has finally rid the Church of 'romantic' images of society and of the economy, which formerly held it prisoner. The real reason why the Encyclical has met with so warm a reception in such divergent circles is . . . its intelligibility" (115, p. 116). One Belgian expert likewise testified that "what strikes one even on a first reading . . . is the open, appreciative reception John XXIII accords to modern society. Nowhere does one encounter that nostalgia for outdated structures that has characterized the thinking of some Catholics in the past" (103, p. 216).

Moreover, as an American view would have it, "whereas Leo XIII and Pius XI dealt almost exclusively with economic and political factors and their moral and theological dimensions, John XXIII draws heavily on the resources of sociology. No longer is the rhetoric couched so much in terms of economic class warfare or in a vocabulary which demonstrates the pervasiveness of Marxist imagery in late 19th- and early 20th-century social discourse" (29, p. 751).

There is, it is clear, considerable harmony of view in different quarters concerning certain characteristic features of the new social Encyclical. This does not mean, however, that the commentators always agreed in every judgment. Thus, in a manner reminiscent of current debate among biblical scholars and theologians, references were made to the "literary genre" of *Mater et magistra*. As one author put it, "to avoid all misunderstanding, the Encyclical should be situated exactly in what can be called its literary genre. It would be an error, first of all, to view it as an essay in political economy, as a complete sociological survey of the contemporary scene, or as an exhaustive program of measures looking to the development of sectors, regions, or countries" (129, p. 8).

When it comes to pinning a label on this literary genre, one meets with certain differences of viewpoint. This is clear in the case of discussion over whether the Encyclical is properly a "pastoral" or a "doctrinal" document. Several comments put a clear stress on the pastoral or practical side of *Mater et magistra* (127, p. 125; 13, p. 497), though an American student of Catholic social teaching saw rather that "the Church has stolen the thunder of the Marxist left by offering generous and understanding programs of social reform. Because of this approach, the Encyclical is as much pastoral as doctrinal" (36, p. 289). Indeed, the same author went on, perhaps too hastily, to affirm that "those who are looking for innovations in the development of doctrine will not find them here" (36, p. 289).

Perhaps a more fully rounded judgment on this point came from a Belgian theologian, who admitted that "the feature which from the start attracts one's attention is the pastoral appeal of the document the tone being clearly that of a fatherly exhortation which is simple and thoroughly practical, rather than that of a doctrinal exposition which is technical and learned in nature" (152, p. 898). He further insisted that "while we emphasize the pastoral character of the Encyclical, our intention is not to miss the doctrinal value or originality of the document" (152, p. 904).

Pastoral or doctrinal in tone, the Encyclical also benefited in the opinion of some observers from its linguistic simplicity—at least in translation. Though authority for such a statement is in the nature of things almost impossible to establish, one author of a new German translation flatly stated that the original draft of *Mater et magistra* was in Italian and that this had given rise to discrepancies between the later, official Latin text and modern-language versions released by the Vatican Press Office (191, p. 9).

Whatever the historical fact in the matter, controversies quickly broke out in several countries over the accuracy and value of available translations. Thus, though Cardinal Richaud praised the initiative of the editors of the Action Populaire center in Paris in bringing out a more satisfactory French translation made directly from the official Latin (174, p. 11), another commentator had greeted the Vatican's French version as "clear, simple, direct, and, aside from a few philosophical or theological terms, understandable to any reader who is moderately intelligent and alert" (13, p. 477). While others expressed concern over difficulties encountered in coping with the Latin text's marked preference for formally classical expressions which left doubt about their precise modern equivalents (124, p. 268; 131, p. 72), the same French writer preferred to "welcome with joy this translation which breaks away from certain curial practices and accentuates the pastoral character of the Encyclical" (13, p. 477).

Whatever the advantages or disadvantages of the language in which it appeared, *Mater et magistra* certainly possessed, in the view of many experts, a "character quite different from the two preceding" social Encyclicals (163, p. 898). This view of one of France's outstanding experts in Catholic social teaching was echoed by a Latin American comment that the Encyclical "seems to be more positive and more realistic than *Rerum novarum* and *Quadragesimo anno*" (120, p. 14). Similarly, two noted German writers found in *Mater et magistra* a practical orientation emphatically more pronounced than that of the two earlier documents (191, p. 69) and a scope which extends beyond their narrower concerns to become "global" in viewpoint (115, p. 119).

What did this difference in the new Encyclical signify? One Roman expert stressed that "Mater et magistra is neither Rerum novarum nor Quadragesimo anno, and it ought not to be" (70, p. 8). Another writer commented that while "less structured than Quadragesimo anno, this Encyclical nonetheless shapes up as a clear, vigorous document, one that is quite exact and substantive" (129, p. 6). And though Pope John insists on continuities between his teaching and that of his predecessors, at least one interpreter read in the papal selection of citations from earlier documents a suggestion that Catholic social thinkers may have "erred by excess in looking to Quadragesimo anno, to the teachings of Pius XI and Pius XII," and for that very reason the present Pontiff made it clear that "it is very much Leo XIII that he has chosen for his model" (70, p. 19).

If there is any validity in the preceding observation, it may help to explain why more than one commentary called attention to a lack of enthusiasm, or even a sense of disappointment, over the Encyclical among some German social experts. Though a Spanish writer saw fit to find in Pope John's references to solidarity an evidence of German influence on papal social thought (131, p. 84), one closer to the German scene remarked that while "Quadragesimo anno (and even more so, many of the speeches of Pius XII) derived inspiration with respect to problems to be treated, and even with respect to the formulations to be employed, directly from discussions carried on in Germanspeaking areas (Austria and Germany)... in the new Encyclical the social tradition of the French (and Italian) school is much in evidence" (40, p. 201).

Debate over the preceding question will undoubtedly continue for some time. One thing is clear: Pope John's Encyclical does treat anew several topics discussed in the two preceding social Encyclicals. For the moment, the opinion of experts on the significance of this new treatment seems to be divided. As one Italian writer put it: "There are some who maintain that *Mater et magistra* contains no new element in its treatment of these... points; there are others who find in it an overthrow of earlier positions" (166, p. 748).

The probability is that the truth lies somewhere between these two viewpoints. An exceptionally qualified student of the history of Catholic social teaching has expressed the view that "the realism of the new Encyclical bears witness to how strongly Pope John's social and political thinking is influenced by the political philosophy of the neo-scholastics and the social doctrine of solidarism" (3, p. 11). Yet, it also seems clear that "this magisterial document is at one and the same time traditional and daring" (42, p. 1). The task ahead for the student is to uncover and to distinguish the old and the new in Pope John's thought. If Mater et magistra is notable for the number of problems it treats of and for the breadth of its viewpoint, it is also seen by many as being "truly a 'code of Christian social humanism'" (88, p. 253), one that reaffirms the Catholic position as "totally new and totally distinct from the individualism of the economic liberals and the collectivism of the socialists" (38, p. 289). It may well be, finally, that there are "many social questions which today are the topic of often burning discussion among philosophers, economists, sociologists, and moralists themselves, about which the new Encyclical did not believe it necessary or opportune to offer us further light" (152, p. 908). It may also well be that the "principal reason" for "this seemingly purposeful silence ... is to be sought, above all, precisely in the intentionally pastoral character of this document" (152, p. 908). Yet, as one notably well-informed scholar reminds us, "the approach to social security and to the distribution of wealth and income, the favorable attitude shown toward trade unions and other groups of that type, the infrequent reference to the vocational orders-all these will furnish

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ample stimulus for the further theoretical development of Catholic social doctrine and will serve as topics of fruitful discussion" (113, p. 295). For this reason, the same expert rightly concludes that the Encyclical "constitutes without doubt one of the most outstanding achievements of the pontificate of John XXIII" (113, p. 296).

## MAJOR TOPICS OF THE ENCYCLICAL

## Socialization

Perhaps no single passage in the entire Encyclical has aroused as much heated interest and debate as that in which the Holy Father discusses the characteristic phenomenon of our age: socialization. In retrospect, this fact seems not surprising. "A decade ago, some Catholics would have drawn a veil over their faces at the mere mention in their presence of the word 'socialization.' They confused, or wished to confuse, socialization and socialism, and thus were enabled to excommunicate their fellow Catholics who had the audacity to pass a balanced judgment on socialization" (163, p. 908). It should not surprise, then, that some Catholics were confused, and others dismayed, by Pope John's teaching on this topic. Yet, as a competent English scholar observed, "this is a key passage in the Encyclical," despite the fact that "there may still be some to whom it will be startling" (74, pp. 204-5).

More than one commentator took pains to remark that socialization was not to be confused with "nationalization" (136, p. 74; 111, p. 185; 176, p. 411) or with "socialism" (140, p. 397; 181, p. 4). Despite the distinction, however, some were of the opinion that it would be better to avoid use of the term "socialization" because of danger of controversy (136, p. 74; 74, p. 205). In place of this term, some suggested translating the Latin text in a quite literal fashion and thus using several phrases through the paragraphs in which the Pope treats of this topic (178, p. 92). A Portuguese commentator raised the question of using another term such as "comunitarização" or "colectivizição" (90, p. 255), while an early German retranslation coined the phrase "die gesellschaftliche Verflechtung" (191, p. 104). Other German authors, however, found no difficulty in using the term "Vergesellschaftung" or "Socialisierung" (127, p. 115; 19, p. 655). "Socialization" likewise found a defender in Spain. He described the word as "authentic," although not used expressly—for reasons that are evident to an expert Latinist—in the official Latin text (53, p. 271). American writers referred to the term as "apt" (132, p. 23), or "correct etymologically" (141, p. 14), and, in one instance, rejected other suggested translations as inadequate or unjustified (29, p. 751).

More important than any linguistic controversy is the question of the precise nature of the phenomenon under discussion. As a leading French commentary remarked, "socialization does not refer to a doctrine, but to a situation, a fact or rather a group of facts.... It is a sociological phenomenon more than a psychological one" (174, p. 68). Cardinal Léger likewise states that "socialization is not a doctrine, but a normal evolution of the social activity of individuals" (86, p. 130).

In their search for an understanding of the Encyclical's teaching on socialization, several authors traced the doctrine back to discussions carried on in the course of the 1960 French Catholic Semaine Sociale at Grenoble (163, p. 900; 145, p. 103; 29, p. 750; 174, p. 66). Others also saw in the Pope's treatment of the question a reflection of views formulated by a French scientist, Teilhard de Chardin (145, p. 103; 93, p. 3). Indeed, one quoted Teilhard to the effect that "the socialization to which mankind seems summoned does not, in any sense, mean the end of the era of the human person upon the earth, but rather its beginning" (132, p. 69).

This theme of a distinctively personalist note in the Holy Father's thought was remarked by others (145, p. 129). One of the most penetrating French comments observed that "what is new and venturesome—at a time when many take a dark view of the future of man overwhelmed by society—is to uncover in socialization the very material out of which Christian freedom can fashion the flowering of the person and the effecting of the most personal form of charity" (28, p. 528).

Others stressed the comprehensiveness of the term. Thus, an exhaustive analysis in Italian included the comment that this "marks a definite advance over earlier pontifical documents on social matters, since socialization is not viewed as wholly confined or limited to such issues of political economy as the question of ownership of property and management of the means of production" (157, p. 79). Thus, while all commentators would agree that in this passage "the Pope is *not*  bestowing blanket approval on schemes for the nationalization of private property, or even of major areas of productive property," still the term "can be understood in such a way as to include such schemes among its several possible connotations" (29, p. 751; 157, p. 80; 74, p. 206; 94, p. 66).

The enthusiasm with which the Pope's treatment of socialization was greeted in many quarters did not, however, prevent some commentators, particularly in English-speaking and Iberian lands, from underscoring the perils in the process (121, p. 328; 74, p. 224). In essence, the note in such instances seems to have been one of great caution. As another English formulation expressed this fear: "Far too many of our people think that they are able to stretch Catholic teaching so that their friends of either the Chamber of Commerce or the Federation of Labor will be pleased" (190, p. 1). In point of fact, however, a more balanced view of the matter may be seen at work behind a French comment: "Instead of blessing those who, faced with the phenomenon of 'socialization' as occasioned by the advances of science and technology, lift up their arms to heaven in token of their disapproval of modern evils, the Church summons Christians to plunge their hand into the dough, to act as the leaven in the mass. Instead of preaching an 'ostrich' policy, it finds that 'socialization' can and ought to be achieved in such a way as to enhance its advantages . . . " (154, p. 21).

## Role of the State

In connection with the topic of socialization, a secondary controversy arose over the role assigned by the Encyclical to the state in economic and social affairs. In the opinion of one American writer, the press in its initial reporting "gave too much attention . . . to what the Encyclical has to say about legitimate government action and too little attention to what it has to say about the indispensable role of voluntary groups" (64, p. 6). In a similar vein, an English commentator complained that "one Catholic M.P. appears to have found in the new Encyclical support for the Welfare State as it exists in Britain today." He found it "difficult in the extreme to see" how such a view could be drawn from the Encyclical by "any unprejudiced reader" (68, p. 459). One conservative Spanish source appealed to the writings of two economists, Röpke and Hayek, "to cite only some of the most qualified among them," in support of his warning against the danger of increasing encroachments by the state, and chose thereafter to stress any references in *Mater et magistra* to the restrictive aspect of the principle of subsidiarity (110, pp. 331 and 346-47). This viewpoint also emerged in the comments of a Portuguese writer on the subject (90, p. 254).

By way of contrast to these generalized fears and cautionary exclamations, a careful analysis by one of the leading Roman social experts led him to conclude that "*Mater et magistra* grants to the state, in economic affairs, a more extensive power than that conceded by *Quadragesimo anno*" (70, p. 11). As the Action Populaire commentary remarks, the Encyclical takes the view that "the total absence of state intervention hands the weak over, without protection, to the mercy of the economically powerful" (174, p. 66). In other words, to quote a Canadian author, "the very terms employed by the Encyclical leave the clear impression that it is a question of a normal reaction on the part of public authorities, and that consequently the further extension of their intervention into the economic realm must be viewed simply as a necessity of the times" (6, p. 236).

Specific situations in which the Encyclical seemed clearly to recognize the value of expanded state activity were those existing in the agricultural sectors of many national economies (20, p. 809) or in underdeveloped regions (55, p. 855). The latter point was made succinctly by the comment that "experience seems to prove that it is foolish to expect to guarantee the common good without passage from a state of underdevelopment, and likewise foolish to expect to pass from underdevelopment without the activity of a strong government which does not fear to display initiative" (91, p. 3).

If there was considerable agreement among most commentators on the general attitude adopted by Pope John toward increased state activity, the application of his teaching to concrete situations still posed a problem. One English author concluded that "the wrangles of the past fifteen years, between Catholics, about the virtues and vices of Welfare Statism can call a truce. All is reconciled in a partnership giving a warmer heart to the welfare state and a clearer head to the voluntary giver" (72, p. 302).

Proof that this judgment may have been too optimistic soon appeared across the Atlantic. There, one of the most prominent Catholic experts on the Church's social teaching undertook, in the light of the Encyclical, to inquire "whether government in the United States-all government, Federal, State and local-has become too big a factor in the nation's economic life." He concluded to the opinion that "our sprawling government establishment can be amply justified on moral grounds" and takes the view that if Pope John "gives every indication of believing that our mixed economy today is much closer to the Christian ideal than the dog-eat-dog system which collapsed in 1929," it is, among other reasons, "because government is now doing a much better job of promoting the general welfare" (99, pp. 73, 75, and 81). This view, however, was quickly challenged, at least in its implications, by another author. The latter insisted that "it may be well to consider what effect the steady governmental expansion in many fields has had on individual initiative, voluntary action and liberty itself." He strongly suggests that the impact has been harmful and cites a 1960 statement of the United States hierarchy on personal responsibility to support his query: "Does it not behoove us to view 'our sprawling government' with concern rather than with satisfaction?" (54, pp. 87-88).

#### Subsidiarity

It has been noted that those who chose to stress the restrictive emphases in the Encyclical's discussion of the role of the state in economic and social affairs tended to make much of its reference to the wellknown principle of subsidiarity or subsidiary function. In fact, as one English scholar remarked, "although Pope John XXIII goes back for his inspiration to *Rerum novarum*, and *Mater et magistra* must be read with this in mind, the key to his remedial proposals is to be found in the summary he gives us of Pope Pius XI's teaching in *Quadragesimo anno*" (74, p. 200).

Now one of the noteworthy contributions of the latter Encyclical was its presentation of the principle of subsidiarity. This principle has often been interpreted almost exclusively as one restrictive of state activity. Yet, as the same English author wrote, "it must not be imagined that papal social teaching is concerned to minimize the role of the state in the economic sphere" (74, p. 202). In view of these apparently divergent interpretations of the meaning and thrust of subsidiarity, it becomes important to examine the exact nature of the present Pontiff's teaching. Attention has already been called to just such close examinations by two French experts (70, p. 11; 163, p. 900). An equally authoritative study by a Dutch specialist writing in the *Civiltà cattolica* concluded that "John XXIII seems to have combined with the principle of subsidiarity a principle that can be defined as the principle of 'supplenza'" (113, p. 294).

A Spanish scholar came to somewhat the same conclusion after a lengthy analysis of interpretations on the principle by a number of scholars and an examination of the precise way in which the new Encyclical presented the doctrine originally proposed in *Quadragesimo* anno (144, pp. 19–20). As another commentary notes, "this principle is in no sense intended to be merely restrictive, nor does it mean that one can and ought to look, as far as possible, for the elimination of all intervention by the state in economic life" (173, p. 60). Rather, the fully-rounded view offered in *Mater et magistra* suggests that "there can be no well-ordered and prosperous society unless private citizens ... unite under the direction of political government in harmoniously pursuing the same 'common good' through free, responsible and ordered co-operation" (82, p. 32).

# Right of Property

At first glance, the passage in *Mater et magistra* dealing with the right of private property seems to be little more than a reaffirmation of traditional Catholic teaching. For this reason, it is all the more interesting to read the following observation of one of the most outstanding contemporary scholars: "We find ourselves at a turning point in the teaching of the Church, one toward which John XXIII had led us—following his customary manner—without raising his voice. Without ever losing sight of the principal role of private property, on both the personal and social planes, we are entitled to hold that society ought to turn its focus more and more on work" (163, p. 913).

Other commentators, while insisting on the novelty in Pope John's development, chose to emphasize another aspect than that of a stress on the new meaning and value of work in contemporary industrialized and technological society. Thus, one writer declared that "a knowledge of the general lines of the Encyclical's teaching on private property suffices to reveal how dishonest is the claim that this is merely a new defense of the right of property. What the Church defends in this exposition is man, the human person, his dignity, his rights, and his freedom. What it preaches is not a social order designed to serve some rich property owner..." (8, p. 243). This concern for the defense of the human person was noted by others (165, p. 524), and some remarked on the Encyclical's criticism of an economy that has any other end in view than the "personal development of the members of society" (138, p. 163).

In some circles, however, the tendency persisted of questioning whether these emphases added up to a new concept of property (25, p. 46), and there was a strongly implied criticism in the remark of an Australian editor that "some even went so far as to hold that changes in social conditions made the teaching of the Church on private property no longer of any validity" (181, p. 3).

Whatever the exact significance of the views set forth by the Pope, few were tempted to see in it an undiluted endorsement of traditional capitalism, any more than it represented an acceptance of Marxist socialism. One writer, who saw in the Encyclical's teaching on property a favorable attitude toward some aspects of the "people's capitalism" so widely hailed as the happy result of the new economy in West Germany (56, p. 315), still insisted that "facts show that under capitalism... there is a link to a profound forgetfulness of human brotherhood, a firm conviction that one's neighbor is only a client to be won over or a competitor to be crushed" (56, p. 301).

Whether Catholic teaching on property has evolved or not, it appeared to at least one British observer that "much of *Mater et magistra* is unknowingly accepted by the main political parties" in England (14, p. 201). And another of his compatriots went so far as to suggest that "what the Pope is saying is getting very near to the present-day attitude of the Russian society where they say that a person counts more for what he is and does than for what he has" (176, p. 417).

In the United States, a student of Catholic social thought who prior to the publication of the Encyclical had written on modern problems concerning property, asserted that while American society affirmed the principle of private property, the attainment of basic goals of human freedom "must be attributed in good measure to new forms of social organization that serve the functions formerly ascribed to personal productive property" (48, p. 59). Though he was challenged by another scholar, who held that "emphasis on preserving traditional forms of ownership recommends itself for the reason that property ownership is an established institution for preserving human liberty and the principle of subsidiarity" (48, p. 70), the same American expert maintained that "in the historical process salaries and the whole series of mechanisms which the Encyclical calls 'socialization' have been substituted for the traditional role of property" (48, p. 65). He added the intriguing comment that the Encyclical, "being a post-Marxist document, is positively optimistic" concerning socialization's potential. For his own part, while applauding "its concern for an ever wider distribution of property-whatever its form-we remember and we are grateful for a guarantor of political freedom, available to millionaire and pauper, our heritage of the common law" (48, p. 65).

It should be clear from the diversity of views just outlined that, as one writer remarked, "we are at this point on uncertain and unexplored terrain" (183, p. 914). One can agree, then, with his view that it would "be desirable for theologians and moralists to sound the depths of these ideas." Indeed, another commentator took the position that the Encyclical may have been deliberately vague on "the extremely difficult question as to how the individual and social functions of property can be balanced or reconciled under a system of large corporate enterprise" precisely in order "to leave room for scholarly research" (64, p. 8).

### Unions and Workers' Rights

Since the Holy Father himself took pains to emphasize the continuity between his teaching and that of Leo XIII in *Rerum novarum*, it should have come as no surprise to anyone that the Encyclical's attitude toward trade unionism is warmly favorable. Yet, one writer commented that the section on workers' rights "must have come as a great surprise and a great disappointment to those Americans, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, who feel unions are at best a necessary evil and that the time has come for the government to put them in their place" (64, p. 8).

In fact, another American writer opined that "the Encyclical does not offer any startling new comment on labor unions. What may be significant is the lack of criticism and the strong urging that labor be given more opportunity to participate in profits, ownership, and management of industry" (37, p. 67). Still a third American commentator warned, however, that "the reader should not run over this part of the Encyclical too rapidly," and pointed out that, in addition to its reaffirmation of workers' rights with respect to ownership and profits in industry, the document contained "a denunciation of the unjust treatment of workers in some of the underdeveloped countries." The result will be, the same writer observed, that "to wealthy minorities in certain countries in Latin America, in Southeast Asia and elsewhere, the Pope's words will not make pleasant or popular reading" (101, p. 566).

One helpful comment concerning the sense of the Encyclical's references to unionism came from an Irish social expert writing in the scholarly publication of a Roman university. He remarked that the difference between European and Anglo-Saxon (British and American) definitions of a union embodies "two very different ways of looking at unions." This difference, he continues, "has at times made it hard for some English-speaking Catholics to grasp some point of papal teaching or to understand some of the discussions that take place in European social circles" (124, p. 275). Whatever the differences, one expert on labor questions in the United States felt it safe to remark that "in the American context, these passages on labor are particularly significant." His reason: "Some of our publicists of the right have been portraying the Vatican as opposed to the union shop, demanding Christian unions in the United States, and generally eager to curb the activities of organized labor. By contrast, Mater et magistra takes a wholly positive and constructive attitude . . . " (36, p. 294).

Some differences of opinion arose over the interpretation of particular recommendations of the Pope. Thus, while an English writer saw a "call for active intervention in politics by the trade unions" and a "claim on laboring men's behalf that they have a voice, equally with their employers, in the ordering of the state" (74, p. 219), an Irish commentator took a more limited interpretation of the statements in question and argued that union representation on the national and international levels was acceptable, but that the evidence was not conclusive that the Pope had shifted from Pius XII's negative attitude toward union engagement in direct political activity (124, p. 290).

Another statement that aroused great interest, and caused more than one eyebrow to be raised, conveyed the Pope's approval of Christian trade unions and his blessing on those Catholics who maintain Christian ideals while working in acceptable "neutral" unions (43, p. 370). One prominent scholar traced a progression in papal teaching from the mere edict of toleration accorded Catholic participation in some neutral unions in the *Singulari quadam* of Pius X, to the "episcoporum est approbare" of Pius XI in *Quadragesimo anno*, and finally to a concession of equal praise by John XXIII (115, p. 122). We may confidently expect that the full meaning of this "very studied expression" will be explored at length, but it seems beyond doubt "another instance of how John XXIII's strong determination not to open up a polemic restrains him from making a more fully explicit statement of his thought" (163, p. 906).

With respect to one other aspect of workers' rights mentioned in the Encyclical, it quickly became clear that a considerable field had been exposed for further research into, and interpretation of, the Holy Father's intention. Though the notion of workers sharing in the profits of an industry is not something new in papal teaching, the added reference to a special urgency in instances where a company was financing its own expansion from undistributed income posed some difficult questions (174, pp. 86 and 88). An American commentator noted that a move aimed at "dispersing property ownership through workers' shares in the enterprise" encountered difficulties in the form of lack of interest on the part of workers, fear over loss of value in a stock market decline, and extensive mobility of the work force within a given industry (48, p. 63). It is, then, clear that the papal suggestion in this matter raises a number of related questions, for "the concept of a just rate of profit is not one that has received anything like the attention that has been given to the just wage or the just price," and the "problem of profits today... is not so much that of vast dividends distributed to shareholders as of undistributed profits being used to finance a company's expansion" (68, p. 463).

## Codetermination

Previous controversy among Catholics in more than one country over the question of codetermination, or the participation of workers in management of an enterprise, had aroused curiosity in advance as to what the present Pope would have to say on the subject. As the event showed, "the Pope doesn't even mention the codetermination controversy, which Pius XII dealt with on several memorable occasions, and he makes no effort whatsoever to define the exact nature of the business enterprise" (100, p. 439).

The same American author who thus described the status of codetermination in *Mater et magistra* went on to say that the Pope "merely states in a down-to-earth way: 1) that the dignity of the workers demands that they have 'an active part' in the affairs of the enterprise; 2) that this participation in management must be reconciled with the 'necessary efficiency associated with unity of direction'; and 3) that the industrial enterprise should have the character of 'a true human community'" (100, p. 439).

Were the terms comanagement and codetermination "avoided because of the debates they have stirred up, and also because the Pope is careful not to deal with too precise technicalities" (174, p. 96)? If so, the fact remains, as the same commentary notes, that "no pope has ever addressed himself so clearly to the workers' share in the responsibilities of an enterprise" (174, p. 96). Even more interesting, however, is the Holy Father's "apparent boldness" in referring to the enterprise as a "consortio humana" and a "communitas humana," a boldness that prompted one expert to ask whether the Pope had given in to a temptation in this regard (16, p. 645)!

The declaration in this categorical form that "workers, like all other agents in production, must be represented at every level of economic activity," had been, in the opinion of another authority, "delayed by the discussions on the 'natural right to participation in management' which took place in Catholic circles in 1949 and 1952" (71, p. 14). The reason for the decision to take a "new look" at some aspects of this question was seen to have arisen out of the fact that the Encyclical takes into consideration the whole world, not just the Germanic lands (115, p. 123). Though "the tone of *Mater et magistra* is undoubtedly friendly to codetermination," the author of the foregoing observation warns, "one must take care to extract from the language of the Encyclical just what it contains" (114, p. 125). This cautionary note was sounded even more explicitly by another scholar, who also found it "worth noting... that in his discussion of the worker's presence at the level of the factory or the firm, Pope John makes no reference to representation by a trade union or other body" (124, p. 282).

Having allowed for the reservations expressed by most commentators on this section of the Encyclical, a prominent Belgian social expert saw it as "decidedly a forward step, a solid advance for the social doctrine of the Church" (105, p. 240). This advance consisted in "an affirmation of a right of workers and employees, of an obligation in justice toward all those on whom the economic structure depends. A right, we must carefully note, which does not rise essentially from some form of co-ownership, but from a contribution of work" (105, p. 240).

It is interesting to note that in a joint pastoral on the Encyclical the Austrian hierarchy took pains to call attention to a close parallel between the Holy Father's call for coresponsibility, exchange, and comanagement in an enterprise, and their own recommendations to the same effect in a message of 1956 (175, col. 175).

Several commentators offered a variety of explanations concerning the relation between the Pope's statements on this subject and those of his immediate predecessor. Thus, a Spanish writer saw the statements of *Mater et magistra* as simply a codification and extension of Pius XII's remarks, particularly those dating from 1944, and stressed the fact that the Pope's criticisms in 1949 were directed against an exaggerated "natural-law" approach to the question (21, pp. 169 and 173-74). From Latin America came the view that the Encyclical qualified what Pius XII had said, but retained his distinction between a deliberative and a consultative participation in management (45, p. 404). A Portuguese commentator was content to describe the process as simply an expansion by John XXIII on the teaching of Pius XII (89, pp. 379-80). The drawing of such distinctions is likely to go on for some time. It may well be that the solution is to see in this matter what a French expert calls "a typical example of the way in which the Church goes about the elaboration of its teaching. It does not become aware in one stroke of the new realities involved in men's circumstances. With a careful watchfulness it successively takes in the different aspects of the situation and finally comes to adopt a view which embraces all elements" (16, p. 656).

What seems clear beyond doubt is that the passage in the Encyclical reveals the Pope's conviction that "justice applies to the way things are done or are produced, as well as to determining what is to be done with things after they have been produced." This, an Australian observer further comments, distinguishes the Church's view from "modern capitalism and communism," which "alike make the very grave mistake of thinking only in terms of efficiency without due regard for the personal character and needs of workers" (181, p. 4). This concern of the Holy Father, as another view would have it, is complementary to Pius XII's "constant preoccupation to avoid lessening the freedom of the contracting parties to the extent of making the enterprise into a public collectivity." It is a concern for freedom that prompts John XXIII to affirm "the necessary participation of the worker in the life of the enterprise," but the insistence in this case "bears rather on the freedom of the worker than on that of the owner" (16, p. 651).

## Vocational or Corporative Order

Though the Encyclical's treatment of codetermination occasioned a considerable stir in some Catholic circles, the consternation produced was slight in comparison with that aroused over the discussion—or rather, lack of discussion—of plans for a reconstruction of society along lines of a vocational or corporative order. One Spanish commentator, who felt that the kernel of the corporative idea was retained in the Encyclical's emphasis on such concepts as subsidiarity and the autonomy of intermediate agencies, still insisted that the document's handling of the topic posed "a delicate problem" (131, p. 77). An Italian author put the matter more bluntly by saying that "some people have been of the opinion that *Mater et magistra* has quietly buried corpora-

tivism, at least as it had been expounded by Pius XI in Quadragesimo anno" (123, p. 43).

From the United States came the comment of an English scholar, who felt that in not actually mentioning "the corporative idea, so dear to Pius XI's heart," the Pope was "consciously avoiding linking his own ideas too closely with that scheme, in view perhaps of the failure of so many paper attempts at bringing it to life, in Austria under Dollfuss, in Italy under Mussolini, in Portugal under Salazar, in Ireland under De Valera" (31, p. 14).

Not everyone felt that the Encyclical's failure to use the terminology of *Quadragesimo anno* meant an abandonment of the corporative notion. In the view of one Spanish writer, "one still encounters . . . the principles of a professional and corporative organization of society, but without reference to the terms 'corporative' or 'corporativism' in order to avoid confusion with erroneously styled corporativism, whether of the fascist or statist variety" (49, p. 94). And a German commentator declared that though the words were missing, the heart of the basic concepts was still to be found in the new Encyclical (191, p. 72). Moreover, a Portuguese observer seemed to find an identity between what the Pope was calling for and the program long envisioned in his native land (90, p. 257).

Though a well-known French-Canadian expert admitted that Pope John "even goes so far as to avoid using the words 'corporation' and 'corporative organization,'" he judged that the new Encyclical set forth those same fundamental principles, laid down by Pius XI and Pius XII, which North Americans associated with the term "industry council plan." Some more conservative-minded students of the famous plan would feel, however, that the new Encyclical has done more than merely evolve earlier teachings, and they would see something more radical in the combination he discovers in the document: "Pope John's clarifications, the integration of the principles of functional economy in the general process of socialization, and the rejection of the corporate system" (44, p. 10).

Other commentators expressed grave fears whether the old plan, as such, can ever be implemented (43, p. 369), and whether the factor impeding the establishment of a corporate economy "is, not the legal fact of the divorce of workers from ownership of the means of production, but rather the technical fact of large-scale production, and the consequent change effected in the relationship between the product and the worker's individual effort" (104, p. 761).

Most informed comments on this feature of the Encyclical begin with an acceptance of the fact that the omission of a reference to vocational or corporative organization was not a matter of oversight. A prominent French expert attributed the Pope's silence to a sense of social realism, which accepted the fact that the historical period in which this particular implementation of a fundamental principle would be possible had vanished (163, p. 902).

A Belgian moral theologian interpreted the omission as rather a refusal on the part of the Pope to become involved in insisting on "the technical formula recommended by Pius XI and, more recently, by Pius XII" (152, p. 909). Perhaps the most realistic evaluation of the situation was provided, however, by yet another French author, who concluded that "what can be said is that the corporative doctrine of the Encyclical is no longer present, as either a grand memory that ought to be revived or a system that need only be applied in order to remedy all evils, but rather as something to be realized progressively by encounter with complex and changing realities-without the possibility of telling a priori the form it will take" (16, p. 1040). In a sense, this opinion was shared by a quite conservative Spanish commentator, who examined the various interpretations proposed by others and remarked that the fact is that the basic plan of Pius XI's Ouadragesimo anno never received effective support in any land. The same author attributes present reluctance to consider such a plan as being due in part to antifascist sentiment and in part also to the triumph of neoliberal views in the West (24, p. 150).

From a man whose authority as an interpreter of Quadragesimo anno was universally recognized came an interesting statement on the thesis that the doctrine of Mater et magistra represented a junking of the corporative plan or the vocational order. In his view, it is more probable that the new Encyclical merely introduced correctives at some points in order to translate certain basic concepts into Roman-law terms and to divest the concepts of a too narrowly German character. "Still," he remarks, "one can neither ignore nor dispute the fact that for Mater et magistra the 'reconstruction of the social order' is neither the central issue nor a burning question. It matters little whether one rejoices over this fact or laments it, the fact is there and it is a waste of time to dispute it" (115, p. 128).

# Problems of Agriculture

In the judgment of one commentator, the third part of the Encyclical, beginning with the discussion of agriculture and the farm problem, constitutes the "most important and most original part of the document" (63, p. 425). The same writer remarked that "it is the problem of maintaining balance among all sectors which impresses and disturbs John XXIII" (63, p. 425). Along similar lines, an American economist noted that the "inadequacy of the farmer's income . . . carries with it strong overtones of social injustice," but he is more concerned with "a related thesis which relies more heavily on basic economic considerations." What is involved is "the interdependence of the various productive sectors of the economy, the chain reaction set up by explosive changes in a particular sector, and the aggregate gains to be derived from maintaining an over-all balance" (73, p. 32).

Another characteristic of this part of the Encyclical is hailed as its "down-to-earth manner" of dealing with problems (66, p. 9). For this reason, the same writer holds that "this section of the Encyclical might in itself be described as a charter for rural life" (66, p. 9).

This concreteness and specificity of the passage in question seems quickly to have invited attempts at practical application. Thus, a British source predicted that it "will have a profound influence on Catholic politicians in the countries of the Common Market" (186, p. 217). And the same person, offering a judgment on the extent to which conditions in English rural areas conformed to standards established by the Pope, found that on the score of adequate roads, transportation systems, and water supplies, something was lacking (186, pp. 218–19).

A Portuguese writer undertook a similar examination of certain aspects of rural life and economics in his own country (87, p. 13), and a detailed analysis of Italian statistics established the extent to which conditions deplored in *Mater et magistra* were actually prevailing in Italy (98, p. 327). In particular, this latter article singled out the gravity of the flight of workers from the farm areas in the southern part of that land (98, p. 320).

Two comments by American observers stressed "how closely the Pope's prescriptions for the ills of farming parallel the agricultural program adopted here in the United States since the first AAA" (73, p. 38), and the fact that "with exceptions in a couple of areas, one is almost constrained to say that the section on agriculture in *Mater et magistra* is a eulogy of what has already been done for the farmer in the United States" (73, p. 45). One of these writers also noted, however, that the Encyclical's teaching "should serve to mark out the areas of agricultural economics which now need much more extended professional treatment. For example: is the farmer getting a fair return on his capital investment? how does the return on farm capital compare with that in non-farm use?" (73, p. 38).

One outsider reported that *Mater et magistra* quickly exerted a significant impact in Latin America particularly because it generated more certainty and enthusiasm about "ways and means by which rural problems may be solved in underdeveloped areas" (65, p. 334). The same writer also quoted a local bishop as stating that there is "not a bishop in all Latin America today who does not stand four-square behind land reform" in the spirit of the Encyclical (65, p. 334).

More than one writer called attention to the large role assigned the state in the Encyclical's prescriptions for remedying the social injustices and inequities inflicted on rural populations and farm areas in so many lands. As one scholar put it, "evidently Pope John does not fear that we will be on the road to communism if we use the legislative arm of the government to redress economic imbalance and to promote the welfare of special groups" (73, p. 37). Moreover, an Italian expert underscored the fact that this stress on state activity in the farm sector is not a break with the tradition of papal social teaching (97, p. 324). An American commentator added a helpful corrective, however, in stating that "those who are inclined to the view that government aid represents a panacea for all agricultural problems, are reminded that *Mater et magistra* speaks of *three levels* on which the farmer is to seek help—a) *his oum endeavors*, b) *voluntary organizations*, somewhat along the lines of Industry

Councils, and c) government aid" (73, p. 45). He concluded, however, that "at the same time there can be no doubt but that Pope John XXIII has spoken more specifically than any predecessor of the role of the state... in helping to alleviate the needs of the farmer" (73, p. 46).

One economist of international reputation commented that, though "it is sometimes said that the papal encyclicals look like the work of a well-meaning amateur when they come to economic problems," in this instance he "got exactly the opposite impression." Indeed, the "section dealing with agriculture, particularly, is almost embarrassing in the precise detail with which the problem is set out" (176, p. 423). He remarked also on the Encyclical's openness to the use of scientific and technical knowledge and saw in it "a direct denial of the view held by many sincere Christians who think that primitive agriculture with handploughs is somehow more sacred and more holy, more desirable, than scientific agriculture" (176, p. 423).

Several writers called attention to the realism of the Pope's doctrine as exemplified particularly in his discussion of the family-type farm. He clearly rejected the thesis that the family-type farm must always give way to the giant, supermarket type (23, p. 459). Yet, it was remarked that "it should be emphasized that Pope John does not absolutely rule out all other types of farm enterprises, but instead postulates the family farm as the best and most desirable type" (73, p. 34). This desirability, another commentary pointed out, stems from the fact that the family-type farm exists "as a community of persons," but this does not contradict Pius XII's earlier recognition of "the utility and often the necessity of large-scale agricultural enterprises... as the most desirable means of insuring the necessary expansion of production and, thus, of the welfare of the people" (174, p. 134).

## Aid to Underdeveloped Areas

In the view of one expert long experienced in programs aimed at promoting international co-operation, "some of the most original thoughts contained in *Mater et magistra* concern the demands of justice and the common good in the relations between nations at different stages of economic development" (71, p. 16). This would seem to accord with another opinion that "the international aspect predominates in the Encyclical" (166, p. 748).

Prompt attention was given to the special implications for Catholics of the document's treatment of international needs, and an American worker in the field of organized relief services pointed out to his colleagues that "our responsibility in the light of the latest papal Encyclical" is "to realize the universality of our Catholicity and to translate this universality into action" (118, p. 18). Catholics, it was noted elsewhere, "have long recognized... the duty of the community as a whole to help its less fortunate members," and "many Catholics and others have also realized that a similar duty may exist in the community of nations." "This view," the writer continued, "has now been clearly endorsed by the Pope, and he has stated that such help should be given without undermining the independence of the aided countries" (68, p. 466).

In two articles that stressed heavily the Scholastic philosophical approach to questions of natural law and social ethics, one of the older Italian commentators examined the traditional bases for establishing the duty in justice of rich nations to aid underdeveloped lands and concluded that *Mater et magistra* continued a doctrinal line described in earlier papal teaching (107, pp. 116 and 123; 106, pp. 339 and 344-45).

Somewhat fresher was the approach of a German student of social questions who stressed the "more practical and concrete character of the Encyclical" and found that "the Encyclical's approach to aid for development takes as a point of departure the given technical and industrial potential of today and the fact of universal solidarity" (77, p. 427).

As with the problems of the farm economy, so here an expanded role for the state was seen to be an inevitable consequence of the policies proposed by the Pope for a just program of foreign aid and international economic development. "This means," it was pointed out, "that heavy responsibilities fall on public authorities in these new nations or states. All co-ordination, and initiative generally, is their task: to find employment for everyone, to direct investments into the right channels, to set up a plan for development and for management of the land, without neglecting the voluntary co-operation of individuals and lesser communities" (69, p. 178).

Though many commentators called attention to the Encyclical's stress on the disinterested character of foreign-aid programs, they were not all in agreement as to the precise practical implications of this teaching. Thus, one of the leading scholars in the field of Catholic social thought in the United States noted that the Pope's "references to a 'new form of colonialism' seem primarily aimed at Iron Curtain countries, but the West can also be on its guard in this matter" (36, p. 292). From Canada, on the other hand, a slightly different outlook is revealed in the comment that "to read into" a certain passage of the Encyclical "an apology for a form of neutralism which washes its hands of all the quarrels between East and West would be dishonestly to pervert its meaning" (5, p. 250). And yet a third voice contended that the Holy Father's remarks on disinterestedness "are of significance to most of the Great Powers at this moment. The point will be lost if each looks across the Iron Curtain at the other to see if the cap fits. The truth is, it fits us all" (66, p. 9).

It is worth noting, in passing, that several writers pointed up the value of the document's obvious international outlook as a counteractive to the more limited viewpoints so often manifested in some American Catholic circles. Thus, the papal praise for international organizations such as the ILO and the FAO was seen as "extraordinarily significant, particularly in view of the fact that so many Americans, Catholics included, have been sniping at the United Nations and all its subordinate agencies lo these many years" (64, p. 7).

## **Population** Questions

The Encyclical's treatment of difficulties posed by the imbalance in some areas between population growth and the expansion of agricultural and other forms of production, involved, as expected, a reiteration of the immorality of a contraceptive birth-control solution. As one writer saw it, *Mater et magistra* rejects the "pessimistic view" and insists that actual problems can be solved realistically by "co-operation and mutual aid" (27, p. 26). Another author saw in the papal message a "challenge to science" of the twentieth century and a summons to scientists "not to be obscurantists" (137, p. 474).

For its part, as one commentary pointed out, the Encyclical, "referring to the arguments which are many times actually employed...states that they are of a doubtful and controversial nature.

This judgment, however, is not meant to cast doubt on the validity of the statistical data of the demographers . . ." (174, p. 170). Similarly, another source noted that the Pope is not content with pointing to the need for "economic development and social progress" as a solution, but calls also for the "education of the individual to a sense of responsibility" (59, p. 895). And this emphasis of the basic importance of education for responsibility was underscored by others (179, p. 531). Indeed, one comment held that the Encyclical's stress on the significance of preparation for responsible marriage and parenthood is perhaps the strongest of any yet adopted by the papacy (174, p. 174).

Despite these evidences of an objective realism and openness in the Encyclical's over-all approach to population issues, two responsible Catholic moral experts expressed varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the document's method of handling the topic. One remarked: "turning rapidly-perhaps too rapidly-from the world-wide aspect of the question as being one that is without true meaning, or at least without urgency, and as one that involves too much uncertainty about the facts in the case, the Encyclical asks us to trust in God ...." (153, p. 1028). Even more direct was the comment of an American moral theologian: "The Encyclical was somewhat disappointing on this question [of birth control as a solution to the population problem], since it treats the problem as though there were only two alternatives: contraception or economic development" (50, p. 632). Citing a 1961 statement of the Cardinals and Archbishops of France on "legitimate regulation of births by use of abstinence," he found in it a teaching that "even apart from a general population problem, regulation of births by legitimate means is often a social necessity for the fulfilment of the second part of the primary end of marriage, the proper bringing-up of children" (50, p. 632).

#### NOTABLE REACTIONS

#### Emphases in the Encyclical

Reference has already been made to distinctive themes and key concepts of *Mater et magistra* that commentators have singled out for special mention. In particular, it will be recalled that several saw in the Encyclical a code or synthesis of Christian social humanism. As one writer summarized this view: "The accent, in fact, in each and every part, is placed on three profoundly human objectives.... On the one hand, respect for the freedom and initiative of the human being; on the other, the necessity of eliminating or reducing as far as possible the excessive inequalities existing between men and between groups; and, finally, the importance and urgency of co-operative effort in all situations" (153, p. 1009). Moreover, the same scholar observed that "the concern to stress personal responsibility is found from beginning to end of the Encyclical" (153, p. 1014).

Writing against the background of contemporary English society, another author made the further point that "this question of public responsibility or sense of it must derive from a sense of personal responsibility as well." He then went on to "wonder if, in fact, what we're going to find is that it is as difficult for a rich society to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven as it was 2,000 years ago for the rich individual to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (176, p. 420). This note sounded also in several comments from Spain, where one editorialist saw the great themes of the Encyclical as a "sense of responsibility and service of the common good" (189, p. 340), and a second writer called attention to the fact that the Spanish hierarchy had affirmed the right and duty of the government to ask austerity of all in order to promote plans for economic growth of the nation (159, p. 727).

One of the more interesting attempts to capsulize the basic spirit and message of the Encyclical was that of yet another Spanish writer who saw in Pope John's words a new codification of the "rights of man" that might be compared with those attempted at the time of the French and American revolutions (96, p. 1368). Others, too, developed at length the Encyclical's conception of the human person and saw it as deriving from the full tradition of Christian philosophy and theology (18, pp. 222–33). In addition, a distinguished French commentary maintained that "the necessity of giving a 'role' to persons and to groups in the economy is one of the fundamental ideas of *Mater et magistra*: a sociological viewpoint looking toward a redistribution of roles is added to the more properly economic viewpoint looking toward a redistribution of income. The idea of 'role' is linked to justice and equity" (174, p. 90). The Encyclical's emphasis on the concept of the common good and its applicability in considerations of various orders of local, national, and world society was seen as something distinctive in the history of papal social teaching (191, p. 72) and as representing a major philosophical contribution (114, p. 11).

If the concepts of personal responsibility and the common good were notable by their emphatic presence in the Encyclical, many commentators were quick to point out that the hallowed expression "social justice" was equally notable by reason of its almost total absence from this lengthy document. Various interpretations were put on this readily discernible fact, but the most common view saw in the absence of the term from the Encyclical's vocabulary a desire to avoid controversy (89, p. 376) and another proof of the strong pastoral, rather than directly doctrinal, concern of the Holy Father's message (179, p. 502). The most common view among expert commentators seems to be that while the term itself has been at least temporarily abandoned, the underlying concept is retained in the Pope's repeated reference to rights, demands, and obligations based on "justice and equity" (163, p. 914).

One final observation offered in various forms by different commentators concerned the Encyclical's "emphasis on the need for synthesis, i.e., for a creative balance in all economic and social endeavors, especially between personal freedom and public order" (111, p. 188). Thus, another author, striking a slightly different accent, spoke of "this Encyclical of the middle way," as the "work of a Pope born of farming stock, and one of his most interesting suggestions is that which envisages co-operatives composed of both artisans and agricultural workers... The reconciliation of town and country would be a natural development of a great centripetal movement in which Pope John has been active ever since his accession to the See of Peter" (72, p. 304).

# World Reactions

Response to the Encyclical in the secular press, as has been noted, was prompt and extensive. No attempt will be made here to summarize or describe these comments, but attention may be called to some interesting articles rounding up press opinion in various nations: Germany (57 and 127), Spain (172), Italy (183 and 122), Belgium (78), international (88 and 101). In this connection, an American expert in social doctrine offered a thoughtful and constructive comment on the method of publication and distribution of papal documents such as a social encyclical. To his own query, "Was the public relations aspect... handled so as to produce maximum effect?" he replied: "The answer must be a qualified Yes.... There appear to be two reasons why the secular press did not go more deeply into this great social document. One is that the translation was often stilted and even unintelligible to a reader not versed in philosophy and theology. It was also inaccurate at some points. The second difficulty is that there was no possibility of preparing for the press in advance the type of selection, explanation and even interpretation that would have stimulated discussion and commentary" (36, p. 295).

If the present writer may be permitted to introduce a personal observation at this point, he would call attention to one further point concerning the mechanics of presenting a lengthy and significant document such as *Mater et magistra*. In addition to the importance of having satisfactory translations into the major modern languages, he would recommend the adoption of an international procedure for standard enumeration of paragraphs of both the official text of the document and all translations. In the case of the present Encyclical, it is gratifying to note that the principal English, French, and German translations agree in numbering paragraphs to parallel the paragraphing of the official Latin text in the *Acta apostolicae sedis*. Regrettably, some Italian and Spanish versions have been enumerated according to totally different norms. It should be obvious to all how desirable, from the point of view of a student or researcher, would be the greatest possible uniformity in this matter.

# **Conflicting Ideologies**

More than one reader of *Mater et magistra*—Catholic and non-Catholic—expressed amazement, incredulity, and even shock over the fact that the Encyclical had practically nothing to say directly about the great conflicting ideologies of our times. One French journalist remarked that "the great letter, so pastoral in tone, which has just been given to us, will leave the collectors of ideological anathemas a little on the hungry side" (154, p. 22). In the same writer's view, "the man of sound gospel spirit, to whom God has entrusted the government of His Church, is obviously little given to tilting with windmills, but is rather concerned with seeing that his faithful do a good job of grinding whole grain" (154, p. 22).

Some comments quickly pointed out that "despite any apparent similarities, there is a fundamental irreconcilability between the Christian and the collectivist social philosophies" (47, p. 778). Nonetheless, questions could and did arise over the meaning of the Encyclical's virtually complete silence on the topic of communism, socialism, and neoliberalism.

One of the more interesting explanations of this fact came from a leading Polish Catholic review: "The realism . . . is quite striking. . . . It is far removed from a doctrinaire mentality and a simplist approach to problems.... Its realism is likewise revealed by the fact that it is totally apolitical.... The Pope does not engage in a polemic with this or that ideology or this or that political trend.... The Pope stands ready to take note of the truth wherever it shows itself, even in ideologies that he labels as 'incomplete'" (188, p. 25). Along a different line was the view of a Latin American comment that "today the enemy is new and the remedy is new.... The enemy is not properly communism-the Pope names it only once in his Encyclical and then in referring to previous papal teachings-but a disarmed Catholicism, one not equipped for the battle of the day" (139, p. 293). And vet a third slant came from the United States, where a writer explained the absence of an explicit condemnation of communism on the score that "this had already been thoroughly done by Pius XI" and the present Pope "chose to concentrate on positive thought and action.... After all, this is the best and most effective weapon against communism" (82, p. 36).

The last-mentioned view received weighty support in a pastoral letter of Cardinal Meyer, in which the Chicago Archbishop saw in the Pontiff's choosing "to mention communism only briefly and to shift the emphasis of his teaching to a positive program of international social justice," not a proof that "the Church encourages 'softness on communism,'" but a declaration that "defense is not enough." The Encyclical makes it clear that "we must take the offense. But, for the Christian the 'offense' is a positive action for good, determination to work for justice and for charity for all" (108, p. 60). It is this same conviction that made another American commentator state that those who read the Encyclical without preconceptions "come to see that, for all its lack of ideological emphasis, *Mater et magistra* is ... 'the most positive and effective anti-Communist document ever to come from the Holy See'" (100, p. 440).

In a slightly different vein, some saw in the Encyclical's handling of the issue of communism, not only the Pope's "wish to avoid all polemics and even to avoid furnishing a pretext for polemics," but a confidence in the "view that a thinking man will discover in his Encyclical teachings that offer one a sound basis for judgment on all doctrines and social structures. Indeed, perhaps the true greatness of *Mater et magistra* consists in this irenic confidence of the Sovereign Pontiff in the teaching that he proclaims" (163, p. 901). As yet another writer viewed the significance of this matter, the Encyclical's "doctrine is no longer presented directly and primarily under the guise of a polemic against the errors of the day." In his view, this fact "would justify putting on this document the label of 'post-Marxist'.... The new accent is indisputable" (160, p. 8).

Turning to the Encyclical's position vis-à-vis the other popular ideologies of the hour, it was remarked that "the teaching of the Church is not exclusively a form of antiliberalism or anticommunism" (94, p. 71). Though "the view of the Church, in one respect, might coincide with those ideologies which also oppose the doctrine of dialectical materialism, this coincidence ought not to be interpreted as an unconditional alignment with the policies of neoliberalism and of liberal socialism" (109, p. 285). In fact, as a prominent German expert noted, the Encyclical's significant stress on the concept of the common good offers rather a "point of departure for an encounter with the modern ideologies of neoliberalism and neosocialism" (114, p. 11).

With respect to a judgment on socialism, one commentary found significant the fact that "neither in the 'historical' section nor in the later parts of the Encyclical...does Pope John XXIII make an effort to determine explicitly whether the moderate socialism of today still deserves the censures imposed on it by Pius XI in his time" (174, p. 40). Rather, as one English author states, the Encyclical "implicitly recognizes the profound change, based on experience, which has taken place in the thinking, for example, of the German Socialist party and others who have jettisoned their Marx-ism" (66, p. 8).

The very irenic quality of Pope John's Encyclical, ironically enough, paved the way for some potentially embarrassing situations in which diverse ideological groups, such as the German socialists and the neoliberals, both tried to claim the document for their own (191, p. 69). In view of one widely publicized effort by a renowned neoliberal theoretician to pre-empt the Encyclical in this manner, it should be remembered that Catholic commentators were equally hesitant to see in the Pope's teaching an endorsement of either socialist or neoliberal policies. Referring to the claims of Wilhelm Röpke, the neoliberal spokesman, one writer conceded the he "is right in emphasizing ... agreements which exist on a good number of points between the ideas he propounds and the teaching of Mater et magistra. Still, it would be possible... to emphasize an equally large number of differences-I might even say essential disagreements-dividing Mater et magistra from neoliberalism" (112, p. 3). This author then went on to point to sharp divergences in philosophy with respect to the rights of workers, the concept of property, and the basic objective of economic society.

## Comments outside the Church

In light of the controversy just referred to, the commentary on *Mater et magistra* of a major figure in the neoliberal school takes on added interest. Though this scholar notices "a lack of penetrating 'ideological' and concretely programmatical statements," he praised the Encyclical's "cautiousness of tone and balance of thought" (133, p. 5). He further noted that the Pope attached the same importance to freedom in industrial society that the neoliberals gave it, and that, "moreover, the answers given by the papal Encyclical on the one hand, and by the neoliberalists on the other, are much the same" (133, p. 6). In particular, he stressed that neoliberalism shares with Catholic social philosophy, in his understanding of it, a common

basis—one that united them in opposition to "anything socialistic or collectivistic." This basis is "the principle of determined, comprehensive decentralism," which "concedes authority and rights to other... units, up to and including the state, with a reluctance that places the burden of proof on any group demanding such powers" (133, p. 7).

Though Röpke concedes that the Pope states workers "should be allowed to have a say and to share in the responsibility of running the enterprise," he also notes that the means by which this is to be accomplished "is not specifically stated in the Encyclical," and the document "carefully avoids demanding 'codetermination' in a radical sense incompatible with our economic order" (134, p. 23).

In lauding the Encyclical's cautious tone, the same critic had indicated that this was "not without serious drawbacks." His complaint was directed specifically at the Encyclical's reference to the relation between the developed and underdeveloped nations, instead of communism, as "perhaps the most difficult problem of the modern world." Since, in his view, communism should have been so designated, he feels that "the question of motive arises." He admits that the Encyclical's condemnation of communism is clear, "if only because it would have been in contradiction to all former statements of the Holy See." In his judgment, however, "what really requires an explanation is the fact that the two world camps mentioned are discussed in a neutralist manner worthy of a Nehru." Indeed, as he sees it, the Pope missed "the perfect opportunity" to drive home the truth about communism. The fact that this was not done "is perhaps indicative of the actual extent of the danger facing us today and therefore also of the amount of caution Rome felt called upon to exercise" (134, pp. 25-26).

# **Communist Criticisms**

If the Encyclical was not sufficiently "anticommunist" in tone to satisfy a neoliberal economist, its "excessive" caution did not succeed in placating critics in the Marxist camp. As one roundup of reactions in Italian communist papers concluded, "the Encyclical, according to them, is wordy, trivial, evasive, paternalistic; it omits quite important topics; it fails to take into account communist achievements; it offers solutions that are basically palliatives" (183, p. 535).

Some of the most interesting communist criticisms came from Polish sources. Argumenty, the review of the Polish League of Atheists and Freethinkers, derived from a reading of the document a "first, over-all impression of political demagogy." It maintained, with less than delicate sarcasm, that "to a certain extent, the Encyclical reflects the spirit of the modern age, when even so immovable and intransigent a bastion of world reaction as the Vatican can no longer openly proclaim its reactionary policies, but must mask them under pseudoprogressist and democratic sloganeering" (188, p. 26).

Another Polish journal was slightly more gracious in granting that the section of the Encyclical "devoted to rejecting the colonial system is a document befitting our day." Even here, however, it criticized the fact that no word is to be found, "to be sure, of the powerful revolutionary movement of national liberation which has struck a deadly blow against world colonialism." Moreover, it finds surprisingly enough, it would seem, in light of Catholic interpretations on the matter—"it is significant that the Church persists in considering the corporative order, that is to say, the conception of the state which approximates the Italian fascist regime, to be the best form of political organization of society" (188, p. 27).

The lengthiest communist critique of *Mater et magistra* to come to this writer's attention appeared in the pages of the *World Marxist Review*. In his introductory remarks, the writer there explained that the publication of the Encyclical was delayed because the authors, "mainly Jesuits, but also secular economists, Catholic trade union leaders, etc., had to compile a text which, while not defending capitalism too obviously, would contain no anti-capitalist or anti-colonialist pronouncements" (58, p. 38). Likewise, the alleged authors "had to exercise the utmost caution to conceal the contradiction between the policy of the Church and the demands of the masses," a contradiction which is, "nevertheless, most palpable on the question of peace and peaceful coexistence" (58, p. 43).

The same article recognizes the "relatively moderate tone of the Encyclical, even when it touches on the working-class movement and the socialist countries—although the authors prefer not to enlarge on this subject." This moderation, however, merely "reflects the objective demand for peaceful coexistence and in a way even seems to foresee its triumph." All this, in fact, encourages the writer to envision immense possibilities for united action: "It is not at all a question of inducing Catholics to renounce their faith, but of fighting, jointly with all people of good will, to preserve peace and for a so-cialist society. And the Catholic masses are showing a growing desire to participate in this struggle" (58, p. 45).

Perhaps the most intriguing (because of the underlying preoccupations they disclose) and most biting comments from the communist ranks have been those of one of the leading young Marxist philosophers in Poland, Lesek Kolakowski. He expressed "regret" that "open Catholics" cannot point to any forthright stand taken by the Pope in support of a truly progressive position on a real issue of the day. The reason is because the document is "the product of pressures from so many different forces and an attempt to reconcile such contradictory positions that it has ultimately been reduced to a series of phrases devoid of all meaning" (187, p. 27). As a result, he continues in slashing fashion, it comes up with "slogans acceptable to a Kennedy as well as a Salazar or an Adenauer, but equally unoffensive to the heads of new African and Asian nations; slogans with which Cardinal Spellman can be content as well as a LaPira or a Cardinal Wyszynski" (187, p. 28).

## Catholic Complaints

At the conclusion of his stimulating survey of initial American Catholic press comments on *Mater et magistra*, one journalist asserted: "If there is a 'Catholic line' on the new Encyclical, there was no evidence of it in the U.S. Catholic press during the first weeks after its appearance" (61, p. 656). In fact, as a German commentator pointed out, in light of the "astonishingly widespread and positive" reaction to the document in the world at large, it was "quite notable that from some Catholic quarters a sharp criticism has been raised, to the effect that the Encyclical fails to advance along a logical line of reasoning, that its contents are meager and bereft of a weighty philosophical basis" (114, p. 1).

Another reporter distinguished among several types of Catholic

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complaints about the document. In integrist circles, he discovered, fault was found with the Encyclical's failure to condemn communism and socialism more directly, with the excessively irenic tone, with references to such dangerous innovations as the reform of basic economic institutions, and with the seeming evidence of a break from the teaching of Pius XII in that no mention was made of corporatism. Progressivists, on the other hand, criticized the failure to modify previous teaching on the right of private property and on the immorality of birth control, and the unwillingness of the Church to "baptize" democratic socialism. The same writer also alleged that German Catholics were critical of an excessively Franco-Italian orientation in the Encyclical's outlook (13, p. 476).

Other writers traced Catholic objections to different sources. Thus, a German social scientist noted that the Encyclical came under fire, not merely from those who supported conflicting ideologies such as neoliberalism or Marxism, but from some rejecting its teachings in the name of a certain "supernaturalism" and out of loyalty to a "pure religion" which does not sully itself by involvement in mundane affairs (39, p. 166). An Italian theologian also remarked on the rise of Catholic criticism of the Church's social doctrine by both "supernaturalists" and a certain type of "laicists" (17, p. 146).

In German Catholic circles, a somewhat different sort of debate tended to distract from the positive content of the Pope's message by focusing public attention on a long-standing controversy over the ultimate sources of Catholic social doctrine. Echoes of this debate were to be detected in several German publications (19, p. 667; 76, p. 668; 169, pp. 254-60). The fact of the discussion pointed, moreover, to other confusions and disagreements among Catholics on the competence of the Church to speak on social issues and the doctrinal authority of papal social pronouncements, particularly in the solemn form of an encyclical.

## The Authority of an Encyclical

One of the earliest and best-informed commentaries on the new Encyclical had, in a sense, anticipated many of the subsequent controversies on these subjects. The author had pointed out that Pope John rejects two erroneous positions: one which exaggerates the supernatural character of the Church to the extent of denying it all entrance into temporal affairs; the other which rejects the validity of natural-law reasoning in the tradition of Catholicism as an approach to social issues (113, p. 295). Another writer, treating at length of theological questions connected with the Encyclical, noted that the Church's concern with social questions rises from such external factors as the positive need of society and the existence of dangerously misleading social ideologies, as well as from an inner exigency created by the Catholic belief that salvation is something social and that the unity of the human person dictates an interest in the total situation of the whole man (17, pp. 147-55).

In a somewhat different vein, a careful historian of Catholic social thought observed that "the activities of the modern pontiffs... are a continuation of the pope's role as moral arbiter and guardian of inalienable human freedoms, which the popes have always fulfilled in the history of Western society: the role of *Pontifex Maximus* of the Roman Cathedra, defender of religious rights and social justice, of the natural liberties and freedom of conscience of the individual man as well as the human race as a whole" (3, p. 9).

It was a similar historical perspective which prompted one American review to editorialize: "If... the full sweep of the Church's contemporary social doctrine going back to Leo XIII were more fully comprehended than it is, certain otherwise good and loyal Catholics would not be making such fools of themselves these days. That goes especially for those Catholics who by their simplistic and lopsided approach to the awful menace of communism... are de-emphasizing *Mater et magistra* and thus endangering the cause which is dearer than life to all of us" (184, p. 146).

On the question of the authority of an encyclical for Catholics, a number of commentaries have appeared (143, pp. 191-203; 75, pp. 38-40). One writer remarked that "declarations which proceed from the ordinary teaching power of the popes are part of the whole doctrine of the Church. The teachings of the encyclicals cannot be brushed aside with the remark that they are 'just the Pope's opinion' " (92, p. 42).

Insistence on the authority of an encyclical did not mean, however, as more than one commentator hastened to state, that the appearance of *Mater et magistra* automatically shut off all further discussion of social questions among Catholics. One Spanish writer remarked that "the Pope allows Catholics full liberty to search for practical formulations of his teaching and to adjust the tempo at which concrete proposals are to be implemented in accord with cultural, social, and economic conditions prevailing in individual cases" (52, p. 978). Indeed, as a French expert in trade unionism observed, traditionally in the Church "the development of doctrine is assisted by action on two fronts, namely by the hierarchy and by lay Catholics, the thinking of each being influenced by that of the other" (71, p. 5).

In the same spirit, an English author claimed that "we should be grateful for the lead given us in this Encyclical, but we should also remember that it is not a blueprint of an ideal social order. The drawing of a blueprint is a technical job demanding the collaboration of experts in many fields" (68, p. 468). Similarly, another English scholar underscored the fact that "in these Encyclicals the Popes are deliberately not trying to lead the way or pioneer in social thought.... An encyclical is a sort of consolidating act. It brings together and it puts the stamp of official approval on ideas which have already become the common property of the Church through the years of discussion and experiment by the Church's ordinary members" (176, p. 429). It was this understanding, finally, which spurred a French commentator to say: "Let me state simply that the thing which strikes me in this document is that it is humane and forthright... this Encyclical is also prudent... the door is left open to new research on the part of clerics and laymen who have the competence" (163, p. 915).

In rather striking contrast to the foregoing views of informed experts representing several schools of thought was a puzzling reaction on the part of a minority among U.S. Catholics. One professor from a Roman university, writing at the close of a lengthy trip across the country in the months immediately after publication of *Mater et magistra*, reported that "this challenge to papal authority in social matters was not exactly new" to him. What was novel about it all was that, whereas in Europe "this laicist mentality finds its principal expression on the left wing of society... here in the United States [he] everywhere encountered it among extreme right-wing Catholics" (81, p. 149).

Writing from Spain, an American Catholic professor of philosophy sought to explain this strange paradox which found some Catholics rejecting the very papal teaching which was meeting with an unusually warm welcome in many American Protestant circles. In addition to noting that the document seemed to challenge many private economic and political views of these Catholic critics, he attributed their hostility also to the fact that (1) in some cases the critics had misread the Encyclical; (2) they failed to understand that the Church's social teaching is not designed primarily to serve as an instrument for the Cold War; (3) they failed to share in the incarnational orientation of the Holy Father's message (167, pp. 289–91).

It would be misleading to conclude this extended roundup of reactions to *Mater et magistra* on a note of puzzlement over the strange alarms and excursions of isolated minorities in one country or other. When one takes a comprehensive view of what has been written and said about the document since it first appeared in July of 1961, it seems more reasonable and more fitting to take a closing cue rather from an editorial judgment in one of the most enlightened Italian social reviews. In "the favorable reception of *Mater et magistra* in the press" the editor found "a clear indication of the fact that Catholics have now come into possession of a document that is exceptional by virtue of its rich contents and courage, one in which they can discover a sound guide toward understanding contemporary realities, a basis for unity of thought and sentiment, and an incentive to co-ordinated, efficacious action in the social field" (183, p. 537).

This response to the Encyclical had been anticipated by an American expert in Catholic social teaching, when he commented that *Mater et magistra* "will hearten all those engaged in the social apostolate. It will attract new recruits. It will clarify doubts and dissipate confusions. Attuned to the times, it is an answer to prayer in a revolutionary age" (101, p. 568).

Perhaps the underlying secret, however, which explains the almost universal acclaim accorded the Pope's words by Catholics around the world is to be found in a reminder issued by an American Cardinal in the course of a pastoral letter to his archdiocese: "We must remember that this vision of the Pope is not a merely human recipe for social ills. It comes from the Christian vision of the unity of mankind and the unity of the Church. In the Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, we have the fulfillment of human unity" (108, p. 61).

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