

Despite the variation in title and the large difference in size, these two books are basically two different editions of the same work. In the 1987 edition, Attorney Montemayor had planned to follow the first volume with another which would deal mainly and directly with the practical application or non-application [of Catholic social teaching] in the Philippines and in other countries whose conditions may provide valuable lessons for the Philippines (1987:1-2).

In the preface to the 1989 edition, however, the author notes that the original volume II will now constitute a separate book; hence the distinct title corresponding to the actual contents of this volume.

The purpose of the book, as the author describes it, is broad and far-reaching:

to help in the wide dissemination and understanding of Catholic social doctrine, and to assist in providing proper formation and motivation for social reform. It is intended both for general reading and as a guidebook in schools, seminaries, convents and institutes. The present volume intends to present the basic social teaching of the Church by direct quota-
tions from the most authoritative sources (1989:2; 1987:1).

The character of this "guide-book" is further explained in its origins as a collection of texts for a course on Church social teaching to some sisters of the congregation known as Workers of Christ the Worker, and to the seminarians preparing to be priests in that group. The class sessions consisted of

explanatory remarks by the author, reading of portions of the quotations in the guidebook, and discussions based on the portions read and in relation to contemporary problems and issues (1989:vii).

The original guide-book was expanded and systematized to create the 1987 edition, which has now, as noted above, been enormously further increased to the present 1063-page compilation (1987:v-vi; 1989:v, vii-viii). The author says that the original classes were held two hours a day twice a week (presumably for one semester). If the original compilation needed that many hours, the twice-augmented edition could hardly serve as a textbook for the ordinary three-unit course. Hence one must take the description of this work as a "guide-book" to mean a reference book, or a teacher's text. On sheer grounds of length, it could hardly be used by the ordinary student as a textbook.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EDITIONS

The principal differences between the first and second editions, as explained by the author are as follows:

Its scope has been expanded to include additional subject matters treated of in later and even earlier issuances of the Church Magisterium. Many other sources (encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, conciliar documents, etc.) under various pontificates are quoted from to further explain, add to, or trace the development of, some topics and aspects of Catholic social teaching. The topics, chapters and sections have correspondingly been increased, and at the same time their focuses have been "sharpened," for clearer understanding. Finally, questions propounded at the end of each chapter have been rephrased, and new ones added, for wider relevance and application.
Among the additions the most important is the insertion of quotations from *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, which was published subsequent to the first edition. However, there are other reasons which have led to the great increase in texts included. First, there has been considerable extension of the areas included within the purview of Catholic social teaching. Thus the original section on "Man and Society" has been greatly enlarged, not only by expanding the treatment of marriage and the family, but by adding numerous related topics such as divorce, contraception, abortion, artificial human procreation, as well as a new section on education. Similarly, church-state relations, formerly a topic under "Politics," has now become a section in itself. A few previous texts have disappeared; others have been placed under new subheadings, thus facilitating the reading of some sections which had earlier dealt with broad topics by simply giving excerpts of several pages from a single document of the Church.

The rearrangement and reordering of texts in the new edition is for the most part a constructive step. However, though opinions may differ as to whether such topics as education and the family belong in a compilation such as this, the more relevant objection is whether such complex questions as artificial intervention in the process of procreation can be adequately treated by simply reproducing large parts of the 1987 instruction of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith without further explanation.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT**

The organization of the book is in its main lines identical in both editions. After the introduction on the nature of the Church's social teaching, there follows a chapter on the nature of the social problem and another on the nature, composition, and structure of the Church. This section follows Book Two of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, from which it quotes extensively, though use is also made of the decrees of Vatican II. A chapter on the role of the Church in regard to the social problem is followed by others on "Man and the World" and "Man and Society." After this quite theoretical and systematic section there are chapters on basic socioeconomic principles, on labor and capital, on politics,
church-state relations, international relations, culture, on morality and religion, on ideologies and utopias, and finally on liberation theology.

Many will not only find the theoretical section and its systematization excessively long, but will shrink from its large use of canon law as a theological source. The work has become not merely a compendium of Church social teaching, but the inclusion of large sections of systematic and moral theology as well as canon law make it more difficult to use for its principal purpose.

THE PROBLEM OF INTERPRETATION

More serious is the question of interpretation. Montemayor makes no explicit claims that texts interpret themselves, though one could argue that such an outlook is implicit in the accumulation of magisterial texts without explanation or context. He is careful to distinguish his own occasional introductory paragraphs from the documents themselves. He likewise shows awareness of the danger in publishing extracts — that a particular selection may be taken out of context. He explains:

Whenever the author saw the possibility of this danger he did either (or both) of two things: he took those portions that by themselves have the tenor of universal application and permanent validity, or included in the quoted portion a fair amount of its historical and logical context (1989:3).

The latter procedure no doubt accounts for the considerable extension given to many passages, though intended to explain a single point.

Nor is he unaware of the development which takes place in church social teaching, though in the section explicitly devoted to the topic of development of doctrine, the emphasis is on the amplification of our understanding of principles and their adaptation to new situations rather than on real evolution of doctrine. Still, even if only in passing, mention is made of “evolution through the successive stages of historical development” (1989:31).

Nonetheless, a truly historical understanding of Church social teaching is lacking, as it cannot help but be when excerpts, no matter how lengthy, are arranged under systematic headings. It is
for this reason that the Congregation for Catholic Education in its instruction on teaching the social doctrine of the Church to candidates for the priesthood, has insisted on their reading the magisterial documents in their entirety, once they have been put into the historical context in which they were written.\textsuperscript{1} None of this method is found here. Documents from different periods and different popes are placed side by side without situating them in any historical context. This becomes notably insufficient in cases where the teaching of the Church has changed radically over time, as for example, the teaching on church and state and on religious liberty.

Thus, alongside passages from Pius IX (the Syllabus of Errors!), Leo XIII, Pius X and Pius XI — all presupposing the framework of the two “perfect societies” — which are used to support the author’s notion of separation of church and state, there appears a lengthy quotation from Vatican II’s decree on religious liberty. Though Montemayor’s citations from the earlier popes do not speak directly of religious liberty as taught by Vatican II, the documents from which he has drawn the passages on separation of church and state do contain statements quite incompatible with Vatican II, which has simply superseded them. These are simply not referred to. I would not question whether the author accepts the teaching of Vatican II on religious liberty; it is clear that he does. But he apparently does not perceive the contradiction in using parts of the Syllabus, and the encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius X, to document his understanding of the “right” and “wrong” concepts of separation of church and state, even though the earlier documents are based on quite different presuppositions than the document of Vatican II and came to quite different conclusions on religious liberty.

One sees the effect of such a procedure of interpretation on looking at the “Questions Propounded by the Author for Discussion” at the end of this chapter (and others). Though many of these questions are welcome aids toward bringing abstract principle down to the level of concrete realities, some are quite tendentious, such as the following:

Under the right concept of ‘the separation of Church and State’, is it proper for a bishop or a priest or a religious sister to become a member of a Constitutional Convention or Commission whose task is to draft the Constitution of the State? (1989:685; 1987:431-32).

A series of subsequent refinements of the question make the point even more specific, that the person in question would be violating canon law, as well as the prohibitions of the Synod of 1977 and of the instruction Libertatis Conscientia. The targets of the ‘questions for discussion’ are quite obviously the priest and bishop appointed by President Aquino to the commission of citizens which drew up the Constitution of 1987. A similar case is the series of questions on the relation between individual bishops and the national episcopal conference, clearly alluding to the dissent of the archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan (whose imprimatur graces the book) to the 1986 pastoral letter of the Philippine hierarchy, declaring the presidential election of that year fraudulent and without binding force (1989:685-86; 1987:432-33). Another of similar import is directed against the government’s refusal to allow the return of ex-president Marcos (1987:272; somewhat modified phrasing in 1989:436).

Questions such as the above will certainly prevent the teaching of the Church from being abandoned to ivory tower speculations of theologians. However, when only a selection of texts is given as the source for reflection, with no indication of their historical context nor any indication of subsequent teaching which may have superseded the earlier one, the result may be lively discussions, but not, in all likelihood, a clearer perception of the Church’s teachings — if there be such on the particular point. Fundamental to the problem, I believe, is the illusion that one can present the

2. The reference to the Synod of 1977 has been removed in the 1989 edition.
3. In the 1987 edition the author explains the function of his questions for discussion (a passage omitted in the 1989 edition):

The various quotations from Church documents are examined in the light of down-to-earth and contemporary problems obtaining in the Philippines and other countries of the world. Controversial issues regarding the application of the social teachings on the level of the local Churches and individual cases are presented for discussion. Concrete actuations of Church members, personalities and groups are subjected to scrutiny. Their consideration and discussion will not only make the teachings clear but will also develop proper attitudes towards the Church and its pastors and help prevent the repetition of past mistakes (1987:2).
Church's teaching with absolute objectivity by reproducing exact words of the magisterial documents. Thus, the questions for discussion become the forum for personal interpretation. That the selection, arrangement, and omission of texts all constitute ways in which such imagined objectivity is liable to considerable subjectivity, I think I have indicated in my review of a similar attempt to present the exact teachings of the Church by arranging excerpts from church documents under systematic headings.

THE SCOPE OF SOCIAL TEACHING

A further difficulty occurs with regard to the scope of the book. Explaining the nature of Church social teaching Montemayor defines his position thus:

The author believes that vital to a proper understanding and instillation of the Church's social teaching is the giving of proper emphasis on the inner life of grace and spirituality as well as communion with the Church as a stable foundation for the social apostolate. Thus, basic teaching on the Church, Church communion, and the life of grace are given considerable treatment (1989:3).

One need not be hostile to the author's convictions to feel that teaching on the nature of the Church and on the inner life of grace and spirituality belongs in another place than in a book devoted to Church social teaching. Indeed, the impression given by the book, especially in its greatly enlarged 1989 edition, is that the author is attempting to present a compendium of all theology, and even canon law, in any way related to social doctrine. Whether such a project is desirable or not, it seems likely to fail simply because a book almost totally comprised of texts from the papal and conciliar magisterium is not able to present the fullness of teaching on the nature of the Church or the life of grace in any adequate way. The author does speak of "basic" teachings, but in fact what results is a somewhat simplistic and legalistic theology, ignoring the nuances and care with which theological statements are supposed to be crafted. The result, unfortunately, is a magisterial and can-

onistic fundamentalism, rather than theological understanding.

A similar theological view seems responsible for the multiplication of texts, sometimes from obscure documents long since considerably reinterpreted or even replaced by subsequent church teaching, or at other times, ephemeral texts taken from homilies of the present pope or even past ones, from all kinds of occasions. Though neither category of documents are a priori to be excluded, they certainly need contextualization and some indication of what doctrinal force they are thought to have.

There is indeed a value in studying older documents of the magisterium if the intention is to trace the development which has taken place in the Church's teaching. One might presume that is with this purpose, for example, that Montemayor reproduces all the major documents on private property and the universal destination of material goods in his section on that subject. But in the absence of any clarifying principles, the reader is left to speculate how the author intended to use them: to illustrate how the Church gradually clarified to herself the purely secondary and derivative character of private property, or simply by the multiplication of texts to show that the Church has always taught the same doctrine on this topic — which is, of course, incorrect. The problem, as I have pointed out elsewhere, is endemic to any effort to teach the social doctrine of the Church by a mere collection of texts under systematic headings.\(^5\) I think, moreover, that this has been confirmed by the Instruction of the Congregation on Catholic Education which I have analyzed in a previous issue of this journal.\(^6\)

CONCLUSION

It is unpleasant to have to make such severe criticisms of a book whose author not only has made great efforts through several decades to make the social teaching of the Church known in our country, but who has done much, at considerable personal sacrifice, to put that doctrine into action and to help others to do so, through the Federation of Free Farmers and in numerous other ways. I am sure that his own teaching of that doctrine continues

5. See note 4.
to both enlighten and inspire other Filipinos. But for the reasons set forth here, I cannot believe that the books under review will serve as good textbooks for giving students, seminarians, or religious an adequate knowledge of the Church’s social teaching.

However, as I noted earlier, it is not clear to me that the author intended his compilation to be precisely a textbook, but perhaps rather, as a "guide-book," to be a reference work, an aid to teachers. In this respect they can certainly be of use, since the diligence with which the author has studied and dissected the social teachings of the Church is truly impressive. However, such usefulness would be conditioned by a familiarity with Church social teaching, and an understanding of its methodology.

In the end, there is no substitute for reading the documents themselves with an understanding of their historical context. It is true, as the author says, that Catholic social doctrine "is contained in long documents that are almost always written in general and abstract terms which are often difficult to understand and tiresome to read" (1989:2; 1987:2). Not everyone needs to read them, of course, but for those who are to teach them, there is no other recourse. And surely the documents themselves are not more difficult to read than are collections of excerpts.