

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

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Philippine Studies vol. 15, no. 3 (1967): 438–463

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Moral Theology After Vatican II

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S. J.

NEED OF AGGIORNAMENTO

THE renewal of moral theology is long overdue. Perhaps in no field of theology, in this age of Church renewal following the close of the Second Vatican Council, is modernization more urgently felt as in that of moral theology. It is clear that the major task which faces present-day moral theologians is the re-thinking and re-formulation of the Church's moral teaching to keep pace with the rapid development of both theology and the sciences and thus make it relevant to the experience and needs of the Christian in the modern world. The task of the moral theologian, to use Mgr. Ronald Knox's striking metaphor, is to "portray the teaching Church not as a harassed official handing out information at a series of press conferences, but as a patient pioneer washing out the gold from the turbid stream of her own memories."¹ For those of us who have inherited the moral concepts of traditional moral theology manuals, it will not be easy to undo a package we have zealously guarded all these years and start anew on a somewhat perilous venture. But the renewal of moral theology is a challenge to anyone who wishes to be a more effective witness of the moral teaching of Christ in the world today.

The first part of this paper will present briefly a historical background of the criticisms and new approaches

¹ Ronald Knox, *The Month* (March, 1959).

over the last century or so which prepared the way for the present trend of renewal in moral theology. The second part will be a rough survey of the different contemporary approaches to a renewed and revitalized moral theology and of the work already done by moral theologians representing various emphases in the rethinking of the Church's moral teaching. The elements of the problem involved in the re-writing of moral theology as well as the avenues of solution in the light of the Second Vatican Council's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" will be discussed in the third part. The fourth part will be an appraisal of what this author believes is the best synthesis of the different contemporary approaches to moral theology as found in Fr. Schillebeeckx's most original book, *Christ the Sacrament of Encounter with God*. Finally, in conclusion, we shall consider what the Second Vatican Council has to say with regard to the development of moral theology in its "Decree on Priestly Formation".

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Actually the ferment of renewal in moral theology began a little over a century ago with the pioneer efforts of J.M. Seiler (1817) and J. B. Hirscher (1835-1836).² According to Ivo Zeiger, S.J., we have inherited, largely due to historical circumstances, a moral theology which is casuistic, philosophical, and juridical. This scholastic moral theology which is still being taught in our seminaries and schools was severely criticized by G. Thiels (1940), J. Leclercq (1950), Ph. Delhaye (1953), and R. Garrigou-Lagrange (1956). These men insisted on a return to the sources of revelation and on a more positive treatment of the Christian way of perfection centered on Christ. As a result of these modern criticisms, foremost moral theologians such as Emile Mersch (1937), Arthur Vermeersch (1947), F. Tillman (1948) and O. Schilling (1952), Gustave Ermecke (1951), and Gerald Gilleman (1952) became the

² For a more detailed treatment of the historical background, see John C. Ford and Gerald Kelly, S.J., *Contemporary Moral Theology*, Vol. I, (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1962), Chapters 4-6. Cf. also D. O'Callaghan, "A Hundred Years of Moral Theology," *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, CII (October, 1964), 236-41.

forerunners of the modern approaches to moral theology. All of them, each in his own distinctive way, rewrote a Christ-centered moral theology which gave primacy to charity. As a common element, the criticism of traditional scholastic moral theology reflected an impatience, first, with mediocrity in the moral life of a Christian; second, with the restrictive effects of "obligationism" or legalism; and third, with the moral theology course as it is taught in seminaries. Although recognizing the need for a new emphasis and a more positive approach to the Christian moral life, Frs. Ford and Kelly, likewise pointed out the dangerous tendencies towards "situation ethics" which had been condemned by the Holy See. However, in their strictures, Frs. Ford and Kelly failed to see the rich possibilities of developing a more authentic and personalist Christian moral theology. It must be admitted that in view of recent trends in theology, Frs. Ford and Kelly's position has become dated.

CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN MORAL THEOLOGY

The present "re-awakening" in moral theology is everywhere evident from the number of books and articles published to meet the challenge of renewal. Undoubtedly, under the inspiration of Vatican II, this impetus for renewal will continue to gain momentum. The answer to the need for a fresh approach to the Christian moral life took several lines representing various schools of thought. For the purpose of this paper, we shall consider these contemporary trends under the following headings: (1) the Scriptural, (2) the Dogmatic or Theological, (3) the Liturgical, (4) the Ascetical, and (5) the Empirical. Depending on the different emphases, the Theological approach could be: (a) Christ- or Charity-centered, (b) philosophico-theological, (c) developmental or (d) existential and personalist. Needless to say, these contemporary approaches to moral theology are not mutually exclusive. Rather it is here a question of varying emphases; the ideal, of course, is an integrated approach.

The Biblical Approach. No one denies that the new moral theology must necessarily draw its central insight and in-

spiration from the written Word of God especially from the New Testament. The work of scholars such as Haring, Gillemann, Carpenter, Ranwez testify more to the creation of a scientific synthesis than an appraisal of biblical sources. The pioneer and recognized authority in the new scriptural approach is C. Spicq, O.P. who wrote *Theologie Morale du Nouveau Testament* in two volumes.³ However, Spicq's monumental work is a difficult book which only the scholar can afford to read.

Another scholarly but more readable book is *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* by Rudolf Schnackenburg, Professor of New Testament literature at the University of Wurzburg.⁴ The first part of the book which discusses the moral demands of Jesus is what chiefly interests us. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God and invites all men to repentance, faith, and discipleship. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus rejects the legalism of the Old Law and presents God's will as the moral norm by concentrating all religious moral precepts in the love of God and neighbor. The attitudes of Jesus towards law, power, and the State, work and property, marriage and the family indicate what He demands of the Christian today under the conditions of the modern world. Finally the motive for the Christian way of life is both the incarnational and eschatological following of Jesus Christ.

Without trying to impose a pre-conceived system, philosophical, theological, or otherwise, Prof. Schnackenburg allows the New Testament text to unfold the gospel message of love, thus giving us a fresh insight into the moral teaching of Jesus. What is so striking about the moral demands of Jesus is their personalistic character. Christian morality is a personal response to the personal invitation of Christ's love. Prof. Schnackenburg distinguishes the moral teaching of Jesus from

³ C. Spicq, O.P. *Theologie Morale du Nouveau Testament*. Tome I & II. (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre. Gabalda et Co. Editeurs, 1965). Cf. also Edouard Hamel, S.J., "L'Usage de l'Écriture Sainte en théologie morale," *Gregorianum*, XLVII (Avril, 1966), 53-85.

⁴ Rudolf Schnackenburg. *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1965).

that of the Old Law, that of the early apostolic Church, and that of His apostles and disciples. In this way we can rediscover Jesus' original moral teaching and its development by the infant Church. In considering the modern problems of special urgency to which Vatican II gave special attention, we are reminded that the attitudes whereby Jesus in the New Testament resolved the specific moral problems of his followers still apply to Christians of all ages. There can be no new moral theology without this emphasis on the New Testament.

The Theological Approach. This approach is an attempt to correct the threefold criticism leveled against traditional scholastic moral theology whose emphasis is more philosophical than theological. This trend stems from the realization that the moral demands of the Christian life must be firmly grounded in dogmatic theology. In this approach several currents are clearly distinguishable.

First, there is the charity-centered moral theology of Gerard Gilleman (1952) and the Christ-centered moral theology of Bernard Haring (1961). Both were equally dissatisfied with the negative, minimalist, sin-centered moral theology textbooks and manuals for seminarians and professors. Fr. Gilleman, in his book *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*⁵, takes St. Thomas Aquinas' treatment of charity as the form of the virtues and sees the moral actions of the Christian as but mediations of the virtue of charity. He works out a practical syllabus for teaching a charity-centered moral theology. The value of this work lies in its attempt to connect moral theology with dogma and to give it a dynamic unity under its distinctively Christian aspect, charity.

A more elaborate effort to synthesize the new developments in theology and philosophy and the recent findings of the sciences into a Christ-centered moral theology is Haring's three volume *The Law of Christ*.⁶ The unifying theme of this

⁵ Gerard Gilleman, S.J. *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology*. Trans. by William F. Ryan and Andre Vachen. (London: Burns & Oates, 1959).

⁶ Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R. *The Law of Christ*. 2 vols. Trans. by Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S. (Cork, Ireland: The Mercier Press, 1961).

approach to moral theology by a world-famous theologian is the Commandment of Love which is the law of Christ for the Christian today. Although Haring's book is considered a masterpiece, it is, in this author's opinion, too amorphous and confusing even for the experts. A more manageable and compact treatment of Fr. Haring's new approach to moral theology is *Christian Renewal in a Changing World*, published in 1964.⁷ Written specifically for the modern layman, this book contains the rich insights of *The Law of Christ*. It is interesting to note that Fr. Haring was the secretary of the Second Vatican Council's Commission to prepare the schema for the "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World". Fr. Haring's thesis in *Christian Renewal in a Changing World* is that the Christian's authentic responsibility for the world today flows from his personal response of love to the Word of God Who is Christ.

This new emphasis on love as the focus for contemporary moral theology and ethics is evident in much of the philosophical and theological literature published in recent years.⁸ As a result there has been a growing demand for an integration of moral theology and ethics as well as for a more developmental approach to the Christian moral life. If traditional moral theology has in the past been too far removed from the lived experience of the Christian, then renewal in the direction of a more authentic and personalist morality can be realized by integrating the classical concepts of nature, law, and duty with the modern phenomenological and existential concepts of person, freedom, and love.⁹ It seems that moral theo-

⁷ Bernard Haring, C.S.S.R. *Christian Renewal in a Changing World* (New York: Desclee Co., 1964). Cf. also Fr. Haring's "Christian morality as a mirror image of the mystery of the Church: application to moral theology," Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings, XVIII (1963), 3-24.

⁸ To mention only a few: *Moral Problems and Christian Personalism* (Moral Theology). *Concilium*. Vol. 5. (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965). R. Carpentier, "Primat de l'amour-charite comme methode de theologie morale," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, LXXXIII (May, 1961), 492-509. J. Toner, "Focus for Contemporary Ethics: Love," *Thought*, XXXIX (Sept., 1964), 5-19.

⁹ Basil K. O'Leary, F.S.C., "The Renewal of Moral Theology," *Continuum*, I (Autumn, 1963), 310-328.

logy alone or a so-called autonomous ethics as taught in our colleges is no longer adequate to achieve a truly Christian moral education and hence what seems to be needed is a philosophical and theological synthesis of both.¹⁰ An example of such a synthesis is Albert Dondeyne's *Faith and the World* in which the author describes the Christian's faith as an involvement in the contemporary world to make Christ incarnate and become an effective witness of the glad tidings of Christianity. One difficulty with this integrated philosophical and theological approach is that so far it has been weighted over to philosophy rather than theology.

Second, due to the growing realization of man's historical dimension and perhaps due to the impact of Teilhard de Chardin's writings, there has also been a trend towards a more dynamic or developmental approach to moral theology. An authentic and personalist morality could be developed from the broadened concept of a dynamic, not a static, morality in which man's historicity and his limited but developing vision of truth grounds the freedom of morality.¹² We shall consider Monden's hypothesis of the moral evolution of mankind later. Suffice it to say that the developmental approach to moral theology is in line with the other contemporary approaches and is very fruitful for growth in Christian maturity and personalism.

The Existential and Personalist Approach. Finally, no rethinking of moral theology is complete without taking into account Karl Rahner's original contribution in this field. In the renewal of moral theology the question of an existential ethics is basic and hence Rahner raises the problem: whence comes a concrete existential moral obligation?¹³

¹⁰ William J. Richardson, S.J., "Moral Education in the Catholic College," *Proceedings of the J. E. A. Workshop*, August 6-14, 1962. New York: Jesuit Educational Association (1962), Vol. II, 142-170.

¹¹ Albert Dondeyne. *Faith and the World*. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1963).

¹² Jan H. Walgrave, "Is Morality Static or Dynamic?" *Concilium*. Vol. 5.

¹³ Karl Rahner, S.J. *Theological Investigations*. Vol. II. (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1964), Chapter VII, 217-234.

Such an obligation, e.g. Sunday Mass, priestly vocation, self-sacrifice and self-donation in married life, Rahner maintains, cannot be adequately explained by the concept of law, natural or positive, in traditional moral theology. A philosophical analysis of moral obligation based on Rahner's theory of knowledge shows that man is spirit or transcendent and this power of transcendence which is so prominent in inter-personal relations grounds the possibility of the human person's "openness" to a personal Transcendent. The theological basis of an existential obligation lies in the fact that it is the individual's personal response to a personal God. Whereas traditional essentialistic ethics asks: What universal norms must be applied to this concrete situation? an existential ethics asks: What is God personally calling me to in this specific situation?

One can easily see in Rahner's position the advantages for moral and pastoral theology. First, an existential ethics shows the limitations of casuistry. One cannot derive moral obligation from universal norms in a case where it is impossible. Secondly, a personalist ethics provides a different notion of sin. The emphasis is no longer on the object of the act and the gravity of the matter but rather how this particular act will affect my personal relationship to God. Thirdly, an existential and personalist morality shows the importance of individual decisions for the dynamic element in the Church. There is a wider horizon for man's freedom beyond the commands of ecclesiastical authority.¹⁴

The central insight in Rahner's Christian personalism derives from the philosophy of the human person in his theology. In *Geist in Welt* Rahner's thesis is that the human person is a transcendent "spirit in-the-world" who remains open to a personal absolute and this basic insight is enriched in his book, *Horer des Wortes* in which the author painstakingly shows that if the human person is to hear the Word of God,

¹⁴ Cf. Michael D. Moga, S.J. "The Existential Ethics of Karl Rahner," *Focus*, II (Spring, 1965), 113-123. (Regis College, Canada). See also W. Wallace, "Existential Ethics (of Karl Rahner): A Thomistic Appraisal," *The Thomist*, XXVII (April-July-October, 1963), 493-515.

this personal Transcendent must enter history and speak to man in human terms.¹⁵ Fr. Gerald A. McCool, S.J. has already done an excellent study of Rahner's philosophy of the human person and the influence of this original thinking on the free individual in the Church, Christology, and the theology of the Sacred Heart.¹⁶ It remains for moral theologians to work out the implications of Rahner's Christian existential personalism for contemporary moral theology.

The Liturgical and Ascetical Approach. Nowhere is renewal in the Church more evident to the layman than in the liturgy. So it would be sufficient for our purpose merely to mention some of the present thinking on the reform of moral theology along liturgical lines. The problem lies in the integration of the liturgy and moral theology. Dom P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B. relates the liturgy as religious worship to the theological virtues with a view to a psychology and sociology of religion. With this theoretical basis he gives some practical suggestions for integrating the moral and liturgical life of the Christian and offers a concrete proposal for the revision of the traditional tract on religion.¹⁷ Dom Stevens' point seems to be that moral theology must appeal both to the mind and heart of the Christian, in fact, to the whole human person and where better is the moral life lived than in the liturgical worship of God. We know that the vocation, apostolate, and spirituality of the layman can only be realized in the Church, concretely in the parish. Now the challenge of Vatican II precisely lies in the realization that the Christian *as a person* can meet the modern world in a dialogue through his parish life which centers on the liturgy.¹⁸ If the modern liturgical renewal stresses

¹⁵ Karl Rahner, S.J. *Geist in Welt*. (Munich: Kessel-Verlag, 1957). Karl Rahner, S.J. *Horer des Wortes*.

¹⁶ Gerald A. McCool, S.J., "The Philosophy of the Human Person in Karl Rahner's Theology," *Theological Studies*, XXII (1961), 537-562. Fr. McCool also points out the difficulties in Rahner's philosophy of the human person.

¹⁷ Dom P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B., "Moral Theology and the Liturgy," *Yearbook of Liturgical Studies* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1960), I, 65-122.

¹⁸ *The Challenge of the Council: Person, Parish, World*. 25th North American Liturgical Week, St. Louis, Mo., Aug. 24-27, 1964. (Washington, D.C.: The Liturgical Conference, 1964).

the liturgy as the public worship of the assembled people of God, then the faithful should participate in the parish mass, not as isolated individuals, but as active members of the ecclesial community.

Several publications on Christian spirituality in the modern world have come out, some of which have a direct bearing on the renewal of moral theology. Gustave Thils' *Christian Holiness* which is a precis of ascetical theology is indispensable for integrating dogma, morals, and Christian spirituality.¹⁹ A fresh ascetical approach to the Christian moral life can be found in *Concilium* which focuses on the Gospel as the test and norm of all spirituality and on the personalist tendency of contemporary spirituality.²⁰ *Lumen Vitae*, of course takes a Christian view of morals from the catechetical and pastoral approach.²¹ What is new in both the liturgical and ascetical approach to moral theology is their distinctively personalistic orientation, namely, that the liturgical and spiritual life of the Christian must be a personal encounter with Christ.

The Behavioral Approach. Evidently the present re-examination of moral theology has been made possible in no small measure by the new findings of the behavioral sciences about the subject of moral conduct, namely man. The most welcome work to date on the behavioral or empirical approach to re-vitalized moral theology is Louis Monden's *Sin, Liberty and Law*.²² The author brings to bear the findings of depth psychology, sociology, and personalist philosophy. The result is a fresh and positive presentation of the heart of Christian morality in terms of contemporary cultural development. As the title of the book suggests, the modern problem of morality

¹⁹ Gustave Thils, *Christian Holiness*. Trans. by John L. Farrand, S.J. (Bombay: St. Paul Publications, 1963).

²⁰ *Spirituality in Church and World. Concilium*. Vol. IX (Glen Rock, N. J.: Paulist Press, 1965).

²¹ "A Christian View on Morals," *Lumen Vitae*, XVI (March, 1961).

²² Louis Monden, S.J. *Sin, Liberty and Law*. Trans. by Joseph Donceel, S.J. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1965).

lies in the tension between the freedom of the human person and the law.

To us it seems that the modern world has lost all sense of sin. In describing the theme of his book, Fr. Monden thinks otherwise. He states in the Introduction:

Obviously the sense of sin has not vanished but has simply undergone a considerable change. Possibly that change, a factor in the mutation which is taking place in our whole conception of the world and man, is not a phenomenon of decay but of maturation, one aspect of man's growing towards a new adulthood.²³

The theme of the individual person's development towards Christian maturity is discussed within the context of three contemporary problems vital to modern man. The development of the mature Christian is the goal of a process of growth on three levels: first, the instinctive or level of shame and social guilt, of law and obligation: second, the moral or the level of self-fulfillment and, third, the religious or the level of responsive love to the personal call of God. We can immediately see the implications of this three-fold distinction for the moral and religious life of the Christian. A challenging hypothesis of Fr. Monden is that the development of a people or culture from the instinctive to the moral-religious level may take a generation or two.

First, there is the problem of human freedom and determinism. In the treatment of freedom in traditional moral theology, the psychic complexity of the moral act due to biological, social, and unconscious determinisms has been sadly overlooked and this lacuna has had harmful pastoral consequences in the confessional and in counseling. Can we really judge how much freedom there is in the human experience of sin? To answer that question one must take into account a person's fundamental option in life in contradistinction to his particular object choices as well as the relation between freedom and grace. The classical distinction between mortal and venial sin needs to be broadened so as to include what Scripture calls "sin unto death" which applies to man's fundamental option rather than to his "deliberate acts". Even more

²³ *Ibid.*, ix.

relevant to this question of sin is the time factor so well brought out by Teilhard de Chardin's cosmic vision of the evolution of man and the whole of creation towards Christ.

Secondly, there is the vexing question today of either legal or situation ethics. The tension of a double morality e.g. existential ethics, on the one hand, and on the other an evolutionary morality, e.g. the Protestant view of the opposition between law and grace and the Catholic brand of "situation ethics" poses a serious problem for the moral theologian and for the modern Christian layman. Again it seems that the solution lies in a re-examination of the value and limits of the law especially on the moral level and the Christian law of life and the laws of the church. In other words, for the mature Christian conscience the tension between the law and the individual's particular situation is resolved. The solution then seems to be re-education towards adult morality.

Thirdly, there seems to be a tendency on the part of modern consciousness towards a "mystique of sin". The modern novel, especially Graham Greene's novels, illustrates this sin mysticism: the bigger the sinner the greater the saint. Once again it is a question of the relation between the moral and religious sense of sin. The elements of the solution can be found in clearly distinguishing on three levels between inauthentic and authentic innocence and in taking stock of modern man's *situation as a sinner*.

The chief merit of this behavioral approach lies in the fact that it integrates the findings of the historical, social, and psychological sciences with the phenomenological studies of the human person and draws the implications for the renewal of moral theology. Certainly the confessor will find the pastoral applications invaluable. For those who feel the inadequacy of inherited traditional moral concepts and what Fr. Monden calls the "peccametry" of moral textbooks and manuals, this study will prove to be a truly liberating spiritual experience. Its main drawback is that it needs a theology.

THE PROBLEM AND SOLUTION

No moral theologian today who is thinking with the Church will deny that the renewal of moral theology is impe-

native.²⁴ This involves a serious inquiry into three main areas: (1) on the side of *revelation*, into the new developments in other fields of theology especially dogma in the light of Vatican II; (2) on the side of *human experience*, into the latest findings of the behavioral sciences as well as into the concrete experience of the laity under the conditions of contemporary development; and (3) on the side of the *human person* who is the subject of the Christian moral life, into the fresh insights of contemporary personalist philosophy. Thus in the restudy of moral theology, three elements must be taken into account: the *Gospel*, *human experience*, and the *person*.

Our survey of the different contemporary approaches to moral theology shows that each trend emphasizes a dimension of the Christian moral life which has been overlooked in the past or has so far remained undeveloped but which we now recognize as more faithful to the authentic Gospel morality and more relevant to the modern experience of laity. But despite a difference of emphasis, all these approaches have in common a dynamic and personalistic element. What is needed today is a synthesis or an integrated developmental approach to the morality of the human person that is at once scriptural, theological, liturgical, spiritual, and empirical. What is needed is a positive moral theology which is personalist and Christ-centered. That this is the direction which the renewal of moral theology must take is confirmed by the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

VATICAN II AND THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

Gaudium et spes or the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" of Vatican II has provided us with the guidelines for the updating of moral theology.²⁵ This major conciliar document bears witness to the Church's consciousness that it must come into dialogue and be at the service of the modern world. The Constitution is divided into two

²⁴ B. McDonagh, "Moral Theology: the need for renewal," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, XXXI (October, 1964), 269-282.

²⁵ The best edition for this and other documents to be referred to in the text is *The Documents of Vatican II*, edited by Walter M. Abbot, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966). An Angelus Book paperback.

main parts: one dealing with "the Church and man's calling" (11-45); the other, with "some problems of special urgency" (46-90). Although the Constitution sets forth "teaching already accepted in the Church", one commentator notes that it significantly accentuates the positive and a strong nuance of personalism runs throughout the whole document.

In the face of the depersonalization and robotization of modern man engulfed by the massive forces of our commercial, technological, and scientific culture, the modern world has become more conscious of the notion of person and personhood than at any previous point in history. What is most relevant to our discussion is that a major portion of the first part of the Constitution is devoted to "the dignity of the human person" (Chapter I, 12-22). This is a clear indication that an authentic Christian morality must be personalist in character. The essence of the Council's teaching on the dignity of the human person lies in his creation "in the image of God" and "the root reason for human dignity lies in man's call to communion with God" (19). But man's sublime vocation and his situation as a sinner are both part of human experience (13). It is the whole human person that is the image of God and is ennobled by the pursuit of wisdom, both human and divine (14-15). This image of God is endowed with conscience (16) but conscience implies responsibility and liberty, not merely immunity from coercion, but guaranteed opportunity to share in some of life's meaningful decisions (16-17). Finally the human person who is a Christian is created to the image of Christ the new man (22).

A strongly personalist note is evident in other sections of the Constitution. Chapter II states that the community of mankind must keep pace with the emergence of socialization or the growing interdependence of man. "The beginning, the subject, and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person, which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life" (25). As a practical consequence, the Council lays great stress on reverence for the human person, love for enemies, and the essential equality of all men (27-29). In Chapter III which deals with "man's act-

ivity throughout the world" (33-39), the Council views human activity, when entered into responsibly, as being a means of personal fulfillment and as having importance insofar as it contributes to human progress and social advance. In Part II, Chapter I on marriage and the family, there is a clear advance on responsible parenthood with the Council's emphasis on the centrality of love and the personal relationship of husband and wife as unique persons. We can only conclude that the mind of Vatican II in the renewal of moral theology must accentuate Christian personalism.

In order to make moral theology more relevant to human experience and to the contemporary needs of the modern world, theologians must seriously take into account the importance of human and natural values, the proper development of culture, and in order to achieve this, moral theology must bring to bear the new findings of the behavioral sciences on the data of revelation. The mind of Vatican II on this point is equally clear.

The Council reminds the Christian not to be afraid of temporal involvement in the modern world (33-34). Herein lies precisely the significance of human natural values and the goal of human activity, that they manifest the incarnational attitude of the Christian towards the world so that the Church can "contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human" (40). That the Church is very conscious of the relevance of human and natural values for dialogue with the modern world perhaps explains the Constitution's most novel venture in the section treating the proper development of culture (Part II, Chapter II, 53-62). Human history at the present time is characterized by profound changes and the emergence of the new intellectual disciplines, chiefly those of the psychological, social, and historical sciences, heighten modern man's sense and ability to shape a more truly human culture (54). As contemporary human culture unfolds, the Christian — and especially the theologian — must maintain close contact with all its aspects, particularly those emerging from the research of the secular sciences (62).

It is clear that Vatican II accepts as its point of departure in the "Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" the three elements for the renewal of moral theology — personhood, modern human experience, the Gospel — in the light of recent developments in contemporary philosophical, theological, and scientific or secular thought. Furthermore, in both the first and second part of the Constitution, the Council indicates how the Church can best be at the service of the modern world by coming to grips with some modern problems of special urgency, namely, contemporary atheism, marriage and the family, the proper development of culture, the social, economic and political life of man, peace and nuclear warfare, and the family of nations. As to the solution to these grave problems the Council makes clear what the Church's role and contribution are. "The Church guards the heritage of God's Word and draws moral and religious principles without always having at hand the solution to particular problems" (33). It is left to the moral theologians working in close contact with the laity and with the secular sciences to work out an authentic Gospel morality that deals with special moral problems today to meet the challenge of modern living. Needless to say, in this difficult task, it is absolutely essential that the moral theologian consult the human experience of the people of God.

SCHILLEBEECKX'S SYNTHESIS

Now the integration of all the contemporary approaches to moral theology in the light of Vatican II into a unique and marvelous synthesis is due to one of the most original and influential theologians of our times, Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., Professor of Theology at the Roman Catholic University of Nijmegen and peritus for the Dutch Bishops at the Second Vatican Council. One of the most inspiring revolutionary and stimulating works to issue from the personalist emphasis in theology is Schillebeeckx's *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*.²⁶

²⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., *Christ The Sacrament of The Encounter with God*. (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963). This is a non-technical summary of the author's *De Sacramentale Heilseconomie*.

At the outset, let it be said that this is not just another book on the sacraments of the Church. With the phenomenological concept of human, personal encounter as the basis of study, Fr. Schillebeeckx directs his "attention to sacramentality in religion in order to arrive eventually at the insight that the sacraments are the properly human mode of encounter with God" (p. 6). Thus by giving us a single, original vision and an anthropological insight into the sacraments, he enlarges our understanding of the properly human already given in our experience and in a theological context, both Scriptural and Patristic, he allows this enlarged understanding to be integrated into our human experience as Christians. The phenomenological concept of "human encounter" is pre-ordained in Christianity where God's personal gift of Himself to man has been consummated in the Incarnation — God addressing man as man amongst men — this is Fr. Schillebeeckx's unifying concept.

The traditional impersonal view of the sacraments as things or effects "put into us" automatically has made us appear as merely passive recipients of sacramental grace. The theology of the sacraments after Trent has tended to center on the dispositions of the recipient hardly ever saying that in the sacramental action the individual encountered the very God Who reconciled the world to Himself in Christ. Even less was said of the actions of Christ in his Church-actions whereby the Church expresses most fully what she is — the sacramental extension of Christ. The remarkable thing about Fr. Schillebeeckx's writings is that he retains the finest insights from traditional theology and yet is fully aware of the recent developments in theology and of contemporary philosophical thought. It is this balanced approach that gives us his central insight that the sacraments are seven different opportunities for personal encounter with Christ in the Church.

The translation is from the third revised edition of *Sacrament van de Godsentsmoeting*. Cf. also Karl Rahner's *The Church and the Sacraments* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), which is more concerned with the ecclesial element of the sacraments.

If revelation is God's self-disclosure of Himself to men in history and religion is man's response to the revelation in the act of faith, then, according to Fr. Schillebeeckx, "because grace is personal encounter with God, it 'makes history,' and precisely for this reason it is also 'sacramental.'" The visible manifestation of God which is realized historically in our lives is what we mean by a sacrament. As Fr. Schillebeeckx puts it: "a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility." Now revelation both in the person of Christ and in the reality of the Church as well as the seven sacramental rites themselves fulfill this definition of a sacrament.

Taking the reality of Christ the Primordial Sacrament, Fr. Schillebeeckx shows the continued presence of the risen Christ in the Church and hence "the sacraments are the personal saving act of the risen Christ through his visible Church". It is the mystery of the Incarnation that is the root of sacramentality. For by the Incarnation, Christ manifests to men the hidden reality of God in the visible actions of his humanity. His humanity is the "sign" or sacrament of the deeper reality of His divine personality. The Church likewise is a visible "sign" of a deeper sacramental reality. It is a visible community which signifies by its existence and its spoken claims to be the actual encounter of men with God, and by its sacraments effects the reality of what it signifies. With the bodily ascension of Christ into heaven, the Church is the continuing sacrament of the Risen Christ. Therefore both Christ and His Church are visible bestowals of salvation in history and hence are rightly considered sacramental realities.

The order of God's revelation or self-disclosure is both sacramental and Christological. Chronologically, the order of revelation is Christ, the Primordial Sacrament, then, the Church, the sacrament of the risen Christ, and finally, the encounter with Christ in the seven sacraments. If we begin with the sacraments and work backward, we can say that the whole of revelation is sacramental. If we start with Christ Himself and work forward, we can say that the whole revelation is

Christological. In short, it is in the Church that man meets God in an ecclesial and sacramental encounter with Christ.

Fr. Schillebeeckx devotes the rest of his study to the implications of the ecclesiastical character of sacramental action, the sacraments in their fullness, the effects of a sacrament, but here we find a fresh and very personalistic approach that is sadly missing in the traditional theology of the sacraments. It is the last part of the book where Fr. Schillebeeckx deals with the Christian life itself as sacrament of the encounter with God that is quite relevant to the renewal of moral theology. When we speak of the Church as a sign of the risen Christ's continuing presence in the world, as the visible presence of grace among men, we refer not only to the teaching authority and pastoral government of the Church but also, as essentially to the Christian lives of the faithful in all their various sacramental encounters with Christ. The Church, not only the hierarchical Church, but the activity of the People of God, is again the visible sign that God is among us in the world today. For all men of all times, encounters with the personal holiness of Christians are the sacraments of encounter with God. This truth has far-reaching consequences for the present-day apostolate. The best sign of Christ's incarnation in the world today is the sacramental presence or witness of our whole Christian life. If the Second Vatican Council stressed the centrality of the sacraments in Christian life, then Fr. Schillebeeckx's book proves that the sacraments deal with the very heart of man's personal encounter with God.

All the advocates of change in moral theology are agreed that the new emphasis and fresh approach must be rooted in the Gospel and Dogma, must take into account human experience and the documents of Vatican II, and integrated into a synthesis that will remain open to further development. Fr. Schillebeeckx's *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* is a marvelous synthesis, showing how inseparable are the realities of the Incarnation, Redemption, Pentecost, grace, the Church, the sacraments, and the Christian moral and religious life. To quote Fr. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. in his foreword to Fr. Schillebeeckx's book:

Once the Christian religion is seen as an encounter of God and man in Christ the "primordial sacrament," the sacraments themselves can be seen as inseparable from a whole economy of revelation in word and reality, a revelation of God in Trinity, of Incarnation, grace, the Church and indeed of man and his destiny, for it is within this economy of sacramental encounter that we men achieve the fullness of our personal being. In fact, what is offered here is not simply an account of the sacraments but of the Christian religion, the *religio Christianae vitae* in St. Thomas' fine phrase, and through it of non-Christian religion and life. (p. xvii.)

MORAL THEOLOGY AND PRIESTLY FORMATION

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, in their "Decree on Priestly Formation", call special attention to the "adaptation and reform" of moral theology in the doctrinal and pastoral training of future priests to meet the changes and needs of contemporary society. To quote the pertinent passage:

Other theological disciplines should also be renewed by livelier contact with the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. Special attention needs to be given to the development of moral theology. Its scientific exposition should show the nobility of the Christian vocation of the faithful, and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world.²⁷

This instruction and directive of Vatican II which aims at the training of the type of priest who could be a more effective witness of Christ in the modern world provides the main guidelines for the development of moral theology in seminaries, and *mutatis mutandis*, in colleges and universities. Fr. Josef Fuchs, S.J., a moral theology professor at the Gregorian University, has recently published a long commentary on the renewal of moral theology as envisioned by the Vatican directive.²⁸ Suffice it here to comment briefly on some of his more important conclusions.

First, the primary object of moral theology is to show the sublime dignity of the Christian vocation. Moral theology as a theological science is the study of the active participation of

²⁷ "Decree on Priestly Formation", n. 16, *The Documents of Vatican II*.

²⁸ Josef Fuchs, S.J. "Theologia Moralis Perficienda," *Periodica*, LV (1966), 499-548.

man in the fulfillment of his vocation to be united to Christ through the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in this life and the enjoyment of the beatific vision of God hereafter. Therefore a renewed moral theology should have Christ for its center. From a dialogal perspective, the Christian moral life from the side of God is a "vocation", a divine personal calling to know, love, and imitate Jesus Christ, and from the side of man, a personal, free "response" of love to the call of Christ. An authentic or morally "responsible" Christian is one who has developed the "ability to respond or answer" the call to Christian perfection. "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," is God's personal invitation of love addressed to each person according to his state of life. Now the concept of morality as a "response" to a "vocation" is more positive and inspiring than the traditional concepts of "duty" or "obligation" to conform to "commandments". Morality then no longer becomes a matter of external conformity to an extrinsic and impersonal moral code but a matter of an interior, free, and loving answer to the call of Christ, a matter of freely and progressively fulfilling one's vocation in life. Only in this light, can the faithful truly appreciate the sublime dignity of their Christian vocation.

Secondly, and as a practical consequence, the object of moral theology is to show the responsibility of the Christian to bear fruit in charity for the life of the world. This means that moral theology must be based on a morality of "love" rather than a morality of "law". Charity must be the heart and soul of the Christian moral life. The new commandment of love sums up the whole Christian vocation whose principal fruit should be charity which alone can change and win the world today for Christ. Christ Himself "taught us that the new command of love was the basic law of human perfection and hence of the world's transformation". (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, n. 38.)

Christian charity as a life of unselfish and continual self-giving is what perfects the life of the human person and of the whole human community and thus keeps the life of the world. The paradox of Christian living lies in the fact that only by

knowing and loving others can the Christian perfect himself and develop his own personality. It follows that an authentic Christian morality based on charity has both a personal and social dimension. The Christian is not only a unique individual but is also at the same time a member of the Mystical Body of Christ. As a member of the People of God, the Christian has no strictly private actions; every act of his affects the whole life of the Mystical Body and all its members. Today our problems are too big for the single individual to solve and so the individual Christian may take a passive and defeatist attitude. Yet in the Church we do not only live in Christ but Christ also lives in us and therefore gives our actions new value and efficacy. The truth that Christ is with us and working for us in the sacraments is the secret of Christian optimism. Since Christian charity is not self-centered but all embracing, it prevents the Christian from an individualistic and exclusive concentration on merely saving his soul and being solely in the state of grace. Christian charity urges us as active and valued members of the Mystical Body of Christ not only to work for our own salvation but also for the redemption of the whole world.

Moreover Christian charity is necessarily apostolic and is the basis and motive of the apostolate of the laity. It is the vocation of the Christian as a witness and apostle of Christ to make incarnate the presence of God in the world by his word and example. The proper Christian attitude towards the world is incarnational. Rather than flee the world as evil, the Christian must get involved with the modern world in order to redeem it and "restore all things to Christ". There can be no genuine Christian charity without this Christian commitment or involvement. Because of the saving and humanizing action of Christ acting through His Church in the history of salvation, the Christian's activity in charity throughout the world is truly humanizing and redemptive. It is Christian charity that fosters the world of men and makes it more human and livable. The task of the modern Catholic layman today is to build the city of man and create a new world based on the Christian principles of truth, justice, charity, and freedom. Whether it be the development of human culture,

or the social and economic advancement of underdeveloped nations, or the alleviation of misery and poverty, or the establishment of the universal brotherhood of all men, or the fostering of peace and harmony among individuals and nations, the soul of the apostolate of the laity in the modern world is Christian charity.

Thirdly, the scientific exposition of moral theology should be more thoroughly nourished by the Word of God or the doctrine of Sacred Scripture. It is evident that the scriptural approach to moral theology is in perfect conformity with the mind of Vatican II. The development of biblical moral theology would mean that the concepts and categories, the moral principles and norms of the new moral theology would be drawn primarily from scripture rather than traditional scholastic philosophy. Likewise there is need to re-study the history, norm, and meaning of the "commandments" (the Decalogue) in the new light of the "Commandment of Love". It is equally clear from the Vatican directive that the context and framework of moral theology should be what St. Paul summed up as the "Mystery of Christ" in the "history of salvation". All the Christian mysteries are contained in the union of God with man in the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and pentecost of Jesus Christ. The truth about God's redemptive work in time and history provides the Christian moral life with meaning and direction which is also the ground of Christian hope and optimism. It also reminds the Christian that moral perfection is a task to be accomplished in one's own personal history, that the Christian moral life is a matter of growth and development.

The scriptural orientation of the new moral theology as a consequence will no longer be exclusively a doctrine of commandments and a catalogue of sins or a casuistic morality for confessors. The question as to whether the tract on the sacraments and canon law questions should be inserted as in traditional moral theology remains problematic. For one thing, Fr. Schillebeeckx has already shown the way of a sacramental synthesis and there are very good grounds for expecting a post-conciliar revision of canon law.

Fourthly, the scientific exposition of moral theology in the future should take into account several factors and come to grips with some difficult contemporary problems. It is not enough that its presentation be "kerygmatic". For its treatment must include the use of Scripture, the history of moral doctrine, of the relation between Scripture and tradition, and a renewed interpretation of the Church's teaching authority on morals. Today the necessity of the anthropological sciences (theological, philosophical, psychological, behavioral) in the development of moral theology is no longer questioned. Moreover, there is need for more discussion and debate on such difficult but morally relevant questions as the relation of nature and supernature, of the natural law and the acceptance of the Christian vocation, of situation ethics and the individual conscience, of the fundamental option and the personal character of moral action; of the bearing of empirical and social psychology on morality, and so forth. Nor is it sufficient to know only Catholic moral theology; the moral theologian should also be acquainted with non-Catholic (Christian and non-Christian) moral doctrines, especially those which have an impact on contemporary man and society. A dialogue or confrontation with contemporary moral thinking will make Catholic moral theology more relevant to men of our times.

One of the pressing problems of the Catholic college today in the moral and religious formation of college students is the relation between faith and reason, between theology and philosophy. The common complaint has been that the philosophy and theology courses in the Catholic college have been taught without relation to one another. The result is often the separation of faith and reason in the life of the student or a split-level type of thinking and acting which is inconsistent with a mature and integrated Christian personality. Furthermore, to a growing number of students the philosophy and theology courses seem to be out of touch with reality and deal with jargon. The solution in the future seems to lie in the combination of theology and philosophy; they should be distinct but not separate. What is needed is an integrated approach to the Christian meaning of life and reality. What can be done for the present in the Catho-

lic college? It has been suggested that philosophy and theology should start with relevant questions posed by modern man, that theology and philosophy teachers should be aware of developments in both fields. It is hoped that an integrated course in philosophy and theology will produce the type of student who will not separate faith and reason in his own life and who will have a total and integrated Christian approach to life. Therefore in the development of moral theology, serious thought must be given to the integration of both ethics and moral theology.²⁹

Finally, from what has been said, one can easily see that the task of developing moral theology is not only difficult and complicated but is never finished. On the one hand, traditional moral theology cannot provide the model for the task of renewal and adaptation. But, on the other hand, the task of development need not begin *ab ovo* since much of the pioneering work has already been done.³⁰ What the Second Vatican Council has to say about moral theology and priestly formation is only by way of a directive, or sometimes, by way of a counsel or suggestion. The document is not a detailed blueprint. In its spirit, bishops, seminary and university staffs, diocesan and religious priests, and all those who have a part to play in the training of future priests for the Church in the modern world, and especially moral theologians must use their ingenuity with the grace of Christ to work out the practical solution to the development and renewal of moral theology.

CONCLUSION

The educational and pastoral implications of the renewal of moral theology after Vatican II are numerous and far-reaching and would be beyond the scope of this article. With the new insights of the Second Vatican Council and the contemporary scientific developments, the task of the mo-

²⁹ Gabriel Moran, F.S.C., "Faith, Reason, and the Catholic College," *Continuum*, IV (1966), 296-301.

³⁰ Fr. Fuchs' article contains, by way of a footnote, quite a comprehensive bibliography on the recent work of moral theologians before and after Vatican II.

ral theologian will continue to be an enormous challenge. Everyday the modern world poses problems for the moral theologian. These problems call for new theological reflection and bold changes. There are no longer simple or final solutions to the ever increasing and complex problems of our times. If moral theology is to be relevant to modern man, it must be fluid, dynamic, living, and growing; it must be translated from the traditional textbook type to creative thought and meaningful action. If moral theology is to help the Church in the modern world, it must extend far beyond its pre-conciliar boundaries and open up new horizons in unfolding God's moral revelation.