

## BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES IN MORAL THEOLOGY

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THE PUBLICATION in 1963 of Bishop John A. T. Robinson's *Honest to God* was followed by a lively and public debate.<sup>1</sup> As he has himself pointed out,<sup>2</sup> it was some time before the chapter on morality provoked any controversy at all, and when it did it was owing in part, perhaps in great part, to England's "Profumo case"; for it was alleged that Mr. Profumo was following Robinson's doctrine when he lied to the House of Commons to save his family from disgrace. Since then the critics of his moral teaching have been numerous, but what he has compelled them all to keep in mind is that his ethic and his defense of it are based, as one should expect from a New Testament scholar of his calibre, upon the data of the scriptural sources. This is true likewise of the many other non-Roman exponents of Christian ethics who in recent times have presented us with a formidable challenge to the basic assumptions and positions of our moral theology.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, if there is to be dialogue on these issues, our own understanding and presentation of morality must be grounded just as firmly in the New Testament teaching. That our moral theology (as represented in the manuals) is unequal to the task is well known and has of late been the object of frequent criticism. It so happens, therefore, that the necessity incumbent upon us of entering earnestly and honestly into ecumenical dialogue (itself a moral issue surely) underscores what should be a patent need *ex natura rei*: the renewal and revitalization of our moral doctrine by a return to the revealed sources.

The aim of this article is simply that of presenting the main lines of the biblical ethic. This is done in the hope that it will place in clearer relief the chief features which must characterize any moral doctrine purporting to be Christian.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Honest to God Debate*, ed. John A. T. Robinson and David L. Edwards (London, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. John A. T. Robinson, *Christian Morals Today* (London, 1964) pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1947); Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York, 1950); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York, 1955) and *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, 1959); Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York, 1956); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics 2/2* (Edinburgh, 1957).

## AN ESSENTIALLY RELIGIOUS MORALITY

How do the scriptural sources present the moral life of man? Even a cursory study of the ethics whether of the Old Testament or of the New makes it abundantly clear that what is asked of man in regard to his free, responsible activity is conceivable only as a response to God's word to him, or (since God's word is ever living and effective) as a response to what God has done and is doing in the world.

In singling out the people of Israel as His very own, God entered into a covenant with them. He was to be their God; they were to be His people. This alliance between God and man meant, however, that His gifts and promises to the chosen people were contingent upon their fidelity to the demands of the covenant. If Israel did not hear God's voice and observe His prescripts, far from their being the beneficiaries of His saving promises, they would experience instead the curses of the divine wrath. In other words, the covenant emerges as, on the part of the Israelites, a contract to observe the divine law (Lv 26: 9-46; Dt 7:6-8:20).<sup>4</sup>

It was this covenant that bound the tribes of Israel together and made them a nation. In the Israelite theocracy it was God Himself who formed the source of their unity. Their legislation is explicable not in terms of a human political constitution but in terms of Yahweh's election of Israel and thus of His authority as their very own God.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Eugene A. La Verdere, "Covenant Morality," *Worship* 38 (1964) 240-46; H. Cazelles, "Loi Israélite," *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément* 5, 511-22; Jacques Leclercq, *Christ and the Modern Conscience* (London, 1962) pp. 55-59; Pierre Grelot, "Loi," *Vocabulaire de théologie biblique* (Paris, 1962) col. 543; T. W. Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel* (London, 1960) pp. 18-25.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* 1 (London, 1961) 39: "The content of the will of God thus defined in the covenant also shows its formative power by the way in which it makes the human party to the covenant aware of his unique position. For participation in the divine covenant impressed a special character on the loose tribal coalition, in which Israel awoke to historical self-awareness. It is no tightly closed national community giving religious expression to national feeling in the worship of Yahweh. That which unites the tribes to one another and makes them a unified people with a strong sense of solidarity is the will of God. It is in the name of Yahweh and in the covenant sanctioned by him that the tribes find the unifying bond, which proves a match even for the centrifugal tendencies of tribal egoism and creates from highly diversified elements a whole with a common law, a common cultus and a common historical consciousness." Cf. J. Hempel, *Politische Absicht und politische Wirkung im biblischen Schriftum* (Leipzig, 1938) pp. 8-11.

Accordingly, the morality of the Old Testament can be described as a "covenant morality," with the will of Yahweh as the central and decisive issue in this perspective. It is here, in fact, that we see the differentiation between Hebrew ethics and Greek ethics.<sup>6</sup> What Greek thought was aiming at in all its ethical preoccupations was "the good" discerned by reason and sought in the perspective of personal fulfillment and happiness and of social stability and equilibrium. Its object was the relation of the community and the individual to definite ideas and ideals. Hebrew ethical reflection was quite otherwise. It was concerned to relate the community and the individual to a Person, to the personal will of Yahweh.

This was not a will that could be arrived at by any philosophical research. It was a datum of divine revelation, disclosed in what God had done and was doing in human affairs. It was God Himself who had shown man what is good, and it was this that He was demanding of man (Mi 6:8). Response to this demand is a response to the God who reveals it. It is essentially religious: encounter and dialogue with the Revealer.<sup>7</sup> Thus we find Yahweh prefacing the Decalogue with a revelation of Himself and His saving works: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex 20:2; Dt 5:6). Here we find God's self-revelation and the disclosure of the path He had marked out for man united and fused together. God makes Himself known only as a saving God. He reveals Himself in the very message of His salvific plan, for salvation is to be achieved through man's fellowship with Him. This means that one cannot conceive of religion and morality as in any way separate or separable, as if the religious response to God's manifestation of Himself could prescind at all from the moral response to the way of salvation He marks out for His human creature. The one total revelation, whereby God makes Himself known and gives man a design for salvation centered in Himself, must evoke one total response on the part

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Manson, *op. cit.*, chap. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., *The Law of Christ 2* (Cork, 1963) xxi-xxix; P. Van Imschoot, "L'Esprit de Jahvé, principe de vie morale dans l'A.T.," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 16 (1939) 457-67; Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford, 1962) pp. 315-20; H. Wheeler Robinson, *Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London, 1959) pp. 154-58; Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville, 1961) pp. 12-16.

of man, in which the worship of the God he has thus learned to know and his obedience to what that God asks of him merge in one adoring and submissive response of love.<sup>8</sup>

Moral life for the Israelite had always to be seen in this context of the covenant as his response to God's will. To divorce it from this context, to make of it a search for an impersonal good or an observance of an impersonal norm instead of a deeply interpersonal relationship between himself and Yahweh, would be to betray the divinely bestowed moral ideal, which was no less truly a gift of God to His people than were the saving deeds and the promises. Yet this was precisely what the Jews, after the Exile, proceeded to do.<sup>9</sup> Bitter experience had taught them well that their only hope lay in the observance of the Law. So they gave themselves with great fervor to a real cult of the Torah. Unfortunately, however, they came to regard this to a large extent outside the context of the covenant and thus as something impersonal and absolute. The altered perspective led in turn to a nomism which lost the sense of proportion and value, placing all the precepts of the Law on the same level, regardless of whether they were civil, cultual, or moral in character. It issued likewise in what may be termed their pre-Christian Pelagianism, for the danger was ever present of seeing righteousness as stemming from observance of the Law rather than as a gift of God. In these concepts, insisted upon so rigorously by the Pharisees especially, lay the "heavy burdens, hard to bear" (Mt 23:4; cf. Lk 11:46) and the "yoke upon the neck" (Acts 15:10), which Jesus and after Him the apostles were to criticize and impugn.

The New Testament was to reverse this process and present again

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., *Agapè: Prolegomènes à une étude de théologie néo-testamentaire* (Louvain, 1955) p. 94: "Les affinités de l'agapè avec la vertu de religion ou la piété sont évidentes. La charité qui cherche à s'exprimer en acclamations et en oeuvres aura littéralement le culte de Dieu, s'emploiera à le servir, s'attachera à lui et fera de la volonté divine le motif suprême de la vie pratique et de toutes les vertus. Lorsque Iahvé exige qu'on le craigne, qu'on l'aime et qu'on observe ses commandements, il ne demande qu'une seule et même chose: une appartenance totale de l'homme, de sa pensée croyante qui l'adore, de son coeur qui s'unit à lui, de sa vie qui lui est fidèle. L'*ágarâw* de l'Israélite est un amour cultuel et en tant que célébration de l'excellence souveraine de Dieu et en tant que consécration de toute sa vie à Iahvé." Cf. Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London, 1944) pp. 122-27, 141-42; William Lillie, *Studies in New Testament Ethics* (Edinburgh-London, 1961) p. 5; Häring, *loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Grelot, *art. cit.*, cols. 545-46; M. Noth, *Die Gesetze im Pentateuch: Ihre Voraussetzungen und ihr Sinn* (Halle, 1940) esp. pp. 118-19; Cazelles, *art. cit.*, col. 522.

a truly covenantal morality. This time the context is that of the new covenant, which God, in the person of His Son, has entered into with mankind. Once again moral life appears as a response to God's word, as a response to what God is doing in the world.<sup>10</sup> What God is doing, however, is "to unify all things under one Head, Christ" (Eph 1:10), for in Christ, the only-begotten Son, we are called to be God's adopted sons (v. 5) by sharing His Spirit (v. 13). In this way God's self-revelation in Christ emerges as a revelation of the Holy Trinity. With the Persons of this Trinity we are called to have fellowship and in this divine fellowship lies our salvation.<sup>11</sup> As in the Old Testament, so in the New: God discloses Himself and the glory of His holiness only in revealing His salvific plan for man. Man's religion is again bound up indissolubly with his moral life, with the submission and obedience in faith to the design God has established for his salvation. Christian morality, too, is an essentially religious ethic, centered as it is in an I-thou relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Like the Israelite of old, the Christian is to respond to the divine initiative with a response of love embodied in and validated by his worship and his conformity to God's will in his day-to-day living.<sup>12</sup>

This response he makes in and with Christ. Christ is the Word of God. He is likewise the Response of man. It is only in Him and the response to God which His mysteries constitute that we respond adequately to God's revealed designs in our regard. Bound, as the Israelites were bound, to the observance of God's will, we find that will to have its true meaning only in the context of the covenant, only in the perspective of what God is doing in the world. But this means the context and the perspective of our unity in Christ. Where the people of Israel,

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., *The Law of Christ* 1 (Cork, 1961) pp. 35-53; J. H. Deibert, "Law-Gospel or Gospel-Law?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 15 (1962) 225-34; L. H. Marshall, *The Challenge of New Testament Ethics* (London, 1960) pp. 12-31, 232-43; T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge, 1959) pp. 285-95.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., *Vie morale et Trinité sainte selon saint Paul* (Paris, 1957) esp. chaps. 3 and 4; Häring, *op. cit.* 2, xxx-xxxv.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (London, 1954) p. 33: "Agape enters from another dimension into the whole of life, and into all qualities of love." Cf. Gérard Gilman, S.J., "Biblical Revelation of the Primacy of Charity," *Lumen vitae* 16 (1961) 9-26; Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (Freiburg-London, 1965) pp. 90-109; Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., "La morale de l'agapè selon le Nouveau Testament," *Lumière et vie* 21 (May, 1955) 103-22; Häring, *op. cit.* 2, xxix-xxxviii, 93-96, 126-29.

in the light of their election and of God's saving activity on their behalf, had their moral response spelled out for them in their Torah, the Christian finds Himself bound to God not by a law but by a Person, Jesus Christ. The coming of the kingdom, the new covenant, meant the coming of a new law, as the Hebrew prophets had themselves foretold.

#### THE NEW LAW

In pointing to the law of the new covenant that was to come in the Messianic times, the Old Testament prophets stressed its newness and its interiority.<sup>18</sup> "The word which Isaiah, the son of Amos, saw" was that "in the latter days . . . out of Sion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Is 2:1-3). The coastlands were waiting for the law which the Servant of Yahweh would establish (Is 42:1-4). God would place His law within men and write it upon their hearts (Jer 31:33). Men would walk in God's statutes and be careful to observe His ordinances, because God had given them a new heart and placed a new spirit, His own, within them (Ez 36:26-27).

This was to be a new law and an interior law. What the prophets had glimpsed in a shadowy way St. Paul was to assert with the utmost conviction and incisiveness.

The Christian law is new, since, as Paul states in regard to the Mosaic code, "Christ is the end of the Law" (Rom 10:4). Although he acknowledges that "the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good" (Rom 7:12), the Apostle still refers to the Law of Moses as "the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). Indeed, at times he seems almost to be identifying the Law and sin, as, for instance, when he declares that being under the Law means being under the dominion of sin (Rom 6:14). For it was to the Law that the Jews looked for life, and this was something it could not give them. Because it imparted knowledge of the good but not the power to achieve it, because it enabled them to recognize sin without enabling them to avoid it, such a law could only make men more conscious of their sinfulness. Possession of the Law meant only that through their transgressions (*parabaseis*) of it the principle of sin (*hamartia*) deeply rooted within them was able to manifest and unfold itself. Without the Law there would have

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Cazelles, *art. cit.*, col. 522; Grelot, *art. cit.*, cols. 546-47.

been no such transgressions and therefore no such manifestation or unfolding (Rom 7:7). It is in this sense that being subject to such a law means being under the dominion of sin.<sup>14</sup>

For all this, St. Paul is still able to number the Law as one of Israel's privileges (Rom 9:4), since this unmasking of sin through transgression of the Law constitutes the very purpose of God's gift of it to His people: "Why then the Law? It was added because of transgressions" (Gal 3:19). Through their being led by the Law to seek a righteousness which, even with the Law, they were unable to attain of themselves, the Israelites were meant to learn their need for Christ, the Saviour who alone could deliver them from this moral predicament. They were to be led in this way by the Law as by a custodian or governess until Christ came to make them no longer mere wards but true sons of the heavenly Father (Gal 3:23—4:7).

The coming of Jesus thus brought the Old Law to an end and ushered in the New Law, which, a "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," sets us free from "the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). This "law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21; Gal 6:2) is a law of the spirit, a spiritual law deriving from the very Spirit of God. Consequently, the Christian is no longer "under the Law" but "under grace" (Rom 6:14), no longer "under the Law" but "in the law of Christ" (1 Cor 9:21), for he has received the Spirit (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6), and "if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" (Gal 5:18).

Does this mean that there is no rule of conduct for the Christian? Does it mean that he is free to do what was previously at variance with the moral exigencies of the Mosaic Law? No, it does not mean this (Rom 6:1, 15). The Christian is free from the moral demands of the Law of Moses (and equally from any external law that restrains or coerces), not in the sense that these no longer bind him, but in the sense that he now follows a norm of behavior that far surpasses them. The law of Christ is "grace," "the Spirit," and is, accordingly, not a

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., "Saint Paul: Liberty and Law," *Theology Digest* 11 (1963) 13-15; M. E. Boismard, "La Loi et l'Esprit," *Lumière et vie* 21 (May, 1955) 72-74; C. E. B. Cranfield, "St. Paul and the Law," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 17 (1964) 43-68; Häring, *op. cit.* 1, 255-56; M. Bévenot, S.J., and R. Russell, O.S.B., "Christianity in Apostolic Times," in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (London, 1953) pp. 801-2; Lillie, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-76; Ethelbert Stauffer, *New Testament Theology* (London, 1963) esp. chap. 19; Maurice Goguel, *The Primitive Church* (London, 1964) pp. 417-24.

law of the letter,<sup>15</sup> not an external code to which we must conform ourselves and our conduct, but an interior principle that both moves us and enables us to accomplish the ideals that it sets for us and the demands that it makes upon us.<sup>16</sup> Thus, observing the New Law is a question of living by the Spirit (Gal 5:16)—in other words, of allowing the Spirit to produce “the fruit of the Spirit” (v. 22) in our Christian living. What St. Paul goes on to depict as the fruit of the Spirit is nobly virtuous activity: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vv. 22–23). He is here describing a way of life so far beyond the minimal demands of external commandments that these latter have no real relevance. “Against such things there is no law” (v. 23).

This is also the attitude that Jesus inculcates in the Sermon on the Mount.<sup>17</sup> When He points to the prohibitive law of the Decalogue and adds His own rider to each commandment He mentions (Mt 5:21–48), His aim is not that of establishing further, more far-reaching external law. For example, where “it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely,’” He bids us not to swear at all (vv. 33–34). But this was no new law of the letter forbidding Christians to take oaths. What Jesus was doing was describing the ideal moral life of the kingdom, in which the members should be men of such honour and veracity that oaths should at all time be utterly superfluous. Our way of speaking, then, ought to be simply “yes” or “no” (v. 37). For the law of the

<sup>15</sup> Since the word “law” ordinarily connotes an external norm of conduct, it may be asked why Paul employed this term to describe also the inner dynamism of Christian living. He could have used, and in fact did use (cf. Rom 6:14), the word “grace.” Lyonnet (*art. cit.*, p. 16) suggests that Paul’s use of “law” here was due to the influence of Jeremiah, whose prophecy of the new covenant, as we have seen, spoke explicitly of law.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jules Cambier, S.D.B., “La liberté chrétienne selon saint Paul,” *Lumière et vie* 61 (Jan.–Feb., 1963) 5–40; Lyonnet, *art. cit.*, pp. 15–16; Ceslaus Spicq, O.P., “I tratti principali della morale neotestamentaria,” *Sacra doctrina* 9 (1964) 31–64; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 347–53; Philippe Delhay, “L’Exigence chrétienne chez saint Paul,” *L’Ami du clergé* 72 (1962) 402–4; Cazelles, *art. cit.*, cols. 526–28; Boismard, *art. cit.*, pp. 75–78; Lillie, *The Law of Christ* (London, 1956) pp. 20–22; Leclercq, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–62; Häring, *op. cit.* 1, 257–63; Sydney Cave, *The Christian Way* (Digswell Place, Herts., 1949) pp. 122–27.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Y. B. Tremel, O.P., “Béatitudes et morale évangélique,” *Lumière et vie* 21 (May, 1955) 83–102; Hans Windisch, *The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia, 1951); James Wood, *The Sermon on the Mount and Its Application* (London, 1963) esp. chaps. 5 and 6; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 65–89; Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel*, pp. 45–57; Cave, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–62; Goguel, *op. cit.*, pp. 417–24.



kingdom is the law of love. The *agapē*, implanted in our hearts by the Spirit of love (Rom 5:5), makes its own claims upon us.<sup>18</sup> These are most intense and radical claims, for the love that we must articulate and authenticate is a wholehearted love (Mt 22:37 and par.), a love stemming from and patterned upon the self-sacrificing love of Christ Himself (Jn 15:12-13; Eph 5:2).

Obviously, the Christian who, by living out his Christ-life, by embodying his Christian love in the deeds of his daily living, and by thus producing the fruit of the Spirit, actualizes the source of spiritual power that is his from his baptism, is living far beyond the reach of external law. It is in this sense that he is no longer under the Law but graced with the freedom with which Christ has set us free (Gal 5:1). In such a perspective, while the Old Law disappears in so far as it was a law of the letter only and in so far as it was bound up with Jewish nationalism and the Jewish institutions, its moral ideal remains in all its purity and integrity, so that Matthew can record Jesus as claiming to fulfil and not to destroy it (Mt 5:17).<sup>19</sup>

St. Irenaeus sets forth very vividly this attitude towards coercive external law:

We have received the Lord of the Law, the Son of God; and through faith in Him we learn to love God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves; but the love of God is without all sin, and love of one's neighbour works no evil to the neighbour. Therefore also we have no need of the law as pedagogue. Behold, we speak with the Father and stand face to face with Him, become infants in malice, and made strong in all justice and propriety. For no more shall the law say: *Thou shalt not commit adultery*, to him who has not even conceived the desire of another's wife; or *thou shalt not kill*, to him who has put away from himself all anger and enmity; *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's field, or his ox, or his ass*, to those who make no account whatever of earthly things, but heap up profit in heaven. Nor *an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*, to him who counts no man his enemy, but all his neighbours, and therefore cannot even put forth his hand to revenge. Nor will it demand tithes of him who has vowed to God all his possessions, and who leaves father and mother and all his kindred, and follows the Word of

<sup>18</sup> Cf. G. Salet, S.J., "La loi dans nos coeurs," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 79 (1957) 563-67; Philippe Delhaye, "L'Obligation morale dans les évangiles," *L'Ami du clergé* 71 (1961) 372; *id.*, "L'Exigence . . .," pp. 404-5; Spicq, "La morale . . .," pp. 103-19.

<sup>19</sup> Cazelles, *art. cit.*, cols. 524-26; Grelot, *art. cit.*, cols. 547-48; J. Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Regensburg, 1956) pp. 89-94; W. D. Davies, "Matthew 5:17-18," *Mélanges bibliques A. Robert* (Paris, 1957) pp. 428-56.

God. Nor will he be commanded to leave idle one day of rest, who is constantly keeping sabbath, that is, giving homage to God in the temple of God, which is man's body, and at all times doing the works of justice.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, while the Christian who lives as his vocation demands is in no way inhibited or coerced by external law as a statement of his minimal obligations, this is not to say that he is not bound by such law. Its binding force remains intact. What is of importance, however, is the fact that it is by no means central in Christian morality. On the contrary, it is peripheral, for it simply marks out the area, as it were, within which the Christian is able to express his love and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>21</sup> So marginal is it, in fact, that St. Thomas Aquinas could regard it as merely "secondary" in the New Law, which "is principally the very grace of the Holy Spirit, which is given to Christians."<sup>22</sup>

True enough, this external law is still indispensable. As St. Paul says, "the law is not laid down for the just, but for the lawless and disobedient" (1 Tim 1:9), and, despite our baptism and all the graces of our Christian life, we fall within this latter category to a greater or less extent (1 Jn 1:8; Jas 3:2). It is true that the Christian who lives according to the Spirit does all that the law commands or can command and far more than the law commands or can command, but our possession of the Spirit in our pilgrim state on earth is imperfect and inchoate only. We have in the Spirit a guarantee and foretaste of the future (Rom 8:23; 2 Cor 1:22). Until that future consummation is ours, we shall always need the guidance of external law to ensure true discernment of "the fruit of the Spirit" from "the works of the flesh"

<sup>20</sup> *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 95-96 (tr. J. P. Smith, *Ancient Christian Writers* 16 [Westminster, Md., 1952] 105-6). Cf. M. F. Berrouard, O.P., "Servitude de la loi et liberté de l'évangile selon saint Irénée," *Lumière et vie* 61 (Jan.-Feb., 1963) 41-60.

<sup>21</sup> "The ten commandments protect the outer periphery of the realm in which Christ will be formed in us" (G. Ermecke, *Theologische Quartalschrift* 131 [1951] 411, cited by Häring, *op. cit.* 1, 261).

<sup>22</sup> *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 106, a. 1 c. St. Thomas refers us here to the very relevant teaching of St. Augustine in *De spiritu et littera* 21, 36: "What, then, is God's law written by God Himself on the hearts of men but the very presence of the Holy Ghost, who is the finger of God and by whose presence there is poured forth in our hearts the charity which is the fulfilling of the law and the end of the commandment?" Cf. also *Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 108, a. 1, ad 2m; *C. gent.* 4, 22; *In ep. ad Rom.* 3:27 (lect. 4); *In 2 ad Cor.* 3:2-3:6 (lect. 1, 2); *In ep. ad Heb.* 8:10 (lect. 2).

(Gal 5:16-26). From this point of view external commandments are not restrictions on the Christian's liberty but a true safeguard to its exercise.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear, then, that while the minimal demands spelled out by the law of the letter and embracing what is to be done or avoided by us under pain of sin remain in all their vigor and cogency, they must not be permitted to become the focal point of our moral effort. The New Law is essentially indicative rather than imperative. It must appear not as an external norm to which we conform our behavior, but as an inner principle of spiritual energy which, seeking to express itself in and to be mediated by our daily living, empowers us to follow a moral ideal that no merely external commandment could envisage. This is an ideal that is concretized for the Christian in the life of the community to which baptism introduced him and in the ever-living example of Jesus which that community mirrors and puts before him.

#### "THE WAY"

Christian life begins with faith and the sacrament of faith, baptism. What the gospel demands, however, is not merely faith but repentance and faith, not merely baptism but repentance and baptism (Mk 1:15; Acts 2:38). In other words, adhering to Christ in faith and baptism involves a fundamental conversion of life: a true interior *metanoia* which expresses itself in the deeds of one's life through a turning away from wickedness (Acts 3:26), a turning to God in Christ the Lord

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Lyonnet, *art. cit.*, pp. 16-18; J. Blich and S. Lyonnet, "De munere positivo Legis in oeconomia salutis," *Verbum domini* 41 (1963) 186-88; Salet, *art. cit.*, pp. 457-62; G. A. De Brie, "De bijbelse radicalisering van de wet," *Tijdschrift voor theologie* 3 (1963) 139-66; Häring, *op. cit.* 1, 261-63; Boismard, *art. cit.*, pp. 79-81. Lillie sums up very appositely the role of external law in the Pauline ethic: "(a) There is the preparatory work of the law. As St. Paul puts it, 'The law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ.' The Old Testament law was a preparation for the Gospel, telling men of God and His demands on men, and so making them ready to understand and receive what God gives in Christ. (b) Closely akin to this work and indeed as part of it, there is the convictive work of the law. As St. Paul says, 'If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin.' It is only through their failure to obey the law that men discovered that they are in need of a Saviour. (c) There is the work of the law in giving guidance. St. Paul would admit that the Jew who had kept the law would have been a 'a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness.' Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour still need guidance in their daily life and work, and the law may provide the necessary directions" (*The Law of Christ*, p. 10).

(Acts 9:35; 11:21; 15:19; 26:18), and the performance of deeds worthy of repentance (Acts 26:20).<sup>24</sup> Conscious of the need to evoke such a conversion, the apostles were very preoccupied in their preaching with driving home to their hearers a real sense of their sinfulness, as we may note, for example, in St. Peter's discourses in Jerusalem (Acts 2:22-23; 3:13-14; 4:10-11; 5:30-31). In the case of pagan audiences this conversion meant a turning away from idols to the true and living God (Acts 14:15; 15:20; 21:25).

In 1 Thessalonians St. Paul uses terminology like this when he has occasion to remind his readers of the effects of his preaching to them (1:9-10). When writing to the Galatians, on the other hand, his problem is that of turning men not from the service of idols but from the Jewish observances. In Paul's mind, to return to the service of "the weak and beggarly elemental spirits" (Gal 4:9) by the renewed observance of the Mosaic Law would reduce them to the condition of the pagans who serve idols. Just as these pagans do not know God (1 Th 4:5), so too a resumption of the Jewish Law would mean a loss of that knowledge of God which the Galatians' conversion had brought them (Gal 4:8-10). It is in order to refute the Judaizers that Paul introduces the notion of the "new creation," an Old Testament theme which rabbinical thought had applied in a special way to the baptism of proselytes.<sup>25</sup> In this baptism the convert to Judaism was regarded as making a complete break with the past, so complete a break, in fact, that all obligations contracted before his baptism were to be regarded as abrogated. He was thus said to be a new creature. Paul borrows this concept here to turn the argument of the Judaizers against themselves; for if Christian baptism has replaced this baptism of the proselytes, the neophyte has no need to concern himself with any obligations of the past, such as that of circumcision. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything now; the only thing that counts is the new creation (Gal 6:15). This theme of the new

<sup>24</sup> Cf. M. F. Lacan, O.S.B., "Conversion et royaume dans les évangiles synoptiques," *Lumière et vie* 47 (April-May, 1960) 25-47.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Erik Sjöberg, "Wiedergeburt und Neuschöpfung im palästinischen Judentum," *Studia theologica* 4 (1950) 44-85; F. Gavin, *The Jewish Antecedents of the Christian Sacraments* (London, 1928) pp. 51-58; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 2 (Munich, 1928) 421-24; W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinical Judaism* (London, 1958) pp. 119-29.

creation, introduced here to refute the Judaizers on their own ground, comes in the later epistles to assume major importance.<sup>26</sup>

In 2 Corinthians, for instance, the conversion of life demanded of the Christian is linked at least implicitly with the new creation involved in his sharing in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle is able to say that the old has passed away and the new has come, that we are now to live not for ourselves but for Him who for our sake died and was raised, and that in all this God's purpose was that we should "become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:14-21). Here the new-creation theme is propounded in a truly moral sense and no longer in the largely juridical sense that was dominant in the use of this theme in Galatians. It is in Romans that the Apostle treats expressly of baptism and the newness of life that it entails through our sharing in the paschal mystery of Christ. Just as expressly he now points to the moral exigencies of this new mode of existence, to the conversion of life it demands; for, far from letting sin reign in our mortal bodies, we are to yield ourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life and to offer our members to God as instruments of righteousness (Rom 6). Finally, in the Epistles of the Captivity, especially in Colossians, Paul presents us with a complete synthesis of his themes of conversion and the new creation, in which he lifts his thought from the level of the individual (which had predominated in his propounding of the old-new antithesis in Romans) to a universal, humanity-wide level. This can be seen by comparing the terminology of Galatians, where he speaks of the Christian as putting on Christ (Gal 3:27), with that of Colossians, where he is said to put on the new man (Col 3:9). In the latter case the Apostle is opposing Christ, who is all and in all (v. 11), to Adam, thereby evoking the contrast he has already stressed in 1 Corinthians (15:45-49) between the "first man" and the "last man."

In its most elaborated form, therefore, St. Paul's thought derives the conversion demanded of the Christian from the new humanity issuing from Christ's saving mysteries and their actualization in us in the sacrament of baptism. In other words, the moral life of the

<sup>26</sup> Cf. M. E. Boismard, "Baptism and Renewal," in *Baptism in the New Testament: A Symposium* (London, 1964) pp. 211-24; *id.*, "Conversion et vie nouvelle dans Saint Paul," *Lumière et vie* 47 (April-May, 1960) 71-94.

Christian is to be seen in the perspective not merely of the recreated individual but of the recreated human race—in short, in the context of the Church, the Body of Christ (to which, in fact, Paul alludes in the parenthetic passage immediately following here in Colossians [3:15]).

Indeed, this is the very context in which the life and activity of the first Christians is displayed to us in the Acts. They found the moral conversion required of them embodied in the style of life of the community they had entered. This *modus vivendi* had come to be known quite simply as “the Way.” St. Paul is recorded as admitting to Felix the governor that he did indeed worship the God of his fathers “according to the Way” (Acts 24:14), and Christians were said to be “those who belong to the Way” (Acts 9:2). So identified was this style of life with the community that lived according to it that the Christian body itself was known as the Way: evil was spoken of the Way (Acts 19:9) and it was persecuted to the death (Acts 22:4).

For the Christian convert, baptismal repentance and baptismal faith meant an introduction into a human community, into the society of those already “in Christ.” It was this community and society that provided him with a concrete and living norm of behavior: the Way.<sup>27</sup> What was most characteristic of this way of life was the fraternal communion in love that bound the members one to the other. This was a *koinōnia*, a common sharing in all the riches of divine life that belonged to Christians by reason of their redemptive union with Christ.<sup>28</sup> In true fellowship they shared Christ (Heb 3:14), the Spirit (Phil 2:1), the faith (Phm 6), grace (Phil 1:7), Christian suffering (Phil 3:10; 4:14), Christian comfort (2 Cor 1:7)—in fine, all things. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4–6).

Hence, the primitive Christian community at Jerusalem is depicted

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jacques Dupont, O.S.B., “La conversion dans les Actes des apôtres,” *Lumière et vie* 47 (April–May, 1960) 48–70; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–85; Bévenot–Russell, *art. cit.*, p. 789.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Morton Scott Enslin, *The Ethics of Paul* (New York–Nashville, 1957) pp. 72–75, 240–85; Paul Hinnebusch, O.P., “Christian Fellowship in the Epistle to the Philippians,” *The Bible Today*, no. 12 (April, 1964) 793–98; Cave, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–70; G. Ricciotti, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Milwaukee, 1958) pp. 77–78.

as devoting itself to the teaching of the apostles and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42), all of which conjures up the picture of a life lived very much in common in a spirit of loving accord. How often, in fact, these first Christians are said to act "with one accord," "together," "in assembly," or however we need to render the *homothymadon* that constantly recurs (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25).<sup>29</sup> Nor was this fellowship permitted to remain an internal communion only. It was translated into terms of practical daily living, expressing itself particularly in a pooling of temporal resources in order that the needs of all might be supplied (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Furthermore, when this fellowship extended into the Gentile world, especially through the apostolate of Paul, it was given external expression in the collection for the mother Church in Jerusalem, to which Paul devoted so much time and effort and for which he ran so many risks (Acts 24:17; Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8:4-9:13; Gal 2:10).<sup>30</sup>

It follows that the moral doctrine of the New Testament can never be conceived as an ethic of the individual as such. The Way, the moral life demanded of the Christian, is to be described, on the contrary, as a *koinōnia* ethic:<sup>31</sup> a standard of conduct for men in fellowship. For the goals Christians aim at are communal goals. What they seek in their responsible activity centers not in personal, individual betterment or gain but in the welfare of the kingdom. This was what St. Paul was already underlining in 1 Corinthians in his exposition of the Church as the Body of Christ: just as the body does not consist of one member but of many and all these members are required for the integrity and perfect functioning of the body, just as there is no discord in the body but the members have the same care for one another, all the members

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Bévenot-Russell, *art. cit.*, pp. 789-90; Ricciotti, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Maurice Goguel, "La collecte en faveur des saints de Jérusalem," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 5 (1925) 301-18; *id.*, *The Primitive Church*, p. 48; Enslin, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-93; Ricciotti, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 96-100; Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York, 1959) pp. 260-61.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Paul L. Lehmann, *Ethics in a Christian Context* (London, 1963) p. 80: "Indeed it is the *koinonia* context and character of Christian ethics that give ethical sense and substance to the seeking and the doing of God's will. For in the *koinonia*, and owing to the *koinonia*, man is concretely and inescapably involved in what God is doing in the world." Lehmann's understanding of the *koinōnia* and of the ethic for which it provides the context is, of course, in the Protestant tradition.

suffering if one member suffers, all the members rejoicing if one member is honored, so is it too with the Body of Christ, of which we are all individually members (1 Cor 12:12-27). In the light of this, the Christian's moral task emerges as that of enabling the whole body to grow in every way into Christ the Head, and thus to build itself up in love, through the proper working of each part (Eph 4:15-16).<sup>32</sup>

It is against this setting that we are to see Christ's "new commandment" of fraternal love (Jn 13:34; 15:12); for the *koinōnia* alone provides the context within which we may understand how this love sums up for us all our moral duties (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14), takes precedence even over our specifically religious acts (Mt 5:23-24; Mk 11:25; 12:33), and constitutes the Christian witness to the world of what God in Christ has done and is doing in its midst (Jn 13:35; 17:20-23). This *agapē*, of course, flows from and finds its model in the love of Christ Himself, for it is the gift of His Spirit (Rom 5:5). We are to abide in Christ's love (Jn 15:9), therefore, and to lead loving lives, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us (Eph 5:2). It is this that makes Christ's commandment of love a new commandment and the distinguishing mark of His followers (Jn 13:34-35): the "as I have loved you" makes all the difference.<sup>33</sup>

This love, which the Christian fellowship reflects in every dimension of its life and which it proffers to each of its members as a vital, concrete norm of conduct, is thus seen as an imitation of Christ on the deepest of levels. Through adopting and participating in the life of love of the Christian community (and Ignatius of Antioch, we may note, referred to the Church itself as "the *agapē*"<sup>34</sup>), the Christian obeys the bidding of the Gospel to learn from Jesus (Mt 11:29), to go after Him (Mk 8:34 and par.), to walk in His light (Jn 8:12), to follow His example (Jn 13:15; 1 Pt 2:21), to be of one mind with Him (Phil 2:5). Herein for the Christian lies his progressive assimilation to Christ, his

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Emile Mersch, S.J., *Morality and the Mystical Body* (New York, 1939) esp. chap. 5; *id.*, *The Whole Christ* (Milwaukee, 1938) esp. chap. 6; Häring, *op. cit.* 1, 80-84; Bévenot-Russell, *art. cit.*, pp. 788-89.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel*, pp. 62-65; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-25, 323-29; O. Prunet, *La morale chrétienne d'après les écrits johanniques* (Paris, 1957) pp. 96-115.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Epistle to the Trallians* 13, 1 (in *Ancient Christian Writers* 1 [Westminster, Md., 1946] 79). Cf. also J. S. Romanides, "The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 7 (1961-62) 53-77.



Head.<sup>35</sup> "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

#### THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Christians are men with their gaze firmly fixed on the future. Thus, St. Paul could describe the conversion of the Thessalonians not only as a turning from idols to the service of the living and true God but, at the same time, as an awaiting from heaven of the advent of God's Son, the risen Jesus, who is our deliverer from the wrath to come (1 Th 1:9-10); for our Christian life, so glorious a gift as it is, is but a foretaste, a prefiguring, and the seed of the eternal life to come.<sup>36</sup> The New Testament emphasizes very strongly, therefore, both the heavenly destiny that awaits us and the fearfulness of the loss of that destiny. For each of us there will be a divine judgment on the Day of the Lord (Mt 16:27; 19:28-30; 25:31-46). This biblical emphasis raises the question of the "sanctions" as motives in Christian living: Are we to be led, or to what extent should we be led, in our moral effort by the desire for reward or the fear of punishment?

St. Paul, for example, refers often enough to the judgment that is to come (Rom 2:6-8; 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10; Eph 5:6; 2 Tim 4:1, 14). Furthermore, he heaps metaphor upon metaphor to keep before his readers the goal they are to aim at: they must be like workers who

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Manson, *Ethics and the Gospel*, p. 102: "It is the Messiah whose life and death exemplifies and interprets the ideal which is summed up in the commandment 'Love as I have loved you.' In the last resort the Christian ethic inevitably comes back to Christ himself. It is from him that it derives its content, its form and its authority. Its force is most likely to be felt by those who belong to the community which he founded and maintains, the community which belongs to him. And the power to carry it into effect is most likely to be found in living association with that community and with its head." Cf. Spicq, *Vie morale* . . . , pp. 42-47; Delhaye, "L'Obligation. . ." pp. 327-29, 370-71; *id.*, "L'Exigence. . ." pp. 434-36; P. Prigent, "L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ d'après quelques textes du Nouveau Testament," *Eglise et théologie* 25 (1962) 15-33; H. E. Barefoot, "The Ethics of Jesus," *Review and Expositor* 59 (1962) 481-92.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet, P.S.S., "Le mystère pascal et la résurrection des chrétiens d'après les Epîtres pauliniennes," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 79 (1957) 337-54; Spicq, *Vie morale* . . . , chap. 6; J. F. Nielsen, "Macht und Ohnmacht des Christen: Ein Beitrag zur ntl. Auffassung der Kirche," *Bibel und Leben* 4 (1963) 1-19; O. Knoch, "Die eschatologische Frage, ihre Entwicklung und ihr gegenwärtiger Stand: Versuch einer knappen Übersicht," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 6 (1962) 112-20.

labor in such a way as to earn their salary (1 Cor 3:8-9), athletes training and running so as to win the prize (1 Cor 9:24-27), soldiers fighting for victory (2 Tim 2:3-4; 4:7), husbandmen whose harvest will be in proportion to their sowing (2 Cor 9:6; Gal 6:7-9). Accordingly, it may seem *prima facie* that the Apostle is presenting the hope of reward as the primary incentive in the Christian's moral activity. Further and closer scrutiny proves this to be false nonetheless. In most of the passages in which Paul propounds the rewards to come or the punishments that threaten, he has for his aim not the inculcating of a moral incentive but the defense or explanation of some aspect of Christian truth. When, in fact, he does *ex professo* present the Christian with motivation for his responsible behavior, he provides motives of a quite different order: motives drawn from the Christian life itself, from the reality of the new life in Christ.<sup>87</sup> For we are sons of God, who must imitate the heavenly Father (Eph 5:1); we are dead and risen with Christ in baptism and therefore dedicated now to a heavenly-mindedness and to newness of life (Rom 6:1-14; Col 3:1-11); we are one body in Christ and thus presented with the task of building up the Body in love (Eph 4:1-29); we are temples of God's Spirit, which must not be destroyed and whose Divine Inhabitant must be not grieved but glorified (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20; Eph 4:30). It is motives such as these that St. Paul stresses in all his parenetic passages.

This is not to deny that on occasion the Apostle will use the sanctions too in order to spur on his Christian readers, and, while the motives of hope and fear as such play a rather minor role in the Pauline ethic, they surely play a much larger part in the moral teaching of Jesus in the Gospels.<sup>88</sup> It is true that the Saviour purified the current notion of retribution (while retaining much of its language and imagery). In particular, He attacked the exaggerated concept of the value of human observances and the bargaining with God involved in measur-

<sup>87</sup> Cf. G. Didier, *Désintéressement du chrétien: La rétribution dans la morale de saint Paul* (Paris, 1955) esp. pp. 219-33; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-77; M. H. Grumm, "Motivation in Paul's Epistles," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 35 (1964) 210-18; Delhayé, "L'Exigence. . .," pp. 407-8; Cave, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. W. Pesch, C.S.S.R., *Der Lohngedanke in der Lehre Jesu verglichen mit der religiösen Lohnlehre des Spätjudentums* (Munich, 1955); Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-60; Delhayé, "L'Obligation. . .," pp. 326-27; Schnackenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-67; Marshall, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-206; Cave, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-52.

ing divine recompense by such value (Mt 20:1-15; Lk 13:1-5; 14:7-11; 15:11-32; 17:7-10). Moreover, the conditions He states for receiving the divine reward are clean contrary to the calculations of a human prudence (Mt 5:3-12; Lk 6:20-23). They center in the personal following of and union with Jesus Himself (Mt 11:28-30; 19:28-30; Mk 10:29-31; Lk 22:28-30). No legalistic or formalistic attitude can be in keeping with the context which all this sets up. Nevertheless, it remains true also that Jesus never hesitated to appeal to the idea of a reward: the persecuted are to rejoice because their reward is great in heaven (Mt 5:12); the man who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward (Mt 10:41). On the other hand, He is ready to invoke also the fear of hell (Mt 10:28).

How are we to reconcile such apparently disparate motives in the Christian life? The solution lies in the nature of the rewards or punishments awaiting the Christian. For what we look forward to as our glorious destiny, the crown of our fidelity to God in Christ, is not a reward extrinsic and heterogeneous to the supernatural life we already enjoy. It is, on the contrary, the perfection and fulfilment of that life. The three key ideas depicting the happiness promised in the New Testament are those of the vision of God, the re-encounter with Christ, and the reunion of the elect.<sup>39</sup> But we already know God in the obscurity of faith, and we are simply waiting for the coming of the perfect which will mean the passing of the imperfect, for the full understanding that will succeed the knowledge in part (1 Cor 13:8-12); the meeting we shall have with Christ in the Parousia will not be a first encounter, for we are here and now in Christ and He is our life (Col 3:3-4); the reunion of the elect around the throne of God will be the consummation of the fellowship achieved on earth in the Body of Christ (Eph 5:25-27). Hence, Christian hope does not mean envisaging our earthly existence as if it were a sort of examination with marks and a prize to be awarded at the end. It is not that we look forward to a gift to be made simply in the future. The gift has already been made,

<sup>39</sup> These three key ideas are emphasized by A. George, S.M., "Le bonheur promis par Jésus d'après le Nouveau Testament," *Lumière et vie* 52 (April-May, 1961) 36-58. Cf. also A. Roets, "De hemel," *Collationes Brugenses et Gandavenses* 7 (1961) 486-504; H. Wulf, "Das himmlische Jerusalem," *Geist und Leben* 34 (1961) 321-25.

and the motive for our moral endeavor lies in the fact that we must do honor to this gift of God. What we aim at is not so much the obtaining of mercy (which in Christ is ours already) as the expressing of gratitude for mercy.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently, just as the norm of conduct for the Christian is found in his baptismal life itself, in the *agapē* with its intrinsic claims and its spiritual energies, so the Christian's motivation too is found there. It lies in the inner dynamism of our Christ-life, seeking as it does its own completion and fulfilment and term and fearing a failure in achieving this. It is here that we see the true emphasis and orientation of Christian vigilance. In their proper context, therefore, desire for reward and fear of punishment are not mercenary motives or indicative of a prudential, commercial morality but expressive of truly Christian love. It is only when they are erected into egoistic incentives of individualistic self-interest and as such constituted the central and ultimate motivation in Christian living (and the danger of this always remains) that they must be condemned as unworthy of the Christian ideal.<sup>41</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

From these considerations on the nature of the biblical ethic it is possible to outline some of the characteristics that should be salient in a Christian moral theology that stems from it.

1) Most basic of all is the *charity-centeredness* of the scriptural teaching. Christian moral life is a loving response to the prevenient love of God revealed in Christ and His saving deeds. This response of love, in its turn, is to be affirmed and validated in our worship and our day-to-day fidelity to the law of Christ.

2) Since the *agapē* which we must thus strive to express and embody is our common sharing in the grace-life of Christ, a morality centered in it will be at once *Christocentric* and *ecclesial*.

3) In the same way, it will be what has been called a "paschal moral": not a morality that consists in the static fulfilment of moral norms but one that is *dynamic* and *progressive*, "which, in hope, keeps

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Didier, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-26; A. N. Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus* (New York, 1950) p. 93; Lillie, *Studies...*, pp. 149-50.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Håring, *op. cit.* 1, 317-20; A. Moretti, "Parusia e morale," *Rivista biblica* 10 (1962) 32-58; Werner Schöllgen, *Moral Problems Today* (New York, 1963) pp. 116-18.

us in tension from good to better, from death to resurrection, from the present life to the future life."<sup>42</sup>

4) To point up the other side of the coin, there will be in such an ethic *no legalism, no minimalism, no individualism*.

These are surely characteristics, positive and negative, to be gleaned from the biblical sources.

The Catholic moral theology of recent centuries has been frequently reproached with a failure to reflect these features. It is clear that on every level of moral teaching—in the classroom situation, in the confessional, in the pulpit (and therefore in the seminary above all)—there is need for a revitalization of our presentation of moral doctrine.<sup>43</sup> Christian moral life must be presented again as essentially a media-

<sup>42</sup> René Carpentier, S.J., "Le primat de l'Amour-Charité comme méthode de théologie morale," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 83 (1961) 506.

<sup>43</sup> This is not a need that has been awakened to for the first time in our own times. The work of the nineteenth-century authors John Michael Sailer (*Handbuch der christlichen Moral zunächst für künftige katholische Seelsorger und dann für jeden gebildeten Christen* [Munich, 1817]) and John Baptist Hirscher (*Die christliche Moral als Lehre von der Verwirklichung des göttlichen Reiches in der Menschheit* [Tübingen, 1835–36]) constituted a spirited attempt to produce a renewed and revitalized moral theology. A similar attempt was made earlier in this present century by Fritz Tillmann in his *Handbuch der katholischen Sittenlehre* (4th ed.; Düsseldorf, 1950). These theologians deserved a wider influence than they actually wielded. At the present time the most influential authors in the new approaches to moral theology have been Bernard Häring (*The Law of Christ*) and Gérard Gilleman, S.J., whose doctoral dissertation was published under the English title *The Primacy of Charity in Moral Theology* (Westminster, Md., 1959). Cf. also John C. Ford, S.J., and Gerald Kelly, S.J., *Contemporary Moral Theology* 1 (Westminster, Md., 1958) chaps. 4–6; René Carpentier, S.J., "Vers une morale de la charité," *Gregorianum* 34 (1953) 32–55; *id.*, "Le primat de l'amour dans la vie morale," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 83 (1961) 3–24; *id.*, "Le primat de la charité en morale surnaturelle," *ibid.*, pp. 255–70; *id.*, "Le primat de l'Amour-Charité comme méthode de théologie morale," *ibid.*, pp. 492–509; F. Clarke, S.J., "The Challenge to Moral Theology," *Clergy Review* 38 (1953) 214–23; Philippe Delhay, "La théologie morale d'hier et d'aujourd'hui," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 27 (1953) 112–30; Th. Deman, "Eudémonisme et charité en théologie morale," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses* 29 (1953) 41–57; Gustave Erneck, "Die katholische Moraltheologie heute," *Theologie und Glaube* 41 (1951–52) 127–42; Jacques Leclercq, "Comment enseigner la morale chrétienne en notre temps?" *Collectanea Mechliniensia* 36 (1951) 560–68; Michael E. McDonagh, "Moral Theology Today: A Theology of the Christian Life," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 28 (1961) 299–303; J. Kraus, "Zum Problem des christozentrischen Aufbaues der Moraltheologie," *Divus Thomas* (Fribourg) 30 (1952) 257–72; G. Thils, *Tendances actuelles en théologie morale* (Gembloux, 1940); Ivo Zeiger, S.J., "De conditione theologiae moralis moderna," *Periodica de re morali, canonica, liturgica* 28 (1939) 177–89; Enda McDonagh, "Moral Theology: The Need for Renewal," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 31 (1964) 269–82.

tion of Christian love in the context of religious encounter and dialogue. The faithful must be taught anew to set their sights on the moral ideal of the kingdom and not to make the commandments and their minimal demands the center and focus of their moral effort. They must learn once more to regard this moral effort not from their own individual standpoint alone but in the light of their fellowship with God in Christ and with their human brethren in Christ.

That this calls for far-reaching changes in the whole methodology of moral theology goes without saying. For example, the use of the Decalogue as its framework will at once be seen as inadequate.<sup>44</sup> But it is not within the scope of our considerations here to suggest the lines along which systematization of our moral doctrine might proceed. Suffice it to say that, whatever the methodology, our presentation of morality must be based on and must stem from the scriptural data. Only a biblically-orientated moral doctrine can be a truly Christian moral doctrine.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Philippe Delhay, "Le décalogue et sa place dans l'enseignement de la morale chrétienne," *L'Ami du clergé* 73 (1963) 49-52, 97-101, 199-204, 241-48, 289-91; O. Lottin, O.S.B., *Principes de morale* 1 (Paris, 1946) 33-34; Sister M. Pierce Butler, M.S.B.T., "Must We Teach Morality according to the Decalogue?" *Worship* 37 (1963) 293-300.