

CURRENT THEOLOGY

NOTES ON MORAL THEOLOGY:
SEPTEMBER, 1970—MARCH, 1971

The six months under review are promising ones for pliers of the ethical trade, both general practitioners and specialists. There is something for everybody. For the more theoretically inclined, the first two sections treat social consciousness in ethics, political theology, and the roles in Christian ethics of responsibility, experience, and the social sciences. For those more down to earth, subsequent sections cover celibacy, priesthood, abortion, and medical ethics.

SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND POLITICAL THEOLOGY

Latin America is astir these days with the movement to throw off old political, economic, and social repressions. These stirrings find expression not just in activism but in the writings of Latin thinkers. Thus we have witnessed the emergence of a theology of liberation. But a theology is abortive unless it issues in an ethic of action. Rubem Alves is among the more profound Latin thinkers in this vein.¹ He sees the perennial peril of ethics in becoming formalistic, a set of sterile propositions:

One of the original sins of our theological tradition has been our unconscious belief . . . that words enjoy an autonomy of their own, so that once the word of truth is uttered, it becomes reality. The result of this mistake is that our theological enterprise, more often than we would like to believe, could be classified as linguistic ritual: a play of words without power to bring about new realities. . . .²

The charge of linguistic ritual is hardly calculated to reassure the ethicist. Yet he is aware that knowledge is not virtue. Educational psychology has long held that knowledge of the good has a low correlation with good behavior. Man lives by his values, those dynamisms that stir his emotions and engage his whole person. We must, then, Alves urges, revise our theory of learning.

The main task of ethics is not to solve the problems that beset man, as we conceived it to be in the past. It is man himself, or rather the creation of a new man, one whose oppressed consciousness is liberated, not to be acted upon but to act. In a word it is "*conscientización*."³ Brave word,

¹ "Some Thoughts on a Program for Ethics," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 26 (1971) 153-70. On liberation cf. his "God's People and Man's Liberation," *ISAL Abstracts* 3 (1971) 7-12. The whole issue is entitled "A Theology of Liberation." Alves is also the author of *A Theology of Human Hope* (Washington, D.C., 1969).

² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³ The concept plays an important part in the thinking of the Latin American bishops; e.g., at the Conference of Medellín, where it is described as awakening "the conscience of the

but is it true? Ethics has tried in the past to tell man how to act and what to do. But language is not sacramental; it lacks the power to effect what it signifies. Should not ethics, Alves asks, concentrate on the educand? Should not man be the primary object rather than the imparting of ethical knowledge? Sound educational theory has always held that formation of the student takes precedence over the giving of information.

The weakness of traditional ethics, Alves continues, is that it has held itself to the given, man in the world as it is. It has been trapped in the present, losing sight of the future, man and the world as they should become—in a proper sense of the word, utopia.⁴ “The ethical man, the one who creates a world in his own image, is the utopian man. His eyes are turned toward the future, and only from this future which exists by a creative act of his will, does he turn back over his present, and apprehends it through the transforming requirements of the future.”⁵

The future, Alves states, comes into being through imagination. But alas, poor imagination has been domesticated by technology, that secularized version of providence, supplying “all” of man’s wants. It has been anesthetized against utopia, lulled to a sleep from which it must be liberated. “The task of Christian ethics, thus, is to take the often hidden and unconscious groanings of the oppressed, their aspirations and values, to transform them in conscious language and to give them back to those to whom they belong—but now no longer as simple groanings but as a tool for the understanding of the world and for its transformation.”⁶

Born out of a Third World groaning for liberation, Alves’ ethic is yet valid for the world as a whole; for the whole world groans for redemption. The author knows the nature of ethical science, respects its relationship to past and present, finds an imbalance in conventional ethics favoring the present, and opts for a future-oriented ethic. He is at once a trustworthy and an original thinker.

Not only is there a theology of liberation in the making; there is also a political theology, not to be confused with political ethics. The latter asks, what is the morality of war, of a public policy, or an international agreement? Political theology asks, what is the role of the Christian and the churches in society? It says that the political world is the subject on which theology should concentrate today.

If the idea sounds mundane or secularistic, this may be the fault of theology itself, which in its more metaphysical and personalistic forms has

masses regarding their condition of life, promoting aspirations and the urgent need for radical transformations” (*Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops* 2, 237).

⁴ Cf. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (Harper & Row), for a rocking view of the future as a source of directions for a future-oriented ethic.

⁵ *Art. cit.*, p. 160.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

methodically screened out political reality in the past. How could God, it seemed to say, be found in politics? Yet Augustine found the Lord of history at work in the political scene of his day. For our day Sam Keen reminds us; "In a given age it may be politics, or art, or psychology, or education in which the most lucid testimony to the sacred is to be found."⁷ The Spirit moves where He will and the theologian may not a priori exclude His primary presence from any area of human activity.

Jürgen Moltmann discerns this presence in the political.⁸ Here it is that theology must ascertain "whether the crucified one is made present or the idols of the nations served."⁹ History teaches us that we dare not reduplicate the error of earlier Christians, who identified *pax Christi* with *pax Romana*. Being eschatological and universal, God's peace cannot be identified with either *pax Americana* or *Sovietica*, with technocratic or revolutionary dreams of peace.¹⁰

Specifically, the problem of political theology is to work out the relationship of Christian faith to the political "religion" of a given country. The task of an American theologian, accordingly, is to reflect upon the political creed of America in the light of Christianity. Fortunately for us, Moltmann has been a student of our political life. Fortunately, too, he has the methodological sense to report not just his own observations but the sophisticated reflections of two sociologists of religion, Peter Berger and Robert Bellah.

Bellah sees American political religion in part as messianic (witness the exodus of the Pilgrim fathers to a new land and life) and as crusading (recall the policy of containment of the great enemy, communism). But it is also particularistic; political salvation is for America and for the gentile allies of her way of life. The problem, then, for a Christian political theology is to purge American salvation of nationalistic elements so that it can universalize itself into a world political religion. Thus, for example, national self-interest would become concern for the family of nations.

Berger, on the other hand, views our political life through a more critical eye. The glorification of success is so endemic to the American ethos, to cite one fatal flaw, that the churches should disassociate themselves from the religion of American society. "The Christian faith, for the sake of the crucified one, cannot accommodate itself to the political religions of the societies in which it lives."¹¹

Having presented two judgments on civic religion, universalization and disestablishment, Moltmann describes the task facing political theology:

⁷ *To a Dancing God* (New York, 1970) p. 157.

⁸ "Political Theology," *Theology Today* 28 (1971) 6-23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), cited *ibid.*, p. 16.

"A Christian 'political theology' wants to bring Christians as Christians, that is, as liberators, to the place where they are being waited upon by the crucified one. In the suffering and condemned ones of this earth Christ is waiting upon his own and their presence."¹² Though he does not elaborate a systematic theology of political reality, he does set up the problematic and point out the way. Such a theology, though grappling with secular reality, would represent not a secularizing trend but a sacralizing one. We have felt in our bones that not all is well with the Church's stance regarding the world, that she has been too closely aligned with certain aspirations of human society. Moltmann confirms this judgment, indicates this state of affairs as a legitimate and necessary target of theology, and suggests how to set matters aright.

The absence of a theology of politics no doubt helps explain our deficiency in social consciousness and points up the need to sensitize our outlook. Paul Weber addresses himself to this problem in "The Role of Clergymen in Foreign Affairs."¹³ As a priest-political scientist, he speaks with competence. His remarks are particularly topical in a period when clergymen run for public office.

Weber is unimpressed by more traditional reservations regarding clerical concern for politics. These are outweighed, he feels, by the demands of students for classroom attention to matters political, by the credibility gap, and a profound disillusionment in the nation with certain government policies. Appositely he cites *Pacem in terris*: "Once again we deem it opportune to remind our children of their duty to take an active part in public life. . . ."¹⁴ Moreover, he finds the clergy especially suited to raise the specifically moral questions which the statesman neglects, engrossed as he is with the issue of political feasibility of foreign policies: "In today's world only the Churches and their spokesmen—the clergy—have the organization, the education, the financial independence and the interest to provide a steady, informal moral voice."¹⁵ This is situational morality at its best; the need is there, Weber seems to say, and the unique ability of the clergy to fulfil it. The two add up to a moral imperative, "world responsibility," he calls it, which "holds that all citizens, according to their abilities and resources, have a direct moral responsibility for the social problems of this earth. . . ."¹⁶

There are two sources of this responsibility, he finds, causal and remedial. First, we have caused the sorry spectacle of our present world by colonialism, by capitalist and communist exploitation, and by our previous indifference. Secondly, we are responsible in that we have the remedy at hand, the material resources and technical know-how to solve the

¹² *Art. cit.*, p. 23.

¹³ *Pastoral Life* 20 (1971) 8-14.

¹⁴ *Pacem in terris*, no. 146.

¹⁵ *Art. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

problems of the world. This responsibility is buttressed by self-abnegation, which demands that we sacrifice personally and nationally some of the luxuries and excess profits we have acquired at the expense of other peoples.

Weber does not hesitate to pass judgment on the question of our national budget priorities. He courageously pronounces radically immoral our position as foremost supplier of world armaments. Force there must be, but national security may not be purchased at so high a price as present policy dictates. For one reason, it is based on a false alternative, risk to our security or nonrisk, as government spokesmen would have it. The real choice is that between risk and risk. The very deployment of massive weapons systems, calculated to remove security risk, increases the risk of their use.¹⁷

What of the role of the clergyman in all this? Should he seek public office? This, Weber thinks, is beyond the normal scope of clerical action. He has, though, the right to vote, to write to his representatives, to publish, to preach, to demonstrate, to protest—in short, anything the normal citizen might do. Teaching and preaching he finds particularly appropriate. Not, however, just the presentation of general moral principles. The clergyman's message to God's people should treat foreign aid, warfare, and the selling of weapons to nations. Personal opinions are out of place in the pulpit but the moral aspects of these subjects are fair game. Finally, raising a lone voice is inadequate. The clergy should consider joining such organizations as the Council of Religion and Foreign Affairs, and priests' associations should bring moral force to bear on foreign policy.

One could question this or that conclusion of the author. For example, does the priest have the right to "do what the normal citizen does" when strong resistance is provoked among his people? What about the captive congregation squirming under the political sermon? But, then, should not people learn to distinguish between the priest acting as citizen and as dispenser of the sacred mysteries? And do not the social encyclicals treat such concrete questions as foreign aid and selling weapons to poorer nations? A strong case can be made for both. Weber has done so.

Hervé Carrier must have had in mind the inadequacy of moral knowledge to effect moral behavior when he wrote "How Will Catholic Universities Confront World Development?"¹⁸ The sociologist Rector of the Gregorian University in Rome leans heavily on experience as teacher in his four proposals. First, the consciences of all ranks in the university, students, faculty, and administration, must be sensitized to the moral

¹⁷ On warfare cf. John A. Rohr, "Just Wars and Selective Objectors," *Review of Politics* 33 (1971) 185-201.

¹⁸ *Gregorianum* 52 (1971) 5-25.

values inherent in development. Second, development theory should not be purely economic. An integral theory includes other and higher values. The program of necessity must include interdisciplinary studies. Third, involvement in concrete action projects should be inaugurated, such as exchange of students between developing and developed nations, teacher exchange, scientific missions to other lands, and collaboration in programs of assistance in poor areas. Finally, there must be student participation in the community life of the university thus socially engaged.

RESPONSIBILITY

Charles Curran demonstrates that interest in the ethical model of responsibility is not a passing fad but a surpassing contribution to moral thought.¹⁹ This conclusion flows readily from Curran's appeal to the documents of the World Council of Churches and the writings of H. Richard Niebuhr, Joseph Fletcher, Gustafson and Laney, Bernard Häring, Robert Johann, Harvey Cox, Barth, Brunner, and Joseph Sittler. All indeed lend respectability to this new child of an older parentage.

Furthermore, the roots of this development are deeply imbedded in various theological traditions: neo-orthodox theology's response of man to the Word of God, contemporary theology's view of man as "creating" his own existence in a better world, and in current eschatology, which ascribes more value to existence this side of the parousia than did its forebear. In addition, responsibility finds generous support in the philosophy of subjectivity and the theological transcendentalism of Rahner and Lonergan, as well as in the trend to historical consciousness, which de-emphasizes conformity to pre-existing norms as compared with classicism.

Having found such support for the ethic of responsibility in past and present, Curran appropriately asks what its future is. He finds its permanence assured despite "a somewhat widespread opinion that moral theology or Christian ethics will cease within this century, if not the present decade. Such predictions apparently stem from the fact that the moral life no longer relies on absolute norms and that personal responsibility will eliminate the need for the science of moral theology. This conclusion distorts a proper understanding of responsibility."²⁰ His support for this opinion is a footnote reference to a now controversial article by John Milhaven, "Exit for Ethicists."²¹

The reference could mislead the reader. Milhaven's point is that conventional moral theology will cease in favor of an ethic of responsibility. Conventional moral was mainly a legal ethic spelled out in terms of fulfill-

¹⁹ "Responsibility in Moral Thought: Centrality, Foundations and Implications for Ecclesiology," *Jurist* 31 (1971) 113-42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²¹ *Commonweal* 91 (1969) 135-41.

ing the law, divine, ecclesiastical, and human. Its basic question was, what must I do to carry out God's will? In Milhaven's view, the new ethic asks "How can" questions: "How can we bring peace to these nations? Not: is this war unjust? How can we appropriately reenact Jesus' last meal? Not: what are the pertinent rites and rubrics? . . . How can one create a healthy appreciation of sexuality in one's community? Not: what is pornography and should it be banned?"²²

Hopefully, Curran and Milhaven will prove correct in their prediction that responsibility will be the orientation of the majority of Christians in the not too distant future. To play the devil's advocate, I predict that the question of law, of rights and obligation, will continue to occupy stage center along with responsibility in the future. Two considerations lead me to this conclusion: technology and the movement to one-world community. The technological ethic asks the question, may we not use all the power science has put into the hands of man? May we not, for example, use the mass media to promote homosexuality as a means of restricting population growth? Or manipulate the genes of native tribes to produce mostly male babies, thus inducing a social structure of polyandry, again restricting population?²³ The best answer to such proposals is, do you have a right to use such intervention?

Granted that the new ethicists can parry such proposals with the fine blade of fitting response, to their satisfaction and that of an elite, the ethical obtuseness of those who espouse the technological ethic will more easily yield to the bludgeon of legal ethics.²⁴ Similarly, the slow, painful process of hammering into being a one-world community will proceed more surely on the anvil of law. So entrenched is the profit motive in American business and so powerful the Pentagon that morality will come about through the sledge-hammer blows of rights and obligations. The citadel of the law must be captured in order to redirect its power toward justice. Since Congress is peopled mostly by lawyers, legal ethics offers better hope of freeing the nations from economic and military dependence. Moreover, the support of the great silent majority must be enlisted. Appeal to law and order, therefore, offers greater expectation of a hearing. I predict that this process will require our major effort for the next forty years.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²³ Views voiced in unpublished discussions. It is not suggested that the majority of scientists entertain such sentiments.

²⁴ To counter the determinism of technology, Paul Peachey suggests an ally in the counterculture which "may represent a reassertion of the claims of freedom." Cf. "Today's Counter Culture: The Radical Reformation as Analogue," *Church History* 40 (1971) 55-56. Cf. also Bradley C. Hanson, "The Counterculture and Theology," *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (1971) 32-39.

Admittedly, fitting response must be developed *pari passu*. This is necessary to motivate the elite in getting to the sources of power and to prepare the way for the ultimate take-over by responsibility and for mankind's evolution to a higher stage of ethical consciousness.²⁵

Curran concludes his timely article with the touchy topic of power in the Church. The word raises Catholic hackles. We dislike the association of power with the Church, evoking as it does association with politics and international power blocks. Yet we must face reality. The Church does exercise enormous power both internally and in civil society. Not to examine the use of this power is to evade responsibility, the responsibility of all in the Church. Curran deserves credit for raising this delicate issue. He does so diplomatically in terms of the "institutional motif" and the "operational motif."²⁶ Both are legitimate concepts of analysis. The institutional motif is concerned mainly with the structure of the Church. Its aim is order and justice. The operational motif looks to the power which builds law and an order of justice. Both are indispensable. Without them basic unity comes apart at the seams.

Structure versus power is not a purely legal question, Curran points out, but also an ecclesiological one. From this viewpoint it is coresponsibility. The author finds an overemphasis on the institutional motif with its primacy of order, to the neglect of the operational, the use of power. Coresponsibility calls for the democratization of power in the Church. The reaction to *Humanae vitae* would not have been so divisive had its implementation been more sensitive to the operational aspect, that is, the power of bishops, of laity, and of theologians. This is true independently of the question of the truth of the Encyclical's teaching.

In conclusion, Curran sees coresponsibility calling for the setting up of diocesan grievance boards, the allowance of clerical and lay associations, the emergence of forms of religious community life other than those juridically recognized, and the like, as necessary though only partial solutions to the problem of coresponsibility and efficient operation.

Had we looked sooner to the distribution of power, we might have avoided the public scandal of dissidence and extreme polarization in certain dioceses. Nor would we have had to wait so long for resolution of such problems. The question of power will continue to plague all of us, unfortunately, for some time. It is the result of the decentralization of power decreed by the Second Vatican Council. The spectre (should we say the Spirit?) of the Council still haunts us.

²⁵ For articles on the new morality, cf. G. J. C. Marchant, "Christian Ethics in Current Debate," *Churchman* 84 (1970) 271-76; Stanley Harakas, "An Orthodox Christian Approach to the 'New Morality,'" *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 15 (1970) 107-39.

²⁶ Borrowed from Edward Long, Jr., *A Survey of Christian Ethics* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1967).

It would be eminently desirable for the shift of power to take place powerlessly. If only pope and bishops could peacefully harmonize their respective teaching and ruling functions, bishops and priests, priests and laity.²⁷ Such redistribution on paper rarely becomes reality without conflict. Conflict, however, can be not only inevitable but healthy, sociology tells us. Unfortunately, it implies that both parties speak from the position of power which they have. It is human to relinquish power—reluctantly.

ROLE OF EXPERIENCE AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Moral theology may indeed follow the model of responsibility in the future. This cannot, however, be an absolute predication. The “responsibilists” do not mean it as such, though the unwary reader might take it to be so. In reality, ethics of the future will be pluralistic, embracing a diversity of models. For a repressed people, the model of liberation could be most appropriate. What would best serve an Oriental culture or a Black subculture cannot be determined a priori. A social-science study of a given group could indicate with most accuracy the wave length which an ethic should select. Only such a study would reveal the mores and moral sensitivities to which the ethic should respond.

A common element, however, of any ethic would be experience. Enda McDonagh treats its importance in “Towards a Christian Theology of Morality.”²⁸ Conventional moral theology, he finds, has been remiss in this respect. It has not taken sufficient account of the experiential background of the educand.²⁹ It must acknowledge that teaching is a process. Teaching is a co-operative discovery by teacher and learner, not a unilateral communication of the teacher’s experience.³⁰

Another feature requiring moral research, the author states, is that of group-to-group morality. We have done pretty well with the relation of the individual to society and of society to the individual. The group as object and subject of moral experience has been neglected. No wonder, he points out, that we cannot come to grips with our individual responsibility for the Vietnam War as a member of an academic community, a religious order, or other association.³¹

²⁷ A layman said recently in a parish renewal discussion: “The ‘lowerarchy’ does not really want the laity to assume responsibility in the Church.”

²⁸ *Irish Theological Quarterly* 37 (1970) 187-98.

²⁹ For a development of the role of experience, cf. John Milhaven, “Objective Moral Evaluation of Consequences,” in this issue of THEOLOGICAL STUDIES.

³⁰ The author does not indicate the role of the behavioral sciences as revelatory of experience. Perhaps he will treat this important issue of current ethical discussion in the next installment of his serialized article.

³¹ “Towards a Christian Theology of Morality II,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 38 (1971) 3-20.

The problem of a group-to-group ethic was raised years ago by Reinhold Niebuhr in his classic *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. This giant among Christian social ethicists died as these lines were being written. The question which he and McDonagh raise will not be answered here. I will, however, suggest three tentative rules to assist the member whose group wants to take a stand on, say, the war in Vietnam. Others are invited to add to them. First, trust the group judgment, though one has not been able to study the question himself, when the reliable others have taken a stand after mature reflection. Second, avoid the exaggerated requirement that the group statement perfectly reflect one's own position. Third, make a projection of the likely reaction of the audience whom the statement will reach; especially be aware of oversimplification by the mass media.

Several years ago the recommendation was made in these pages that we welcome ethical conclusions coming from the human sciences—or better, from social scientists.³² The rationale behind this suggestion was in part that the scientist can have a better grasp of some complicated situations than the moralist. Facts are not values, granted, but what ought to be is based on, and flows out of, what is.³³ Happily, not all behavioral scientists eschew ethical value judgments for fear of being considered unscientific by their empiric peers. Psychologists and psychiatrists have long been willing to leave their lasts to take part in ethical dialogue—Erich Fromm, Erik Erikson, and Marc Oraison, to mention a few. Kenneth Galbraith, Barbara Ward, and Kenneth Boulding are among the few economists who have put their competent hand to social ethics. Even fewer political scientists have dared not to be “academic.” It comes as a pleasing surprise, then, to find the relation of ethics to political science explored in the pages of the prestigious *American Political Science Review*. Duncan McRae, Jr., professor of political science and sociology at the University of Chicago, says that political analysts may not dispense with ethics: “To make recommendations on particular (public) policies one must consider specific facts as well as ethical valuations, and perhaps assume a more responsible and less academic role.”³⁴ He cites the advantages in political scientists consulting the major political philosophers:

The disparate goals and values sought in particular policy studies will be linked together, and those who study public policy will acquire special competence in an-

³² THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 28 (1967) 311–22. Cf. also Robert Springer, *Conscience and the Behavioral Sciences* (Washington, D.C. 1969) pp. 29–38.

³³ For the importance of the empiric data to moral, cf. Edward Hamel, S.J., “Lux evangelii in constitutione ‘Gaudium et spes,’” *Periodica* 60 (1971) 103–20.

³⁴ “Scientific Communication, Ethical Argument, and Public Policy,” *APSR* 65 (1971) 38–50, at p. 50.

alyzing these interrelations. This discourse may also aid the cooperation among academic disciplines that is necessary for intelligent policy advice on major questions. With this stimulation the universities may become more nearly inner-directed in their work on policy matters, rather than hired servants of power. . . .³⁵

Ethicists should applaud such collaboration by political scientists, and the resulting influence on political leaders.

Robert Bellah, sociologist at the University of California, Berkeley, explores the relation of sociology to religion.³⁶ Addressing himself to his fellow scientists, he appeals for subjectivity in their study of religion. Not that the detached objectivity of science should be abandoned, but a new dimension should be added. They should study religious systems also as committed religionists themselves, he forthrightly maintains. Several considerations bring him to this explosive conclusion. For one thing, "reality is inner as well as outer . . . the [religious] symbol is not decoration but our only way of apprehending the real."³⁷ Objective cognitive study of religion in terms of sociological categories does not exhaust religious reality. Furthermore, one cannot totally prescind from one's own implicit religious position, be he Christian or Buddhist. Nor should he prescind. Our culture has become so fragmented and dissociated, he believes, the split between science and religion so deep, that it is nearly impossible to communicate the integrated meaning to life which young people so passionately seek. Sociologists should communicate the value of religion to their students, not merely a studied analysis of religion.

Bellah's case for an integration of science and religion by the sociologist advocates of religion is stronger than this résumé can show. Certainly it will raise resentment and fear among theologians. Rightly so. I submit, however, that this supportive stance of sociology vis-à-vis religion is less threatening to religious faith than the older cognitive bias of the sociology of religion: "This position held that the only valid knowledge is in the form of falsifiable scientific hypotheses. The task, then, with respect to religion has been to discover the falsifiable propositions hidden within it, discard the unverifiable assertions and those clearly false, and even with respect to the ones that seem valid to abandon the symbolic and metaphorical disguise in which they are cloaked."³⁸

Bellah's suggested *rapprochement* of religion and sociology, maintaining the autonomy of their respective tasks, calls for serious attention by

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Christianity and Symbolic Realism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 9 (1970) 89-96, 112-15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

sociologists and theologians.³⁹ It portends profound consequences for the future of both disciplines and contains substantial promise for the healing of fragmented people in a fragmented culture.⁴⁰

PRIESTHOOD

By now we have all heard of the preliminary conclusions of the Sociological and Psychological Reports on the life and ministry of the priest in America. The Sociological Report, emanating from the National Opinion Research Center, concluded that our priests are as emotionally balanced as any comparable professional group in society. They are reasonably content with their lot in life, well motivated in their work, and satisfied with their relationships with their colleagues.⁴¹

A vote of thanks is due our bishops for their foresight in authorizing these studies. Some conclusions of the Reports, not circulated in the press, merit reporting here. These will be followed by theological studies on celibacy.

The debit side of the sociological ledger was as dark as the credit side was bright. Many priests are dissatisfied with the structure of the Church and the distribution of the decision-making power. Differences of opinion represent a "potentially dangerous" gap between priests and the hierarchy.⁴² The majority of priests do not accept the official position of the Church on birth control, obligatory celibacy, and divorce. To the extent that this was unknown prior to the survey, communication had broken down between bishops and their priests. The Sociological Report concludes that the two principal problems with priests are authority in the Church and resignation from the ministry. With regard to resignations, loneliness of priests is a major factor. This loneliness will not be solved, the researchers insist, by resolving the authority problem. Both require separate and individual attention. "Most of the problems center on the highly volatile subjects of power and sex, which indicate trouble and conflict in the years ahead."⁴³

The Psychological Report was equally balanced. Most priests are as emotionally mature as their secular counterparts.⁴⁴ However, "a sizable

³⁹ On pp. 97-111 of the same issue, rejoinders by James Burtchaell, Samuel Klausner, and Benjamin Nelson advance the discussion.

⁴⁰ For a good sample of interdisciplinary theology, cf. John Glaser, S.J., "Conscience and Superego," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 32 (1971) 30-47.

⁴¹ "NORC Report on the Catholic Priesthood," *Documentary Service*, April 19, 1971, pp. 1-5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ "Report of the Subcommittee on Psychology of the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry," *Documentary Service*, April 20, 1971, pp. 1-6.

group of American priests are not as developed as they could be.”⁴⁵ The solution lies in “greater practical *freedom* within which to assume their true adult responsibilities.”⁴⁶ (The distribution of power in the Church raises its head again.) Along with this increase of freedom should go greater accountability for the exercise of the priestly ministry. The Report ends on a note of hope. There is not much danger of abuse of freedom; priests on the whole are not impulsive people. They have acquired control from years of ascetical training. Developing priests, as contrasted with the psychologically underdeveloped, “are discovering new strengths within themselves. . . . Their strength comes from within, where a deepened faith and set of convictions provide a more stable bedrock for their work.”⁴⁷

The basic problem posed by the psychological findings is stated at the beginning of the Report: “Do you put first priority on assisting American priests to achieve greater personal maturity and therefore greater effectiveness as priests? Or do you rather put priority on American priests adjusting themselves to the expectations of the institutional priesthood even at the price of not developing themselves?”⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that “personal development,” long a catchword of the younger clergy for which we elders took them to task, is here recognized as a legitimate goal by professional psychologists. The need of psychological growth, however, does not invalidate that other norm, the institutional good of the Church. In fact, the social norm would, other considerations being equal, take priority over the good of the individual. The matter is not so clear-cut, however, for psychological maturation would contribute to “greater effectiveness as priests.” Such questions of priority cannot be solved by theoretical niceties. Somehow both these goals must be achieved. The devil of conflict between personal development and institutional demands can only be cast out by prayer, communal discernment, experiment, and some error.

Part of the exorcism can be done by consulting other empiric studies. Sociologists Eugene Schallert and Jacqueline Kelley focus their attention on the clerical “drop-out,” where the previous Reports concentrated mainly on those in the active ministry.⁴⁹ Their first conclusion: “The drop-out is an individual who has been deeply affected by the ‘spirit’ of the Second Vatican Council.”⁵⁰ This conclusion is particularized in part by the following: “Religious freedom is invariably espoused as a Christian value as opposed to authoritarianism.”⁵¹ Also, drop-outs identify with person-

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁹ “Some Factors Associated with Voluntary Withdrawal from the Catholic Priesthood,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 71 (1970) 95-106, 177-83; 71 (1971) 254-67.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

alism in that they are opposed to total role incumbency (being a twenty-four-hour-a-day priest). This echoes the desire for personal growth of the Psychological Report. Many priests no longer lean so heavily for support on their priesthood. They want to be accepted primarily as the persons they are rather than for their priestly role. In this regard, Schallert and Kelley warn, personalism or "subjecthood with all its accompanying risks is not resolved through an appeal to objectivity."⁵²

A second conclusion reads: drop-outs are strongly oriented toward change. That is, they are disillusioned because the Church is not changing. Here the researchers note a curious similarity with the control group, priests who remain in the active ministry. Among the latter are some who are likewise disillusioned because of change—these, however, because the Church is changing or changing too fast. These are called "drop-outs from within."⁵³

Thirdly, the drop-out "also manifests a significant degree of alienation, especially in the dimension of powerlessness."⁵⁴ The powerless priest is described as one who does not think his efforts will have any effect. Alienation is also experienced as meaninglessness, self-estrangement, and isolation in life.

This study lends no support to the folklore belief that most priests leave the ministry to marry. There are "too many priests within the Church who were alienated and who reported having meaningful relationships with women. None of these indicated any desire or inclination to leave the ranks of the clergy."⁵⁵ More than three fourths of priests are in strong agreement with the statement: a priest benefits by close relationships with women. This fact is significant for our subsequent study of celibacy.

There is a "crucial other" in the life of most drop-out priests, the survey finds, but this other is someone who represents for him all that is questionable or unacceptable in the Church. This negative identification with another is reinforced by failure of the drop-out to find sufficient approval and understanding in his life. The resolution of clerical alienation, the authors suggest, lies in two steps: (1) renewal in the Church and (2) the training of bishops, religious superiors, and communities to understand disaffiliation.

These conclusions diverge somewhat from those of the two Reports. No doubt the divergence is due, in part at least, to the diversity of subjects studied: clerical drop-outs as contrasted with the American clergy as a whole. The continuing interpretation of their data by the authors of the Reports will further clarify the apparent discrepancies.

Another study pertinent to our investigation was conducted by two so-

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

ciologists of the University of Texas.⁵⁶ Their subjects were thirty dissident priests of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The sample is small and the results cannot be extrapolated for the clergy as a whole. The conclusions, however, supplement the studies previously surveyed. These priests were found to be "liberal," the word meaning three things: (1) they are deeply disturbed over what they view as arbitrary exercise of authority; (2) they are generally favorable to ecumenism, lay participation in liturgy, contraception, and optional celibacy; (3) they champion the causes of minorities, Mexican-Americans and Negroes. Authority is closely identified with "structure" in the Church, by which they feel oppressed. To it they oppose "personalism," by which they mean that one should listen to another, not impose his own preconceived ideas, should let the other develop his own creativity and expression. They appeared, however, not to have thought through the individual-institution antinomy in terms of the need of institutions for nonpersonal bureaucracy.

Contrary to the Psychological Report's finding of average emotional health for priests as a whole, this study found the dissenting priests "cut adrift from stable self-identification."⁵⁷ This is balanced, however, by a tendency to identify themselves "in terms of personal characteristics," without reference to membership in groups.⁵⁸ As in the other studies, they experience powerlessness. What seems not to have been brought to the surface by the other researchers is that the dissident priests are "agonizingly self-evaluative. . . ."⁵⁹ Their dissidence is not characterized by unreflecting unconcern about what is going on in themselves and in the Church they serve.

CELIBACY

A final empiric study focuses on a much narrower, though crucial, issue, the celibacy of priests.⁶⁰ Kenneth Mitchell, Director of the Religion and Psychiatry Division of the Menninger Foundation, writes from personal observations rather than survey or interview techniques.⁶¹ He uses the respected developmental psychology of Erik Erikson as a model to examine the choice of celibacy or marriage. Analyzing the view that questions the seriousness of the married priest's original choice of celibacy, the au-

⁵⁶ Louis Schneider and Louis Zurcher, "Toward Understanding the Catholic Crisis: Observations on Dissident Priests in Texas," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 9 (1970) 197-207. No attempt is made here to report all the observations, just those that are supportive of, or contrary to, the conclusions of the other studies reviewed.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ "Priestly Celibacy from a Psychological Perspective," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 24 (1970) 216-26.

⁶¹ The autobiographies of priest applicants for the Menninger clergy training program.

thor finds it specious. It has ignored the problem of timing: "the choice to marry or remain single and the choice of vocation (priesthood) properly come in life at two quite different points in development of the person."⁶² Starting with the datum that most priests effectively decide on priesthood between the ages of twelve to twenty, he finds this decision psychologically appropriate. Adolescence is the time when vocational identity is fittingly acquired. So far so good.

"The choice to marry or not to marry belongs to another developmental stage altogether. It is a problem of intimacy more than a problem of identity."⁶³ This is to say, Mitchell explains, it is impossible to make a meaningful decision about the intimate sharing of your life with another before adolescence is grown through. You cannot seriously give to another the you you do not yet know. Personal identity develops in years twelve to twenty. Only *after* identity has been achieved in a significant degree can one enter upon the intimacy stage of growth. Only when this has been substantially acquired is one ready to make the choice of marriage or celibacy.⁶⁴

The author concludes: "Connecting the decision to become a priest and the decision for celibacy is therefore a psychological error."⁶⁵ He answers the objection that comes immediately to mind, the series of times before ordination and after the vocational decision when the Church requires the candidate to face the celibacy decision. These moments, he replies, occur at a time when he has made his own the ecclesiastical ethos; to think of marriage now would be to turn back after putting his hand to the plow. Result: the decision for celibacy is not really faced. Therefore it was not really made.

The fact of psychological growth affects not just the capacity freely to opt for celibacy. It touches importantly on the ministry of counseling, Mitchell points out. The counselor runs the risk of becoming emotionally involved with his clients, therefore less objective in his advice, if he has not yet passed through the intimacy stage of development. Or, fearful of closeness, he pulls away from the client who needs support.

One final caveat concerns the gratification by the priest of the need for warmth and deep personal involvement. This basic human need, Mitchell warns, must not be fulfilled from parishioner-clients. This would be to use them for personal gratification. Nor should the priest or nun expect to find

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ All who want to be whole persons must face the challenge of intimacy, whether they marry or remain single. It is the emotional ability to be close to, and at ease with, certain others. This need not involve genital sex.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

in rectory life or religious community the gratification experienced in family life of physical closeness and the satisfaction of touch. Our culture does not allow such manifestations outside a family structure. Besides, relationships with others in rectory and community are complicated by the work relationship. Work and close social bonds do not go well together. "Rather than being urged to keep their social life fairly well confined to their fellow priests, men should instead be urged to find a wide range of social relationships."⁶⁶

The problem of relationships and what psychologists can tell us about human interaction need ongoing study and discussion. The happiness of priests and nuns is certainly a desideratum of the Church. New forms of community life are being tried. New signs of affection, contrary to those culturally approved, are being exchanged. If celibacy is to remain a way of life—and remain it should—ways must be found to ensure human beings in the Church the fulfilment of the basic human needs of acceptance, recognition, support, and love.

Mitchell's one suggestion for the psychological dilemma of the time differential between vocation decision and the decision for celibacy is entrance into seminary or religious life at a later age. To this we may add other alternatives: change the structure of seminary and religious life to allow intimacy growth to develop, or postpone the time when the decision for celibacy is to be made, or finally, make celibacy or marriage optional with the priesthood. One thing is sure. We must face the reality of human development: people are not ready for celibacy at the time of the adolescent vocation choice. Otherwise we are adolescent celibates.

Discussion and discernment on this question—by the whole Church—is imperative. Else celibates will find their own solution alone, as a number are doing already. The Schallert-Kelley study indicated above that some priests who have no intention of marriage or resigning from the ministry have found meaningful relationships with women. What kinds of relationships are represented no one has studied. No doubt they run the gamut from platonic friendship to something approximating marriage. We can play the ostrich or discuss openly what is going on.

Maurits De Wachter discusses one of the many forms in "Celibacy in Man-Woman Relationships: A Case Study."⁶⁷ After passing reference to the warm friendships between Francis of Assisi and Clare, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and Jeanne de Chantal, he presents the case of L, a nun, and K, a seminarian soon to be ordained. They had met at summer school. Over a period of time a deep relationship

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁶⁷ *Lowain Studies* 3 (1970) 83-98. The author is professor of fundamental moral theology at Louvain University.

developed which they recognized and wanted to maintain while keeping their celibate commitment to Christ and their vocation of service to others in the Church:

Just like husband and wife, we feel responsible in a particular way for one another. Our relationship will be lived out openly: families, superiors and friends will be informed. We shall be happy, furthermore, to tell all who are interested of our experience. We consider such sharing an essential element of our relationship with one another and with them.⁶⁸

The author shares with us an unpublished manuscript of Teilhard de Chardin, "Evolution de la chasteté."⁶⁹ In it Teilhard asserts that we have a culturally bound ethos of virginity, an empiricism, not a doctrine worthy of the name. The ethos contains a distrust of matter and the body. Its ethic is tutiorism. With such an attitude no genuinely spiritual experience was possible.

With the rise of evolutionary thought in the nineteenth century came a challenge to this imperfect concept of virginity in the form of "an affective complementarity," Says Teilhard: "It is not in isolation—whether married or unmarried—but by couples that masculine and feminine must ascend to God."⁷⁰ What he means, De Wachter interprets, is closer relationships of women and men: "Virginity has to be reinterpreted in the light of the notion that bodily union is significant beyond . . . any consideration of procreativity."⁷¹ Though he recognized certain physical elements of love seemingly not transformable into spiritual virginity, "in theory Teilhard does not see why the experience and expression of bodily love should be denied to those who live as virgins."⁷²

After this brief disquisition into Teilhard's thought, the author returns to the case of L and K. He finds much to be commended but raises a number of questions. He notes their openness and sincerity with their counselor, an increasing availability to others, the absence of the exclusivity characteristic of infatuation. Freedom for others, he observes, pertains to the essence of virginity. He commends their sense of fidelity to the Church and to their respective communities.

He wonders whether their genital sexuality is under control and questions the witness value of celibacy in such a relationship. The reaction of the faithful and the institutional Church must enter into consideration. The possibility of the relation being utopian is voiced but countered by the "equally real danger of angelicism in some aspects of traditional Catholic empiricism: the frustration of human potentials in favor of a so-called 'supernatural' development before a person reaches a stage of psychic

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶⁹ A précis of Teilhard is given, not his text.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86. ⁷¹ *Ibid.* ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

maturity and balance that would allow him to integrate this sacrifice into a minimally fulfilled way of life."⁷³ This last is reminiscent of Mitchell's requirement of postadolescent growth before celibacy can be freely chosen.

Having warned of the danger of creating expectations in the other which cannot be fulfilled and postulating a certain level of maturity lest selfish exploitation occur, De Wachter concludes: "A high degree of grace is necessary for the tentative experience of human love in celibate life."⁷⁴

The older emphasis on celibacy in largely biological terms of avoiding coitus and masturbation and the like has been nicely downplayed by the author. Genital sexuality still has its place in his evaluation of the case, but the emphasis is rightly placed on more profound and meaningful questions: How does a given relationship affect the celibate's freedom for the kingdom, and what is the effect on his life in community? A more refined norm than what is the likelihood of coitus occurring with the possibility of conception is: How does the priest relate to people, specifically to women, and the nun to men? In a basically self-gratifying, uncomfortable, or defensive way, or in a manner productive of growth, happiness, and work-effectiveness for both parties? Is what is happening consonant with the commitment to Christ?

Like it or not, we will be more and more constrained to this kind of approach as science increases its control of fertility and as the cultural prohibition of the bodily expression of affection outside a family context weakens.⁷⁵ Discussion of the celibacy question is too often based on the cultural presupposition that there are only two choices open to man: celibacy with platonic love or warm human love in a family context. This leaves out of consideration not only the heterosexual relation De Wachter explores but warm, nonexploiting relations between two persons of the same sex and deep interpersonal relationships between old and young of either sex.⁷⁶ Relaxation of the law of celibacy would be precipitous without simultaneous consideration of such respectable, nonmarital human relationships.

ABORTION

Much has been written on abortion in the period under review. Complete coverage of the writing is not possible in the space available. Be-

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. also Albert Plé, O.P., "Celibacy and the Emotional Life," *Supplément de la Vie spirituelle* 89 (1969) 217-33.

⁷⁵ Sociologists and other critics of our culture have complained of the taboo on tenderness. Cf. Lester Kirkendall, "Sex, Education and Family Stability," in Seymour Farber *et al.*, eds., *Man and Civilization* (New York, 1965) pp. 119-20.

⁷⁶ A successful priest and a happy mother of a family, brother and sister, were raised by a busy monsignor from childhood after the death of the parents.

sides, the question has been treated at length in these pages in the recent past.⁷⁷ Some updating of the discussion, however, is in order.

Writing for doctors in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Paul Ramsey isolates an important ethical issue in the development of community medicine.⁷⁸ Health, the goal of the healing profession, becomes no longer a matter of physical and psychological well-being but of social well-being. Community medicine accordingly finds justification for abortion in population control or economic need. In a time of widespread moral confusion and in a society that now has no common assumptions about the well-being of man, the medical profession, Ramsey affirms, must define its own ethic.

He next indicates the special qualifications of doctors to make sound moral judgments:

Physicians have a lively knowledge of the facts of fetal development; they know the grounds for believing that there is more than one patient in cases of abortion. Physicians know our brother the genotype with his surprising uniqueness and individuality . . . our sisters the blastocyst and embryo with their astonishing independence and fix on life, throwing out the lifeline that alone makes the uterus a fit place in which to live for a while.⁷⁹

They alone detect the heartbeat and brain waves and know the breathing of the unborn. He continues:

Physicians should have a lively sense of the incongruity of a society that would turn the practice of medicine now into an instrument for saving life, now into an instrument for destroying life, at the same stage of development—for “social indications,” population control, genetic selection or last-ditch contraception.⁸⁰

With their exclusive experience of fetal life, Ramsey says, doctors have the obligation to share with others in society its ethical import. To this effect he cites the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: “Obstetricians and gynaecologists should not be regarded as technicians whose functions include applying technical skills irrespective of their knowledge and experience.”⁸¹ He chides the medical profession for waiting until after the New York State law was passed before giving the public authoritative listings of possible damages from abortions and correcting the erroneous view that viability is not present until the twenty-eighth week. He wonders out loud whether conscientious doctors, to avoid malpractice suits, might not have to seek exempt status before the law like

⁷⁷ Cf. THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 31 (1970) 3-176; Robert Springer, “Notes on Moral Theology,” *ibid.* 31 (1970) 492-507.

⁷⁸ “The Ethics of a Cottage Industry in an Age of Community and Research Medicine,” *NEJM* 284 (1971) 700-706.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 701.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 702.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

the objector to war. Since the latter gets his exemption only on the grounds of objection to all wars, might not the physician who objects to only some abortions have to adopt a legal position similar to that of the war objector? "Thus, general objection to all abortion (except to save life) may become the only shelter for selective abortion refusals."⁸²

Next Ramsey pleads for avoidance of euphemisms in favor of realistic language. Instead of "chance of a birth process" in the 20-28-week period, why not say there is apt to be a "viable human infant"? Where Roman Catholic moralists speak of "emptying the uterus" for permissible abortion, why not say "killing the fetus to terminate the pregnancy"? The euphemisms, he points out, refer explicitly only to the mother and ignore the presence of another life:

They are all ways of keeping ourselves systematically ignorant of the fetus. These are all ways of discussing the whole question without reference to him or her or it. Everyone of the foregoing statements must be coupled with statements about the fetus if we are to allow his or her or its claims upon medical practice and upon the human community to come into view. Otherwise, we have a comparatively uncomplicated medical problem and by stipulation not much of a moral problem; all relevant considerations for good medicine and good morality would fall within the confines of care for the woman alone. That would provide the only limit upon physicians' becoming technicians in carrying out some public policy for stopping pregnancies as by vaccinations they stop epidemics. . . .⁸³

Ramsey's approach is commendable. Not based on a position claiming the value of innocent life to be always inviolable (not even the Roman Catholic tradition makes such a claim), he concentrates on an a posteriori, experiential methodology. In this respect doctors do have a unique experience of abortions which yields an insight contrary to the folklore view which would see the mother granting life to her child on first delivering him or her to the light of day.

The experiential or ethics-of-consequences method, the only tenable one in this matter of human life, attaches significance also to the experience of other peoples. A report from Japan lends support to the position opposing the new abortion laws.⁸⁴ The article arrives at four conclusions: (1) in Japan, legal abortion became a substitute for conception control (hardly anyone would recommend abortion as a contraceptive); (2) "induced abortion has become quasi-compulsory for many people at the grass roots level"; (3) "most women are ashamed of committing induced

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 703.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Cf. also Vittorio Marozzi, S.J., "La liberalizzazione della legge sull'aborto," *Civiltà cattolica* 122/2 (1971) 18-30.

⁸⁴ Yokochi Hayasaka, M.D., et al., "Japan's Twenty-Two Year Experience with a Liberal Abortion Law," *Linacre Quarterly* 38 (1971) 33-44.

abortion"; and (4) "legal abortion is not remarkably safer (medically) than induced abortion."⁸⁵ This is telling evidence. Though it cannot be extrapolated to the American scene because of cultural differences, it should give pause to the movement for liberalizing the law.

In this ecumenical era, given such impetus by Vatican II, it is profitable, even necessary, to listen to what our Protestant brothers say about a given Roman Catholic position. Writing in the *Review and Expositor*, Andrew Lester analyzes the Catholic (abortion is murder) view, discusses the "quality of life" argument, explores the rights of infants and families, and disagrees with the abortion-on-demand theory.⁸⁶

Examining the Catholic argument that God alone is the Lord of life, Lester interprets: if God alone has absolute dominion over human life, then every conception that occurs is the result of, and within, His will. But who could think of a pregnancy resulting from the gang rape of a sixteen-year-old girl as something willed by God? This would be theological determinism.

The Catholic trained in the art of scholastic distinctions could dispose of the argument in terms of God's merely permissive will as opposed to His direct willing, in terms of man's will entering into human events, or of divine lordship over life allowing restricted discretion to man, etc. The Catholic tradition is, to be sure, more carefully nuanced than the author gives it credit for. Yet, a more careful wording of his argument poses a valid question: Does God's granting of stewardship over life to man include the instance of the raped girl, or does it preclude man's intervention even within a few hours or days after conception?

The second Catholic argument Lester reviews is the right to life: "human beings do not have the right to take the life of other (innocent) human beings."⁸⁷ To this he opposes the objection that the conceptus is not always innocent; occasionally it threatens the mother. Again, the Catholic tradition did consider the possibility of the fetus being an unjust aggressor against the mother. Admittedly, however, this was at the turn of the century, subsequently frowned on officially, though not by irreversible teaching.

Lester goes on to acknowledge the *potential* for human life existing from conception. He refuses, however, to evaluate this potential at any stage of prenatal development as equal to postnatal life. It is only fair that "human beings who are actualized—functioning in the world with responsibilities, developed talents and active relationships—be given a higher value than the potential human life residing in the fertilized

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 36–39. For other medical evidence against liberalized abortion statutes, cf. *Medical-Moral Newsletter* 7 (1971) 33–36.

⁸⁶ "The Abortion Dilemma," *RE* 68 (1971) 227–44.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

egg.”⁸⁸ All Catholics would admit this argument. Most would say, however, that both lives are inviolable, the lesser fetal life and the greater maternal; they would nonetheless allow indirect termination of fetal life. Some Catholic theorists would allow direct intervention against the lesser life if otherwise both lives would be lost.

The author explicates the quality-of-life argument as follows: “all persons should have the opportunity of having adequate food, shelter and clothing; of possessing good physical and mental health; of being free from tyranny. . . .”⁸⁹ “It is also important,” he further explains, “to exist in a family and community where one is wanted, can love and be loved, accept and be accepted.”⁹⁰ His argument is a beautiful expression of the ideal of human living, the kind that we want eventually to assure to every man, woman, and child on the earth. There are degrees, however, of physical and mental health, even of freedom from tyranny, that many would not want to sacrifice life for. But then, no one has yet worked out an adequate evaluation of all the “goods” comparable to the value of life.

Lester is far from being an exponent of abortion on demand: “Does a conceptus have no value unless it is wanted by the mother.”?⁹¹ He recognizes the relativity of human life, as do Catholics, and assigns it very high priority. That his article is somewhat polemic is not his fault. The blame is rather to be ascribed to those Catholic spokesmen who persist in calling abortion “murder,” a loose use of the term unwarranted by Catholic scholarship.⁹²

CATHOLIC MEDICAL ETHICS IN GENERAL

In the past few years Catholic moralists have been at work quietly behind the scenes studying and consulting about medical ethics. New data from research and new impetus from Vatican II to examine the human sciences and other religious traditions had rendered the standard medical-ethics textbooks and the Catholic hospital code in need of updating. Occasionally there has appeared in print a revision of an older view regarding tying of the Fallopian tubes in instances involving scarred uterine tissue, the Rh factor and multiple miscarriages, and similar medical situations.⁹³

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁹² Commendable for their calm and solid reasonableness are the “Massachusetts Bishops’ Statement,” *Documentary Service*, March 26, 1971, and “Statement on Respect for Life” of the Catholic Hospital Association, issued June 8, 1970.

⁹³ A search of the medical-ethical journals and the clergy reviews would reveal similar revisions. For tubal ligation cf. Robert Springer, “Notes on Moral Theology,” *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 31 (1970) 507-8.

A solid reassessment of the moral principles underlying Catholic positions on life and health was done by Richard McCormick in the last installment of the "Notes on Moral Theology."⁸⁴ McCormick first reported various approaches to the subject by American and European moralists, added his own considerable contribution, and then drew them all together in a synthesis that portends a significant development in Catholic moral thought. The reassessment of principles has implications for the ethics of sterilization, co-operation, contraception, abortion, artificial insemination, and ectopic pregnancy, to mention only some.

One upshot of this kind of work has been a tentative revision of the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Hospitals*.⁸⁵ The revision apparently was prepared for promulgation by the bishops at their meeting in April 1971. Either it failed to reach the floor or it was sent back to committee for redrafting. This was fortunate. Had the February 1971 draft gotten through, it would not really have been a revision at all, so closely did it resemble the old *Directives*.

Furthermore, the Preamble of the same draft is out of step with the changing times on the medical scene. Its tone is sternly authoritarian. The underlying methodology cannot withstand the scrutiny of the epistemology of moral science. The *Directives* themselves, some forty-nine in number, largely ignore the research on the ethical questions described above. One development that did manage to qualify for the revised draft was the allowance of tubal ligation in place of ethically warranted hysterectomy.⁸⁶

The teaching of *Humanae vitae* on contraception is the only one allowed to be followed in Catholic hospitals.⁸⁷ The majority of the laity and clergy, as we now know, hold a different view. Is there hope for substantial compliance in hospitals with a practice ignored in most homes, confessionals, and doctors' offices? Promulgation of the *Directives* in the form described would run the risk of being met by public protest on the part of associations of laity, clergy, and theologians—in a word, of power.

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⁸⁴ THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 32 (1971) 80-97, esp. pp. 92 ff.

⁸⁵ The revised draft is not yet published.

⁸⁶ *Directives*, no. 30.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 26.