

## MORAL THEOLOGY 1940–1989: AN OVERVIEW

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IN 1940 the first volume of *Theological Studies* carried a section entitled “Recent Canon Law and Moral Theology: Some Important Items.”<sup>1</sup> These 31 pages were unsigned but research reveals that they were actually authored by editor William McGarry, S.J. John C. Ford, S.J., beginning with Volume 2, continued these critical surveys through Volume 6 (1945). Gerald Kelly, S.J., began his contribution with Volume 8 (1947) and produced an annual “Notes on Moral Theology” through Volume 14 (1953). Volume 15 (1954) saw the beginning of the rich and rewarding collaborative authorship of Ford and Kelly, as well as the first appearance in *TS* of John R. Connery, S.J. Connery and John J. Lynch, S.J. (along with three surveys by Joseph Farragher, S.J., one by Kelly, one by Ford-Kelly, and several by Robert Springer) carried the “Moral Notes” into the mid-sixties. The present author began his contributions in 1965 and concluded them in 1987.

I mention this bit of history because, by perusing the “Notes on Moral Theology” from the beginning, one gets a fairly clear picture of moral theology then and now, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as its methods and priorities. I say this with confidence because from the very outset these surveys ranged over moral studies in Latin, French, German, Spanish, Italian, and English, from *Angelicum* and *AAS*, through *Nouvelle revue théologique*, *Periodica*, and *Studia moralia*, to *Razón y fe* and *Stimmen der Zeit*. However, an overview of moral theology during these five decades would be incomplete without mention of theologians such as Francis Connell, C.S.S.R., Joseph Duhamel, S.J., Paul McKeever, Franciscus Hürth, S.J., Edwin Healy, S.J., and a host of others.

It is easy to caricature, and no serious scholar with an ounce of self-knowledge and a sense of history will do so. With that caveat in mind, it can be pointed out that in the 40s and 50s Catholic moral theology was the stepchild of the *Institutiones theologiae moralis* of Genicot, Noldin, Prümmer, Aertnys-Damen, et al. Concretely, it was all too often one-sidedly confession-oriented, magisterium-dominated, canon law-related, sin-centered, and seminary-controlled. In many books and articles Bernard Häring has excoriated this as “legalism.” Yet, when reading the Ford-Kelly review of this literature, one must immediately add qualifiers

<sup>1</sup>*TS* 1 (1940) 412–43.

that provide perspective to each of these sweeping indictments. Thus: very pastoral and prudent, critically respectful, realistic, compassionate, open and charitable, well-informed. Indeed, the two dominant American moral theologians of the 40s and 50s (Ford and Kelly) had such towering and well-deserved reputations that most of us regarded their agreement on a practical matter as constituting a "solidly probable opinion." It is easy to understand why their experience, wisdom, and prudence were treasured by everyone from bishops, college presidents, moral theologians, physicians, priests, and students to penitents and counselors.

All of us, however, bear the restricting marks of the cultural contexts in which we work. So, along with truly prophetic and pathbreaking studies that are still urgently relevant,<sup>2</sup> one finds during these earlier years discussions that strike us now as downright quaint. For instance, there is debate about knitting as servile work,<sup>3</sup> of organ-playing at non-Catholic services,<sup>4</sup> of calling non-Catholic ministers for dying non-Catholic patients,<sup>5</sup> of steady dating among adolescents,<sup>6</sup> of the gravity of using "rhythm" without a proportionate reason.<sup>7</sup> It is to the everlasting credit of theologians like Ford, Kelly, Connery, and Lynch that they brought an uncommon common sense to such "problems" that dissipated them before they could seriously quiver the ganglia of the Catholic conscience.

A few samples are needed to jar the unexposed and possibly incredulous postconciliar Catholic. In 1946, *TS*—under the editorship of the renowned John Courtney Murray, S.J.—carried an article on fasting. It concluded as follows:

In conclusion, then, just how much is allowed at breakfast and at collation for a person who is fasting but needs something extra? Some authors say sixteen ounces in all; one or two authors seem to suggest even more. As things stand at present, if one should be asked how much over the two-ounce/eight-ounce limit is permitted nowadays, it appears that one should reply: First, if a person can conveniently fast on that amount, absolutely nothing extra; otherwise, whatever is really necessary, up to around sixteen ounces; these sixteen ounces can be divided as the person requires—into four for breakfast and twelve for collation, into six and ten, into eight and eight, and so on. However, if the person needs much more than sixteen ounces, or if the mathematical juggling would make him

<sup>2</sup>One thinks immediately of John C. Ford's "The Morality of Obliteration Bombing," *TS* 5 (1944) 261–309. Interestingly, one finds reference in *TS* 5 (1944) 511–13 to an article by John Rock and Miriam F. Menkin entitled "In Vitro Fertilization and Cleavage of Human Ovarian Eggs," *Sciences*, August 4, 1944, 105–7.

<sup>3</sup>*TS* 9 (1948) 105.

<sup>4</sup>*TS* 10 (1949) 70.

<sup>5</sup>*TS* 10 (1949) 71–74.

<sup>6</sup>John R. Connery, S.J., "Steady Dating among Adolescents," *TS* 19 (1958) 73–80.

<sup>7</sup>*TS* 11 (1950) 76, and 15 (1954) 101.

scrupulous, he should be dispensed completely.<sup>8</sup>

If this citation seems extreme, one has only to recall that at the 14th annual convention (1959) of the Catholic Theological Society of America, the moral seminar spent the better part of an hour wrangling over whether chewing gum broke the Eucharistic fast. Another example is a paper delivered at the same meeting by Anthony F. Zimmerman, S.V.D. He concluded:

These and other documents of the Holy See have convinced me that ‘rhythm’ cannot be recommended as a Christian solution for overpopulation. In my opinion Rome has spoken and the case is settled. For we are not allowed to promote the ideal of a small family in a nation, in opposition against the Church’s ideal of the large family. But ‘rhythm’ could not be promoted as a means of solving a national overpopulation problem without setting up the small family as a new ideal for that nation.<sup>9</sup>

That conclusion was recognized even then as quite preposterous and I remember distinctly John C. Ford’s immediate and magisterial refutation of it. It began: “Rome has not spoken.” Today, of course, the refutation would remain vigorous, though it might well take a different analytic form.

My final example of how moral theology was pursued by the manuals that constituted the inherited *Weltanschauung* for the 40s and 50s is taken from a standard manual of moral theology. Antonius Lanza and Petrus Palazzini, Roman theologians of indisputable stature, discussed the morality of dancing, and specifically of “masked balls.” I cite it partly in the original to forestall questions about authenticity.

Likewise, masked balls offer a fairly facile opportunity for disaster; for there are some who hide their faces so that, no longer restrained by the bridle of shame, they may do incognito what they would not dare to do if recognized. Today, however, the situation has degenerated badly with more recent dances: one stoep [sic], paso doble, turquey-trot, pas de l’ours, spiru, charleston, fox-trot, rumba, carioca, boogie-woogie, samba, etc.<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere I have summarized the perspectives and cultural context of pre-Vatican II moral theology as follows:

<sup>8</sup>Francis V. Courneen, S.J., “Recent Trends with Regard to Fasting,” *TS* 7 (1946) 464–70.

<sup>9</sup>Anthony F. Zimmerman, S.V.D., “Morality and the Problems of Overpopulation,” *Proceedings of the CTSA 14th Annual Convention (1959)* 5–27.

<sup>10</sup>Antonius Lanza and Petrus Palazzini, *Theologia moralis*, Appendix: *De castitate et luxuria* (Rome: Marietti, 1953) 225.

For many decades, even centuries, prior to Vatican II Catholic moral theology conceived its chief task as being the training of priests to hear confessions. Within the sacramental perspectives of the times the confessor was viewed as exercising a fourfold office: father, teacher, judge, physician. Specially necessary to effective ministry were charity (of a father), knowledge (of a teacher and judge), prudence (of a physician) . . .

The knowledge required of a confessor included many things, but above all knowledge of God's law *as proposed by the Church*, i.e., the Church's magisterium. At this period of time, for many understandable sociological reasons, the Church's magisterium was understood in a highly authoritarian and paternalistic way. One did not question ordinary noninfallible teaching. Dissent was virtually unknown and would certainly have been extremely risky.<sup>11</sup>

In the remainder of this overview I will touch on three points: (1) Significant developments in moral theology over the past 50 years. "Significant" refers in general to factors that affected moral theology, and especially to those that altered the cultural variables that framed the moral agenda of the first 20 years of *TS*'s existence and led to the types of moral concerns and judgments I have cited above. (2) Where we are now. (3) Some suggestions for the future. These last two points can be developed briefly, because they are implicit in the developments I will list as significant.

#### SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

Symptoms abound that there were deep stirrings of dissatisfaction with the brand of theology contained in the *Institutiones theologiae moralis*. One was the growing popularity of Bernard Häring's *The Law of Christ*. Another was the appearance in 1952 of G. Gilleman's *Le primat de la charité en théologie morale: Essai méthodologique*.<sup>12</sup> Or again, I shall never forget the shock waves produced by Daniel Callahan in 1964. Ford and Kelly had just published their volume *Contemporary Moral Theology 2: Marriage Questions*. It was a haven of moderation against those we called *strictiores*. Callahan described the revered authors as "loyal civil servants" and "faithful party workers," and their work as "years behind the [theological] revolution now in progress."<sup>13</sup> Gerald Kelly, I am told by reliable sources, was at his typewriter about to respond, but experienced chest pains in his agitation.

In retrospect, I think Callahan was correct. I do not believe that "revolution" is too strong a word for the developments that have occurred

<sup>11</sup>Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "Self-Assessment and Self-Indictment," *Religious Studies Review* 13 (1987) 37.

<sup>12</sup>Gérard Gilleman, S.J., *Le primat de la charité en théologie morale* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952).

<sup>13</sup>Daniel Callahan, "Authority and the Theologian," *Commonweal* 80 (1964) 319-23.

in moral theology in the last 30 years. Different authors might well produce different litanies of the revolutionary phases or ingredients. However, I am reasonably confident that the following ten items would appear in one way or another on many lists.

1) *Vatican II and ecclesiology*. The Council said very little directly about moral theology. Yet what it said about other aspects of Catholic belief and practice had an enormous influence on moral theology. These “other aspects of Catholic belief and life” are largely, though not exclusively, ecclesiological. For Vatican II was, above all, an ecclesiological council. There are many ways of wording this, I am sure. One could, e.g., speak of it as the Council of the Holy Spirit to highlight the pervasiveness of the Spirit in its formulations. Richard McBrien, in a talk to moral theologians at Notre Dame (June 1988), neatly summarized in six points Vatican II’s major ecclesiological themes.

a. The Church as mystery or sacrament. The Church is a sign as well as an instrument of salvation. As a sacrament, it causes by signifying. As McBrien notes, this powerfully suggests the need to be attentive to justice issues within the Church as well as outside. It is this principle of sacramentality that undergirds the statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ pastoral letter *Economic Justice for All*: “All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the Church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the Church should be exemplary” (no. 347).

b. The Church as people of God. All the faithful (not just the hierarchy and specialists) constitute the Church. This has immediate implications for the elaboration and development of moral doctrine, for consultative processes, for the free flow of ideas in the Church.

c. The Church as servant. Besides preaching of the word and celebration of the sacraments, the Church’s mission includes service to human needs in the social, political, and economic orders. This suggests that these orders are also ecclesiological problems and that moralists and ecclesialogists must be closely co-operative. It also suggests that moral theology, following John Courtney Murray, must continue to probe the relationship between civic unity and religious integrity.

d. The Church as collegial. The Church is realized and expressed at the local (parish/diocese/region/nation) level as well as the universal. The collegial nature of the Church helps to raise and rephrase the question of the use and limits of authority in the moral sphere, and the meaning of subsidiarity and freedom in the application of moral principles and the formation of conscience.

e. The Church as ecumenical. Being the whole Body of Christ, the Church includes more than Roman Catholics. The obvious implication

is that Catholic officials and theologians must consult and take account of the experience, reflection, and wisdom resident in other Christian churches.

f. The Church as eschatological. The Church is a tentative and unfinished reality. It is *in via*. A fortiori, its moral and ethical judgments are always *in via* and share the messy, unfinished, and perfectible character of the Church itself.

I believe McBrien is absolutely correct when he asserts that these ecclesial metaphors affect both the substance and method of moral inquiry in very profound and practical ways.

2) *Karl Rahner and fundamental freedom*. When I began theological studies toward the priesthood in 1950, Rahner was a "corollary" at the end of our theses on grace, creation, the sacraments, Christology. Not for long, however. During the next 35 years he became the most prolific and greatest theologian of the century, and arguably of several centuries.

One of Rahner's key contributions to moral theology was his anthropology, and specifically his recovery of the notion of the depth of the moral act.<sup>14</sup> He argued that the human person is, as it were, constructed of various layers of freedom. At the center is the area of core or fundamental freedom, which enables a person to dispose totally of her/himself. Other layers are more or less peripheral. The use of core freedom is the area of grave morality—of total self-disposition, or radical conversion, of truly mortal sin. Actuations of this intensity of freedom may be called "fundamental options" precisely because of their depth, stability, and permanence. The notion of *fundamental option* pervades Rahner's writings on grace, sin, conversion, the moral life in general, and, above all, his presentation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

Such an anthropology has enormous repercussions on some very basic concepts of moral theology: sin, conversion, virtue, serious matter, priorities in the moral life, confession, temptation, laws of the Church, spiritual discernment—to mention but a few. Systematic theologians began to use this anthropology in their presentations of Catholic teachings,<sup>15</sup> but it was domesticated in moral theology largely through the writings of Joseph Fuchs, S.J., and his disciple Bruno Schüller, S.J.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup>For a discussion cf. Ronald Modras, "The Implications of Rahner's Anthropology for Fundamental Moral Theology," *Horizons* 12 (1985) 70–90.

<sup>15</sup>E.g., cf. M. Flick, S.J., and Z. Alszeghy, S.J., "L'Opzione fondamentale della vita morale et la grazia," *Gregorianum* 41 (1960) 593–619; P. Fransen, S.J., "Pour une psychologie de la grâce divine," *Lumen vitae* 12 (1957) 209–40.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Fuchs, S.J., *General Moral Theology* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1963). This is my translation of Fuchs's *Theologia moralis generalis*. Fuchs has also discussed the matter elsewhere, e.g. in "Basic Freedom and Morality," in *Human Values and Christian Morality*

Unfortunately, the notion of fundamental freedom can be and has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and abused.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps that is the unavoidable fate of the attempt to rethink the depth and complexity of the human person. Be that as it may, I believe that moral theology, largely through the pioneering work of Rahner, has been forever altered. We can no longer think of the moral-spiritual life in terms of the clear and distinct categories that were generated by an anthropology that conceived of freedom exhaustively as freedom of choice. Things are just not that simple.

3) *Moral norms and revision of method.* In 1965 Peter Knauer, S.J., published his seminal essay on the principle of double effect.<sup>18</sup> When I drove Joseph Fuchs, S.J., from O'Hare Airport that year, I asked him about the article. His reply: "Very interesting." Very interesting indeed! It proved to be the opening shot in a 25-year discussion of the proper understanding of the moral norms within the community of Catholic moral theologians. Specifically, it concerned the method for determining the morally right and wrong in concrete human conduct. At the risk of oversimplification, Knauer's basic thesis could be worded as follows: the causing or permitting of evils in our conduct is morally right or wrong depending on the presence or absence of a commensurate reason. When such a reason is present, the intention bears on it, not on the evil—and therefore the evil remains indirect. Knauer was on to something, yet he filtered it through traditional categories. The result was provocative, yet a bit untidy and unsettling. That is the way it is with many beginnings.

In 1970 Germain Grisez wrote of Knauer that he "is carrying through a revolution in principle while pretending only a clarification of traditional ideas."<sup>19</sup> Grisez was, I believe, right. That "revolution in principle" gradually led to a vast literature that huddles under the umbrella-term "proportionalism."

Unless I am mistaken, I can detect the general shape of this *Denkform* as early as 1951 in the work of Gerald Kelly. In commenting on a piece by William Conway in the *Irish Theological Quarterly* (wherein Conway considered some procedures involving mutilation as not evils), Kelly wrote:

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(Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970) 91–111. B. Schüller, S.J., "Zur Analogie sittlicher Grundbegriffe," *Theologie und Philosophie* 41 (1966) 3–19.

<sup>17</sup>I believe the C.D.F.'s *Persona humana* (*The Pope Speaks* 21 [1976] 60–73) presents the notion inaccurately. Cf. Charles E. Curran, "Sexual Ethics: Reaction and Critique," *Linacre Quarterly* 43 (1976) 147–64.

<sup>18</sup>Peter Knauer, S.J., "La détermination du bien et du mal moral par le principe du double effet," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 87 (1965) 356–76.

<sup>19</sup>Germain Grisez, *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1970) 331.

For my part, I prefer to say that there are some physical evils that are naturally subordinated to higher ends, and we have a right to cause these evils in order to obtain these ends. Thus, the bodily member is subordinated to the good of the whole body, and one has a right to remove this member where this is necessary for the good of the whole. The principle of the double effect is not required to justify this act; but the reason for this is not that the amputation is not an evil, but rather that it is an evil that one has a right to cause.

In summary, let me suggest that the principle, evil is not to be done in order to obtain good, is not an absolutely universal principle. It refers absolutely to moral evil. As for physical evils, it refers only to those which lie outside the scope of the agent's direct rights (e.g., death of an innocent person); it does not refer to evils that one has a right to cause (e.g., self-mutilation to preserve life or health; the death of an enemy soldier or an unjust aggressor).<sup>20</sup>

Kelly was not at that time what is now known as a proportionalist. But those paragraphs indicate that with a few minor analytic moves he would be.

So-called proportionalists include some of the best-known names in moral theology throughout the world, though some are less explicit about their method: Joseph Fuchs, S.J., Bruno Schüller, S.J., Franz Böckle, Louis Janssens, Bernard Häring, Franz Scholz, Franz Furger, Walter Kerber, S.J., Charles Curran, Lisa Cahill, Philip Keane, Joseph Selling, Edward Vacek, S.J., David Hollenbach, S.J., Maurice de Wachter, Margaret Farley, James Walter, Rudolf Ginters, Helmut Weber, Klaus Demmer, Garth Hallett, S.J., and on and on. The leading published opponents of this methodological move are Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Joseph Boyle, William May, and the late John R. Connery, S.J.<sup>21</sup>

It is impossible in a brief space to give a fair summary of this development or an adequate account of the differences that individual theologians bring to their analyses, or of the objections lodged against them. However, common to all so-called proportionalists is the insistence that causing certain disvalues (ontic, nonmoral, premoral evils) in our conduct does not *ipso facto* make the action morally wrong, as certain traditional formulations supposed. The action becomes morally wrong when, all things considered, there is not proportionate reason. Thus, just as not every killing is murder, not every falsehood a lie, so not every artificial intervention preventing (or promoting) conception is necessarily an unchaste act. Not every termination of a pregnancy is necessarily an abortion in the moral sense.

<sup>20</sup>TS 13 (1952) 60.

<sup>21</sup>There are others such as Benedict Ashley, O.P., and Kevin O'Rourke, O.P., in *Health Care Ethics* (St. Louis: Catholic Hospital Association, 1977). Their treatment on this point is rather sketchy.



This approach to moral norms has two interesting characteristics: (1) It contrasts markedly with earlier official understanding (e.g., *Humanae vitae*) which regarded some of the actions in question as intrinsic moral evils (i.e., under no circumstances could they be justified). (2) It touches the lives of people in very concrete ways. One may, and I do, suspect that this is why it is so strongly resisted. The 25-year discussion has been well summarized recently by Bernard Hoose, himself a proportionalist.<sup>22</sup>

4) *The Birth Control Commission and Humanae vitae*. I put these two together because only when *Humanae vitae* is seen in light of the previous consultations does it yield the full dimensions of the problem. The Commission for the Study of Population, Family, and Birth (widely referred to as the Birth Control Commission) voted by a heavy majority for a change in Church teaching on contraception. So did the subsequently added (1966) cardinals and bishops. On Sunday, June 26, 1966, after the Commission had completed its work, Canon Pierre de Loch of Brussels, a member of the Commission, wrote in his diary:

It will not be possible any longer to reaffirm the general condemnations of contraception. I do not understand what excuse he [the pope] can use to impose on the Church his own personal option. The research he set in motion does not make sense if he does not take it into account. Why, then, would he have asked for it? Will he accept our conclusions only if they lean toward a reaffirmation?<sup>23</sup>

De Loch's statement summarizes the authority problem that *Humanae vitae* raised in 1968.<sup>24</sup> Paul VI had enlarged the Birth Control Commission and supported its work. Indeed, in 1966, under mounting pressure to issue a statement, he had intervened, almost agonizingly, with a kind of delaying plea. He said he was not ready to make his final statement. "The magisterium of the Church," he said, "cannot propose moral norms until it is certain of interpreting the will of God. And to reach this certainty the Church is not dispensed from research and from examining the many questions proposed for her consideration from every part of the world. This is at times a long and not an easy task."<sup>25</sup>

Yet *Humanae vitae* appeared in 1968. The problem is obvious. I wrote at that time: "If in February, 1966, the pope needed the studies of the commission to achieve (*raggiungere*) the certainty necessary to propose

<sup>22</sup>Bernard Hoose, *Proportionalism: The American Debate and Its European Roots* (Washington: Georgetown Univ., 1987).

<sup>23</sup>As in Robert Blair Kaiser, *The Politics of Sex and Religion* (Kansas City: Leaven, 1985) 177.

<sup>24</sup>André Hellegers said much the same thing as de Loch. Cf. LeRoy Walters, "Religion and the Renaissance of Medical Ethics in the United States: 1965-1975," in *Theology and Bioethics*, ed. Earl E. Shelp (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985) 9-10.

<sup>25</sup>AAS 58 (1966) 218-29, at 219.

moral norms, and if having received the majority report of the commission he achieved or maintained a certainty contrary to it, then perhaps we need a long, long discussion about the nature of the magisterium."<sup>26</sup> This is exactly what de Lochte meant when he wrote that "the research he set in motion does not make sense if he does not take it into account."

The firestorm that greeted *Humanae vitae* over 20 years ago is familiar to readers of *TS* and many others; no need for repetition here. What needs to be emphasized, however, is the enormous influence of this event on subsequent moral theology. Theologians became freshly aware of the inadequacy of a heavily juridical notion of the moral teaching office, and correspondingly they became more sensitive to their own responsibilities, especially their occasional duty to dissent in light of their own experience with the faithful and reflection on it. Nonreception became overnight a live theological issue. Questions were raised about the formation of conscience, about the response due to the ordinary magisterium, about the exercise of authority in the Church, about consultative processes and collegiality, about the meaning of the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the pastors of the Church. Contraception, as a moral issue, was virtually smothered in the ecclesiological tumult. The pope had been convinced by a minority of advisors from the Commission that any qualification of the condemnation of *Casti connubii* would compromise papal teaching authority. The fact is, authority has actually suffered in the process.

I can think of no moral issue or event in this century that impacted so profoundly on the discipline of moral theology. The reason was not only or primarily the sheer day-to-day practicality of the problem, but the fact that *Humanae vitae* was perceived by many to be the symbol of a takeback of important things that had happened in Vatican II. Bernard Häring once remarked to me that he thought we had learned more from *Humanae vitae* than we (as church) had suffered. He was referring, of course, to the place and exercise of authority in Christian morality. The lesson we learned had chiefly to do with limits. In a sense Paul VI, without really wanting to, or realizing that he was doing so, put Vatican II on the scales by testing it on a single burning issue.

5) *The emergence of feminism*. This is surely one of the "signs of the times" of which John XXIII and Vatican II spoke. Its full effect on moral theology is probably still ahead of us. Prior to Vatican II, the Catholic Theological Society of America was an all-male club and, even earlier, an all-seminary club. Now women are in positions of leadership in the C.T.S.A. It was not until 1971 that a woman (J. Massingberd Ford) first

<sup>26</sup>*Notes on Moral Theology 1965-1980* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1981) 212.

authored an article for *TS*.<sup>27</sup> Now it is common to see such fine scholars as Lisa Cahill, Catherine LaCugna, Leslie Griffin, Elizabeth Johnson, Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, Anne Carr, Sandra Schneiders, and Carol Tauer in these pages. In the field of moral theology the work of Griffin, Cahill, Tauer, Anne Patrick, Sidney Callahan, Christine Gudorf, Margaret Farley, Judith Dwyer, Eileen Flynn, Diana Bader, Corrine Bayley, Barbara Andelson, Elizabeth McMillan—to mention but a few—has been very effective and deeply appreciated.

The presence of women in the moral theological enterprise should have an obvious impact in several key areas of moral concern. Two that stand out are the place of women in the Church and in society, and the theology of marriage and sexuality. But even beyond such issue areas, the theological contributions of women will be a constant reminder that Catholic Christianity is still male-dominated and bears its own share of the blame for what the draft (as I write) pastoral *Partners in the Mystery of Redemption* calls a pervasive sin of sexism in the Church.<sup>28</sup>

6) *The maturation of bioethics*. Within the Catholic community there had been for some years standard texts in medical ethics. One thinks of those authored by Charles J. McFadden, O.S.A., Gerald Kelly, S.J., Thomas O'Donnell, S.J., and Edwin Healy, S.J.<sup>29</sup> As LeRoy Walters has noted of these texts, “the general approach to medical ethics was based on the standard textbooks of moral theology.”<sup>30</sup>

The years 1969 and 1971 represented something of a turning point. In 1969 Daniel Callahan and Willard Gaylin founded the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, now more economically referred to as the Hastings Center. In 1971 André Hellegers founded the Joseph and Rose Kennedy Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Bioethics, now known as the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, at Georgetown University. These sister institutes brought physicians, scientists, philosophers, theologians, and lawyers together for the systematic and interdisciplinary study of the emerging problems in bioethics. The result was not only a fresh awareness of the breadth and complexity of the problems created by technology, but a huge outpouring of literature that attempted to wrestle with them. Bioethics had been born as a large and loosely but well-enough defined subspeciality of ethics. Since then centers for bioeth-

<sup>27</sup>J. Massingberd Ford, “Toward a Theology of Speaking in Tongues,” *TS* 32 (1971) 3–29.

<sup>28</sup>“Partners in the Mystery of Redemption,” *Origins* 17 (1988) 757, 759–88.

<sup>29</sup>C. J. McFadden, *Medical Ethics* (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis, 1967); Gerald Kelly, S.J., *Medico-Moral Problems* (St. Louis: Catholic Hospital Association, 1949–54); T. J. O'Donnell, S.J., *Morals in Medicine* (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1956); Edwin F. Healy, S.J., *Medical Ethics* (Chicago: Loyola Univ., 1956).

<sup>30</sup>Walters, “Religion” 4.

ics have sprung up all over the country and the world.

The significance of this for moral theology should not be lost. I will note three aspects. First, it became clear that it is impossible for any one theologian to be a truly reputable expert in all fields of moral theology in our day. Many of us are asked to teach, write, or lecture "on the moral aspects of" virtually anything; naively we used to think we could do that. To persist in such thoughts merely proliferates banality and incompetence, and threatens our theological credibility in the process. The present lacuna of moral-theological competence in certain areas of applied ethics should not tempt us to fill it with instant ethical energy but long-run incompetence. It should rather function as a challenge.

That leads directly to my second point. If bioethics establishes any kind of paradigm, it tells us that we need in law, business, and politics—to mention but three areas—truly well-trained and experienced persons who are ready to specialize in the ethical dimensions of the professions, i.e. limit themselves to such areas in a way that allows them to emerge as nationally recognized experts.

Finally, what is increasingly obvious in medicine—and I would guess, therefore, in the areas of law, business, and politics—is that an ethics of medicine can degenerate into a lifeless and detached body of knowledge that one dusts off now and then when faced with a nasty dilemma. That is the result of identifying ethics with "dilemma ethics." What we have come to see as essential to a genuine ethic is a formational dimension and therefore a spirituality of and for the professional person. When that is in place, decisional ethics will have a nourishing and supportive context and it will certainly flourish. Otherwise it remains spare-time aerobics. By "spirituality" I do not mean, e.g., a parallel-track, off-time retreat each year or two. I mean an approach to the profession developed from within its institutional ambience that views and lives the practice of medicine as a truly Christian vocation.

7) *The influence of liberation theology.* Liberation theology has the Vatican worried. In 1970 Gustavo Gutiérrez published in *TS* what he called "Notes for a Theology of Liberation."<sup>31</sup> With that article the Peruvian theologian alerted North America, as well as the world, that something terribly exciting was afoot in Latin America. In introducing the article, editor Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., referred to it as "theological dynamite." For a world sadly anesthetized to exploding automobiles and body counts on an almost daily basis, *theological* dynamite would seem to be a relatively cozy and comfortable threat.

Try again. Burghardt was prescient. Liberation theology is here—or,

<sup>31</sup>Gustavo Gutiérrez M., "Notes for a Theology of Liberation," *TS* 31 (1970) 243–61.

more accurately, there—to stay. I am not interested here in reviewing its salient features and its vast literature, or critiquing its sometimes over-reaching claims. Others (theologians such as Roger Haight, S.J., and Alfred Hennelly, S.J.) are more competent to do so and indeed have done it. I simply point to it as a significant development. The term “significant” cries out for specification. Exactly how has liberation theology affected moral theology? I will list three ways.

First, there is the demolition of the separatist mentality. This refers to the approach that conceives of basic Christian realities such as faith, hope, and love—i.e., salvation—as exclusively or at least one-sidedly other-worldly realities. In other words, there is a radical continuity (even partial identification) between the eschatological promises and hope (the kingdom) and human liberation from systemic oppression. This entails a profound readjustment of our assessment of political and economic activity. These can no longer be viewed simply as “worldly” or secular pursuits. As Gutiérrez words it, “There are not, then, two histories, one profane and one sacred, juxtaposed or interrelated, but a single human progress, irreversibly exalted by Christ, the Lord of history. His redemptive work embraces every dimension of human existence.”<sup>32</sup>

Second, as Gutiérrez and others such as Segundo and Sobrino make clear, the Church’s mission of charitable action is not merely that of social critique; it provokes all Christians to participate actively in construction of a just order. Only so will the people of Latin America (and elsewhere) believe the message of love at the center of the Christian idea. Paul VI put it this way in 1971: “It is to all Christians that we address a fresh and insistent call to action. . . . It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustices and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by the livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action.”<sup>33</sup>

Third, the theology of liberation is a constant reminder of the primacy of social concerns in our conception and presentation of the moral-spiritual life, and therefore of moral theology. This is a necessary corrective to the individualism of the West, since one form of that individualism is overemphasis on the personal (especially sexual) dimensions of the moral life. Paul VI in *Octogesima adveniens* emphasized this: “These are questions that because of their urgency, extent and complexity must, in the years to come, take first place among the preoccupations of Christians. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Moral theology, in other words, cannot be equated with the

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. 255.

<sup>33</sup>*Catholic Mind* 69 (1971) 37–58.

<sup>34</sup>*Octogesima adveniens* (cf. n. 33 above) 7.

problems and priorities of the Western industrialized democracies. We need other cultures to give us critical perspective on our own cultural and theological "locked-in syndrome."

8) *The person as criterion of the morally right and wrong.* Readers of *TS* will be familiar with this. But that does not diminish its importance. Vatican II (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 51) asserted that "the moral aspect of any procedure. . . must be determined by objective standards which are based on the nature of the person and the person's acts."<sup>35</sup> The official commentary on this wording noted two things: (1) In the expression there is formulated a general principle that applies to all human actions, not just to marriage and sexuality (where the passage occurred). (2) The choice of this expression means that "human activity must be judged insofar as it refers to the human person integrally and adequately considered."<sup>36</sup>

The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated. If "the person integrally and adequately considered" is the criterion of moral rightness and wrongness, it means that a different (from traditional) type of evidence is required for our assessment of human actions. For instance, in the past the criteriological significance of sexual conduct was found in its procreativity (*actus per se aptus ad procreationem*). Deviations from this finality and significance were viewed as morally wrong and *the* decisive factor in judging conduct. In my judgment, these perspectives continued to appear in *Humanae vitae* and "The Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics."

However, Vatican II adopted the broader personalist criterion. As Louis Janssens words it, "From a personalist standpoint what must be examined is what the intervention as a whole means for the promotion of the human persons who are involved and for their relationships."<sup>37</sup> This commits us to an inductive method in moral deliberation about rightness and wrongness in which human experience and the sciences play an indispensable role.

9) *The Curran affair.* Prior to the removal of Charles Curran's canonical mission to teach on the pontifical faculty at the Catholic University of America, Bishop Matthew Clark (Curran's ordinary) wrote on March 12, 1986:

If Father Curran's status as a Roman Catholic theologian is brought into question,

<sup>35</sup>*The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: America, 1966) 256.

<sup>36</sup>*Schema constitutionis pastoralis de ecclesia in mundo huius temporis: Expensio modorum partis secundae* (Vatican Press, 1965) 37-38.

<sup>37</sup>Louis Janssens, "Artificial Insemination: Ethical Considerations," *Louvain Studies* 8 (1980) 3-29, at 24.

I fear a serious setback to Catholic education and pastoral life in this country. That could happen in two ways. Theologians may stop exploring the challenging questions of the day in a creative, healthy way because they fear actions which may prematurely end their teaching careers. Moreover, able theologians may abandon Catholic institutions altogether in order to avoid embarrassing confrontation with church authorities. Circumstances of this sort would seriously undermine the standing of Catholic scholarship in this nation, isolate our theological community and weaken our Catholic institutions of higher learning.<sup>38</sup>

Both possibilities have begun to happen and thus the Curran affair ranks as among the most significant developments in moral theology in the past 50 years. For instance, after the appearance of *Donum vitae* (the C.D.F.'s instruction on reproductive technology), I publicly but respectfully disagreed with a few of the instruction's conclusions. A young theologian told me that he agreed with me but added: "Will I get clobbered if I say so?" Such an attitude is understandable but profoundly saddening, especially in a church that rightly claims divine guidance. One would think that the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit would be the most solid basis for welcoming challenge and disagreement. It takes little imagination to see how the climate of fear may lead theologians to "stop exploring the challenging questions of the day" or to hedge their bets. This is especially the case if the individual has dependents. And sadly, these are the very people whose experience and reflection is so essential in approaching such questions.

As for abandonment of Catholic institutions, that has not happened yet. But what has begun to happen, I fear, is the gradual and impoverishing isolation of Catholic University. Over and over again I have heard theologians state that in the present circumstances they would recommend Catholic University to neither aspiring professors nor students. I emphasize that this is not a threat of mine; it is a report. But the report is threatening.<sup>39</sup>

There is a single theological issue in play in the Curran case, but one with many ramifications. That issue: public dissent from some authoritative but noninfallible teaching. The teaching in question, as Curran has repeatedly emphasized,<sup>40</sup> has these characteristics: (1) distant from the core of the faith; (2) based on natural law; (3) involved in such particularity and specificity that we should not realistically expect the

<sup>38</sup>Found in R. A. McCormick, S.J., "L'Affaire Curran," *America* 154 (1986) 267.

<sup>39</sup>I go out of my way here to point out that this is no way impugns the quality or integrity of professors presently at Catholic University. It seems to me to be a judgment about institutional policy.

<sup>40</sup>Charles E. Curran, "Public Dissent in the Church," *Origins* 16 (1986) 178–84. Cf. also Curran, *Faithful Dissent* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1986) 61.

same level of certitude enjoyed by more general norms.

The C.D.F. has denied the legitimacy of such dissent. This collides in principle with its acceptance by the American bishops in 1968. In this matter I stand by what I wrote in 1986:

The implications of the Congregation's approach should not be overlooked. The first is that, to be regarded as a Catholic theologian, one may not dissent from *any* authoritatively proposed teaching. The second is that 'authentic theological instruction' means presenting church teaching and never disagreeing with it, even with respect and reverence. Third, and correlatively, sound theological education means accepting, uncritically if necessary, official Catholic teaching. The impact of such assertions on the notion of a university, of Catholic higher education, of theology and of good teaching is mind-boggling. All too easily, answers replace questions and conformism replaces teaching as 'theology' is reduced to Kohlberg's preconventional level of reasoning (obey or be punished).<sup>41</sup>

10) *The "restoration."* The description is that of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger.<sup>42</sup> It refers in a very general way to the attempt to "tighten things up" in the Church, especially by authoritative intervention into theological work considered suspect or dangerous. Cardinal Ratzinger has made no secret of the fact that moral theology heads his list. This restoration has taken two forms, one direct, the other indirect. The direct form involves the withholding of the canonical mission, the withdrawal of the imprimatur, dust-up actions, and letters to bishops and theologians. The indirect form is found above all in the appointment of bishops and the criteria of suitability for such appointment. Further symptoms of this restoration are seen in the failure of the synodal process and of the International Theological Commission. These were designed as vehicles for episcopal and theological collegiality, but have fallen a good deal short of these expectations and are widely dismissed as tokenisms.

The theological implications of this restoration are profound and far-reaching. I once listed them as ten "confusions" and have found no persuasive reasons for modifying this listing.<sup>43</sup> One can, of course, challenge the idea that we are involved in a restoration. Most would ridicule that challenge as unreal. What I think is beyond challenge is that, if we are, then these confusions will be exacerbated.

The above represent ten significant developments since 1940 that relate to moral theology.

<sup>41</sup>"L'Affaire Curran" 266.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Giancarlo Zizola, *La restaurazione di papa Wojtyla* (Rome: Laterza e Figli, 1985) 3.

<sup>43</sup>Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "The Chill Factor: Recent Roman Interventions," *America* 150 (1984) 475-81. I cannot avoid the conclusion that the C.D.F. has somehow been isolated from contemporary discussions and therefore in significant respects misunderstands them.



## WHERE WE ARE NOW

Once again I shall work in tens. Ten points can describe where we are now in moral theology, and I shall refer to them as “ages,” as “we are in the age of . . . .”

1) *The age of settling.* Charles Curran and this author have attempted, in our *Readings in Moral Theology*, to identify some of the areas of both importance and debate in contemporary moral theology. It is somewhat risky and difficult to assess the outcomes of these discussions, and for two reasons. First, they are still ongoing. Second, we are associated with an identifiable point of view. For instance, where dissent is concerned, we both would accept its legitimacy and even necessity in some cases. Or again, where moral norms are concerned, we would reject the notion of intrinsic evil as this was understood in manualist presentations and would accept some form of proportionalism.

My acquaintance with the literature leads me to believe that most theologians share similar perspectives.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, if this were not the case, one has to wonder why Cardinal Ratzinger (and even John Paul II) has aimed his guns in this direction. So the first thing that might be said about where we are is that there has been a quiet theological (even if not magisterial) settling, and a move to other issues in some of these matters. There are several possible readings of this. One is that a significant consensus has developed. Another is that a stand-off has been reached and further discussion appears nonproductive. Still another is that people are just bored with some of these concerns. I shall leave the decision to the judicious reader.

2) *The age of specialists.* I have already touched on this. Suffice it to note that the theologian should not aspire or be expected to be *uomo universale*. It would be unrealistic to expect Daniel Callahan to be a hands-on expert in the field of international relations, or Bryan Hehir to be a standout bioethicist. These people have established reputations in the fields of their competence and have done outstanding work. Without specialization they would hardly have the influences they have.

3) *The age of justice.* There has been a sea-change of moral consciousness during the past 50 years. During that period we gradually began to speak of sin not simply as the isolated act of an individual, but as having societal structural dimensions. We began to see that the sins and selfishness of one generation became the inhibiting conditions of the next. The structures and institutions that oppress people, deprive them of rights, and alienate them are embodiments of our sinful condition. The notion

<sup>44</sup>As an example cf. Walter Kerber, S.J., ed., *Sittliche Normen* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1982).

of systemic violence and social sin entered our vocabulary and is so much a part of it now that John Paul II uses it freely. For instance, in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* he states:

If the present situation can be attributed to difficulties of various kinds, it is not out of place to speak of 'structures of sin,' which, as I stated in my Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et penitentia*, are rooted in personal sin, and thus always linked to the concrete acts of individuals who introduce these structures, consolidate them and make them difficult to remove.<sup>46</sup>

This is, I think, where we are in much of contemporary moral theology. Many of the quite personal problems that so engaged the manualists are, obviously, still problems. Indeed, there is a pastoral wisdom there that remains somewhat undervalued, largely because it is unknown. Yet the focus has shifted. We are much more concerned about the rights of people that are denied by social structures. A symptom of this is the fact that the major problems in bioethics are perceived to be problems of access and distribution, problems of social organization and social responsibility. The same is true in other areas. For example, the women's issue is seen to be a structural problem. Similarly, life issues (abortion, war, capital punishment, etc.) are increasingly approached as a whole in terms of a "consistent ethic of life."

4) *The age of experience.* Through many initiatives of Vatican II (and the theology that led to and formed it) we now are more aware than ever that one of the richest and most indispensable sources of moral knowledge is human experience and reflection. To be ignorant of it or to neglect it is to doom moral theology to irrelevance and triviality.

I am deeply aware of the traps of overcontrast. But that being acknowledged, there is a residue of truth in the general assertion that for some decades Catholic moral theology proceeded as if its responsibility was to form and shape experience, but hardly ever be shaped by it. The overcontrast in that generalization refers to the work of the theologians mentioned at the beginning of this overview. Anyone who reads "Notes on Moral Theology" from 1940 forward will see immediately that Ford, Kelly, Lynch, and Connery were intimately associated with psychiatrists, social ethicists, physicians, business persons, and laypeople. My generalization does not refer to these eminent authors.

Rather it refers to official formulations. On the one hand, we honor key ideas in Vatican II. For instance:

She [the Church] must rely on those who live in the world, are versed in different institutions and specialties, and grasp their innermost significance in the eyes of

<sup>46</sup>"*Sollicitudo rei socialis*," *Origins* 17 (1988) 642-60, at 653.

both believers and unbelievers. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish, and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine Word.<sup>46</sup>

For this reason the Council warned:

Let the layperson not imagine that his/her pastors are always such experts that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him/her a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission. . . . Let the layperson take on his/her own distinctive role.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, we seem not to know how to deal with this “take on his/her own distinctive role.” There are repeated attempts by some *immobilisti* to marginalize it as “mere polls.” And they have a point. But not the only point. When I include the “age of experience” as a dimension of where we are, I mean to underline the fact that both authoritative statements and current theology admit experience as a *locus theologicus* in principle. There remain tensions about how to use and interpret it in systematic moral reflection. This is particularly true of some “authentic” utterances of the Holy See.

5) *The age of cultural diversity.* In 1979 Karl Rahner published in these pages “A Basic Interpretation of Vatican II.”<sup>48</sup> Rahner saw Vatican II as the inauguration of the Church as a world church. He saw three epochs in the history of Christianity: (1) the period of Jewish Christianity, (2) the period of Hellenism and European culture, (3) the period of the Church as a world church.

Up to Vatican II, Christianity was basically a Western export that attempted to proselytize by imposing the Latin language and rites, Roman law and the bourgeois morality of the West on various cultures. Our challenge now—and one with profound implications for moral theology—is to recognize essential cultural differences and with a Pauline boldness to draw the necessary consequences. For instance, Rahner asks: “Must the marital morality of the Masais in East Africa simply reproduce the morality of Western Christianity, or could a chieftain there, even if he is a Christian, live in the style of the patriarch Abraham?”<sup>49</sup> Simply to suppose that we have answers to questions like these is to fail to de-Europeanize Christianity and to “betray the meaning of Vatican II.”

6) *The age of technology.* Nearly every aspect of modern life in the Western world has been deeply affected by technology. The changes

<sup>46</sup>*Documents of Vatican II* 246.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.* 244.

<sup>48</sup>Karl Rahner, S.J., “A Basic Interpretation of Vatican II,” *TS* 40 (1979) 716–27.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.* 718.

continue on an almost daily basis: travel, information flow, education, construction, cooking, business, medicine, and so on. I have no precise idea how this relates to moral theology. But one cannot avoid the nagging suspicion that it may reinforce some deeply embedded Western and American value priorities: efficiency and comfort. If these are indeed the values that shape the perspectives of many Americans, it should be fairly clear that we are knee-deep in danger that they will corrosively affect our judgments of the morally right and wrong, and more generally of the priority of values.

7) *The age of holiness and witness.* The past 50 years have led us to the point where we recognize the value but limits of rational argument and analysis. The very meaning of "in the Lord" is best gathered from the lives of the saints. Johannes Metz notes that "Christological knowledge is formed and handed on not primarily in the form of concepts but in accounts of following Christ."<sup>50</sup> That is why the history of Christian theological ethics is the history of the practice of following Christ and must assume a primarily narrative form. We make Christ present in our world by embodying in our lives what Joseph Sittler used to refer to as "the shape of the engendering deed."<sup>51</sup> The saints do that best.

What I am suggesting by inference is that moral theology today, in its self-concept, is much more sensitive to the central importance of witness, imagination, liturgy, and emotions. There are many loose ends and incomplete agenda, of course. But it is where we are.

8) *The age of theological anthropology.* The *Institutiones theologiae moralis*, notwithstanding their compassion and practical pastoral wisdom, contained an image of the human person and of moral agency: the agent as solitary decision-maker. That may be an overstatement, but I think not by much. It is the result of presenting the moral life largely in terms of obligations and sins—itsself the precipitate of a confession-oriented moral theology.

Moral theologians today are much more aware of the need of a sound theological anthropology. By theological anthropology I mean a doctrine of the human person that views him/her in terms of the great Christian mysteries: creation–fall–redemption. It is a doctrine that would yield an appropriate emphasis on vision, perspectives, and character, and the stories, metaphors, and images that generate and nourish these elements.<sup>52</sup> Vatican II summarized this very cryptically: "Faith throws a

<sup>50</sup>Johannes Metz, *Followers of Christ* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1978) 40.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph Sittler, *The Structure of Christian Ethics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ., 1958), unfortunately out of print.

<sup>52</sup>Such an emphasis may help to recognize obligation, but it does not justify it. Cf. James Childress, "Scripture and Christian Ethics," *Interpretation* 34 (1980) 371–80.

new light on everything, manifests God's design for man's total vocation, and thus directs the mind to solutions which are fully human."<sup>53</sup> The terms "God's design" and "total vocation" are shorthand for theological anthropology.

9) *The age of ecumenism.* Because of the ecclesiological moves of Vatican II (e.g., acknowledgment of the presence of the Spirit to non-Catholic Christians and the reality of church in many of their communions), it is simply accepted in contemporary moral theology that our non-Catholic Christian colleagues are an important *locus theologicus* in moral deliberations. This is in rather stark contrast to canon 1399, 4 of the old Code that forbade the reading of books of any non-Catholics who "*ex professo* treated of religion" unless it was absolutely clear (*constet*) that such treatments contained nothing against the Catholic faith. In other words, the very separation of a Christian from Catholicism contained a presumption that that person was not a source of religious and moral wisdom and knowledge.

A symbol of where we are now is the fact that not a few of our Catholic moral theologians have studied under fine theologians such as James Gustafson, Paul Ramsey, Harmon Smith, et al. Once again I must advert to the fact that the discipline of moral theology has moved in this direction, yet it is far from clear that the sources of official statements have.

10) *The age of women.* I have already mentioned this above. Further comment, especially by a male, might be interpreted as a move in the reassertion of male dominance.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The detailing of significant developments and descriptions of where we are now implies directions for the future. The agenda seems fairly clear. We must develop these directions in a more profound, systematic, and pastoral way. Here I will simply list the qualities our continuing theological search should have if it is to respond to the needs of our time. Once again, in *tens*. I take these qualities from the preface of my recent volume *The Critical Calling: Reflection on Moral Dilemmas since Vatican II*.<sup>54</sup>

1) *Open.* The Church is a world church. I add only that "open" does not mean unstructured, unsystematic, or dispassionate. In the American Church, openness means a willingness to listen to what Hispanic Catholics have to say to us. In a real sense, but one I cannot specify, the future of the American Catholic Church belongs to Hispanics, much as

<sup>53</sup>*Documents of Vatican II* 209.

<sup>54</sup>Georgetown Univ., 1989.

its past and our present were shaped by immigrant Catholics, especially the Irish.

2) *Ecumenical*. It must take seriously the activity of the Spirit in other Christian and non-Christian churches.

3) *Insight-oriented*. This references an approach that views deeper understanding and corrective vision as the primary challenge of moral theology, not first of all conclusions or rules of conduct.

4) *Collegial*. Moral theology must be informed by the experience and reflection of all those with a true competence.

5) *Honest*. A "theology" rigged to justify pretaken authoritative positions merits the quotation marks I have given the term.

6) *Scientifically informed*. This speaks for itself.

7) *Adult*. The moral theology of the future must take personal responsibility seriously, both in developing moral convictions and in applying them. The older paternalism is dead.

8) *Realistic*. Past experience has taught us to beware of systems, and authors, that claim to have all the answers. A realistic theology will readily admit the limits of human concepts and verbal tools and not be upset with zones of ambiguity and uncertainty.

9) *Catholic and catholic*. The moral theology of the future must be proud enough of and loyal enough to its heritage to be critical of it in ways that make it more challenging to and meaningful for the non-Catholic world and prevent it from becoming comfortably and/or defensively sectarian.

10) *Centered on Christ*. A Catholic moral theology that is not centered on Christ had better change its name. By "centered on Christ" I do not mean repetitious and cosmetic overlays of biblical parenesis. I mean rather that the fundamental concepts of such a theology (e.g., vocation, *telos*, conversion, virtue, sin, obligation, etc.) should be shaped by the fact—and implications thereof—that Jesus is God's incarnate self-gift. The very gift of God in Jesus shapes our response—which means that the central and organizing vitality of the Christian moral life and moral theology is the self-gift we call charity. This must function, far more than it has, in the very notion of the moral life, in the discernment of moral rightfulness and wrongfulness of conduct, and in the pastoral education of the community of believers.