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*Morals and Medicine* by Joseph Fletcher (review)

Urban Voll

The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review, Volume 18, Number 1,  
January 1955, pp. 89-101 (Review)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1955.0005>



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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Morals and Medicine.* By JOSEPH FLETCHER. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954. Pp. 243 with index. \$4.50.

The first reaction of a Catholic on encountering a book by a Protestant theologian on specific moral problems such as the patient's right to know the truth, contraception, artificial insemination, sterilization and euthanasia is pleased surprise. Perhaps the traditional Protestant vagueness on definite moral issues, deplored on the dust-jacket and in the preface by Dr. Karl Menninger, is to give way to a more conclusive moral theology which, while probably differing on some points, will at least provide a basis for civic cooperation. Such happy expectation of a new ally is heightened by the high praise there accorded to Catholic moralists for their diligence.

With such a gracious introduction, it is possible to thumb blissfully, if not too carefully, through the first two chapters. The first, on human rights, displays an interesting historical insight into the relations of religion and medicine, with an impressive background of reading in modern medical problems as well as Catholic moral theology. The author is quite concerned with the interference of old religious beliefs in medicine. He carefully distinguishes reflective or rational morality from theocratic or revealed morality and chooses the second as his frame of reference, while at the same time professing his belief in the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, and expressing the hope that his conclusions fall within the range and provision of Christian theology. His opposition is reserved, it seems, for a third type of morality which he calls customary, that is, the confusion of *mores* with morals. The problem encountered in the second chapter is that of the moral right of the patient to know the truth about his condition. This preliminary skirmish, like the introductory chapter, is, at first glance, uneventful. However, both chapters strike the tone which is maintained throughout the work. The reader is reminded by the smooth urbanity, worldly wit and amicable benignity with physicians that the discussions of these medico-moral problems were originally the Lowell lectures. There is a slightly discordant note in rather constant and petty peevishness with Catholic moralists, but then this might be expected in a field the author confessed had already been filled by those whom he could not approve in every respect.

The real shock comes in the succeeding chapters. The pleased surprise this time is for the medical men rather than the moralists. It was perhaps best expressed by the science editor of the *New York Times* who wrote

in his review: "As a devout clergyman, Dr. Fletcher might be expected to champion theological conceptions of morality. He opposes them." The nature of that opposition the disappointed moralist may glean by turning back to the subtitles in the table of contents. Contraception is there described as our right to control parenthood. But that is only the third chapter. The fourth, fifth and sixth are successive illuminating explosions. Artificial insemination is the right to overcome childlessness. Sterilization is our right to foreclose parenthood; euthanasia, our right to die.

What proof is offered for these interesting conclusions, so novel in a moralist? Each chapter discusses the history of the practice, its current medical and legal status, but the discussion of morality is in each case a negative argument directed against Catholic moralists and anyone who agrees with them, be he Protestant clergyman or physician. Are the conclusions of these four chapters, the bulk of the book, then merely assumptions? Oddly but perhaps significantly, the principles which are supposed to guide the conclusions, while dispersed rhetorically as slogans throughout, are not found in anything like definite form until the seventh and last chapter which is on the ethics of personality. Dr. Fletcher there justifies his procedure by stating (p. 214): "Deliberately we have relied upon a cumulative support for our central thesis, choosing to bring out what it means in a clinical style by examining concrete problems rather than by presenting a contrived and systematic construction of ethical doctrine." This process from conclusion to principle undoubtedly would enjoy a certain attractiveness for men accustomed to the inductive methods of scientific research. Yet, while apparently avoiding aprioristic reasoning, it is actually far more aprioristic in the pejorative sense than the genuinely scientific method of Aristotle, for it makes the principle fit the conclusion. The actual result is a process from prejudice to principle, a work of rationalization rather than reasoning.

Unfortunately a point-by-point refutation would take a shape larger than the provocation. A great deal of ground is covered, and many passages from Catholic moral manuals are quoted. Yet as the book progresses, it becomes increasingly evident that the praise accorded Catholic moralists is a great deal like that which Mark Antony accorded Brutus and the rest in his famous speech. "So are they all, all honourable men." In this connection, it is interesting to note that Paul Blanshard is cited for his "somewhat tendentious (book), for all its careful documentation." Dr. Fletcher is mildly deprecating about the whole thing, remarking: "Mr. Blanshard has chosen to shock his readers rather than to explain the tortuous and detailed arguments with which Catholic moralists handle these matters. The result is an inexact and incomplete account of the Catholic views." (p. 19) The quality of Dr. Fletcher's scholarship is often of the same kind as Blanshard's for all its careful documentation, and the best thing that can be said of his contribution is that it is less inexact and incomplete. Some-

times the inexactness is picayune, as when he writes *libror censorum* for *censor librorum* or Liturgy for Litany of the Saints. But sometimes it is more important, as in his accusation that popes and moral theologians condoned sterilization to obtain *soprani falsetti* choirs. Surely the author's mind, so subtle in other respects, could have discerned in one of the sources adduced, the *Moral and Pastoral Theology* of Father Henry Davis, S. J., a distinction between such sterilization and the use for church music of those already made eunuchs. And still other times the author's explanation is incomplete, as when he challenges the inviolability of the sacramental seal for the sake of *agape*. In that case, the author implies that the reasons for the seal of confession are "institutional expedience (such as creating confidence in the inviolability of the confessional 'no matter what')." (p. 57) Such reasons are neither exclusive nor compelling, and it is unjust to Catholic moralists to omit the main reason they give, while conducting a debate on the matter.

Since a detailed rebuttal is clearly impossible, any critic must search out and judge the underlying bases for Dr. Fletcher's conclusions. It is exceedingly difficult to get at the moral principles of the book because of its technique, and indeed even when they are uncovered, they are quite nebulous. One may wonder to what extent the good physicians understood, or even cared to understand, the moral justification of such inviting conclusions as the legitimacy of contraception, artificial insemination, sterilization and euthanasia. These doctors are practical men, busy in their research and practice, and if this earnest clergyman, who seems to enjoy the blessing of his co-religionists in his position as professor of pastoral theology and Christian ethics in an Episcopalian theological school, says that these things are good, why, so much the better. The conclusions indeed seem to benefit the human health and happiness the physicians are sworn to serve, and here is obviously a scholarly man, well acquainted with medicine and legal practice, who must also be an expert in moral matters. If other theologians oppose such conclusions, they are surely less enlightened; they must have, as Dr. Fletcher says they have, theocratic ideas tinged with customary or primitive morality. Of course, such an attitude on the part of the physicians really involves an act of faith in Dr. Fletcher, which would mean a betrayal of the reflective, rational morality on which he takes his stand. Thus those tempted to the conclusions owe it to Dr. Fletcher as well as to themselves to examine carefully his principles, his general ethical position, and to satisfy themselves of the soundness of those principles and their logical connection with the conclusions. In doing this, there is one further difficulty; Dr. Fletcher frequently anticipates objections by qualifying his principles to meet the objection. In that case, the critic must insist that he follow the qualified principle rigorously to the conclusion.

The main principle of *Morals and Medicine* is what is called Personalism.

"The bias of my ethical viewpoint, apart from its frame of reference in the Christian faith," the author writes in his Preface, "is probably best pinpointed as personalism." Personalism is described immediately as "the correlation of personality and value; the doctrine, that is, that personality is a unique quality in every human being, and that it is both the highest good and the chief medium of the good." How the human person is the highest good will be reserved for later discussion. The question now is how it is found in every human being, since Dr. Fletcher denies human rights to the unborn child (p. 152) and later denies personality itself to an unconscious person since he cannot communicate with others. (p. 201) Then the ancient ontological definition of the person as the individual substance of a rational nature would certainly not be accepted in the author's context. Just what a rational nature is the author finds in a somewhat dubious condition, which may have to be revised in the light of increasing knowledge. "On any view, all the way from Aristotle to a Ralph Linton," the author writes in his final chapter of principles and qualifications (p. 221), "there is no reason to regard this personality of men as fixed, static and predetermined." He says in the same place that men *become* persons; he emphatically denies that they *are* persons. What then constitutes human personality? Not the soul, since the very word is in a dubious, murky condition and "too obscure, not to say obscurantist, to deserve any further use in either common-sense or Christian ethics." (p. 218) The direct creation of the soul is denied as "antiquarian" and as committing the "genetic fallacy of judging the worth or value of a thing by its origin, rather than by its achievement." (p. 222) The immortality of the soul is similarly denied as a pagan notion, although the New Testament faith in eternal life demands the qualification that there is a resurrection of the *spirit* (distinct then from soul) for the just. The other alternative is extinction (hell, of course, does not merit mention). If the soul then is rejected, and the nature of man apt for revision, what remains of the being of a human person in Dr. Fletcher's personalism? Certainly not the body, for it has no part in personality. The body is an *it*, a *thing*; at best, the body is the material of the artist, man.

The important thing about the human person for Dr. Fletcher is self-consciousness, which marks the frontier between *thou* and *it*. And the real significance of self-consciousness is the freedom of choice it gives. Paul Tillich's notion of personality is quoted: "Personality is that being which has the power of self-determination, or which is free; for to be free means to have power over one's self, not to be bound to one's given nature." (p. 66) "To be a person," Dr. Fletcher himself says, "to have moral being is to have the capacity for intelligent causal action." (p. 218) There is more than a little truth here, although it is difficult to see how one can be certain of the conclusion when so much confusion exists about the notion of personality and the concept of man is in such precarious condition that it is subject

to further change without notice. Probably the author regards intuition as sufficient to establish the fact, but the omission of the ontological background causes some serious confusion. However, the idea that is being sponsored in this personalism is for the present simply this. The evolution, progress and growth of personality consists in independence. Although Kant is quoted twice, and Hegel and Engels given credit for the proper ideas of freedom and necessity (despite the terror of investigation which is supposed to reign in academic circles, the citation is from the *Handbook of Marxism*), the author qualifies by saying that the person of man is not to be put in God's place and that man, for all his ingenuity and growth is still a creature of the natural order. The question to ask is how this qualification to meet anticipated objections is followed in the conclusions drawn.

However, it is quite naturally the moral situation which is the heart of Dr. Fletcher's problem. The matters of personality and freedom are but preliminaries. In his introduction to the concrete problem of contraception, he isolates four factors in every human act, four things to be considered in every moral judgment. These are first, the motive; second, the intention, which is also called the object or end sought; third, the means or method; finally, the result or consequences. These factors would seem to provide a working basis for the discussion of morals except for the fact that the explanation given asserts that not only the first factor, motive, but even the second, intention is subjective, internal and psychological as opposed to objective, external and behavioral. In practice, the second factor is sometimes reduced to the first, sometimes to the third so that there is no clear statement about the objectivity of a particular moral end, independent of the motive of the agent. This confusion about a moral object is at once so elemental and yet so serious that any college sophomore writing an examination paper on general ethics would receive a resounding "F" for it. One of the fundamentals of any sound morality is the objectivity of a moral object or end, independent of the physical nature of the act and likewise independent of the motivation of the person performing the act. Murder is intrinsically evil, even though the physical action is the same as legitimate self-defense, execution of a criminal, or military action in a just war, because murder is unjust killing. Dr. Fletcher himself makes use of this distinction to justify euthanasia which he does not see as unjust killing. Nor does the motive of the agent justify a moral object already intrinsically evil; certainly the Robin Hood motivation of the Communist powers does not justify their lying and stealing. So likewise does adultery remain intrinsically evil, despite the ever-so-noble motivation of the adulterers, which Dr. Fletcher suggests may be the fulfillment of the parental impulse. But in both these cases—euthanasia and artificial insemination by a donor—Dr. Fletcher can and does argue that the moral object is not intrinsically evil. In two other cases, he admits, at least for the sake of argument or for the conscience of

the questioner, that an action may be wrong and still be justified by its motivation. This means that in practice, Dr. Fletcher, who has some unkind things to say about the application of the principle of the double effect, really goes much further, so that indeed the end may justify the means. In the first case, on artificial insemination, he writes: "And even if we grant that masturbation is self-abuse when practised for its own sake, does it not lose that character when it becomes the method or means to a procreative process which is otherwise impossible?" (p. 118) To those who may feel some scruple about sterilization, Dr. Fletcher has a word of hope and comfort offered "only half in jest." "Repentance in Christian doctrine," he says, "is supposed to be a high virtue as well as the gateway to a larger life. Why not then, if unhappy circumstances require it, obey the moral claims of sterilization, and then repent, that is, be sorry, as any sensible person would be anyway?" (p. 170) Here is a coarse version of the *pecca fortiter* which Luther himself would disown; here now is a Protestant indulgence which really is a license and permission for sin.

The relativity of the author's moral system becomes increasingly apparent. The reason for the relativity is the lack of an absolute. Whatever may be said about the freedom ethic, if it is to remain an ethic, it must have an end. The confusion of immediate ends and means is all too obvious; the question of an ultimate end is never considered, except the single reference to the resurrection of the spirit without any advice on the means to take thereto. Of course, a book on particular moral problems is not intended to be a complete course in ethics, but surely some assumed or postulated end must color any judgment of human actions, if they are, as was said, causal. The description of person already quoted states that the person himself is the highest good. In that to be taken literally? It would seem not, from other references to God, but those references apply to God as creator, not as goal. Nevertheless, the purposiveness of the person and his freedom is entirely neglected. Thus the primary principle of ethics, that the morality of a particular action depends on its order to the ultimate end of man himself has not yet been refuted; in this new ethic it is simply passed over in disdainful silence.

How then shall the critic speak of the eternal law of God as the way God instructs us to reach our true goal? Dr. Fletcher has what amounts to an allergy towards any kind of law. The civil law is too tainted with customary morality, too much under the influence of theocratic moralists. It is always discussed, but as frequently deplored, and the physicians are invited to work for its liberalization, or failing that, to get around it. In one instance there is a very strong hint that the Hippocratic oath does not bind in the case of euthanasia, for after all these centuries Dr. Fletcher finds it mutually contradictory in its promises to relieve pain and at the same time to refuse drugs which produce death.

The divine law as promulgated in the Old and New Testaments the author acknowledges, mentioning that this is one qualification for the Lowell lectures he may besaid to possess. However, frequent references to theocratic morality and Bible-bound moralists make one wonder how Dr. Fletcher intends to have and to eat his cake. Admittedly it is a question of interpretation, as he himself indicates. When, for instance, he anticipates an objection to the anthropocentrism of his freedom ethic, he replies: "Given a theocentric context for the analysis of these matters, 'what doth God require of thee?' how is that to be determined?" (p. 189) In the determination of God's requirement or the interpretation of Scripture it is sufficient, in this matter of euthanasia as in others, that "many Christians do not find any theological logic (natural reason) or revelation to condemn euthanasia." Dr. Fletcher duly records the long history of pagan and Christian opposition to suicide, but the opposition is nearly always dismissed as theocratic tinged with customary morality. Here as in his other conclusions, Professor Fletcher is impressed neither with Church Councils, even of the earliest age, nor with Church Fathers like Augustine and Jerome who are treated with contempt, nor with modern writing, whether Catholic or non-Catholic.

In his own use of Scripture, the author is eclectic. If a text suits, it will be used innumerable times for many purposes. "Blessed are the merciful" is stretched not only to cover a multitude of sins, but even to the denial that there are sins to cover. But if a text does not suit, it must be corrected or explained. An example of the first is Christ's condemnation of evil thoughts taken from the same sermon as the beatitude of mercy. Since psychiatrists maintain guilt-complexes about evil thoughts are harmful, Professor Fletcher undertakes to *correct* (his word) Christ, using for the occasion another sentence, which in context was uttered against false prophets: "By their fruits, you shall know them." This wrenching of Scripture for previously contrived purposes is far more evident when the text forms a telling argument against one of the practices deemed necessary for freedom. The account of Onan's sin in Genesis is described as a deceptive evasion of levirate marriage, which it was. But, by a bit of rapid exegetical legerdemain, it becomes "quite clear that Onan was punished for the deception, not for the method he used." (p. 118) The interpretation that the self-defilement which was used as a means was itself sinful is rejected as "uncritical." Then "all Jewish and non-Catholic exegetes are agreed about this." (p. 118) Evidently the standard Protestant exegetical work, the *International Critical Commentary*, is no longer to be considered either critical or non-Catholic, for Professor John Skinner in his exegesis on Genesis there writes: "Onan, on the other hand, is slain because of the revolting manner in which he persistently evaded the sacred duty of raising up seed to his brother. It is not correct to say . . . that



his *only* offence was his selfish disregard of his deceased brother's interests." (pp. 451-452) Fletcher himself is forced by Deuteronomy 25 :7 to admit that the penalty for the evasion of the levirate responsibility was not death but public ridicule; yet no connection is seen between the direct slaying by the Almighty and the crime which merited such an awful punishment. "The account in Genesis merely states that 'the thing which he did displeased the Lord.'" (p. 88) "Merely" is a very light word to use about God's displeasure and the consequent punishment.

Yet perhaps the most disturbing position assumed by Professor Fletcher in regard to Christian revelation is his attitude towards suffering as part of the divine plan. This may seem to be a small matter compared to some of the things already mentioned; after all, if there is to be such ruthless living in respect to the generative function, surely a ruthless attitude towards the dying is not unexpected. Still, the very centrality of Christian living is its revolutionary way of suffering, which is neither hedonist nor stoic. Dr. Fletcher himself admits with Brunner that "it is not without significance that the picture of a dying man is the sacred sign of Christendom." "But when it is applied to suffering in general it becomes, of course," he goes on, "a rather uncritical exemplarism which ignores the unique theological claims of the doctrine of the Atonement and the saving power of the Cross as a singular event." (p. 197) Is then Christ Himself guilty of "uncritical exemplarism" when He declares that "if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me?" Is St. Paul, of all people, unaware of the uniqueness and singularity of the Cross and Atonement when he writes: "I rejoice now in the sufferings I bear for your sake; and what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ I fill up in my flesh for His body which is the Church?"

Whatever the stand of the reverend gentleman on the revealed morality of God, there can be no doubt that his choicest shafts and most poisonous barbs are reserved for the natural law target. Catholics sometimes assume that Protestants, whatever their differences with them on the place of the Scriptures in revelation and on their interpretation on certain points, are at least one with all who profess Christianity, as indeed all men of good will, in their acceptance of the natural law. Reinhold Niebuhr would correct this assumption: "There is something ironic in the fact that the concept of the Natural Law is regarded by Catholics as a meeting-ground for Catholics and non-Catholics, and for Christians and non-Christians, whereas, as a matter of fact, it is really a source of tension between the Catholics and non-Catholics." ("A Protestant Looks at Catholics" in *Catholicism in America*). Niebuhr's objection is that ". . . rigid Natural Law concepts represent the intrusion of Stoic or Aristotelian rationalism into the dynamic ethic of Biblical religion." Fletcher's attack proceeds from an entirely different quarter; as interpreted by its proponents the natural

law interferes with medical care and ultimately with that supreme good, the freedom of the human personality.

However, his direct attack legitimately centers about the vague and loose use of the word "natural." It may be said at once that any ambiguity in the use of the word is not confined to Dr. Fletcher's opponents. In one of those after-thoughts of the last chapter he speaks of a "moral order" which was called by ancient and medieval moralists the Natural Law; by religionists the Will of God; by the American Founding Fathers, certain inalienable rights. No further information is given in this postscript except that this morality, which is an aspect of what is as well as what ought to be, is an article of faith. Faith probably is not to be taken literally in what promised to be a morality of reason.

At any rate, it will not be unfair to select one place of the many places in the book where the natural law is attacked, for the infection seems to bring itself to a head in the argument for sterilization. *Casti Connubii* is given as the provocation: "Christian doctrine establishes, and the light of human reason makes it most clear, that private individuals have no power over the members of their bodies than that which pertains to their natural ends. . . ." Dr. Fletcher writes on his side: "Here again we are back to that counter-Reformation version of the Natural Law as something *physiologically* determined, which we have previously described as a denial of true morality, and as a submission to *fatality* and to physical (material) determinism." (p. 159)

Saint Thomas had some things to say about the Natural Law almost three centuries before the Reformation, and he is not generally credited with ambiguity. The Natural Law is not a physiological law; the Holy Father was not condemning the use of spectacles or store-teeth because these things do pertain to the natural ends of the parts of the body affected. Nor does the natural law refer to human nature (otherwise Dr. Fletcher who points to man's ability to walk upright as the sign of his reasoning ability could not be allowed an occasional somersault). The word "natural" refers to *right* human reason; it refers to the "ought" judgments. Dr. Fletcher himself says that the "moral order" is an aspect of what is as well as what ought to be. Certainly then the "ought" should be based on reality, and part of reality is the physical organism which the person uses. But the real question is the determination of the "ought"; or to use Fletcher's terminology, "the moral order." What is man ordered to? Every human action has an order to an end. Particular ends are not enough. What is the final motivation, the ultimate end? This book never tells, unless one may assume that the statement that the person is the highest good is to be taken in an absolutely literal sense. In that event, what is the purpose of man? Again the darkness and confusion close in, for there is no answer to be found here. And because there is no answer to this most

fundamental question, there is no satisfactory answer to secondary questions about proximate ends, and there are egregious blunders in the evaluation of moral acts.

The natural law is not blind submission to fate. It is an intelligent examination of the law of God written on the fleshly tablets of the human heart. It goes far beyond the examination of physical phenomena where Dr. Fletcher, for all his inveighing against physical determinism, stops. It helps the human person use physical things below it as means to a higher freedom than is ever mentioned in *Morals and Medicine*.

Sex is an important question here, for three of the five problems discussed in this book center around its meaning. Sex is assumed to be good, which it certainly is, but what meaning can the word good have if it is not also an end? The purpose and function of sex is reproduction. The author does mention that, but seems more often concerned with the mere assuagement of a natural desire. But what role does sex play in the entire human personality? Is it only an animal function, only the expression of love or does it too have a part in the direction of the human personality to its true ultimate end?

The meaning of life itself enters the last moral problem entitled the right to die. The natural desire for sex played such an important part in the previous three chapters that one might expect the natural desire to live to play an important part in this chapter. The author admits "the valid generalization that the wish to live is among the strongest instinctual drives in the higher animals, including men." But this instinctual drive, so unlike the one to sexual satisfaction, is to be ignored. Even Freud's testimony that in the subconscious everyone is convinced of immortality is overridden by the slogan, "pathetic immaturity."

What then is this wonderful maturity? It is freedom, freedom from nature, but with due provisos and exceptions. But how does it apply? For what purpose is this freedom to be utilized? For the development of personality. Dr. Fletcher is heartened by the ability of science to remove moral compulsions; thus, contraceptive devices have removed the triple restraints of conception, infection and detection from extra-marital sexuality. But this is, to use a distinction he proposes, only physical freedom (*can*), not moral freedom (*may*). Still, Dr. Fletcher praises the enhancement and heightening of moral stature by such physical freedom, though he is forced to confess by the recorded promiscuity of the Army during the last war and the Kinsey report that the heightened personal responsibility and the increased physical liberty also enhance the chances for moral failure. Now if it is evident that mere physical freedom is not an unmixed blessing, why is it so extolled? The question might be by-passed if the author had said more about the use of moral freedom in the achievement of a true ultimate end. As it is, the only end proposed is the untrammelled

pursuit of science without regard to other human values and without regard to the supreme human value which is the achievement of the end to which God has destined the human personality.

It is unlikely that Dr. Fletcher, and those who agree with him, would be willing to consider their problems in what they would call a theocratic context. Nor is there any better hope that the purposiveness of Aristotelian ethics will find a place in their reflective, rational morality. The adroitness displayed in dodging what is prejudicial to pre-conceived theses is too reminiscent of the sophists whom not even Socrates, Plato and Aristotle could silence forever.

Nevertheless, the Catholic moralist should not be discouraged. Despite the number of books which are currently appearing against the natural law, this concerted and concentrated attack hardly represents the entire Protestant or non-Catholic community. The number of quarrels Dr. Fletcher has with other Protestants in the course of his remarks is some evidence that the battle has not yet been decided. Indeed, in his own Episcopalian communion there are many who do not share his views. Moreover, there are powerful, discerning writers like C. S. Lewis who are poles apart from Dr. Fletcher in their views on what constitutes Christian behavior. It is interesting to note that Fletcher quotes only one insignificant passage from Lewis' *Problem of Pain*, a book whose whole tenor would be against Fletcher's ideas on euthanasia. Neither it nor any of the works like *Christian Behaviour* which would touch on the other problems of *Morals and Medicine* are as much as mentioned in the bibliography.

For those men of good will who are likely to listen, then, the Catholic moralist has a special work to do. He must show how reasonable are the conclusions which he says are binding not simply on Catholics but on all men. For Protestants who accept the revelation of the Scriptures, he must perform the task which Pope Pius XII said was one of the noblest tasks of the theologian, to show how his conclusions may be found in revelation. (*Human Generis*) Here he faces a serious difficulty, for the main current of Protestant thought is not at all in sympathy with the great Thomistic principle that grace perfects nature. The education of ministers by-passes philosophy to begin at once with a theology. In the more advanced theological seminaries there is an attempt to "systematize," that is, order revelation through reason. But the philosophy chosen will be personalism, humanism, existentialism or any philosophy but the Aristotelian *philosophia perennis* which they regard with ancient hostility and fear. Although some early Protestants did attempt something with scholasticism, modern Protestant thinkers regard this attempt as unfortunate, and are nearly always suspicious of it. Nevertheless, it is certainly feasible to present to those who accept and love the Scriptures the conclusions of the natural law in their divine, promulgated form. Not only the decalogue and the sermon

on the mount are to the point; indeed, even the Pauline epistles, so highly favored by Protestants, have things to say about the natural law. For instance, the divine words of St. Paul to the Romans, in which he upbraids those pagans for their abandonment of God and their consequent degradation and dishonor in unnatural intercourse with women and unnatural homosexuality, should indicate to the believing Protestant that there is more to the natural law than a mere pagan ethic. St. Paul likewise in his first epistle to the Corinthians is not at all unlike the Catholic moralist who sees in the natural law a meeting place for Christians and non-Christians when in his condemnation of fornication, adultery, effeminacy and sodomy, he asserts: "And such some of ye were." If these things were sins only for those who accepted Christianity, how could these converts be stigmatized for what they had done in their pagan life when they were without knowledge of Christian teaching?

For those who do not accept Christian revelation, it is still possible to show how philosophy itself, however faintly and incompletely, leads to the moral conclusions of the natural law. Many may have embraced philosophies which are really barriers between reason and the discovery of moral truth. But, as Newman once said: "While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians. . . . In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples whether we will or no, though we may not know it." The cooperation of non-Catholics in the Natural Law Institute of Notre Dame University, where the meaning, history and presence of the natural law in American ideals and even non-Christian religion is discussed, is a harbinger of hope.

There is a valuable lesson, then, for the Catholic moralist in Dr. Fletcher's book. Although some may justly claim they have been badly used, this book will serve as a good reminder about incautious and incomplete remarks. Even when Catholic moralists write for the Catholic community, other eyes, some unfriendly and some friendly, are reading over their shoulders. It will not be sufficient to stamp the magisterial foot, while reciting: "The Catholic Church teaches" or "the Natural Law holds." Especially in the case of the latter it will be necessary to show how these conclusions are derived, and to perform not only the function of an explicator but that of an apologete. Here there is a parallel with the one conclusion of *Morals and Medicine* we may accept. The patient has the right to know the truth about his condition insofar as he can understand it and in terms intelligible to him. The physician himself—and this is true of any professional man and indeed every man—has the right to know insofar as he can understand and in terms intelligible to him, the reason why moral guides say this action is right; this, wrong.

This principle may be applied to the morality of the book under review. The conclusions of the book make it a scandal, in the Scriptural sense of that word, for it presents the occasion of spiritual ruin. The means used in

arguing to the conclusions are unfair, incomplete and self-contradictory. There is an even stronger word for such judgment of higher things by lower, and it is the opposite of wisdom. Dr. Fletcher calls at least one Catholic argument simple and foolish. It is not simply a return of the compliment, but a strict, technical use of the words to say that Dr. Fletcher's arguments are not simple; they are stupid.

URBAN VOLL, O. P.

*Trinity College,  
Washington, D. C.*

*Cardinal Newman's Doctrine on Holy Scripture.* By JAAK SEYNAEVE, W. F. Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1953. Pp. 596.

Even a cursory reading of the works of John Henry Newman will reveal that man's deep interest in and wide acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. "Like medieval sermons his are often for pages on end a mosaic of Bible texts." (p. 46) And this interest and acquaintance could only have been the result of a constant study of the inspired text. But yet, to attempt an analysis of Newman's teaching on Sacred Scripture is not an easy task. For he was not a professional biblical scholar, nor did he publish, in any sense of the word, an introduction to that science.

It is true that the Cardinal did write various treatises on particular aspects of Sacred Scripture. But these treatises were generally the result of some controversy that had been stirred up by the Liberals of his age. (And Newman was a controversialist, and lived in a controversial period.) It would be necessary, therefore, in order to present any kind of complete picture of his biblical teachings to analyze all of Newman's writings. The present book represents such an attempt. And to its author, Jaak Seynaeve, professor at the White Fathers' Theological College in Louvain, are due the thanks of all those interested in Newman as well as of those whose interest is in the development of biblical science. For the book is a definite contribution to the study of the religious thought of Newman and his age.

An introductory chapter presents the historical and doctrinal background of Newman's biblical teachings. And it is only by a thorough study of that background that we can understand the controversial trend of much of Newman's writings. For the "sudden growth of physical sciences and the introduction of more scientific, critico-literary methods in Bible study" (p. 44) had a strong influence on the deeply religious scholar. And especially is this to be noted in the problem of squaring the findings of science with certain statements of the Bible. That Newman faced this problem by a thorough investigation of the nature of inspiration need not be stressed. But the same could not be said of many of the so-called Christians of the time. Even some of his Anglican friends were surrendering