

Him. For too long a time penance and the restrictions of Christian life have seemed to be nothing more than a program of self-torture. The day for that is past. It is now our task to emphasize the vivifying power of Christian abnegation. All death must issue in resurrection, or death is without meaning. All suffering, like the suffering of Christ, must bring with it glorious power, making us true saviors of the world in which we live.

Our work, therefore, as apologetes, our role as teachers, our whole life as priests and religious will come alive with new vitality only if it is a life rooted deep in the intelligent understanding of Sacred Scripture. Today, one of the greatest opportunities of a religious superior is to include in the community program of Sister Formation a complete and competent study of all that is deepest in God's revelation and of all that is richest in modern insights.

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*Contemporary Developments in Sacramental and
Moral Theology*

Severe limitations of time make it imperative to narrow our focus to the main streams of contemporary development. This is relatively easy in the instance of sacramental theology, for certainly the most influential of the new currents in Catholic life is the liturgical movement. Its vitality and success, however limited it might seem to those whose zeal would do much more, may be taken as a sign that the history of God's plan of salvation was not finished when the last evangelist put down his pen. The descent of the Spirit at Pentecost was not the conclusion of salvation-history, but rather a beginning which continues in the organic growth and development of the Church. Discoveries in archeology, philology and anthropology might have been confined to a few scholarly exegetes, had not the renewed interest in the liturgy (according to Pope St. Pius X, "the true and indispensable source of Christian piety") provided an interested and eager audience for biblical study within the church. More immediate to the present topic, however, is the striking influence

the liturgical movement has exercised on current development of sacramental study.¹

Those with the slightest acquaintance with the liturgical movement are aware that the encyclical *Mediator Dei*, justly called the *Magna Carta* of the movement, would hardly have been possible without the scholarly labor of the Benedictine monks of Maria Laach.² In that famous community, the work of Dom Odo Casel on his theory of mystery-presence (*mysteriengenwart*) has had a most far-reaching significance. Even those who are somewhat critical of some aspects of the theory admit it has had "a primary influence in the development of contemporary sacramental theology."³ In view of the overall convention theme and its major papers, it would not be prudent to dwell at any length on the Caselian theory here.⁴ Suffice it to say that the theory's point of departure is the concept of mystery, not simply in the usual theological sense of a truth not fully understood, but rather with the Pauline meaning of the secret hidden from all ages.⁵ As a point of reference, you might recall the well-known words of St. Paul, read in the liturgical context of the nuptial mass, "This is a great sacrament (Gk. *mysterion*); I speak in Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5, 32)

The studies of the monks of Maria Laach in comparative religion led them to see some analogies of the Christian mysteries,

¹ Often the bibliographies of liturgical studies provide the best clues to current developments in sacramental theology. E.g., cf. John H. Miller, C.S.C. (ed.) *Yearbook of Liturgical Studies*, Vol. II (Notre Dame: Fides, 1961).

² Other liturgical schools, especially those with a more pastoral orientation, should not be excluded. However, Pius XII in *Mediator Dei* paid special tribute to the Order of St. Benedict, and there is little doubt that the Maria-Laach school exercised a most important influence on sacramental theology.

³ Colman E. O'Neil, O.P., "The Mysteries of Christ and the Sacraments," *The Thomist*, XXV, 1 (Jan. 1962), p. 1.

⁴ Among the making of books and articles of which there is no end, the commemorative issue of *La Maison-Dieu* #14 at the death of Dom Odo (1948), contains a series of articles by liturgical scholars who provide a most illuminating introduction to the study of this theory.

⁵ Eph. 3, 16. This theology of mystery has received much fuller development since it was first broached, especially in the work of I. H. Dalmais, O.P. Cf. note 14.

especially the Paschal mystery, in the ancient, pagan mystery-religions. Although the secret character of these mystery-rites prevented definite information, it seemed apparent that they involved a dramatic representation of the saving action of the god being worshipped, the god and his action somehow being made present by the liturgical action of the participating initiates.⁶ Of course this was only an analogy, a point of departure for these Christian scholars of liturgy, their proper frame of reference being the early Christian fathers, or rather the worship-acts of the early Christian communities as interpreted by the liturgical homilies of these fathers. Perhaps the full significance of this theory of mystery-presence is caught by Dom Odo's own definition of liturgical mystery, "a sacred action of worship in which a redemptive work of the past is rendered present under a determined ritual. The worshipping community, in accomplishing this sacred rite, enters into a real participation with the redeemer evoked, and thus acquires their own salvation."⁷

The rich poetic content of this mystery-presence theory elicited an enthusiastic response. It was far removed from the spirit of pastoral manuals which presented the minimum for sacramental validity and liceity. But so too was it removed, at least in emphasis, from the strict, descending line of sacramental causality. Tridentine definition of sacramental causality (*ex opere operato*) against Protestant objection accented the descending mediation of Christ. Modern Protestants, well informed and cordial in the dialogue, incline to a view of the sacraments as signs of faith, acts of the worshipper, and criticize Catholic teaching as too mechanical, almost a species of white-magic.⁸ Some liturgical scholars sympathize with these strictures, satirizing popular Catholic understanding of the sacraments as too one-sided. The priest, in this ordinary understanding, does not celebrate the sacraments; he *distributes* them as a druggist serving his customer

⁶ Dom Éloi Dekkers, O.S.B. "La Liturgie, Mystère Chrétien," *La Maison-Dieu* #14 (1948), p. 34.

⁷ Odo Casel, O.S.B. *Le Mystère du Culte dans le Christianisme* (Paris: 1946), p. 109.

⁸ Jarislow Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959), pp. 110-127.

with the required bottle of pills from the pharmacy.⁹ Often sacramental theology seems to have been oversimplified by constant appeal to the axiom that sacraments are for men. This emphasizes the descending line of sacramental causality to the oblivion of the other side of sacramental mystery, the ascending mediation, the notion that sacraments are indeed signs of faith.¹⁰ It was the liturgical genius of the Caselian school which reminded us of what had perhaps been neglected and forgotten, that the sacraments mean more than the channeling of a reservoir of graces won by Christ to the individual recipient by the minister of the sacrament, that the sacraments are actions of the total church, of Christ's mystic Body, both head and members. In fact, it may be said that the sacraments are the vicarious actions of Christ; it is Christ Who baptizes, absolves, consecrates His Body and Blood in daily sacrifice. And Christ is both the suffering servant of Yahweh described in the songs of Isaiah, and at the same time the risen and triumphant victor of the Apocalypse.

Most agreed that the insight was magnificent, but the theory did not meet the unqualified enthusiasm of all theologians; the ensuing controversy indeed might be a good test case for our discussion on the acceptance of contemporary development in the theological formation of Sisters. If it is possible to give a brief account, it might be reported that the critics centered their attack on the manner in which Christ's action (His passion, resurrection and ascension) might be said to be present, keeping in mind that Christ died once, now dies no more.¹¹ Some of

⁹ A. M. Roguet, O.P., *Christ Acts Through the Sacraments* tr. Carisbrooke Dominicans (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1954), p. 11.

¹⁰ "The traditional formula 'sacraments of the faith' (*sacramenta fidei*) is no mere pious phrase, and St. Thomas can write: 'The sacraments are so many signs which show the faith by which a man is justified.' (Summa Theol. I, q.61, a.4.) We have so concentrated our attention on one aspect of the sacraments that many would cry 'heretic' if anyone other than St. Thomas had uttered these words." A. J. McNichol, O.P., "Sacramental Signification," *The Thomist* X, 3 (July, 1947) p. 335.

¹¹ Rom. 6, 9. The best account of the controversy is that given by Dom Eloi Dekkers, O.S.B., "La Liturgie, Mystère Chrétien," *La Maison-Dieu* #14 (1948), pp. 30-64.

Casel's disciples tried to fit the theory into more precise, scholastic categories, a process Dom Odo never took kindly, preferring the poetic vagueness of patristic formula, and answering all objections by recourse to the essentially obscure character of mystery. For instance, if Christ is present really, truly, substantially—although not locally—in the Eucharist in many places, why could not His saving action of passion, victory, exaltation, while limited from a human point of view to particular moments in the long chronicle of world history, still be present to all ages in the fullness of time?¹² When the battle smoke cleared, it became more apparent that the Caselian theory applied best to the Mass, less perfectly for the other sacraments, to say nothing of sacramental rites and the divine office, all, be it noted, part of the church's liturgical celebration of the Paschal mystery.¹³

The dialogue still goes on. The major continuing difficulty seems the concept of *mysterium* so rich in its suggestiveness that it becomes imprecise, even ambivalent.¹⁴ Some of you may have noticed this in the mystical, almost Alexandrian exegesis of a disciple of Dom Odo's, Dame Aemiliana Löhr.¹⁵ For those accustomed to an Antiochene scrupulosity about the literal sense of Scripture, some of the poetic flights of this liturgical interpretation come as an awakening, one might hope not too

¹² "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today, yes, and forever." Heb. 13, 8.

¹³ As Dom Eloix Dekkers points out, *op. cit.* (pp. 57-8) this was the judgment of theologians such as M. Schmaus and Y. Congar on Sohngen's opposition to Casel. St. Thomas had written: "In sacramento Eucharistiae continetur ipse Christus substantialiter; in aliis sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus instrumentalis participata a Christo." III, q.65, a.3.

¹⁴ Cf. I. H. Dalmais, O.P., "Le 'Mystère'" in *La Maison-Dieu* #14 (1948), pp. 67-98. Père Dalmais suggests that the Western Church in its scholastic development achieved the power of using concepts rigorously defined with precise analogies, but may have lost some ability to elaborate a double theology of Christian rites: one sacramental by a descending scheme of communication of salvation from God to men; the other, a liturgical orientation of external and social manifestations of religion as acts of worship. Poetic, symbolic thought may be complementary to logical, scientific thought.

¹⁵ *The Mass Through the Year* (2 vols.) tr. I. T. Hale (Westminster: Newman, 1958). Also *The Great Week* tr. D. T. H. Bridgehouse (Westminster: Newman, 1958).

rude an awakening. However the ambiguity of mystery is somewhat avoided by the exciting sacramental theology of the Dutch Dominican, Father Henry Schillebeeckx.¹⁶ Schillebeeckx, instead of mystery, uses the idea of sacrament, a concept he extends considerably. The sacrament is a sacred sign; it is the place of encounter of man with God. The very nature of man demands sacrament; this argument has long been part of the apologetic battery against those who would Platonize religion, striving to free the mind from the shell of sense to arrive at the pure idea. In the Christian context, Catholics had argued that our Lord had not only followed Jewish liturgy, but instituted sacred rites, notably baptism and the eucharist so that Protestants were interpreting too exclusively the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4, 23) on true worship in the spirit. But in Schillebeeckx's view, sacramentalism is almost universal. First, for the pagans the external world was the sacrament of God. While it had been argued before that the externalism of the sacraments was an extension of the Incarnation, Schillebeeckx says boldly that Christ Himself is God's sacrament. The Church in its turn is seen as the sacrament of the heavenly Christ. To sum up this theology still in progress, sacrament is encounter, place of meeting between God and man, a mediation which is a descent from God, and an ascent of man to God.

Although a good deal less than justice has been done, perhaps the general theme of the convention more than this brief summary will permit a posing of the practical pedagogical question. How much of these interesting insights can or should be incorporated in the theological formation of Sisters? Or more concretely, since the sacraments will certainly be taught, should their presentation be a descending causality (causes of grace) or as ascending liturgical actions of the worshipping Church? Obviously this is a false juxtaposition; the question is not an "either/ or" but a "both: and." The very character of theological

¹⁶ This sacramental synthesis, still incomplete, is written in Dutch. Besides random articles, a good idea of this work can be gathered from *Le Christ, Sacrement de la Rencontre de Dieu* tr. A. Kerkvoorde, O.S.B. (Paris: Cerf, 1960).

development implies no repudiation or rejection of what has already been gained, but rather an absorption of the new insight. In a memorable, oft-quoted passage Newman says of the Church what might be said of theology; she did not lose Benedict when she gained Dominic, nor did she lose Benedict and Dominic when she gained Ignatius.¹⁷ What creates these false oppositions of "either/ or" is a narrow attitude which might be described as totalitarian. Exegesis versus patrology, for instance, or biblical theology against scholasticism, or in our present problem, liturgical theology as opposed to the divine causality of the sacraments.

Admitting, then, no real opposition, on which aspect should the accent fall? Or, in the curricular context, where and how should the sacraments be taught? A great deal depends, certainly, on the general scheme adopted. It is interesting to note St. Thomas in his neo-Platonic scheme of *exitus-reditus* makes provision for the sacraments from both points of view, i.e., as acts of religion, specifically as those acts by which we take something from God, and then again as extensions of the redemptive Incarnation, as vicarious acts of Christ.¹⁸ If some preference must be indicated, it would appear that theology's character as divinity makes it advisable to consider the sacraments primarily as God's action in Christ and the Church (descending line), without however failing to supply the corrective of an ascending liturgical line.¹⁹ After all, this is a constant problem of sacred doctrine, to teach both sides of mystery: unity and trinity, divinity and humanity, grace and free will.

Which leads us into moral development. The suggestion occurred that the reason these two quite distinct developments of

¹⁷ "The Mission of St. Benedict" in *Essays and Sketches* (Vol. III) (New York: Longmans, 1948). The quotation was recently used by Fr. Eugene Burke, C.S.P. in a paper on "The Scientific Teaching of Theology in the Seminary" explaining he was borrowing from an article of Fr. Donnelly, S.J. in *Theological Studies*. That article revealed Fr. Donnelly was quoting from Père Congar, O.P. Père Congar was, of course, quoting Newman who appeals to history.

¹⁸ Cf. John H. Miller, C.S.C., "Nature and Definition of the Liturgy," *Theological Studies* XVIII (1957), pp. 325-356.

¹⁹ Cf. note 14.

sacramental and moral were to be discussed in one paper was that in the minds of some, the sacramental life is identified with the moral life. Granting most intimate connection, it would seem that a perennial task of sacred doctrine is to divide in order to unite, to analyze for the sake of ultimate synthesis. Integration is "a consummation devoutly to be wished," all the more so because moral is not an autonomous science, but part of theology, needing scripture and dogma and sacraments as blood stream needs oxygen, or *vice versa*. Still, premature integration breeds confusion, and to continue the biological metaphor, the empirical scientist studies separately the circulatory and respiratory functions, although in reality they cannot be separated.

In this connection, at the very last minute of preparation, in fact at the book display of the convention, Father Schlitzer's new text appears, and, from the table of contents, seems to be just such an attempt to integrate sacramental and moral study. This is certainly in the spirit of St. Cyril of Alexandria who is the classical example of systematic sacramental orientation, weaving moral instruction within the sacred mysteries. Those of you who know Father Schlitzer's *Redemptive Incarnation* will be most eager to study this latest contribution. But moral teachers among you, already harassed with more material than you can possibly cover, may move somewhat gingerly into still another area.

As a matter of fact, at this very moment the moralist is confronted with such serious problems that it is no exaggeration to say that moral theology is in crisis. The moralist, like any other theologian, is deeply concerned with the new insights of scripture scholars and liturgists; after all, the Christian life, like the Trinity and the Incarnation, is a revealed mystery.²⁰ But even more, on the side of application, the moralist faces other problems, those of a rapidly changing society.²¹ If the teaching of the

²⁰ "The principles . . . of our life as Christians are as mysterious and ineffable as the Divinity in whom they are participations." Dom P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B., "Current Trends in Moral Theology," *Catholic Educational Review* LVIII, 1 (Jan. 1960) p. 2.

²¹ Those few who may be unfamiliar with the vast extent of these problems might peruse with profit the annual "Notes in Moral Theology" published in *Theological Studies*.

moralist is to have relevance—and remember it is precisely the business of the moralist to be relevant, i.e., practical—he must know, besides matters proper to theology such as scripture and liturgy, new developments in other sciences—psychology, economics, sociology, to name but a few. Recently a doctor called me about a moral problem, and receiving a solution he did not like, said in exasperation: “You moralists and the lawyers are making the practise of medicine intolerable.” To which I replied, “You doctors and lawyers (and I could have mentioned psychiatrists, atomic scientists, economists and a host of others) are making the practise of moral theology intolerable!” But are these matters germane to the education of sisters? First of all, nothing human is alien to theology, and whatever is discovered about the human animal which has reference to his moral life must receive the scrutiny of sacred doctrine. Secondly, at least some, probably most, of the Sisters are being prepared to teach, and, as every teacher knows, the price of confining classroom teaching to the pre-conceived limitations of the lesson-plan is to invite the bugaboo of boredom, to kill in the student, as Einstein put it, the holy flower of curiosity.

And students do ask questions about morality, even those silent partners who seem to come to the rest of theology in the capacity of uninterested observers. Once, speaking to fellow-members of a college faculty, I started with the diplomatic generality that every professor thinks his subject the most important in the curriculum. One gentleman, unmoved by the diplomatic overture, growled: “You’re different, of course, you *know* yours is.” Now, had I been speaking as I am now to sacred doctrine teachers, I would have had to answer: “No, moral is not as important as scripture or dogma or liturgy—except, of course, in a qualified sense that all theology leads to the moral life.” But, having stigmatized totalitarianism in other parts of theology, I can allow no moral totalitarianism. Seriously, the moral teacher does have one advantage; students, sisters and lay, do generally think moral is most important. They often confer their supreme accolade on the moral course. “It’s practical.”

Some have spoken of a crisis in moral theology; others, of a

renaissance. If synthesis follows criticism, renaissance may be the just word. For, at the present time, moral theology is blessed (or cursed) with a plethora of criticism. Though unsettling, such ferment may be the sign of growing pains and an eventual healthier maturity. Much criticism has been directed at the customary moral manuals; the word "customary" is deliberately chosen as more accurate than classical, and the word "traditional" has a claim to reverence. Some of this criticism has been so trenchant and negative that the Church authorities have intervened.²² This intervention, withdrawal from publication, does not necessarily imply that all the criticisms are invalid. Quite the contrary, the admission should be candidly made, that, where there is so much smoke, there must be some fire.

Fathers Ford and Kelly suggest that the welcome extended to critics should itself be critical.²³ It might be added that any critique of the current critics involves a search for a criterion. Obviously and correctly one criterion is evangelical; the charge is made that present moral books do not breathe the spirit of the gospel. On the other hand, there is still another and distinct complaint that moralists have not come to grips with today's problems; therefore another criterion is modernity. Nor is this addition of a second criterion a cancellation of the first so that the moralist may assert that, being shelled from both sides, he occupies the golden mean. It could be that he is not doing a good job in two different areas.

Some of the critics further try to determine the historical causes of the present situation. One says that all the trouble began with scholasticism which represents the intrusion of a pagan ethic in the pure simplicity of gospel teaching;²⁴ still another says the

²² Jacques Leclercq, *L'Enseignement de la Morale Chretienne* (Louvain: Vitrail, 1949). An account of the unsigned review, "Constructive and Destructive Criticism" in *Osservatore Romano*, Feb. 2, 1956 is given by Ford & Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology* (Westminster: Newman, 1958), pp. 57-59.

²³ *Op. cit.* p. 80. Three chapters are devoted to this problem: "Modern Criticisms of Moral Theology," "New Approaches" and "Reflections on the Criticisms and New Approaches," pp. 42-103.

²⁴ This is a tendency rather than a clear statement. However, for one

wrong turn was rather made in the departure from the superior synthesis of scholasticism with a separation of moral from dogma, then further bifurcation of moral itself into speculative, practical and a final atomization of casuistry on the one hand, ascetical and mystical on the other.²⁵ Still, these interpretations of historical data depend on some other norm than the facts themselves, and resolve into the search for the criterion of what moral study ought to be.

Putting that question aside for the moment, and accepting for the sake of argument the common complaint that the present state of moral theology is something less than satisfactory, one might turn to the positive efforts towards a rethinking of the moral problem. Most of these efforts have come from the Tübingen school—Tillman, Hörmann and Häring.²⁶ It may be permissible to isolate for brief consideration Häring's *Law of Christ*, since it is quite popular and has been adopted by some religious as a moral text. A careful perusal of the first volume as well as some attention given to reviewers elicits praise for magnificent effort with many individual complaints on detail.²⁷ Leaving

such expression, cf. Ph. Delhaye, "La théologie morale d'hier et d'aujourd'hui," *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 27 (1953), 112-130.

²⁵ R. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Beatitudo* tr. Patrick Cummins, O.S.B. (St. Louis: Herder, 1956), p. 14. Part of the difficulty stems from the want of a thorough history of moral theology to determine its nature more accurately. A good beginning is made by Thomas Deman, O.P., *Aux Origines de la Théologie Morale* (Paris: Vrin, 1951). Likewise the "Historical Survey of Moral Theology" which is the first chapter of Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., *The Law of Christ* (Vol. I) tr. Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S. (Westminster: Newman, 1961). A short but valuable introduction to the nature of moral is that of J. Tonneau, O.P., "At the Threshold of the Secunda Pars: Morality and Theology" in *Man and His Happiness* (Vol. III. Theology Library ed. A. M. Henry, O.P.) tr. Charles Miltner, C.S.C. (Chicago: Fides, 1956).

²⁶ Available in English as well as Häring (Note 25) are Fritz Tillmann, *The Master Calls* tr. Gregory Roettger, O.S.B. (Baltimore: Helicone, 1960) and Karl Hörmann, *An Introduction to Moral Theology* tr. Edward Quinn (Westminster: Newman, 1961). An interesting criticism of some of the philosophical presuppositions of this school is that of L.-B. Gillon, O.P., "La théologie morale et l'éthique de l'exemplarité personnelle," *Angelicum* 34 (1957) Fasc. 3-4, pp. 241-378.

²⁷ Cf. especially Dom P. Gregory Stevens, O.S.B. in *Worship*, XXXV, X (November, 1961), pp. 685-688.

aside these complaints about the heavy scholarship, the awkward integration of biblical themes, the unsure use of modern sciences such as phenomenology, one might address oneself to the sweeping attempt at a new synthesis. With all due proportion, the defence of one of the apologetes for Teilhard de Chardin's effort at synthesis in another area might be applied to Häring: "he attempted a gigantic work, like Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. Well, no. He did not have the sober style, nor the metaphysical rigour, nor the deep, impeccable and sure knowledge of Christian theology that Thomas Aquinas had."²⁸ And the same author goes on to draw comparisons with Origen. The comparison with Origen is not entirely inept; however abortive the synthesis itself, the bold, adventurous spirit which prompted it provided those who followed with valuable lessons.

One important lesson which might be learned is the proper place of law in Christian morality. The concept of law, even though it be the law of Christ, has often received in customary moral what many critics deem a disproportionate underscoring. What response does the concept of law conjure up in the minds of students? Very often a series of burdensome precepts with but a tenuous connection with Christian mysteries and Christian living. Law in this common understanding remains something external, imposed from without. Would then the law of Christ be the precepts laid down in the sermon on the mount, the discourse at the last supper, with perhaps the exhortatory sections of the epistles? Such a naive version of the law of Christ would be hard to reconcile with the Pauline teaching on Christian liberty. Father Stanislas Lyonnet in a magnificent study has shown that modern Pauline exegesis confirms the traditional teaching of Saints Augustine and Thomas, namely, that the law of Christ is not primarily written, but the Spirit dwelling in the hearts of Christians.²⁹ There is much significance for moralists who give law

²⁸ Nicolas Corte (Msgr. Leon Cristiani), *Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (New York: McMillan, 1960), p. 114.

²⁹ Stanislas Lyonnet, S.J., "St. Paul: Liberty and Law," *The Bridge* Vol. IV ed. John M. Oesterreicher (New York: Pantheon, 1961), pp. 229-251. Cf. S. Th. I-II, Q. 106, a.1.: "*Id autem quod est potissimum in lege*

a primacy which returns us to the Old Testament in the very time of Pentecost. The first Pentecost represents the giving of a law engraven on tablets of stone to Moses on Mount Sinai; the new Pentecost is the descent of a Person, the Holy Spirit breathing forth a new life of charity, something predominantly interior into the hearts of Christians.

It has been said that French theologians write with the ghost of Pascal at their elbow.³⁰ One might suppose then that an American theologian, even though he had never read Dewey, might be influenced by the pragmatic spirit. The German school of moralists in the same vein seem to entertain a Kantian reverence for law and corresponding duty. If then the Germans have been tried and found somewhat wanting, we might turn to the French, who, instead of attempting systematic works prefer to send out *essais* and *jalons*. With the aid of one French moralist who writes *principes* we may conclude with a rough blueprint of a moral theology as ideal as human limitations permit.³¹

First, aware of the dependence of moral on the rest of theology and the need for criteria, Père Trémeau offers four orientations. A Christian morality must be God-centered, and, in this context theocentrism is opposed to the homocentric character of any natural ethic. Although it is in some quarters fashionable to speak of Christian humanism, there is in the phrase not only some pejorative Renaissance connotations, but a latent Pelagian tendency to diminish the unique character of sacred history. In its first phase sacred history is the story of the covenant relation of God's people to their Lord, Lover and Father, even as in these latter days God has manifested our brotherhood with Christ in the Spirit.

This leads to the second orientation the moralist must keep in

novi testamenti, et in quo tota virtus ejus consistit, est gratia Spiritus Sancti, quae datur per fidem Christi."

³⁰ "The towering stature of Pascal continues even until today to overshadow French thought." James F. Connolly, *The Voices of France* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 6.

³¹ Marc Trémeau, O.P. *Principles de Morale Chretienne* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1959).

mind, even though he might not dwell on it explicitly. Christian morality is christocentric.³² Jesus is the Way; no one comes to the Father except through Him. Jesus is the model in such fashion that the imitation of Christ is the only way a Christian can dynamically realize the image of God in which he was created. But Jesus is even more than exemplar, more than way and truth; He is the life itself.

The divine life Christ gives us, that which makes us, in St. Peter's phrase, co-sharers of the divine life, is given to us in Christ's Church. Moral theology is ecclesial, not simply in the sense that the Church is the proximate teacher of moral life, but more important because she is mother. The ecclesial aspect of the sacraments is the social context in which Christian life is reborn from on high in baptism, nourished by the eucharist, restored in penance.

As a final orientation, Christian morality is eschatological, otherworldly. In a sense, it is a morality of failure, or rather, of victory in defeat. Its center on God, Christ and the Church is, when these are properly understood, focussed on the *parousia*. The consciousness of the *parousia* may be diminished by two thousand years' delay, and perhaps by essentialist emphasis on the soul's immortality and the immediacy of the beatific vision for the saints, but the Advent liturgy and the official professions of faith still remind us of the existential end of sacred history, so vivid in the apocalyptic *genre* of scripture. This does not mean that the Christian is not to love the world, as God loved it at creation. The exclusiveness of the chiliastic Thessalonians is one extreme in that it forgets that the best manner of preparation for the kingdom is by fraternal charity practiced in the needs of the present time. Granting the need for balance in the presentation, it must be clear that the ultimate end, the beatitude which is the goal of moral theology has the horizons of the infinite, compared to the limited terrestrial goal set by a natural ethic, however valid in its own order.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 8-12. Cf. Domenico Grasso, S.J., "The Core of Missionary Preaching," *Teaching All Nations* ed. Johannes Hofinger, S.J. tr. Clifford Howell, S.J. (New York: Herder, 1961), pp. 39-58.

In conclusion, three or four of the most valuable themes of Christian morality should be mentioned. Since faith is, according to conciliar definition, the root and foundation of holiness,³³ it should receive in any moral course the fundamental position. Avoiding the extremes of fideism and rationalism (a Charybdis not all apologetics has avoided) the double character of faith as both gift of God and virtue to be used by man should be carefully delineated. One might as well face at the outset the deep mystery of divine grace and human cooperation which has troubled the Church from the time of Augustine. The credibility of faith should not overshadow its obscurity; the student should be as appreciative of the dark night of St. John of the Cross as he is aware of a reason for the hope that is in him.

Without neglecting Christian hope as the very foundation of prayer, certainly the heart of the matter is charity. As someone remarked, the real scandal of modern moral theology is that a book like Gillemann's *Primacy of Charity* ever had to be written. Social charity like humility is so predominant in evangelical teaching that it is not likely to be overlooked, one might hope; still, the primordial character of charity as love of God with its inseparable connection with sanctifying grace is so consistently a theme of sacred scripture that one biblical theologian believes he has found the central theme of all sacred history in the idea of *agape*.

One last virtue, prudence, and this for several reasons. First, the studies of Père Deman have shown this forgotten virtue to be much more evangelical than previously supposed; recall the five prudent virgins and that bewildering commendation of an unjust steward in that he had acted prudently.³⁴ Moreover, the same studies have indicated that a more careful attention to prudence obviates in a more dynamic synthesis the complexities of the moral systems connected with conscience and law.³⁵

³³ Trid. VI, c. 8, Denz. 801.

³⁴ T.-H. Deman, O.P., *La Prudence* (Paris: Revue des Jeunes, 1949), pp. 389-412.

³⁵ Thomas Deman, O.P., "Probabilisme," *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, XIII.

Finally, the study of prudence shows the meeting place between grace and nature, between Christian revelation and Greek thought in a distinction which is yet union, and still the glory of Catholic theology.

The sacramental and moral problem then in the formation of Sisters is the same, not in the sense of those who would combine them,³⁶ but in the sense that both have a unique historical opportunity. Both areas of theology are disengaged from an exclusive, professional preoccupation in the preparation of ministers of the sacraments. They are liberalized, studied for their own sake. Not that these studies cannot be subordinated to other and superior ends such as the spiritual development of the Sisters and their preparation for their task as teachers of sacred doctrine. But sacramental and moral theology are less likely in this context to be reduced to what their critics have called a study of the minimum, i.e., what is absolutely necessary for sacramental validity and liceity, and how far one can go without falling into serious sin.

The one peril is a possible abuse of freedom. Sacred doctrine is characteristically conservative, not simply in the common-sense way of Pope's epigram, "Be not the first by whom the new are tried, nor the last by whom the old are laid aside," but in the deeper sense of commitment to revelation as it is communicated to us by the Church. New insights need examination, professional checking not only against defined dogmas but against the teaching of the fathers and doctors as more probable. The novelty of contemporary development may be the presumption which is the daughter of vain glory; it may also be a sign of theological vitality.

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Integrating the Spiritual and Intellectual Life

In the beginning of that part of the *Summa Theologica* in which he treats of the return of the rational creature to God,

³⁶ The very length of this paper is persuasion sufficient that those who conjure up two-headed monsters must suffer the consequences.