

WHERE IS MORAL THEOLOGY GOING?*

(Closing Reflections)

By

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Students of theology may find it difficult to understand this somewhat unyielding attitude of some theologians, priests cultured layman of the West to the firm and constant teaching of the magisterium. Perhaps a few reflections on the socio-cultural religious conditions of these affluent countries, will shed some light on how to evaluate existing opposition to the *Humanae Vitae*.

"There has been illegitimate birth-control in all ages," writes Eb. Welty. "Since the end of the nineteenth century birth-control has come to threaten the existence of many nations and States. The small family has become the rule, and in many places births no longer suffice to maintain the population, let alone increase it."⁵⁷

"There are various reasons for the general spread of birth-control such as the decreasing religious and moral sense; — the consequent spirit of worldliness (refusal to take life seriously, craze for pleasure, aversion to responsibility; conflicting views on the purpose and order of sex; the disintegration of marriages and of family life; depopulation of the land and urbanization (new housing conditions, higher material living standards); new working conditions; technological achievements; easy availability of contraceptives, greater effectiveness and less danger of surgical operations; less danger of infection and the possibility of quicker and more certain cures; influence of the press, theatre and films, radio and TV, and the impact of two wars.

"Contraception is the most widely practised form of birth-control. It is the simplest way of getting rid of all worry about the child; it excludes the child from the outset. It is due to contraception and abortion, above all, that large families are dying out, and the family of three or four children is getting rare.

"In most cases contraception is motivated by selfish pseudo-motives, — such as lack of sacrifice, pleasure-seeking, the child

* Cfr. B. E. de F., May 1976, pp. 304-327; and June, 1976, pp. 373-397.

⁵⁷ Cfr. A. Knoch: *El Onanismo Conyugal y el Sacramento de la Penitencia* — Barcelona, España, 1914.

being regarded as a troublesome burden, Healthy nations that are lead into the evil of contraception by modern methods of canvassing and advertising, very soon will sink from their previous high moral level. Contraception is at the same time cause and effect of moral decline".⁵⁸

In the USA, Rev. F. M. Kirsch writing early in 1930, acknowledges that birth-control is practiced to an alarming extent and that it is frankly discussed by married and unmarried young women and even by our youth. Birth-control ideas, under one form or another or under one name or another, are in the air and in the minds of all. And the sad result of all this discussion is that we live in an age when it is no longer possible merely to hand on generally accepted truths. Soon our Catholic people are no longer accepting these truths. They are rationalizing about the Catholic teachings and standard of marriage. Common places and platitudes will not convince them of the error of their ways. People argue that the Church in the course of time will modify her teaching on the subject. . . .⁵⁹

Early in his work Rev. Kirsch observes that "the modern world is giving up not only this standard or that, but all standards as such. This is painfully evident especially in the field of sex, where the modern world no longer recognizes fixed values and standards . . . There is no thought of spiritual values or of other worldly standards. In this attitude the college women reflect the philosophy of the day — irresponsible individualism". Trends of thought and action and attitudes at all levels of the Ecclesial Community in the United States to-day on this subject matter of contraception are summed up in the July issued, 1973, pp. 30-33 of *America* by Richard A. McCormick. Its reading is far from inspiring . . . The author's title of the resume is "The Silence Since "Humanae Vitae"

The main standing block on the path of Catholic laity, priests and moral theology writers is present-day, social cultural and moral religious environment, — for hardly anyone of us realizes how much we are creatures of the time and place in which we live, observes F.J. Sheed. Its assumptions tend to be ours, without even a question stirring in us. And there is a continuous seeping in from it, which makes for a damping and discoloration even of values we used to had sacred. We have been taught to make examination of conscience; we should build the habit of examining our intellects too,

⁵⁸ Cfr. A. Handbook of Christian Social Ethics by Eberthard Welty vol. II, pp. 120-121 Herder, London, 1963.

⁵⁹ Cfr. Sex Education and Training in Chastity by Rev. F. M. Kirsch. Benzinger Brothers. S. Francisco, 1930, p. 454; Ecclesiastical Review, Sept. and Dec., 1928, Education to Catholic Marriage by Rev. J. V. Nevins, S.S.

for any assumptions, any seepage which may be in them unnoticed. In our case, the first step is to take a good look at the moral-religious atmosphere of the Western World, the affluent countries, and northern European countries in particular.

French Julius Payot, in his book *L'Education de la Volonte'* (Paris, 1922) observes that prior to the eighteenth century, it was customary to remind people of their duties, and in this way, continual appeals were made to the will, which tended to become developed and strengthened. In the second part of the nineteenth (19th) century, however, it became the fashion to speak only of rights, and of so-called autonomy. Humanity entered upon an age of general moral relaxation (i.e., weakness of the will, and lack of central purpose.) The much lauded autonomy so far has resulted in giving us the autos, but not the nomos, the self, but not the government of self, much less the mastery of self. This mentality paved the way to the "new morality", which in reality means "no morality" or "a-morality".

Students of theology in going over the Pastoral Constitution of Vatican II on "The Church To-day" — (G et S.), (Dec. 7, 1965), and its introductory statement: "The situation of men in the modern world (nn. 11-45), part II: "Some problems of special urgency" (nn. 46-93), will readily become aware of the spiritual climate, religious and moral, in which the scientific, industrial countries of the West live. A world in which "man pain-stakingly searches for a better world, without working with equal zeal for the betterment of his own spirit" (n. 4) "Growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike in former days, the denial of God and abandonment of them are no longer unusual and individual occurrences. For today, it is not rare for such decisions to be presented as requirements of scientific progress, or of a certain new humanism" (n. 7). "The future of the World stands in peril, unless wiser men are forthcoming" (n. 15). "We can justly consider that the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations, with reasons for living and hoping" (n. 31). "If anyone wants to know how this unhappy situation can be overcome, Christians will tell him, that all human activity, constantly imperiled by man's pride and deranged by self-love, must be purified and perfected by the power of Christ's cross and resurrection. For redeemed by Christ and made a new creature in the Holy Spirit, man is able to love the things themselves created by God, and ought to do so" (n. 37). "We are tempted to think that our personal rights are fully ensured only when we are exempt from every requirement of divine law. But this way lies, not the maintenance of the dignity of the human person, but its annihilation" (n. 41).

In theology, knowledge of God is central, and from this center radiate the duties and obligations, and also the dignity and eminence of man. In religion as understood by the deist, God recedes into the background and man assumes the control place.

In the past century the process of devaluation of religion has run its logical course; religion, in the sense of service and love of God, has been labeled an illusion which man has invented to bolster his inherent weakness and infirmities. Religion is no longer made a la mode, and is not mentioned in polite society; it is replaced by humanism and secularized ethics in which man is his own authority. Paralleled with this development runs the shift in philosophical thinking: the main problem of philosophy no longer centers around truths, but about the existential needs of man. The full realization of human existence is measured by the yardstick of need fulfillment. Believe in God and the quest for truth are still the cardinal virtues of those who have remained Christians, — but even for them the old problems and their solutions have lost some of their values and appeal.

It bears repetition to say that the average person of today is so much influenced by the spirit of the times that he lacks perception and understanding of the natural norm by which he should live. Instead, he imagines that he can use his nature just as he pleases, with absolute sovereignty. Most people, we are told, in the Western World, pass their lives in a degenerate state of mental passivity, never becoming aware that they are fundamentally intellectual beings, and that demands are made on their personal decision from the depths of their intellectual nature. But instead of becoming independent moral personalities, they simply surrender to the values and judgments dictated by the spirit of the times. The same applies to those "personalities" who ware-themselves-out prematurely, seized with the fervor of an activism which is likewise inspired by the actualism inherent in the spirit of the times."⁴⁰

We are living in an almost complete eclipse of the supernatural. The crisis of faith, of holiness, of authority and obedience has spread far and wide and deep in the Western World particularly. There exists a sort of hostile or refractory mentality to faith and authority.

Writing in the 1930, a well known Catholic theologian, Karl Adam, asked himself this question: "What is the attitude of the western mind to Christ, now in our time?" He answers with facts which speak louder than lengthy essays. "The eclipse of the super-

⁴⁰ Cfr. *Belief in God and Mental Health* by Georg Sigmund, N.Y., 1965 p. 209.

natural, intellectualism, propensity to self-complacent autonomy, which awakens in our spiritual life only too easily the defiance of a proud self-determination, a distrust of and mania to criticize ecclesiastical authority, worldliness... are not unknown in contemporary Catholicism. This spirit is so deeply embeded in our souls that ordinarily we are unconscious of it".⁶¹

Pope Paul VI addressing some 400 participants in the 1st International Congress on the Theology of Vatican Council II on Oct. 1, 1966, said among other things, this" ... If we consider the mentality and the spirit of the cultured men of our times, we will see that they have these three characteristics in common:

- a. an exaggerated confidence in themselves which leads them
- b. to reject all authority and to propound the idea, that
- c. everybody may even proceed by himself in every field of knowledge, and can regulate its own life according to the limits of his understanding."⁶²

Again, in an address to a General Audience, on March 12, 1969, Pope Paul VI said: "Modern man does not want to feel he is the servant of any authority or of any law. His highly developed instinct for freedom inclines him to caprice, license and anarchy. Within the Church herself the idea of service, and therefore of obedience, meets with many objections even in seminaries".⁶³

In the general audience held early in Dec. 1969, Paul VI issued a warning on modern-day eroticism. "What are the needs of the Church, today? he asked. "This Church lives in a society to which he wishes to bring her message of salvation, but which perhaps as never before, brings to bear upon her a pressure of profanity, of secularization, of a-morality... One thing which appears to us, at this time, as the most grave and treacherous against that human and Christian dignity, to which we owe our defense and esteem as a highest value, it is the threat, which has become epidemic and aggressive, of an eroticism driven into unrestrained and repelling public and advertised expressions... An eroticism through promiscuity, pornographic images, and then drugs, an exaltation and degradation of the senses, to the point of depraved expressions, which were cursed by the Word of God, assails furthermore the

⁶¹ Cfr. Christ and the Western World, by Karl Adam, Sheed and Ward, London, 1930, pp. 26-50.

⁶² Cfr. Boletín Ecl. de F., Dec., 1966, p. 760.

⁶³ Cfr. For Italian text of the Pope's address, L'Osservatore Romano, March 13, 1969.

most sound and most reserved environments, such as the family, the schools, and leisure time".

The Pope closes his address with this emphatic, courageous exhortation: — "almost a sense of fatality seems to inhibit responsible and good people from legitimate and effective reaction against the above.

"Beloved children! Do not lose your awareness of moral values, do not lose the awareness of sin, in other words, the judgment of good and evil.

Do not let the sense of liberty, bound as it is to the sense of responsibility as a Christian as well as a man in civil society, to become benumbed.

Do not think that the dignified and frank defense of the decency of the press, of shows, of customs, conceals an inferiority complex.

Do not think that knowledge of evil should be acquired by means of personal experience.

Do not term purity and self-control as ignorance and weakness.

Do not suspect that love and happiness will be missing if you seek them thorough the broader and more authentic ways of Christian Life. Know at the same time the better signs of our times, in the frank and enacting affirmation of truth, of justice, of loyalty and Christian consistency.

Give to ascetic effort, to heroism, to sacrifice, to brotherly love, the importance which Christ, the Crucified Redeemer, gave to you; and make of your personal moral energy, a generous gift to the Church. The Church has need to-day of such a gift".⁶⁴ The environment was polluted, and became very contagious. The silence of bishops, of priests, in many countries, was quite solemn: It meant for many Catholics, consent, approval.

In an essay entitled "A Layman Looks at the Church" John Phibin observes that "there is obviously change and there is obviously a high degree of uncertainty in many areas that were once benchmarks of the faith. Many of the old virtues seem to be museum pieces of Church history. If I was to pick two that look like they have already been placed in showcases, they would be the sense of sacrifice and the sense of discipline . . . Our ability to rationalize

⁶⁴ Cfr. Filipinas, Manila, Saturday, Dec. 20, 1969.

human weakness is also improving with an attendant diminishing of self-discipline on the grounds that we are simply feeding "guilt complexes" p. 116).

It is worth remembering at this time, in our theological reflections, that in the words of Cahal B. Daly,⁶⁵ the traditional doctrine on the natural moral law — a divine law — "has been considered as the central citadel of Catholic morality," hence the firing attacks of all kinds against this doctrine, particularly after Vatican II, with the explosion of ecumenism (Cfr. AAS, 57 [1965] pp. 244-246) and still more after the publication of the Encyclical "Humanae Vitae" on July 25, 1968.

Protestant divines never had any problem in disposing of the traditional doctrine on the natural moral law; they could simply appeal to the Lutheran doctrine on the basic corruption of man by original sin. In such a sinful condition, the natural moral law, — if it exists at all, — cannot represent God's will.⁶⁶

Catholic writers, clergymen and laymen, attack the objective natural moral law from another angle — human nature they say, is dynamic and evolving. Existential man lives in a dialectic between history and nature, therefore he cannot be subjected to static laws. Cultural factors, it is claimed, are also determinants of moral good and evil, rather than the so-called objective natural moral law. Thus the stage is set for relativism and a socio-cultural morality.

An appeal is also made to Scriptures. St. Paul asserted, we read and hear to-day, that the law was done away with Christ. Christ is the only norm of Christian's actions, and Christ taught that all morality is reduced to love of God and neighbor. He who loves his neighbor is in conformity with the "law" of Christ, and there is no other law or precept, except love. It is true that Christ said that He had not come to abolish the law, and that if anyone loves Him, we will keep His Commandments; but — It should not be forgotten, we are told, that the nucleus of salvation history is the call to salvation thru faith and union with Christ, leading to one's commitment of love. The laws and precepts in Scripture are only accidentally related to the central act of faith and loving commitment. They are in fact essentially bound to the cultural conditions of the times in which they are given. Therefore, it is said, all Scriptural laws and precepts must be re-interpreted and re-applied to fit our culture and our needs, for God is not opposed

⁶⁵ Cfr. *Morals, Law and Life*. — Scepter, London, 1966, p. 27.

⁶⁶ Cfr. *The Thomist*, vol. 34, 1970: "Law and Gospel: Luther's teaching in the light of *Disintegration of Normative Morality*" by Otto Hermann Pesch, O.P. pp. 84-113.

to history, but reveals **Himself in history**. The absolute character of moral requirements and norms are meant to serve man not to harm him by their pitiless sternness.

These and other similar gratuitous statements aiming at rendering the moral binding of the natural moral law, null and void, find an answer doctrinal and authoritative, in statements 3, 4, and 5 of the "Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics" of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, of Dec. 29, 1975, approved by Paul VI, who ordered its publication"* I quote:

"n. 3. The people of our time are more and more convinced that human person's dignity and vocation demand that they should discover, by the light of their own intelligence, the values innate in their nature, that they should ceaselessly develop these values and realize them in their lives, in order to achieve an ever greater development.

"In moral matters man cannot make value judgments according to his personal whim: "In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose on himself, but which holds him to obedience... For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man: according to it he will be judged".

"Moreover, through his revelation God has made known to us Christians his plan of salvation, and he has held up to us Christ, the Saviour and Sanctifier, in his teaching and example, as the supreme and immutable Law of life: "I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark, he will have the light of life".

"Therefore there can be no true promotion of man's dignity unless the essential order of his nature is respected.** Of course, in the history of civilization many of the concrete conditions and needs of human life have changed and will continue to change. But all evolutions of morals and every type of life must be kept within the limits imposed by the immutable principles based upon every human person's constitutive elements and essential relations — elements and relations which transcend historical contingency.

"These fundamental principles, which can be grasped by reason, are contained in "the divine law-eternal, objective and universal — whereby God orders, directs and governs

* St. Paul Publications, 2650 F. B. Harrison, Pasay City, 1976.

** Underlining supplied

the entire universe and all the ways of the human community by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever increasingly the unchanging truth. This divine law is accessible to our minds.

- "n. 4. Hence, those many people are in the error who today assert that one can find neither in human nature nor in the revealed law any absolute and immutable norm to serve for particular actions other than the one which expresses itself in the general law of charity and respect for human dignity. As a proof of their assertion they put forward the view that so-called norms of the natural law or precepts of Sacred Scripture are to be regarded only as given expressions of a form of particular culture at a certain moment of history.

"But in fact, divine Revelation and, in its own proper order, philosophical wisdom, emphasize the authentic exigencies of the human nature. They thereby necessarily manifest the existence of immutable laws inscribed in the constitutive elements of human nature and which are revealed to be identical in all beings endowed with reason.

"Furthermore, Christ instituted his Church as "the pillar and bulwark of truth". With the the Holy Spirit's assistance, she ceaselessly preserves and transmits without error the truths of the moral order, and she authentically interprets not only the revealed positive law but "also . . . those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself" and which concern the Church throughout her history has always considered man's full development and sanctification. Now in fact, the Church throughout her history has always considered a certain number of precepts of the natural law as having an absolute and immutable value, and in their transgression she has seen a contradiction of the teaching and spirit of the Gospel.

- "n. 5. Since sexual ethics concern certain fundamental values of human and Christian life, this general teaching equally applies to sexual ethics. In this domain there exist principles and norms which the Church has always unhesitatingly transmitted as part of her teaching, however, much the opinions and morals of the world may have been opposed to them. These principles and norms

in no way owe their origin to a certain type of culture, but rather to knowledge of the divine law and of human nature. They therefore cannot be considered as having become out of date or doubtful under the pretext that a new cultural situation has risen.

"It is these principles which inspired the exhortations and directives given by the Second Vatican Council for an education and an organization of social life taking account of the equal dignity of man and woman while respecting their difference.

"Speaking of "the sexual nature of man and the human faculty of procreation", the Council noted that they "wonderfully exceed the dispositions of lower forms of life". It then took particular care to expound the principles and criteria which concern human sexuality in marriage, and which are based upon the finality of the specific function of sexuality.

"In this regard the Council declares that the moral goodness of the acts proper to conjugal life, acts which are ordered according to true human dignity, **does not depend solely on sincere intentions or on an evaluation of motives. It must be determined by objective standards. These, based on the nature of the human person and his acts, preserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love**".

"These final words briefly sum up the Council's teaching more fully expounded in an earlier part of the same Constitution — on the finality of the sexual act and on the principle criterion of its morality: it is respect for its finality that ensures the moral goodness of this act. "This same principle, which the Church holds from divine Revelation and from her authentic interpretation of the natural law, is also the basis of her traditional doctrine, which states that the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage".⁶⁷

In the course of the foregoing theologico-moral reflections, I have had several opportunities to see that the Protestant ethical mentality is shared by "modern" Catholic theologians and eccle-

⁶⁷ Cfr. L'Osservatore Romano, Feb. 12, 1976, "Human and Christian values of Sexuality" by Philippe Delhaye — Secretary to the International Theological Commission.

siastical writers. Nay, several arguments advanced against the traditional doctrines of the Church on artificial fertility control, had been previously presented by Protestant divines in the first part of this century in defending birth-control, against the conservative stand of some Protestant Churches, particularly the Church of England (1920 - 1959).

A manifest Protestant theological mentality can be seen at work in many of those opposing the Church's teaching:

- a) The teaching of the magisterium is ignored, by-passed or even challenged on flimsy reasons;
- b) The tendency to elevate "conscience" into the only really significant criterion of morality;
- c) The unconditional rejection of the basic unchanging principles of the natural moral law, a divine law;
- d) The solemn by-passing of objective morality, which is at the basis of the moral doctrine of the Church, both in the area of Moral Theology and of Ethics (Philosophy); (Objectivity as the essential character of its principle, scientific system and of its practical solution.)
- e) Tradition no longer means anything to the innovators of our day, even the good ones, said some years ago, Pope Paul VI in one of his weekly allocutions; a superficial, and at times imprudent way of speaking has entered the ordinary language of the Church. People talk about the Constantinian age, in order to jettison the whole of the Church's centuries of history down to our own day; or they talk of pre-conciliar mentality as arbitrarily as the inheritance of Catholic thought and life. Their attitude is such as to suggest that existing norms and customs in peaceful possession are no longer of any value.
- f) The "insinuation" that marriage has two objectives, independent one from the other, and exactly of the same value: love and . . . procreation, hence . . .
- g) The argument from "situationism" offered to defend the stance against the *Humanae Vitae*, is or has its origins in the world of evangelical theologians like Barth, coupled with the postwar ideas of existentialist philosophers.
- h) Relativism, historicism — each culture supposed to have its own code of ethics — the exaltation of personal existential freedom, — all these principles, attitudes, mentality have

paved the way to complete moral subjectivism, abound in so called Catholic literature.⁶⁶

It is well known that man's attention has been shifted from God, our Maker, as the determiner of righteous behavior, to man himself evaluating what is humanly and morally good. — Pope Paul VI, in his lengthy and heavy message of X'mas 1973-1974, remarks: "that many to-day substitute anthropology for theology; they see in Christianity a human value, acceptable to all; but they do not see the divine truth that gives to that Human value its *raison d'être* and its infinite worth".⁶⁷ The attention of "modern theologians" is shifted from God as the determiner of righteous behavior, to man-himself, evaluating what is humanly and morally good. Thus Catholic morality is being "watered down", and it is almost "directionless"; no wonder Christian moral life is sinking down to lower levels of degradation!

Pope Paul VI addressing the Members of the International Theological commission (Cfr. *L'Oss. Romano*, January 16, 1975, p. 2) said: "In our opinion one of the reasons, perhaps the chief one, for this deterioration in man's faculty of judgement is to be found in the radical separation — rather than distinction of doctrine and moral practice, from religion, by denying that the latter has a reason for being, and depriving the former of their ontological bases and ultimate ends."

Protestant divine John AT Robinson has this observation. "The revolt in the field of ethics from supernaturalism to naturalism, from heteronomy to autonomy, has been with us so long, that we need not spend much time on it. It began with the magnificent grandeur of Kant's autonomous ideal . . . Kant's idealism was living on religious capital. As this ran out or was rejected, it comes to be replaced by every kind of ethical relativism — utilitarianism, evolutionary naturalism, existentialism.

These systems, so different in themselves have this in common, they have taken their stand, quite correctly, against any subordi-

⁶⁶ Jeremiah Newman, *op. c.*, pp. 123-131: Cfr. Karl Barth in Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p. 135. "The New Theology" — Rapport doctrinal présenté le 30 avril 1956 à l'Assemblée plénière de l'Épiscopat Français, and the Enc. *Humani Generis*, 12 of August, 1950. It borders on the "incredible" to hear of the fruits of some modern theologians research work, when most of these fruits are "old errors" with "new labels" . . . Cf. *Teologia Nueva y Teologia*. Santiago Ramirez, *op. c.* — Collección "O. Muere.", Madrid, 1958; "Angelicum" vol. 52, fasc. 5, 1975, pp. 169-227 where the student of theology can find a very clear and thorough presentation of "La Moral y su valor objetivo", por T. Urdanoz, O.P.).

⁶⁷ Cfr. *L'Oss. Romano*; 27-28, Dec. 1973.

nation of the concrete needs of the individual situation, to an alien universal norm. But in the process, any objective or unconditional standard has disappeared in a morass of relativism and subjectivism".⁶⁹ -a

The world, particularly the Western World, is morally sick. "To any observer of historical perspectives, it is obvious that Western civilization is reverting, — after almost two thousand years of a truly new morality, — to the attitudes of antiquity, although with some slogans and some new techniques . . . writes V. Chalupa. History shows that individuals, groups, and classes, which have attained personal security, and economic affluence, exhibit a strong tendency to overcome and break all barriers restricting them, in the full satiation of their sexual urges.

"In such a cultural atmosphere, love ceases to be an emotional relationship, with emphasis on self-giving and self-sacrifice, and is conceived as sexual experience aiming at self-gratification.

"In accordance with the overall character of Western culture, the aim of science is shifted from protecting life to preventing life for the benefit of a pleasure-seeking population. Science has given to eroticism its ultimate freedom — freedom from the consequences of the sexual act: it has severed the connection between sex and procreation.

"A phenomenon like a dissolution of restraints in the area of sex, does not remain an isolated phenomenon in the social fabric of a nation or a group. It goes hand in hand, because it is reinforced by and re-inforces a dissolution of restraints, in all other areas of social relationships. Discipline in interpersonal relations is affected: obedience gets ridiculed, sacrifice, as a whole, becomes incomprehensible.

"In the special context of the Church, efforts to remove its hierarchical structure, to weaken or destroy the Pope's role, to replace objective norms of good and evil by subjectivistic conscience, play down the discipline in sexual matters as well as in priestly life, to replace historicity of revelation by religious experience, to overlay Jesus the Saviour with a Jesus-event, — they are all similarly inter-related and originate from similarly overlapping circles.

"The traditional hallmarks of Catholicism, Sunday Mass attendance, devotion to Our Blessed Mother, . . . calls for additional, more exacting indications of the life style of a true Catholic distinguishing him from the non-catholic; boys and girls who stay

⁶⁹ Cfr. "Honest to God: 6. The New Morality" by J. AT. Robinson, SCM — Press Ltd., London, 1971, p. 113.

away from "sexy" novels, magazines, T.V. and movies; married couples who overcome stress and difficulties by means other than divorce; young mothers and fathers bringing their little ones to Communion rail, at Mass; families, let us say, with five children, in the Church pews. Thus, a new type of quiet, determined, prosaic Christian heroism emerges unnoticed under our eyes, born out of deep faith and obedience, without much or without any help from the modern pulpit, school or confessional".⁷⁰

If Pascal (1623-1662) viewed the world as a hospital, and Voltaire (1694-1708) as a madhouse, today, a chance look at the affluent, industrialized countries of the West, discovers evident symptoms of religious-moral insanity, of un-realism.⁷¹

The foregoing reflections, the statements of some of the members of the Synod of Bishops of 1974, the statement of Pope Paul VI, at the closing of the 1st International Congress of the Theology of Vatican II, in 1966, all these statements quoted in the course of these reflections give copious evidence. At this time and age when "religious ignorance is astonishing, it borders on the incredible";⁷² since "the Pope took off his tiara at the Council, a vast number of people seem to believe that it descended upon their own heads, each one seems to have discovered for himself a vocation as Doctor of the Church. They not only perorate to everyone, indiscriminately, and on every subject, but also pretend to dictate the law with an authority inversely proportioned to their competence";⁷³ "I get the feeling, writes F.J. Sheed, that the Pope isn't fallible, and the Council isn't, but half the Catholics I meet, are". "There is hardly a doctrine or practice of the Church, one has not heard attacked by a priest". "It is no exaggeration to say that here and there and elsewhere within the fold, almost every doctrine and practice is being questioned by someone — priest or professor or prominent writer...".⁷⁴ The fact that mass

⁷⁰ V. Chalupa received his *Juris Universi* Doctor degree at Masaryk University, Brno, Czechoslovakia. His own life experience with two totalitarian regimes has given him a special interest in the interaction of totalitarian movements with democratic societies. Dr. Chalupa is the author of the Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia, and other books and articles in the Czech language. He has edited various magazines and now lives in Palatine, Illinois. — Cfr. *Hom. and Past. Rev.*, June, 1973, pp. 5-67.

⁷¹ "Enquiries" by Christopher Dawson. — London Sheed and Ward, 1934.

⁷² Fresquet, Henri. "Catholicism: Religion of Tomorrow?", Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1964, pp. 5-6.

⁷³ Bouyer, Louis — "The Decomposition of Catholicism", Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Ill., 1969, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁴ Sheed, Fr. J., "Is it the Same Church?", Sheed and Ward, London and Sydney, 1969, p. 6, 89, 191.

communication and entertainment media have assumed the role of speaking for the morals of a people is a revolution in itself and what they say must be viewed as both a cause and an effect. A cause, in that attitudes are established and values abolished by a word, gesture, or scene; an effect, because it must be granted that they are, as faithful arts, forms, reflecting the standards of the society in which they exist.⁷⁵

Every Christian needs to take new, lively and active consciousness of his dignity, of what he has become through the mysterious, truly marvelous and real regeneration of Baptism. So much is being said of the dignity of the human person at the human level — and it is already a very lofty and most worthy level: to be man. This level should spare us from the animal, barbarous and sub-human degradations to which our civilization — no longer or not yet worthy of such a name — so easily yields —; his dignity is exceeded in an extraordinary manner, at the supernatural level. Christians must be constantly aware of their dignity to which they have been raised, in being made partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4): **Know yourself, be yourself, respect yourself, act accordingly or in the way it befits your "new" nature.** A too keen realization of their nobility, would impose on Christians a sustained elevation of conduct, which, the multitude might find a strain. Hence, it is, perhaps, that many prefer not to study too closely their titles of nobility.⁷⁶

If ever Western moral life and spirituality is to be restored all along the line to a Christian sense, it is by answering the call — **"Back to the supernatural"**, theologians, priests, sisters, cultured lay men, and perhaps some bishops... But we can reach back to the supernatural only by a most determined change of heart, a metanoia, back to normal Christ life. The Western mind will have to become quite small again, in order to make room for the supernatural. It must turn again, from the surface of its being where the things of this world are silent and God speaks... There are few truths which the Church impresses upon our conscience, with the same emphasis and truthfulness as that of our supernatural vocation and of our duty to do penance.⁷⁷

Indeed we have had enough of rationalism, then naturalism, and last of scientific humanism, all of them ignoring what man really is.

⁷⁵ Elbert, J., *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁷⁶ Leen, C. S. Sp., Edward, "The Holy Ghost", Sheed and Ward, New York, p. 339.

⁷⁷ Adam, Karl. Christ and the Western Mind, Sheed and Ward, London, 1930, pp. 40-41.

Let us open our mind, with a clean heart, to the Magisterium, in accordance with the word and spirit of Vatican I — (Dogmatic Const. "Dei Filius", 3; Dogmatic Const. "Pastor Aeternus") — Vatican II — Const. "Lumen Gentium": n.25; — we have had more than enough of "doctrinal anarchy" in matters of faith and morals.

Let us go back to the central citadel of traditional Catholic morality — the doctrine of the natural law, its unchanging basic principles.

"It is most certainly true that God wills the objective order of the nature He has established and that an offense against nature is an offense against its Maker", wrote K. Rahner, in 1964, in his "Spiritual Exercises" (p. 40). I suppose he has not changed his mind, since then; but one thing is true, he cannot change the objective order of nature!!!

Christian asceticism is a must; its rejection is a very tragic note in modern spiritual christian life, and it is very deceptive because those who disdain voluntary mortification will do so, on the plea that they are using a positive rather than a negative approach to Christ-living. Both approaches are badly needed. And what has become of the protective value of the sense of shame, well understood? . . .

Our attitude towards the Church's historical past is a very defective one. In 1957, the University of Freiburg, Germany, celebrated the 500th anniversary of its foundation. More than 100 universities, all over the world, sent delegates to this great anniversary celebration. An address was delivered centering on three Freiburg scholars of the 19th century. The speaker, said, among other things, this: "Their work does not merely belong to the past, but also remains an example for the present, which draws its strength from the timeless world of the spirit". There followed a second address on the theme: "Tradition and the Reorganization of the University", delivered by the Rector of Freiburg University, prof. Dr. Gerd Tellenbach, a historian. He discussed the problems in the university in the 20th century, which has to seek new paths of research and of academic vocational education. The foundation remains the same, of course, he said, the great traditional idea of the university as set forth by W. V. Humboldt in the age of Goethe: "The union of the old and new gives us confidence that we are not exposed to the storms of the century, without roots".⁷⁸

In vain, one looks for critics of ecclesiastical tradition with the kind of common sense and awareness of the basic realities of life exhibited by the respected speakers at Freiburg, just quoted. Com-

⁷⁸ Cfr. *Universitas*, Vol. 1, n. 4, 1959, pp. 544-445.

petence and authority are needed, to begin with, to make an inventory of the Church's ancient inheritance.

I shall bring to an end, these theologico-moral pastoral reflections, with these few words of advice to college students and more in particular, to theology students.

Deepen your knowledge of "Obedience in the Church". Urs von Balthasar observes that there is a tendency to consider as true only what is fully comprehensible, and if possible, what can be done by the qualified person. This is the concept of a technical age. It tends to an ever increasing extent to invade and try to regulate the spheres of natural social life, the family and all relations between men. It is not surprising that it does not hesitate when it turns to the Church, and tries to change her into something understandable to the human mind, in order to be able to control her. Inevitably, also the understanding and exercise of ecclesial obedience is fully involved, because in this conception of Church, the individual will obey one in command, if and to the extent to which he considers it reasonable and useful, in accordance with his supposed understanding of the nature and task of the Church. So he holds in his own hand, the yardstick of his obedience. In the last resort, he obeys an idea of the Church he has himself formed and approved. But if the Church is primarily a mystery, then she cannot be considered in this way. Obedience, therefore will also take on another structure in the Church. What structure? I refer the theology student to Hebrews 5:8 for reflection.

Obedience in the Church is probably felt as being so heavy, because most men, under the pressure of technical existence, have regressed to the childish concept of freedom. For this reason, to speak of "coming of age", in the Church is ambiguous. If there is a childish way of thinking behind this concept, "to be of age" means "knowing oneself what one — has to do", not needing to receive indications from anyone else. To support this concept, people drag in the Holy Spirit, and His charisms, personally distributed to every member of the Church. May I refer the student of theology to St. Paul (1 Cor. 12:31) who develops the doctrine of Charisms, and yet the Apostle had no "childish" conception of freedom. In the Church, a mature conception of freedom does not consider the task of guiding and the power of directing as an aggression upon his own freedom! Much has been said about humanizing "obedience" in the Church; unfortunately, little, if anything, has been written about Christianizing "obedience" in the Church! . . .

In the IV World in which we live — a morally subdeveloped world, exuding eroticism and senseless self-sufficiency, the virtues

of chastity and humility should be particularly dear to the Catholic college students.

The special effect of virtue is to insure the correctness of the value-judgment thanks to which the virtuous man desires his true good, and spontaneously makes for it. "Qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei" (I 83, 1, 5^m, I-II, 9, 2, c; I-II, 24, 11; ib. 45, 2; De Ver. 24, 10, c; In III Ethic, lect. 13^a). The value assigned by a man to any object depends largely on the biopsychological or moral attitude he adopts towards it, which makes it, so to speak, **connatural** to him, and therefore desirable. St. Thomas calls attention to the part played by this "connatural (to him, and therefore desirable) knowledge" in the **chaste man** (II-II, 45, 2, c); the **prudent man** (I-II, 95, 2, 4^m), the **believer** (II-II, 1, 4, 3^m; and ib. 2, 3, 2^m), and particularly in the man who is moved by the **Gifts of the Holy Spirit** (II-II, 9, 1, 1^m) of **wisdom** (II-II, 45, 2, c; In III Sent. 35, 2, 1, 3^a, sol 1) and of **knowledge** (II-II 9, 3, 3^m). The importance assigned to "connatural knowledge" shows that St. Thomas was fully aware of the priority of the **psychological and emotional life** to the knowledge of their objects; this is particularly true in the field of ethics and moral theology. Not in vain St. Thomas is the **Catholic Theologian**.

As to **humility**; St. Thomas sees in **pride** an unsurmountable obstacle to true science and wisdom, fruitful for thought and life, in so far as the proud person is **not fully open to reality**, and also takes delight in his own supposed greatness and glory, and consequently, loses the reverence and loving understanding for the excellence of truth. **Humility**, on the other hand, makes man open to reality and broad and receptive towards God. "Humility makes man capable of God". **Chastity and humility** constitute the under-structure upon which St. Thomas doctrine and life rest; they ought to be of the greatest significance to us, priests and theologians, in the IV world, a morally subdeveloped world, in which we live.⁷⁹

Lastly, at this time, when so many ecclesiastical writers, show evidence of philosophico-theological malnutrition, let me offer this advice as to what books, the Catholic college student should read: it is an advice given by E. Dimmett, some long forty years ago, and reads: "The principle which has never failed to confer superiority on a man's thinking activity, is the well-known precept — **"Do not read good books."** — life is too short for that, — **"only read the best"**. — This simple recipe is as infallible as good air and good food in physical hygiene.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Cfr. *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. IX, Sept.-Dec. 1974: *The Catholic Theologian*: St. Thomas.

⁸⁰ Dimmett, E. *"The Art of Right Thinking"*, Simon and Schuster, N.Y., 1931.