CHAPTER NINETEEN: CONCEPTS ESSENTIAL TO DESCRIBE CHRISTIAN MORAL NORMS

A. Introductory remarks

Chapter eighteen was devoted to an analysis of Christian love as the primary principle of Christian moral life. Chapters twenty and twenty-one will be devoted to an analysis of the normative principles of Christian morality. No specific kind of action will be studied in these chapters, for (like the whole of this volume) they will be concerned with principles of Christian morality, not with the specific responsibilities of Christian life.

However, chapters twenty and twenty-one will articulate normative principles of a more determinate and practically helpful sort than the very first principle of morality. These more determinate principles will be the means by which the primary principle of morality can be brought to bear upon specific issues.

Throughout the analysis to be given in chapters twenty and twenty-one, certain notions will be used repeatedly. These include the concept of modes of responsibility, the notion of the transformation of human modes of responsibility into Christian modes of response, the conception of virtues and vices, the notion of gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the notion of the beatitudes. The main objective of the present, transitional chapter is to provide clarifications of these notions, so that when they are employed in chapters twenty and twenty-one, the student will understand them.

First, however, I will try to clarify the difference between Christian normative propositions at the level of the first principle of morality and those more determinate principles to be considered in chapters twenty and twenty-one.

B. What is distinctive about a primary moral principle?

In the New Testament, one finds a number of normative statements which intuitively seem to be (and which can be shown to be) equivalent to the first principle of morality specified in the light of Christian faith.

For example, St. Paul says: "Be imitators of God as His very dear children" (Eph 5.1). The idea is that inasmuch as we are children of God, we ought to be like our heavenly Father. Conceptually, this norm is distinct from the first principle of morality specified in the light of Christian faith, which I formulated in chapter eighteen, section A: One should choose only those possibilities which contribute to fulfillment in Christ by contributing to integral human fulfillment. However, Paul himself immediately explains how the Christian can put into practice the imitation of God the Father: "Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance" (Eph 5.2). Within the framework of Paul's understanding of revelation, the sacrificial gift which Christ made out of love is the act by which the ideal of integral human fulfillment becomes a real possibility, which is to be realized through the divine power bringing all things to fulfillment in Christ (cf. Eph 1.9-10, 22-23; Col 1.15-22). Hence, in fact Christians can imitate God by moral acts only by cooperating with the redemptive love of Christ and so contributing to fulfillment in Christ by contributing to integral human fulfillment in Him.

Similarly, the norm that Christians should walk according to the Spirit (cf. Gal 5.16) is in practice equivalent to the normative requirement of Christian love, since the Spirit transforms Christian moral life by communicating divine love. Likewise, as I explained in chapter eighteen, section E, the norm of Christian love is not something separate from Christ in His concrete totality (cf. LG 42). Love disposes one to that good which will be accomplished in the fulfillment of all things in Christ.

In His work of revealing God's loving will, Jesus used both words and deeds; His deeds lent substance to His words and His words interpreted His deeds (cf. DV 4). For this reason, one cannot follow the teaching of Jesus without cooperating in His work, and one cannot walk with Him (join in His work) except by carrying out His norms. One who loves Him--that is, who is committed to Him--keeps His commandments (cf. Jn 14.21). Since what the Church teaches is nothing else than the revealed truth received from Christ, it follows that an injunction to live according to the Church's teaching is in practice equivalent (for believing Christians) to the first principle of morality. Hence, no different general principle is proposed when Paul says: "Live according to what you have heard and accepted, what you have heard me say and seen me do" (Phil 4.9).

From the preceding examples, one can see what is distinctive about primary moral principles. Ultimately, there is only one such principle, and all the various propositional formulations are reducible to the same thing; they differ insofar as they make the connection between doctrinal truth and moral life at different points in the dogmatic complex. The primary moral principle is sufficient to distinguish in general between morally good and evil acts. However, in itself it provides no guidance for relating human goods to any specific kind of act so that one could judge whether acts of that kind would be morally good or morally evil.

What one needs for the explanation and defense of normative propositions expressing specific moral responsibilities are principles more determinate than the primary moral principle precisely in this: They must help to show how various kinds of acts are differently related to human goods, and so are compatible or are not compatible with integral human fulfillment.

C. What are modes of responsibility?

As I have just stated, one needs some principles more determinate than the primary moral principle. The modes of responsibility are such more determinate principles. They specify the primary moral principle by excluding as immoral kinds of actions which involve certain relationships to basic human goods, such that one who had responsibility for an action of any such kind would to that extent be morally evil.

An example of a mode of responsibility is the principle of impartiality: One ought not to favor oneself and those with whom one is identified by sympathy (for example,

those who are near and dear) over others unless one has a reason for discriminating which would be valid against oneself and those with whom one is identified by sympathy. The Golden Rule (cf. Mt 7.12) is based upon the principle of impartiality. (This and three other modes of responsibility will be considered in detail in chapter twenty.)

5 From the example, one can notice that a mode of responsibility does not mention any kind of action and does not refer to any definite category of basic human goodness. Rather, a mode of responsibility excludes a certain type of relationship between actions of any kind and any of the basic human goods. The types of relationship excluded by the modes of responsibility are those which one might bring about if one's action is determined not by unrestricted love of good but by some nonrational, limiting interest. 10

As I explained in chapter fourteen, section M, the classic explanation of the possibility of temptation, which is based upon the teaching of St. Paul (cf. Rom 7.22-23; Gal 5.24-25; GS 16), is that emotion competes with intelligible good for the role of determinant of behavior. One can allow oneself to follow one's feelings contrary to a 15 reasonable judgment of conscience. Modes of responsibility exclude various ways in which one's feelings might lead one astray.

Emotions are based upon sentient nature. As such they are not bad. But they move us toward the very limited fulfillment of our concrete sentient self as it actually is. Intelligent love, by contrast, moves us toward integral human fulfillment, which includes 20 goods which transcend sense experience--for example, by involving intelligible aspects (as truth does), by involving free choice (as fully human friendship does), by involving mysteries (as Christian religion does), and so on.

The modes of responsibility do not altogether exclude the fulfillment of emotional needs. One's concrete sentient self is part of one's whole self; emotional fulfillment 25 is part of integral human fulfillment. However, the demands of feeling can be satisfied rightly only insofar as they are included within some intelligible good. For example, parental affection should not be satisfied by unreasonable partiality among one's children, but may be satisfied by carrying out parental responsibilities toward all of them.

As I explained in chapter seventeen, section K, the first principle of morality can 30 be formulated in terms of right reason in action. The explanation in the present section further clarifies this formulation of the moral principle, since modes of responsibility exclude various ways of being unreasonable in action. Thus, stated negatively, the first principle is: Do not be unreasonable in acting; the modes of responsibility are: Do not be unreasonable in such-and-such ways (for instance, by partiality) in acting.

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D. Further points about modes of responsibility

Parents who act as judges in a game ought not in applying the rules to favor their own children over other children. This is a specific moral norm. It is based upon a 40 mode of responsibility and a certain human good which is at stake in a particular kind of action. All modes of responsibility work in the same general way. One must consider the basic human goods involved in a possible action, and see how one responsible for the act would be related by choice (or some other mode of voluntariness) to the goods.

Logically, the modes of responsibility are all negative. They exclude ways in 45 which a person in acting with moral responsibility might deviate from a reasonable pursuit of intelligible goods. The negative character of the modes of responsibility does not entail that morality as such is negative. The principles of practical reason representing the basic human goods and the first principle of morality are affirmative. Moral action encounters no normative limit until one is tempted to deviate from the unre-50 strictedly reasonable pursuit of intelligible human goods. For this reason, one whose love is perfect would not in the least give in to temptation (cf. Heb 4.15).

Because the modes of responsibility are negative, their multiplicity cannot generate conflict. Affirmative norms which range over the same field can lead to conflict, for they might require that one do two different things at once. Norms which exclude 55 certain ways of acting cannot generate conflict, since it always is possible simultaneously not to do any number of things.

Because the modes of responsibility generate specific moral norms, and because the specific norms are what people are usually interested in, one normally does not pay attention to the modes of responsibility themselves. Like most basic and self-evident 60 principles, one uses them without explicitly attending to them and clearly expressing them. They shape one's judgments of conscience (which is the reason why I call them "modes of responsibility"), but one cannot easily formulate them by themselves. Hence, in the history of ethics and moral theology, the modes of responsibility have not been explicitly discussed until now.

65 However, most of them have been articulated--as the Golden Rule has articulated impartiality--in some form or other. Many proverbs embody or are based upon modes of responsibility. Most of the modes have been mistaken by at least some philosopher for the first principle of morality. This mistake is understandable, since the modes of responsibility are determinations of the first principle of morality.

70 The difficulty is that the first principle of morality is broader than any one of the modes of responsibility. Hence, a moral system based exclusively on one mode would be too loose. For example, the Golden Rule is inadequate as a general principle of morality, because it is concerned only with the way one treats other persons. One might commit suicide without violating the Golden Rule. Suicide violates a different mode of 75 responsibility. What Jesus says about the Golden Rule (cf. Mt 7.12) must be understood in context; it summarizes the law and the prophets only as to their moral implications for interpersonal relationships, not, for instance, as to their implications for our attitude toward God.

80 E. In what way are modes of responsibility transformed in Christian morality?

In Christian morality, the human modes of responsibility remain valid, but they are fulfilled by specific determination and transformed into modes of Christian response.

This transforming presupposes but is more than the deepening of the modes of responsibility, which is brought about by revelation before Christ. The revelation of the Old Testament already provides insight which gives new depth and significance to a principle such as impartiality. The Old Testament makes clear that human solidarity under God and in sin demands that moral respect extend to everyone. The truth that the human person is created in the image of God clarifies human dignity. The truth about the human condition in comparison with God's holiness undercuts the assumption that conventional morality can be trusted. Hence, impartiality, for instance, makes its demand not only toward fellow Israelites, but also toward aliens; it excludes preference for the rich and powerful, rather than allowing their status as a title to preference; it calls into question established institutions as well as particular preferences.

The Christian transforming of human modes of responsibility in no way means their nullification. Christ is the perfect man; one who follows Him becomes more, not less, human (cf. GS 41). As the principle and model of renewed humanity, Jesus responds to all authentic human aspirations (cf. AG 8). Yet Christ does bring something new to human hopes (cf. GS 22). He becomes the norm of a new morality, as human values are freshly understood in the light of the redemption (cf. GE 2).

In the fallen human condition, the human modes of responsibility could not in practice all be respected simultaneously by sinful men and women. One avoided acting irrationally in one direction only by acting at least somewhat irrationally in another, since the conditions for pursuing human goods were so poor that despair was inevitable and compromises seemed essential. By living His human life in the form of a perfect response to God's redeeming love, Jesus provides a model and principle by which others--sinful men and women--are able, once more, to live upright human lives.

The uprightness of Christian lives is <u>human</u> moral goodness, but human goodness in the only specific form in which human moral goodness can be realized under the existing conditions. This form of life is marked by redemptive love which overcomes evil by suffering and which forms human community by faith and hope, which look for divine intervention to render the common effort of the community fruitful (and so to make living the life of the community purposeful).

The transformation of the modes of responsibility into the Christian modes of response is one essential aspect of the transformation St. Paul describes when he speaks of dying to sin and rising to new life in Christ (cf. Rom 6.3-11). Christians must not live like pagans, but must "put on that new man created in God's image, whose justice and holiness are born of truth" (Eph 4.22). The new man is Christ; the modes of Christian response are His perfectly human way of responding to human evil and to divine redemptive love (cf. Eph 4.13-16).

F. <u>How can one explain the moral goodness of those who have not heard the Gospel?</u>

As I explained in chapter seventeen, section F, the conventional morality generally accepted in societies is based upon a limited set of accepted goals, a requirement of fairness necessary for a common life, and the exclusion of certain types of behavior which are unreasonable in view of the common purposes. Conventional moralities represent workable compromises between human aspirations for fulfillment and the hard realities of the fallen human condition. Such moralities are an aspect of culture which defines "the world" over against Christ. For this reason, the Fathers of the Church were right in regarding the standards of pagan morality as norms of immorality and the pagan virtues as vices.

Nevertheless, as I explained in chapter thirteen, section I, the Church clearly teaches that God provides every person with the opportunity for salvation; such salvation comes only by the grace of Christ; somehow those who have not heard the Gospel can be united with Christ by living faith. In short, upright pagans also receive the gift of the Spirit and share in divine love. How can this teaching be reconciled with the position that there is a specifically Christian normative content to morality, which is very different from the specific content of conventional moralities, and which can be grasped only in the light of the mystery of the redemption?

The starting point for answering this question is that persons who follow sincere consciences which are in error through no fault of their own are morally upright, as I explained in chapter fourteen, section C. Such persons do not close themselves against integral human fulfillment; rather, they choose consistently with it. For instance, people who first conceived the idea of enslaving their defeated enemies rather than torturing them to death probably acted uprightly; similarly, many religious aberrations, such as human sacrifice, probably have been accepted out of an earnest but mistaken will to please God.

Moved by God's grace, people in every state and condition can use their ability to make free choices in a way which is upright--<u>given the options and the moral demands as they see them</u>. Of course, people also can choose to violate their own consciences. Any large and complex society will be shaped by the interplay of both good and bad choices, although those who are vicious are likely to have greater wealth and power, thus to exercise greater influence in shaping the common life. (This fact partly explains the affinity, notable throughout the Bible, between God and those who are poor and weak.)

Those who are upright seek God insofar as they understand how to do so; they receive the gift of divine love which both enlivens their love of human goods and makes them conscious of the unsatisfactoriness of the human condition and the inadequacies of conventional morality. Thus is born the restless heart, ready to welcome the Gospel, disposed to grope toward it, and able to begin in some inadequate way to outline some aspects of Christian truth.

G. <u>The superiority of explicit faith in Christ and Christian responsibility</u>

Under appropriate conditions, upright persons who have not heard the Gospel have emerged and made an impact upon the consciousness of society; a few of them have become great historical figures. It seems very reasonable, for example, to assume that Socrates

and the Buddha were such persons. Their emergence depended upon many factors in addition to their moral character--for example, on their intelligence and articulateness, on their social positions in societies at a certain stage of civilization, on their having some extraordinary associates and followers, and so forth. All such moral leaders are at odds with their own societies' conventional moralities.

Despite the nobility of such moral leaders, their thought involved serious errors and their moral teaching fell short--according to objective standards of Christian morality--of marking the way toward integral human fulfillment. Neither Socrates nor the Buddha, for example, adequately appreciated the materiality of creation, and so neither proposes a moral ideal which gives due emphasis to the pursuit and enjoyment of human goods in this world. Both of them tend to confuse moral evil with the human condition of bodiliness; for both of them, evil cannot so much be overcome as escaped from by a kind of knowledge which transcends the concrete limits of space and time, sentient desires, and death. In short, neither Socratic philosophy nor Buddhism is adequately and integrally redemptive; neither gathers humankind into a community in friendship with God.

To offer these criticisms is not to detract from the nobility of moral leaders such as Socrates and the Buddha. Their lives very likely were holier and more pleasing to God than are the lives of most self-conscious Christians; indeed, they almost certainly were great saints. Yet they lived in semi-darkness; they did not perceive the true significance of the shadow of death; objectively their ways are not the way of Christ, which is the only way of peace which is wholly wise, wholly enlightened, wholly true.

According to Catholic faith, which is true to divine revelation as it is recorded in the Scriptures, all grace is through Christ and all who are saved will rejoice in His fullness (cf. LG 14). There is only one heaven, the fulfillment of all things in Christ; there is no world of ideas for socratic disembodied minds and no nirvana into which buddhists will be dissolved without their unwanted individual selves. The precious gift which has been received by those who live in Catholic faith is this:

> God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan he was pleased to decree in Christ, to be carried out in the fullness of time: namely, to bring all things in the heavens and on earth into one under Christ's headship (Eph 1.9-10).

As I explained in chapter eleven, sections B-D, the work of redemption ultimately is a divine work. But by the incarnation of the Word, God also has made it a fully human work.

Through the Church and explicit Catholic faith, we are blessed with the opportunity to cooperate consciously in God's work. We are friends of God, for we know what He is about (cf. Jn 15.15). Working with Christ, we build up His fullness in this world; ours is the dignity of confidants and intimate fellow workers with the architect and Lord of the world which will never end. If we are faithful, after death we will find ourselves at home in heaven. Socrates and the Buddha also will find themselves there, but for them it will be an unexpected wonderland.

H. In what sense are faith, hope, and charity to be considered virtues?

To understand the general notion of virtue, one must recall that persons have a variety of naturally given capacities.[1] These capacities are active potentialities, abilities to become by some sort of action. Due to a variety of factors, the whole range of possible action tends to become limited, and the limited range of action, at the same time, facilitated. The limitation and facilitation of actuations of capacities occurs by dispositions, which are acquired and (more or less) lasting qualities. One knows the disposition from the regularity and facility of the actuations of particular capacities.

One type of dispositions are habits, such as motor skills. For example, a person who engages in a sport or carries out a task such as driving a car or typing has a disposition (or a set of dispositions) which both limit and facilitate the actuations of the various capacities involved in the activity. The disposition persists; one does not lose it at once when one is not engaged in the activity. In English, we call dispositions "habits" only when they limit possible action to definite, recognizable patterns of behavior; habits are acquired by repetition of behaviors of empirically describable sorts, and habits lead to further instances of the same types of behavior. For example, one gets into the habit of drinking coffee each morning by drinking coffee many mornings, and the habit disposes one to go on doing the same sort of thing.

Although in Latin "habitus" extends to the whole range of dispositions, so that a virtue is a kind of "habitus," in English a virtue is not a "habit." Virtues are dispositions which limit action to that which is (at least in some sense) humanly fulfilling and which facilitate such good action. A person who has a virtue is disposed to act in a way which by some standard of human goodness is good. Vices are dispositions similar to virtues except that they dispose to bad action.

As I explained in chapter five, section D, goodness is in a realization of potentialities which tends to further and fuller realization; badness is in a realization of potentialities which blocks further and fuller realization. Thus a virtue is a disposition to goodness, and a vice a disposition to badness. Because of the dynamic character of goodness, dispositions defined in terms of it do not lead to habits--that is, to repetitive patterns of behavior of the same sort. Rather, a virtue will dispose one to a constantly changing pattern of behavior, whose only regular feature will be that it realizes potentialities in a given instance in a way which is consistent with the openness and growth which define goodness. Because immorality is limiting, vicious dispositions do involve elements of habit.

What I have explained can be illustrated in the nonmoral sphere. (English barely recognizes the existence of nonmoral virtues.) A great painter, such as Monet, had the dispositions to do the excellent work of his art. The result of these virtues is not empirically describable constancy in his work, although Monet also was limited by certain aspects of his style and technique, which can be described. Rather, the effect of the artistic virtues of Monet was that his performance continued to improve and his works

continued to show unexpected freshness and originality, although looked at retrospectively the course of development seems almost inevitable.

As I explained in chapter six, section B, love is a disposition toward fulfillment. However, not all love is a virtue; not all love is an enduring disposition, and not all love disposes toward humanly good fulfillment. For example, a passing love for a particular, sensible good is not a virtue, and even a lasting disposition, such as love of the feeling of alcoholic intoxication, will not be a virtue, since it is not in accord with human fulfillment. However, a love which is both lasting and which disposes to actuations of one's capacities which will truly be humanly fulfilling is a genuine virtue.

Charity, although it primarily disposes one to fulfillment in divine life, also disposes the Christian to integral human fulfillment, as I explained in chapter eighteen, section I. Faith primarily is an act, but insofar as it is a lasting gift on God's part and an enduring commitment on the part of the believer, it has the character of a lasting disposition; this disposition is good insofar as it is a disposition to accept charity and the life of friendship with God which flows from charity. Thus faith is a virtue. Hope is an attitude of trustful confidence in God's faithfulness; this attitude is necessary for life according to faith; hence, the constant disposition of hope in God also has the character of virtue.

Although faith, hope, and charity can be called "virtues" in the sense explained, it is important to realize that they dispose to more than human fulfillment. They affect choices and human moral actions, but they also affect other parts of the personality. While certain human acts, done with the help of grace, are necessary to prepare one to receive these virtues, faith, hope, and charity are acquired not by the sorts of human acts to which they dispose one, nor by any human acts at all, but by the gift of the Spirit (cf. DS 1525-1531/797-800).

I. What are human and Christian moral virtues?

Many sound Catholic theologians discuss human and Christian moral virtues. All agree that these are dispositions to morally good acts, and that Christian moral virtues dispose one to acts which are transformed by charity, along the lines I discussed in chapter eighteen, section K. Beyond these basic propositions, there is little agreement about human and Christian moral virtues, and no explicit, authoritative Church teaching on the subject. What follows will help students comprehend the topic within the framework of the assumptions of the present work.[2]

As I explained in chapter eight, sections J-L, choices are determinations of the self. They are spiritual entities. Of themselves, they endure. Some choices are more comprehensive than others, in the sense that they extend to a larger part of one's life. Among the more comprehensive choices are commitments, by which one settles one's relationships with some other person or persons and with some one or more basic human goods. As I explained in chapter twelve, section E, the fundamental commitment of Christian life is the act of faith, by which one commits oneself to cooperate in the redemptive, community-forming act of Christ. The commitments of one's personal vocation, by which one forms one's unique, Christian identity, give personal determinacy to one's act of faith.

The personal identity established by one's commitments clearly is an enduring disposition to morally good or bad acts. To the extent that it is a disposition to morally good acts, it is virtue. Thus, the essence of the moral virtue of Jesus is His disposition to live His life in fulfillment of His unique personal vocation. The essence of Christian moral virtue is the disposition to live one's Christian life in accord with faith by carrying out one's personal vocation. (One must not have too restrictive a conception of vocational commitment; a small child who undertakes to try each day to become more like Jesus has made a fundamental, personal vocational commitment which begins to put faith into personal effect.)

The difference between generically human virtues and specifically Christian virtues simply is the difference between good acts which are formed by the modes of responsibility and those which are formed by modes of Christian response. Thus, every true virtue in a Christian in a more or less adequately developed way will include the Christian specification of the common, human virtue. One need not suppose that in the Christian there are two sets of virtues, one at the natural and the other at the supernatural level. The Christian virtues simply further specify the common human ones, thus to make them genuine virtues in the present human situation.

The existential dimension of the person--that is, the capacity for free choices, the choices which are made, and whatever exists only incidentally to these choices--does not exist by itself. The person also has other dimensions, including a natural bodily one, an intellectual one, and a cultivated, behavioral one. (The goods pertaining to these in themselves were discussed in chapter five, section H.) In carrying out one's moral choices, all the other aspects of the person become engaged. To the extent that this is so, they share in the moral quality of the existential self. Their dispositions also affect one's moral actions.

Thus, for instance, the dispositions of imagination and feeling which are present in a chaste person are very different from the dispositions of imagination and feeling which are present in one who is unchaste. Central to the virtue is one's commitment--for example, to be a true husband or to be a playboy. However, the dispositions of other aspects of the self also are important. To the extent that they contribute to virtue, they do so not so much by habituation (that is, determination to behavioral routine) as by the disposition of imagination and feelings to conform to virtuous choices. Thus, a truly chaste married person will feel different about sex with his or her partner than about other sexual stimulation, and even will feel different when sexual activity is appropriate from the way he or she feels when it is not. (Here is the link between chastity and natural family planning.)

If one considers the entire person, including all his or her dimensions, insofar as the whole is more or less perfectly integrated with morally good or bad choices, the integral identity of the person regarded as disposition to moral action is called

"character." In other words, good character is a matter of morally good commitments together with dispositions in all of one's powers to contribute harmoniously to acts which will fulfill these commitments.

It is possible to distinguish various aspects of character according to many different principles of distinction. Since the existential goods--which are various levels of harmony among personal factors, persons, and humankind and God--are themselves realized in morally good acts, these goods are really the same thing as the virtues, although considered from a different point of view, namely, as purposes rather than as dispositions to action. Thus, it is natural enough to distinguish aspects of the virtuous character corresponding to the distinct levels of the existential goods. On this principle, the inner harmony of aspects of the self which disposes to morally good action is self-control, courage, and so on (which are distinguished by the different temptations they exclude); the harmony between one's given self and one's life which disposes to morally good action is practical wisdom; harmony with others which disposes to good action is justice; and harmony with God which disposes to morally good action is piety (devotedness, holiness, and so on).

Nevertheless, the virtuous person is more an organic unit than any analytic treatment of the virtues would suggest. Morally good character is of a piece, and the whole of it centers in a self constituted by good basic commitments. The integral self of the Christian, formed by divine love, is marked by dispositions which lead to a Christian fulfillment of the human modes of responsibility. Hence, the modes of Christian response are both norms which can be formulated propositionally and virtues.

Insofar as the virtue is perfected, the norm is fulfilled without coming to consciousness as a demand opposed to inclination. Thus the Christian lives by the Spirit and is liberated from the law, including the moral law in its aspect of demand upon the self. If one loves God perfectly, one may do as one pleases, for nothing will please one except doing God's will.

J. Some critical remarks upon the classical conception of virtue

The ancient philosophers, including Aristotle, had no clear conception of free choice. They did not understand commitments and did not clearly distinguish between aspects of a person which belong to the existential domain and aspects of a person which belong to other domains. Hence, they were not in a good position to analyze virtue.

In treating virtue Aristotle stresses certain features which moral dispositions have in common with habit--for example, that it is acquired by repeated acts. Actually, the repetition of acts is important only for the secondary aspect of virtue--that is, the integration of other aspects of the personality with one's commitments.

The ancient philosophers also were heavily influenced in their analysis and description of virtues by conventional morality. The conventional morality of the time presented a somewhat too definite ideal of human perfection, since it lacked the distinction between what is naturally given and what is existentially possible. Nor did the conventional morality adequately recognize that human fulfillment is to be achieved in communion. Thus although the naturally social character of human life was emphasized, the diversity of virtue according to personal vocation was ignored. Virtues were regarded as dispositions of a perfect or fulfilled person.

The notion of moderation was adopted in ethics from medicine, which considered health to consist in a proper balance of organic factors. This model is plausible for the organism. It is not as plausible for the existential self. Indeed, the preconceptions of Greek philosophy were an obstacle to the acceptance of the Gospel, since the cross of Christ--and His sacred heart--seemed to the Greeks foolishness (cf. 1 Cor 1.18-2.5).

Primarily and directly, each of the virtues which is distinguished by a mode of responsibility (or mode of Christian response) will be opposed to one form of deviation. For example, fairness is opposed to partiality. To the extent that tendencies to partiality might be avoided by choices in accord with some other unreasonable determinant, fairness might be made to appear a mean between opposed vices. For example, sometimes people who are fanatically committed to the attainment of certain specific objectives--think of a fanatical revolutionary--are as brutal in respect to their own interests and those of people close to them as they are to the interests of strangers. In a situation of this sort, fairness might appear to be a mean between excessive private interests and excessive social concern. But in another situation, this opposition would not be present, yet partiality might be possible.

K. Vices which are proper to Christians

Insofar as Christian modes of response are more specific than common human modes of responsibility and the virtues corresponding to them, there occur in Christians states of character which are vicious only by specifically Christian standards. By common human standards, these same dispositions might not appear particularly praiseworthy, but neither would they be excluded as vicious.

For example, by the common human standard of impartiality, a person who is careful to be perfectly fair with others meets the norm of impartiality, although he or she is equally exacting in making certain that his or her own rights are fully respected by others. To be precise in requiring and obtaining what one ought to have if others are to be as impartial as one is oneself in no way violates the requirement of impartiality. A person who regularly behaved in such a fashion would not be praised for kindness and generosity, but neither would he or she be criticized for any moral failing.

As I will explain in chapter twenty-one, the Christian specification of the mode of responsibility which requires impartiality transforms it into the Christian mode of response which is marked by mercy or loving-kindness toward others. This mode of response demands that one meet others more than half way. One must do one's duty and go beyond it, but at the same time one not only may not make unfair demands but also ought not to insist upon that to which one is entitled (simply because one is entitled to it).

Hence, Christians who regularly insist on their rights, simply because these are their rights (not because insistence in a particular case is necessary to fulfill some commitment) fall short of the relevant Christian mode of response. This shortcoming includes the sort of thing one might call "niggardliness." Niggardliness is not a humanly admirable quality, but neither is it a general human vice as long as it does not lead to unfairness of some sort.

It follows that one must speak, somewhat paradoxically, of "Christian vices," which are dispositions incompatible with specifically Christian modes of response but not incompatible with the common human modes or responsibility and virtues. These Christian vices will be less drastically opposed to Christian modes of response than common human vices will be opposed to them--for example, injustice is more opposed to Christian compassion than niggardliness is opposed to it. The reason for this is that what would be morally evil under any conditions remains morally evil for fallen and redeemed humankind. Nevertheless, the less radical opposition of Christian vices to human fulfillment should not lead one to suppose that these vices are peccadilloes--qualities unattractive but not morally unacceptable.

The traits of character which constitute specifically Christian vices are noticed and criticized by sincere Christians, especially in themselves. Insofar as the Christian modes of response are affirmative in form, particular instances in which one fails to fulfill them generally do not clearly and obviously count as instances of sinful behavior. However, acts of niggardliness can be sinful.

The Christian vices appear to lack appropriate names which fit them precisely, although a variety of negative traits can be mentioned in the area of each of the modes of Christian response which seem to meet the notion of a Christian vice. This difficulty ought not to prevent one from attempting to understand these traits with precision. Such understanding is likely to be especially valuable for the examination of conscience and guidance of persons who are avoiding grave sins (which usually violate common requirements of the modes of responsibility) and who are striving for the holiness to which every Christian is summoned. This summons is not merely a counsel, but is an unconditional imperative (cf. Mt 5.48; LG 40).

L. <u>What are the gifts of the Holy Spirit?</u>

The Holy Spirit Himself is the primary gift to Christians; sent by Christ and the Father, He is God's loving gift of Himself (cf. LG 39-40). The first gift of the Spirit distinct from Himself is that love by which sinful human persons are inwardly transformed into loving children of God (cf. Rom 5.5; 8.14-16; LG 40 and 42). The Spirit is not communicated to individual Christians in their separateness, as if to be a private possession; rather He is the Spirit of Christ shared with His body and bride, the Church, and received by each Christian insofar as he or she is a member of the Church (cf. LG 7).

It follows that the effects of redemption accomplished by the Spirit primarily are gifts to the Church. Hence, St. Paul teaches that the one Spirit gives many gifts, each gift appropriate to the member of Christ to whom it is given for the building up of the one body, the Church (cf. 1 Cor 12). However, the primary and greatest gift is that charity by which the entire body and all of its functions becomes an integrated whole, and every good work, every fruit of God's redeeming love manifested in Christ, is brought to fulfillment (cf. 1 Cor 13).

During His earthly life, Jesus was moved by the Spirit. The Spirit anointed Him for His mission in life (cf. Jn 1.32-33; Lk 4.18), accompanied and led Him throughout it, and brought Him at last to the cross (cf. Heb 9.14). For us to be children of God and brothers and sisters of Christ is to receive His Spirit and, like Jesus, to be led by the Spirit (cf. Rom 8.14-16). If one shares divine life in Christ from the Spirit, one also must follow Christ in walking according to the Spirit (cf. Gal 5.25). Hence, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have taught that the endowment of the Spirit promised in Isaiah to the messiah also is shared in by every Christian:

> The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
> a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
> A spirit of counsel and of strength,
> a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord (Is 11.2).

Although not in the Hebrew Bible, the versions generally used in the Church until recently mention a seventh "spirit": piety. These seven aspects of the messianic endowment have been called, in a special sense, the "gifts of the Holy Spirit."

M. <u>Theological reflection on the seven gifts</u>

As St. Thomas Aquinas summarizes, there was a great diversity of theological opinion up to his time concerning the gifts. Some did not distinguish the gifts from virtues, in particular from the specifically Christian virtues by which one is conformed to Christ. The common view of the gifts was that they are like virtues at least in being enduring dispositions and in having relevance for human acts.

The position of St. Thomas is that the Christian needs the gifts as lasting dispositions distinct from the virtues. Human persons are naturally disposed to act according to reason, and the virtues perfect this disposition. But as a child of God, the Christian needs to be disposed to be divinely moved. The gifts are created qualities made present in the soul together with charity (and never apart from it) which provide an inherent receptiveness to divine leading, so that the Christian led by the Spirit is inwardly drawn, not violently dragged.[3] In providing this explanation, St. Thomas regards movement by reason and by the Spirit as alternatives, thus to suggest that the gifts of the Spirit account for actuations of the Christian's human powers which have no adequate natural principle.[4]

If the position of St. Thomas is accepted, the most important point to bear in mind is that nothing he or any other sound Catholic theologian ever has proposed on this subject in the least suggests that the gifts of the Spirit can be principles by which Christians are led to override the definite requirements of reason. In other words,

there is no basis here for supposing that acts otherwise immoral might be justified by being attributed to the Holy Spirit. If one is led by a spirit to do something contrary to reason and the Church's teaching, one can be sure that the spirit in question is not the Holy Spirit. The spirits must be tested (cf. 1 Jn 4.1-2).

However, I do not think the position of St. Thomas ought to be accepted without qualification. It seems to me that the opposition he sets up between being moved by reason and being moved by the inspiration of the Spirit is a mistake, based upon a confusion analogous to that which leads in christology to heretical commingling.

I by no means deny that Christian life, insofar as it is lived not only according to human nature but also according to a share in divine nature, is a participation in the activity of the Holy Spirit. This point was discussed in chapter seven, section I. Nor, of course, do I deny that divine causality is presupposed by every actuation of human powers, and that such an actuation if salvific is caused by grace and that such grace may be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Christian life presupposes faith and is formed by it, and living faith has a certitude and force it could not have were it not motivated by charity. The same is true of all virtuous acts which make up the life of faith. Also, I have explained how the human modes of responsibility and virtues are specified in the Christian to become modes of Christian response, and how this transformation is accounted for by charity, which is the gift of the Spirit.

What I find unsatisfactory is the notion that human powers are actuated in a manner which cannot be accounted for by reason enlightened by faith and by love of goods liberated and enlivened by charity. It seems to me that St. Thomas' account of the gifts introduces an element of divine activity into the course of human action, and treats it as a principle on the same level with the principles of human action. (If it were not on the same level with them, the divine movement would not be an alternative to the movement of reason.) This treatment of divine movement as an alternative to the natural principle of human actuation seems to me to be a case of commingling.

For this reason, I side with those who consider the gifts of the Holy Spirit to be nothing else than the specifically Christian virtues. These virtues already are transformed by faith and charity. They can be regarded as virtues to the extent that they are dispositions to human acts (although of a specifically Christian sort) and gifts insofar as they are specifically Christian by their relationship to living faith.

If this view is correct, there are no actuations of human powers which cannot be accounted for by the relevant human principles as these are affected and transformed by living faith. Someone might object that this position is incompatible with Christian experience, which testifies to many sorts of acts which spontaneously arise without free choice (for example, the experience of loving knowledge in contemplative prayer) and also some sorts of acts which seem to elude rational principles (for example, some charismatic behavior experienced more as a happening than as a doing, and undergone without understanding by the person who is subject to it).

However, what I am saying does not exclude any such phenomena. Naturally many human acts proceed by spontaneous willing, without free choice, as I explained in chapter nine, section F. Other acts are instances of executive willing, discussed in chapter nine, section L. These proceed from a prior free choice, but this choice could have been made far before. Moreover, there are spontaneous acts of intellect which presuppose no willing at all. In the context of living faith, spontaneous acts of these various sorts are possible. As effortless and not chosen (or even, in some cases, not willed at all), such acts will seem in a special sense to be gifts, to be due to "infused contemplation." Likewise, charity not only affects the mind but also transforms the whole person. Hence, a Christian might at times experience behavior altogether lacking a rational principle--and so not a human act--which is closely integrated with Christian life--for example, by being connected with acts of prayer and worship.

N. What are the beatitudes?

The beatitudes with which I will be concerned in chapters twenty and twenty-one are the eight stated by Jesus at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5.3-10). Some commentators think to find a ninth (Mt 5.11-12), but sound scholars agree with the tradition in regarding these verses as an expansion of the eighth beatitude, not as an additional one (cf. JBC 43.32). Luke places the sermon on a plain and has four beatitudes together with four corresponding woes (cf. Lk 6.20-26). I will not consider Luke's version and will leave the comparison of the two to experts in Scripture.

It is worth noting that the beatitude form is found in many other places in both the Old Testament and the New. Beatitudes are especially common in the wisdom literature (cf. e.g., Sr 25.7-10). Psalms begins with a beatitude: Happy the person who follows the law of the Lord, not the way of sinners (cf. Ps 1.1-2). There are a number of beatitudes scattered throughout the gospels (cf. e.g., Lk 1.45; Mt 16.17; Jn 20.29) and several of them in Revelation (cf. 14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 22.7, 14).

The word "happy" or "blessed" in the beatitude form is not a prayer so much as it is a declaration of fact. In other words, beatitudes are propositions asserted as true. They state conditions under which persons will share in or be fulfilled by goods and usually describe the good in which one will be fulfilled. Thus beatitudes state the connection between certain dispositions or actions and the appropriate fulfillments to which these dispositions or actions lead. They assert the general type of relationship of which merit is an instance, since one who does good merits the fulfillment in which this good action is a participation.

The eight beatitudes which open the Sermon on the Mount all promise the same fulfillment, although it is expressed in a variety of concepts: fulfillment in Christ. For the poor in spirit and the persecuted, it is the kingdom of God; for the sorrowing, it is consolation; for peacemakers, being called children of God; and so forth. Most commentators, ancient and modern, agree that these are all the same reality, expressed in a way appropriate to each type of person to whom fulfillment is promised.[5]

St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, closely relates the beatitudes to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For Thomas, the beatitudes express the acts of Christians in

accordance with the gifts by which lesser goods are set aside, obstacles are overcome, and heavenly fulfillment is attained.[6]

The Gospel of St. Matthew in a special way is the New Testament book of moral teaching.[7]. The Sermon on the Mount is the primary synthesis of such teaching, and the beatitudes are placed at the opening of this synthesis. Throughout Christian history, the beatitudes have been given an important place in Christian moral instruction, although their relationship to the remaining moral content of Christian faith never has been clarified in detail. These are extrinsic, but not insignificant, reasons for taking the beatitudes as organizing principles for an analysis of Christian norms and virtues.

More important, perhaps, is an intrinsic consideration. The beatitudes propose some basic norms of Christian life. These norms clearly are more specific than charity itself--since there are many of them--yet they are not norms which deal with definite kinds of acts--as the Ten Commandments do. Thus the beatitudes seem to be at the level of Christian moral principles which correspond to Christian modes of response. For this reason, I take them as the organizing principle of the next two chapters.

The beatitudes involve a conditional proposition, but they assume that the condition is fulfilled by the central gift of charity (cf. AA 4). Thus the blessing is granted, at least in hope. One can lose it only by willfully violating the conditions of the gift. The Christian is in the position of a person who has received an unearned inheritance, which is conditioned only upon one's being properly disposed to make use of it.

In chapters twenty and twenty-one, I will begin the treatment of each mode with the common, human mode of responsibility, then proceed to the mode of Christian response and the corresponding beatitude.

Because the beatitudes are expressed in concrete and figurative language rather than in abstract, theoretical terms, they have been open to a variety of interpretations. The interpretations I will propose have support in the tradition and in current scholarship, although they are not the only possible ones. However, I am not bending the meaning of the beatitudes to fit my pre-existing ethical theory. Indeed, I have been compelled to rethink, develop, and correct my prior understanding of the modes of responsibility to bring it into line with the theological data.

Notes to chapter nineteen

1. For a general treatment of this subject, which integrates the teaching of St. Thomas with some of the work done in modern psychology, see George P. Klubertanz, S.J., Habits and Virtues (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1965).

2. The implications of the framework I am developing lead me to a treatment of virtue rather different from that of St. Thomas, and somewhat more like that of St. Bonaventure. See St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, vol. 23, Virtue, trans. and ed. W. D. Hughes, O.P., (New York and London: McGraw Hill and Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1969), pp. 245-248.

3. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 1-2, qu. 68, art. 1 and art. 3.

4. Ibid., art. 2. For a helpful nontechnical study of the gifts as St. Thomas understands them, see Robert Edward Brennan, O.P., The Seven Horns of the Lamb: A Study of the Gifts Based on St. Thomas Aquinas (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 1-33. Brennan's notes suggest the extent of theological indeterminacy in this area.

5. There is some discussion concerning whether the promised blessing in every case is eschatological, or whether perhaps in some cases it is this-worldly. Since, as I explained at length in chapter seven, there is considerable continuity between Christian life in this world and in heaven, it seems to me one can regard the blessing as pertaining to both, but more to the latter, since what begins here is completed only in heaven.

6. St. Thomas, op. cit., 1-2, qu. 69, art. 1 and art. 3.

7. See John P. Meier, The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel (New York, Ramsay, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 42-51.