M O R A L T H E O L O G Y

C H R I S T I A N M O R A L P R I N C I P L E S

by

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This is an outline or a very condensed draft of a textbook on the principles of Catholic moral theology. This version is quite different from an earlier one circulated during 1977-1978. The content and order of the work itself will be close to what is set out in the present version.

I already have received the help of suggestions, financial contributions, and prayers of many persons. I appreciate all of this help. If the work shows any promise, it is because of the generosity of so many.

I earnestly request criticisms of this outline-draft and suggestions for fleshing it out. Help will be welcome at any time, but the sooner, the better. If a reader cannot take time to react to the whole, a response bearing upon certain parts would be welcome. I will be researching topics throughout the work continuously until Semptember 1979, when I will begin to prepare the first full-scale draft of the book.

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MORAL THEOLOGY

CHRISTIAN MORAL PRINCIPLES

CONTENTS

The main topics treated in works on the principles of moral theology are treated here, but everything is reorganized and centered on Christ, to comply with the norms of Vatican II (Optatam totius, 16) for the renewal of moral theology. Part I treats the ultimate end of man; part II, human acts. But these parts also include certain points concerning grace, charity, the Incarnation and redemption. Part III treats revelation, faith, and the sources and authority of Catholic moral teaching--an important treatise in view of current issues. Part IV includes most of the treatise on natural law (certain points come in earlier); it also treats the law of the Gospel and describes the natural and the Christian virtues. Part V covers conscience, sin, and the effects of sin. Part VI treats growth in Christian life; it focuses on prayer and the sacraments, to integrate the principles of spiritual theology into fundamental moral theology.

MORAL THEOLOGY: CHRISTIAN MORAL PRINCIPLES (An Outline)

Preliminary Remarks

The following outline is of a two-semester course to be taught during 1979-1980 at Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland. The students will be first-year major seminarians. While the course is in progress I will develop this outline into the first draft of a textbook.

This outline is tentative. I shall continue to revise it until the class begins. Also, from now until then I shall be researching the topics which will be covered. Criticisms of the outline and suggestions of books and articles I should consult will be most welcome.

Readers of this outline will notice that everything must be developed, illustrated, and annotated. I will try to do this in ways appropriate to each topic. (Again, suggestions will be most welcome.) Points treated in other parts of theology will be developed concisely; students will be sent to more adequate treatments in other works. Topics not treated in other parts of theology will be developed fully in the present work. Examples will be given; references to Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium provided; detailed expositions of theoretical points articulated; and important counterpositions stated and criticized.

The projected volume for which this is the outline will be designed for use by Catholic seminarians and others as a basic text in moral theology--as a synthetic treatment of the principles of the subject. Questions more subtle or more detailed than necessary will be avoided; the essential matters will be treated more fully, in a way suited to beginners. Every effort will be made to relate the course to other parts of theology and to the present Christian life of the seminarian as well as to his future pastoral work.

I purposely try to avoid much of the technical language of classical moral theology, in many cases using Scriptural terms instead--for example, "completion in Christ" (pleroma) rather than "ultimate end of man." In the work itself I will be careful to introduce the expressions students will need to understand the documents of the magisterium and other works in moral.

The outline covers a great deal of material. All of the topics usually treated in a basic course in moral theology are covered. But much material not usually treated in moral theology also is included. This seems to me to be necessary for the renewal of moral theology mandated by Vatican Council II. The principles of Christian morality include all the realities with which Christian faith is concerned insofar as they are relevant to the moral lives of Christians. Thus Christology and sacramental theology cannot be wholly excluded from an adequate treatment of the principles of moral theology.

The outline projects a work of thirty-four chapters: a general introduction followed by six parts, each having four to seven chapters. The goal is a work which may be used either in a one-semester or in a two-semester course. To facilitate use in a one-semester course the essential points will be highlighted by placing them near the beginning of each chapter. Theological reflections for deeper understanding will be placed after the more essential material. This plan also will help less able students.

Chapter 1: General Introduction

In moral theology we study the truth God has revealed in the Lord Jesus insofar as this truth can shape the lives of those who believe. Moral theology is not so much distinguished from other studies by the realities we will examine as by the special approach we will take: the practical approach of persons who believe in Jesus and who wish to live in harmony with the only real world there is--the world which is seen in the light of faith.

In the present volume we consider only the first part of moral theology: Christian moral principles. In subsequent volumes we will consider the specific responsibilities of Christians, to clarify them in the light of these principles. Three subsequent volumes are planned:

II. Responsibilities Arising from the Common Christian Vocation

III. Responsibilities Proper to Christians in Various Roles

IV. Responsibilities of Members of the Church to One Another

Courses based on the course in Christian moral principles normally are devoted to responsibilities pertaining to the theological virtues, to social justice, to sexual conduct, and so on. Therefore, a volume will be used to survey these common responsibilities. The potential subject matter of the third volume is endless, since Christians find themselves in many diverse conditions and states of life. Only some of the more common, important, typical and/or difficult questions will be treated. The subject matter of the fourth volume logically would be included in that of volumes two and three. However, since the responsibilities of bishops and priests, and other members of the Church, to one another are so important, these responsibilities will be reserved for special treatment.

In treating the training of priests, Vatican Council II made special mention of the need for renewal in moral theology (Optatam totius, 16). This course will try to respond to the Council's injunctions. The mystery of Christ and the history of salvation will be our central reference points. Biblical themes have first place. We will stress the understanding of principles of morality as truths of faith. We will treat in an integrated way the total, divine-human vocation of Christians, to avoid both otherworldliness and secularism. Because the present volume is devoted to the principles of Christian morality, we will not here apply the truths of faith to concrete human problems, but we will develop here the necessary tools for doing this work in subsequent volumes.

The topics which are included in this volume will be studied only to the extent necessary for moral theology. For example, in part three we shall examine the work of the Church as moral teacher. A more complete study of the Church belongs to another course: ecclesiology. From the ecclesiologist's point of view, the treatment here would be only a very partial and inadequate reflection upon the mysterious reality of the Church.

Moreover, certain topics treated in the present volume as principles of Christian morality will be treated again in subsequent volumes insofar as they indicate that certain ways of acting are morally appropriate or inappropriate for Christians. Thus, faith, hope, and charity will be considered here as general principles of Christian life. How these virtues demand

specific kinds of acts characteristic of Christian life will be considered in volume two.

Morality is a characteristic of human actions. Human actions are not what is most fundamental in reality or in Christian life. More basic is the reality of God and the works of God. Yet God has chosen to create persons who can be like him in acting intelligently and freely; the creator ennobles his creatures by making them able and effective cooperators with him. For this reason the moral quality of Christian life is very important.

This volume is divided into six parts. Each of these parts is divided into several chapters.

Part I: Completion in Christ and Human Fulfillment. Christians believe that human life moves toward a definite goal: completion in Christ. This completion is a perfect communal sharing of life among divine and created persons. In this communal sharing, human persons will be blessed abundantly with the goods of divine and of human life. The bond of perfect communal sharing is the love of charity. This completion is a divine gift. One integral part of this gift also is a human task.

Part II: The Redemptive Act and Christian Life. The goodness in which God first constituted humankind was spoiled by sin. Human acts are most centrally ways in which persons establish their own identities and relationships with others, and fulfill the individual and communal lives they have undertaken. Sin is unnecessary self-limitation, and it destroys harmony between humankind and God, among human persons, and within each person. The redemptive act of Jesus restores friendship between humankind and God, and frees humankind from the other effects of sin. Freed by the Lord Jesus, those who follow him can share in his work. By the power of the Holy Spirit, members of Christ share in building up his body toward completion.

Part III: The Church of Christ as Moral Teacher. The Church tells followers of the Lord Jesus how to live on in him. In doing so, the Church teaches what God has revealed in Christ--divine truth which the Church receives and shares in faith. The faith lives and remains identical through history. It is expressed in a special way in the words of Scripture and in other formulations; it also is present in the whole life and worship of the Church. Insofar as the faith shapes the communion of the Church with God, it is essentially normative, and insofar as this communion requires human acts of members of the Church, faith is morally practical. What the Church accepts and hands on in faith cannot be mistaken. But the moral requirements of Christian life can grow and can be more perfectly articulated in the course of Christian tradition.

Part IV: Guidelines for Forming a Christlike Character. There are specific norms of Christian life, specific traits of Christlike character. Followers of the Lord Jesus must seek to imitate him by acting in ways which express his redemptive commitment in their own lives. The specific principles of Christian life presuppose and embody requirements without which no human person under any condition could live a good human life. The requirements of Christian morality are more specific, because they take into account the fact that humankind is fallen but called to share in completion in Christ.

Part V: Obstacles to Full Life in Christ. Redemption is complete in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but it is yet to be completed throughout humankind. Redemption can be present in one's faith yet need to be extended throughout one's life. Because of diversity and undevelopment, which are not themselves evil, obstacles to redemption can remain in redeemed humankind and in the justified individual. Sin and its effects are especially important obstacles. Every mortal sin is a fundamental option which separates one from the love of God. But some sorts of mortal sin leave less basis in the sinner for reconciliation than do others; these can be called "fundamental options" in a special sense. False and wrongly formed conscience also is an obstacle to fullness of life in Christ. Consequences of sin, including death and corruption of culture, also are obstacles.

Part VI. The Way to Completion in Christ. The Lord Jesus has provided a way by which those who believe in him can overcome obstacles to full life in him. The Christian way is based upon listening to the Father and responding to him in union with the response of Jesus himself. This response is prayer and life formed by prayer and lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacraments are the chief instances of the Church's prayer. Their center is the unique redemptive act of Jesus, rendered present and effective in the lives of those who listen and respond to God. Baptism is the basic sacrament of incorporation into the redemptive act. Penance, confirmation, the anointing of the sick, and the eucharist perfect Christians in various aspects of their redemption and sanctification. In addition to the sacraments and subordinate to them are other practices for training in the following of Christ, and other forms of prayer and action necessary for growing intimacy with God.

PART I: COMPLETION IN CHRIST AND HUMAN FULFILLMENT

Chapter 2: Completion: Perfect Fellowship among Divine and Human Persons

Christians understand reality and human life not as a chaotic strife nor as an endless process but as an orderly process moving toward completion. In this completion all things will be brought together into a harmonious unity centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus is human. As such he is a creature among creatures. But he also is divine, the Son of the eternal Father and coprinciple with him of the Holy Spirit. The otherness of creator and creatures cannot be eliminated. But in the Lord Jesus creator and creature are perfectly united.

God the creator is not a lone and simple self, but a divine family in which the Son proceeds from and is sent by the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from and is sent by the Father and the Son. Yet though there is order among the divine persons, they are identical in divinity and equal in perfection. Insofar as we are creatures we depend in the same way on the three divine persons; they create insofar as they are one God.

By their own nature the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit enjoy a perfect interpersonal life with one another. By divine free choice, created persons are adopted into the communion of divine life. As adopted into the

divine family, created persons who become God's children receive as a wholly free gift all of the richness of intimate life with the divine persons and with other created persons who share by adoption in divine life. The personal relationship we have with each of the divine persons is distinct; we come to the Father and receive the Spirit through the Son, through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Human persons are adopted into the divine family by divine action within human history, and so not all at once but gradually. Each adopted member of the divine family also is called to grow up to mature divine life in union with Jesus. The full development of the divine-human family, embracing the proper order and perfection of creation as a whole, is the completion for which Christians hope. Therefore, completion is not a static arrangement of entities but a living community of persons.

This completion, when fully achieved, is the kingdom of God, whose members enjoy life eternal and the blessed vision of God. The blessed vision of God means an intimate life of friendship with him. In this life all the goods of knowledge, justice, love, and peace will be included; every good human desire will be satisfied. Since human persons are bodily realities, the resurrection of the body is essential to completion.

The divine family extended by God's act of adoption to include created persons is more than a nuclear family; it is a realm and divine Fatherhood is kingship. Adopted members of God's people receive everything by his gift, but are free to refuse the gift, and so are members of his realm by covenant. Since the extended family of God both exists and must be raised up by him, the realm of God is both present and coming. The kingdom grows.

The Lord Jesus is the principle of this growth. He is already perfect in himself and he is drawing all creation to perfection in him. As principle of growth and maturation of the kingdom of God, Jesus is the head of the Church, which is fulfilled by him. The Church is a means to the kingdom--not a means as if a mere instrument, but a means as a stage of growth. Jesus builds his Church and calls upon its members to help him to build it. In this way, we can contribute to the growth of God's kingdom.

The communion we are invited to share with the divine persons is of no benefit to them; this fellowship is a wholly gratuitous gift of them to us. Nothing of our own capacities or accomplishments entitles us to this gift. Yet a share in divine life does not displace those human fulfillments which satisfy our own capacities; rather, our natural capacities are to be fulfilled superabundantly. In human completion with God, all human goods will be included. Contributed to human completion in the Lord Jesus, these human goods are shared with him and through him restored to the Father. Hence we can live our lives for God and offer to him our works which he first gives to us.

Chapter 3: The Goods Which Fulfill Human Persons

Completion in Christ includes goods which fulfill human persons, and human life is made up of actions in which persons are enriched by these goods. Therefore, we must consider more closely what these human goods are. These goods mark out the field in which human effort can have its proper effect;

still, these aspects of the well-being or flourishing of human persons and communities leave the human open to the divine gift discussed in chapter two.

What is called "good" merely because it is perceived as agreeable is not of itself something which fulfills a person. Rather, what is called "good" because it is understood as an aspect of well-being or flourishing is a good which fulfills persons. What is merely instrumental to fulfillment must be distinguished from what contributes to fulfillment and will remain in it. The latter is the topic of the present chapter.

God does not develop. God's life is complete simply by his being who he is. But for us, being who we are includes unrealized possibilities. We must realize some of them for our well-being. Hence, good for us is in flourishing; lack of appropriate fulfillment is bad.

It follows that the contrast between what is humanly good and bad is not a contrast between different kinds of reality, as though the spirit were good and the body bad. Nor is it the case that our desires and choices make some things good and others bad for us. Nor is the humanly good and fulfilling something apart from the person and community--for example, some possession. Rather, the humanly good is what both realizes the potentialities of human persons individually and in community and opens the way to continuing and always expanding realization of these potentialities.

Pleasure is surely not the only good for persons, nor is there only one kind of pleasure. Indeed, there are as many kinds of pleasure or enjoyment as there are kinds of fulfillment corresponding to these preferred conscious states. Thus pleasure is best regarded as a conscious aspect of other goods.

The goods which fulfill human persons include the following: life itself and health, skill in performances done for their own sake, experiences of the pleasing and interesting, knowledge of truth, inner harmony, peace and friendship in human community, and peace and friendship with God. Individually and in community, human persons can share in these goods by action.

Many human acts are freely chosen, and these are the morally central ones. For the various human goods to be pursued in freely chosen acts, they must share something in common insofar as they are goods; otherwise, they could not fall within the same field of choice. At the same time, the goods must be diverse in their very goodness; otherwise, the goods would be commensurable, and choices among them could not be free because the greater good would be compelling. What the goods share in common, which corresponds to their common power to interest us, is that they are different finite reflections of divine goodness. Thus, although human persons always understand their proper goods as finite possibilities, these possibilities unfold indefinitely. In designing human persons, God made them adoptable.

The basic human goods are fundamental for human community. They can be shared in by many; they are definite enough to focus human interests; they fulfill persons intrinsically. Humanistic theories do not meet all of these conditions. But the humanism of Christian faith makes clear that human fulfillment in Christ will meet all of these conditions. Thus completion in Christ will fulfill rather than frustrate human potentialities. Communion in the Lord Jesus ensures rather than frustrates the community we long for.

Chapter 4: Love: The Unity of Completion

To love persons is to be interested in them for their own sake, to be glad that they exist and to wish fulfillment for them. But human love always involves self-interest. To love is fulfilling for the lover. To love, then, is to will at once the good of oneself and of another. Thus love is a unifying principle, grounded in the single and total good--the common good--of the lover and the beloved. One who loves truly will not subordinate the good of the beloved to the self. The otherness of the beloved has to be respected, or else love is replaced by domination.

Love, then, is the principle of a unity which respects distinction. The more perfect the unity of love, the more perfect in their diversity are those united by love. This truth can be illustrated on all levels of love. For example, by the love of members of a family for one another, they share a common life in which each one's unique personality can flourish to the utmost.

The reality of God is the highest exemplar of love. His one divine reality absolutely unites the three Persons, yet they remain distinct. This understanding of love as the very being of God is stressed by St. John, who especially tells us of the indwelling of the divine persons in one another. God can share his own nature by his own free choice with created persons; he can do this because he is love. Although creator and created persons remain completely other, the Trinity truly communicate their life. They dwell in adopted members of their family as they do in one another.

The goodness of God, being his very nature, is communicated to adopted members of the divine family. Still, divine love respects and perfects what is proper to human persons in their individuality and in their human nature. Of course, every human good wholly originates in the divine bounty, and the fulfillment of human persons has divine significance only insofar as human persons are adoptive members of the divine family. But by contributing their proper goods to the completion of the divine-human family, human persons can in a certain sense share these goods with the divine persons. Primarily, human goods can be shared with the divine Son by sharing them with the man, Jesus. These human goods are to be gathered up in Christ and restored by him to the Father in the completion. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit extends to human goods, and so service to human goods can be a human contribution to the Spirit's divine work.

Action is the fullness and overflow of the reality of those who act. Considered as action, love is not something particular one does, but is the direction of everything lovers do toward their common good. An act of love is a principle of sharing. Hence, God's love is the principle by which he shares his life with us; our love for God requires us to offer our goods to the Trinity and to share these goods with human persons, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Since the goods to which human persons can attain naturally are finite reflections of divine goodness, a proper love of human goods already implies a certain love of God. But since God reveals himself as personal, it is possible to love him with a distinct, personal love. God's goodness deserves this personal love from human persons; his good will toward humankind requires

that human persons love one another. Finally, with the Incarnation and the revelation of God's will to make human persons adopted members of his family, love of God and of neighbor in God become equivalent, since God in Jesus is a human neighbor, and human persons by the Spirit of adoption share in the divine life. This last form of love of God is the first principle of Christian moral life. It will be discussed more fully in chapter sixteen.

Chapter 5: Completion: Divine Gift and Human Goal

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the relationship between ultimate completion in Christ and the acts of Christians in this present world.

It is a false dichotomy to suppose that completion either must be continuous with history or transcendent in a way which would make present life a wholly extrinsic means. What we do here contributes mysteriously to the invisible growth of the heavenly kingdom. Completion in Christ already is achieved in Mary, already is initiated in the remainder of creation; hence, completion is not altogether future. But for us it is still to come, and our present life can contribute to the growth of the kingdom to completion.

It is a false dichotomy to suppose that completion either is exclusively God's work or that God depends on us for it. Completion is wholly but not exclusively God's work. God leads us to love human goodness by his own love which he pours forth in our hearts; he guides our acts by our own intelligence which by faith shares in his divine wisdom; he causes our free choices of the goods he wishes to realize in our acts. It can be misleading to say, "Pray as if everything depended upon God, work as if everything depended upon yourself," for God makes some aspects of the share he gives us in completion to depend upon us, and our work (except insofar as it is deficient) is wholly God's free gift to us. Unless the Lord builds, they labor in vain who build.

It is a false dichotomy to suppose that eventually evil must be totally eliminated from reality or that completion will be flawed. Evil is permitted for the sake of the good God will bring from it. Christ triumphs without destroying the good which was deformed by evil, and without turning deformity into fulfillment--which is impossible. The residue of evil which will last is inseparable from the reality of the free choice of created persons and from the permanent triumph of the Lord Jesus over sin. This point is difficult to understand if we imagine sin to be a passing event. It is a condition of the self, a state of soul, the kind of person one makes oneself.

The completion we have been describing also can be clarified by contrasting it with other notions of human fulfillment.

First, the pre-Christian, classical humanism of the Greeks projected a fulfillment of human capacities, understood as limited and definite. This view was consonant with the givenness of meaning and value in a created world; the Greeks also were right in thinking that human fulfillment must somehow be in human acts themselves. But they overlooked human free choice.

Second, various thinkers, including the sophists of ancient times and some contemporary radical existentialists deny all definition to human capacities. Thus they deny that there can be any proper human fulfillment. The human individual might be made into anything at all, for humanity as it is

sets no limits and calls for no definite fulfillment. This view on the whole is at odds with Christian faith, but it does allow for an openness of human persons to share in divine life, which transcends the givenness of nature.

Third, Christian philosophy in the tradition of St. Augustine considered the proper use of human capacities to be a means to heavenly completion. Augustine rightly emphasized the total gratuity of divine life and the disproportion between human acts and divine life. But in not making clear that human goods are included within completion, Augustine seemed to imply that human acts could only be extrinsic means to a heavenly life to which they could make no lasting contribution.

Fourth, various post-Christian, practically oriented philosophies see human capacities as open to indefinite fulfillment and they emphasize the lasting importance of human acts. However, they erroneously consider this fulfillment to be incompatible with a sharing of human persons in divine life, and so they project human fulfillment in a purely human community.

On the account we have given in the light of faith, completion by sharing in divine life does not exclude human goods, nor is fulfillment in human goods reduced to the status of a mere extrinsic means to heavenly beatitude. Rather, completion will be in the perfect, mature divine-human family, in which divine and human goods will be fully shared by all.

PART II: THE REDEMPTIVE ACT AND CHRISTIAN LIFE

Chapter 6: Humankind's Original Goodness Spoiled by Sin

In the first part, we saw the great importance of human acts. Grace is primary; meritorious human acts are only one expression of it. But these acts are important because the goods present in them contribute to the completion of all things in Christ. Such acts also are in some way in human power; they express freedom, for one can by freedom do or resist the good which grace empowers. Moral theology is concerned with human acts from this point of view.

Humankind was constituted by God in a threefold dignity. First, man and woman were created in the image of God, sharing in divine intelligence and freedom, with some degree of creativity and dominion over the rest of material creation. Second, they were made to share in divine life, and called to share in perfect fellowship with the divine persons. Third, human persons were given an opportunity to contribute to growth toward completion, to help to bring about in themselves and in other human persons the fullness of human life to be contributed to the divine-human family. But from the beginning the power of human free choice made it possible for man and woman to betray their own dignity.

In general, freedom means that someone not be inhibited in acting by a potential obstacle. Thus there are as many meanings of "freedom" as there are ways in which obstacles can limit action. For example, not to be limited by a potential physical obstacle is to be at liberty physically; not to be limited by the impositions of another person is to be free to do as one pleases. Free choice is neither of these. Free choice is a choice not settled by prior conditions. The power of free choice is the capacity to say,

within bounds, what is to be. For created persons, the power of free choice is the capacity to determine oneself, to accept the gift of divine life or to limit oneself arbitrarily by refusing it.

The experience of free choice is preceded by an awareness of incompatible possibilities and a need to decide between them if one is to act. Reflection fails to solve the problem; nothing already given determines one to this or that. A choice has to be made; it entails a sense of responsibility.

Created persons can abuse their power of free choice because they can limit themselves to what satisfies them as they already are. Human persons, for example, can limit themselves in line with the determinacies of their sentient nature. The right use of free choice requires openness to fuller being, beyond the satisfaction to which one is inclined by sentient nature.

Constituted in a threefold dignity, man and woman also were endowed at the beginning with special gifts, including immunity from death. They had the power to do evil but no inclination to do it. They enjoyed friendship with God and were called to generate children who would have been born into a human family blessed with their gifts--a human family already part of the divine-human family which God wills to bring to completion.

However, man and woman abused their freedom; they sought to enjoy indiscriminately those things which it is morally good and those it is morally wrong to enjoy. They asserted against God freedom to do as they pleased. In doing this they lost the divine friendship in which they had been constituted. Also, they lost the gift of immunity from death. Consequently, human children throughout the ages are born--insofar as they are members of the merely human family--outside divine friendship, subject to misery and death, and alienated from their destiny. This condition of alienation is the central reality of what is called "original sin" in us.

Original sin carries with it disruption of relationships among human persons, disruption of harmony within them, and a bias in everything touched by humankind incompatible with its right order with human life. Original sin will be considered again in chapter twenty-four. At present we are concerned with it only insofar as it is a human condition brought about by human action, a condition overcome by the divine-human action of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus.

Chapter 7: Human Acts

The life of Jesus and the lives of those who follow him are made up of human acts. Of course, neither the acts of Jesus, a divine person, nor the acts of Christians, adopted children of God who live by the power of the Spirit, are exclusively human acts. However, the lives of Jesus and his followers are <u>moral</u> lives precisely insofar as their acts are <u>human</u> acts. Therefore, since we will examine the human life of Jesus in order better to shape our Christian moral lives, we must examine human acts more closely.

Human acts must be distinguished from processes occurring in a human individual and the behavior of human individuals. Acts are performances shaped by the understanding of some good to which they are directed. Some acts of human individuals, such as the acts of small children, are shaped by

understanding but done spontaneously, without free choice and unconditioned by any prior free choice. These acts must be distinguished from morally significant acts, which execute a free choice or are conditioned by some prior free choice. In what follows only morally significant acts will be called "human acts" without qualification.

Free choices, already discussed in chapter six, are between (among) alternatives. These alternatives become interesting as options for the person because each holds out the possibility of participating in a basic human good--or, at least, something thought to be an aspect of such a good. The basic human goods are not extrinsic to persons, but are fulfillments of human possibilities within persons. Hence, choices always are between possible selves. Moreover, since on the whole personal realization is achieved in interpersonal community, choices generally establish, modify, or develop one's relationships with others.

In many choices the alternatives are particular proposals which can be executed by single performances. These acts are of two kinds: some involve a state of affairs desired for itself, while others are means to an ulterior end. Where the alternatives are particular proposals, the aspect of choice as self-determining remains implicit, especially so in the choice of a means.

But in certain choices the aspect of the choice as self-determining is explicit. A young man asks what he will be, and decides to become a priest. In such a case in which one decides what one will be, one makes a commitment to a certain human good rather than another, and one also accepts a certain status in relation to others.

There will be many different outward performances expressing one's basic commitment. There also usually are many basic commitments shaping a person's life. However, if one's life is to be a unified whole which can be lived in an orderly way, some commitment must overarch and integrate the rest.

Choices explicitly involving self-determination and commitment to a stable relationship with others make possible a special type of practical reflection. People who know who they are need not wait for possible courses of action to occur to them or to be suggested by others. They can creatively articulate possible courses of action, better to fulfill their commitments.

Two or more individuals can commit themselves to the same good and take mutual responsibility for performances by which they will share together in this good. Such common commitments really unite those involved. Those who are thus united are not necessarily together in space and time, and they remain distinct persons. But they are joined not only in mind and heart but in action; they share a common life, enter each other's identities.

One's commitments and other choices can condition in several ways acts which are not in themselves executions of proposals adopted by choice. In choosing, one foresees that the execution of a choice will bring about consequences not sought, perhaps unwanted. Again, having made certain choices, one often proceeds without considering alternatives one would have thought about had one's prior choices been different. In this way, indeliberate deeds and omissions can be voluntary through prior choices. Moral responsibility extends to all that is voluntary, but not in the same way to all.

Chapter 8: The Life of Jesus as the Principle of Our Lives

To overcome original sin, a twofold grace (or a grace having two aspects) is needed: to heal the wounds of sin and to elevate human persons to the status of adopted members of the divine family. The Incarnation is fitting both because a divine person who is a man cannot be alienated from God or from humankind and so can restore peace, and because union with this man entails communion with the Trinity. The Incarnation not only is fitting but even necessary for the completion God wills, namely, completion in Christ.

The Lord Jesus, the Son of God become man, has human powers and does human acts. (Of course, his acts also are divine, but at present we are interested in them as human.) The selfhood and consciousness of Jesus are necessarily mysterious to us, but they certainly do not preclude human acts of deliberation and choice, including the making of a basic commitment which shapes the human life of Jesus. His most basic commitment is to be our savior, to do the will of the heavenly Father, to redeem humankind and to be the source of sanctification for human persons. This human act of the divine Son belongs to him insofar as he is also truly a man.

The miracles of Jesus both express creatively and execute his basic commitment. These miracles reveal God's overcoming of evil and actually do in the cases in point overcome it. Forgiveness of sin by Jesus both reveals and carries out the divine will to reconciliation. The teaching of Jesus, likewise, both shows forth the divine will to save and sanctify humankind and brings about the effect which God wills.

Jesus as man deals with evil in two ways. First, he provides an example of goodness in harmony with the divine will and seeks to persuade sinners to repent. Second, he patiently suffers evil at the hands of unrepentant sinners. Both of these ways of dealing with evil express and carry out the basic commitment of Jesus. He undergoes passion and death for the sake of the love which suffering evil involves and also to establish a ground of community with all who suffer the evil which results from sin.

Humankind deserves punishment for sin. Undergoing what would have been a suitable punishment, the Word of God made man reunites humankind in friendship with God and thus pays the debt. Because death is final for human agents, the acceptance of death is a definitive act. This definitive act by Jesus completes the assumption of the human condition by the Word, shows the divine and human love of Jesus for his human brothers and sisters, and both completes and reveals the perfect unity between this man and the Father.

The death of Jesus leads to his glorification, establishes the new and everlasting covenant, lays the foundation of the new family of God in its eternal perfection. The redemptive effect of this act of Jesus, his definitive human act of self-oblation, is given to human persons if only they do not oppose it. Thus infants can be freed from sin and become adopted children of God with no personal choice on their own part. Hence, in his teaching Jesus always gives first place to God's will and his saving action. Humankind is radically renewed before any human person is expected to do anything pleasing to God.

Yet after the Beatitudes proclaim God's saving will, the commandments

call for a response from us. Having restored us to intimacy with God, Jesus asks us to cooperate with him by living in a way appropriate to God's children. If God had willed to give no human person more than he gives to infants when they are baptized, the Incarnation and the human life of Jesus would hardly have been necessary. But God wills also to ennoble human persons by making them free cooperators in redemption. Mary shows what he wishes to do for us.

To the end that we should cooperate freely with him, God presents his saving will to us in the human act of Jesus. He makes available to us this humanly community-forming act and asks us to share in it by our own free consent. In the Last Supper and the discourse interpreting it, Jesus reveals the opportunity God makes available in him to us. Thus, having been redeemed by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, we can share in his redemptive act, doing with him what he does. Mary exemplifies what we are asked to do.

Chapter 9: Following Jesus: Living as Children of God

The central act, the basic commitment, of the life of Jesus is not a past event. Human choices as such last. Thus this act of Jesus endures in the glory the Father gave him for it. To follow Jesus is possible only insofar as one has received the benefit of his act and been adopted as a child of God. But having been adopted, one can commit oneself to live one's life as a child of God in communion with Jesus. Freely committing oneself to Jesus, freely establishing one's own identity by communion with him, one must act as he does in principle although other than he does in the concrete, because the abilities and opportunities of those who follow Jesus differ from his.

To the best of our knowledge the life of Jesus was shaped by a single commitment: to the religious good of his role as Christ our savior. The central religious commitment of those who follow Jesus can overarch and integrate other commitments--commitments to various human goods pursued for the sake of bringing them to completion in Christ. Also Christians can use subpersonal things in order that these too may be restored to God in Christ.

Christian lives in their rich diversity thus contribute to completion in Christ. All who live in communion with Jesus make up one body having diverse functions; all of the parts contribute to one another and to the whole. The works of Christians are done by the power of the Spirit but also are truly human acts.

Insofar as our redemption and the completion God wills depends wholly on the act of Jesus, the will of God already is fulfilled, the kingdom of God already is established on earth as in heaven. But insofar as our own redemption and the completion includes our action as well as that of Jesus, we must work out our salvation and build up the body of Christ for the sake of the kingdom which is gradually growing. Christians do the acts Jesus did and --in a limited but nevertheless real sense--expand upon them.

Two basically different Christian lifestyles, which are found in various proportions in every Christian life, reflect the two aspects of the kingdom of God as already established and as not yet complete. The religious life expresses the reality of Christian life as a sharing in the kingdom already

established; the religious life shows the liberty of God's children and the riches of his household. The secular Christian expresses the reality of God's kingdom as still growing toward completion; the Christian in the world works to contribute to the completion in Christ for which we still hope.

Hope is confidence in the success of God's plan, certainty that Jesus will come in glory to inaugurate the perfect state of the kingdom which will endure forever. Hope is reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the good we desire to enjoy in the completion and to which we seek by our own acts to contribute.

Hope must be distinguished from secularist optimism, which supposes that human well-being can be attained by an automatic flowering of human potentialities or by human effort alone. The secularist must be concerned with visible consequences of human acts; the Christian knows that every act which is faithful to Jesus contributes to the invisible growth of the kingdom. Thus the Christian looks forward without anxiety in joyful hope to the day when the true meaning of the works of God's children will be revealed.

In the sacrifice of the Mass, the redemptive act of Jesus is made present so that those redeemed by Jesus can be integrated with him and can offer their human acts and the work of their hands to be transformed into completion in Christ. In the Mass Jesus transforms our offering into his glorified self, then returns to us our own lives transformed in him.

But what ought Christians to do? What is suitable--and what unsuitable--to bring to the Mass? What sorts of acts will build up the Church?

Ideally, one perfectly united with the loving heart of Jesus would have no difficulty in knowing what to do. But typically there are many obstacles, which we shall consider in part five. Even apart from the obstacles which arise from defects in us, we need instruction in the implications of faith for our lives.

What follows is directed primarily to answering the question of what to do as this question is put by one who believes in Christ and is ready to follow him, not as it is put by those who do not yet believe or who are not ready to follow. To the child of God who wishes to grow to maturity in Christ, the answer to the question about what to do is: Do as the Church tells you. Mother Church has the mind and the heart of the Lord Jesus.

III. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST AS MORAL TEACHER

Chapter 10: The Church Formed by the Word of God

The Church tells followers of the Lord Jesus what their duties as Christians are. To some extent, the Church describes these duties in specific terms, with commandments or precepts which require or forbid certain kinds of acts. But many duties of Christian life, including the most important ones, cannot be specified in general terms. The Church teaches what to do by holding up models: Learn of Jesus and be like him! Imitate Mary and other saints!

How does the Church know what to tell us? This is the question to be answered in this part. To begin to answer the question, we must be clear that the Church is not just a few people who are living today. It is the entire

gathering of human persons united through the ages by communion in faith in *the Lord* Jesus, a gathering taught constantly by his Holy Spirit. Jesus lives and he is always contemporary with his Church.

Someone who looked at Christian life from the outside might suppose that in accepting Jesus as our guide, we follow someone who was good and wise, but who died long ago after living in a culture very different from ours. How could his teaching be relevant to us today?

While the cultures of the first century were very different from those of the twentieth, we see from within faith that the style of life taught and exemplified by Jesus is a nucleus for a culture all its own. Ancient and contemporary cultures are even more alien from the culture of Jesus than they are from one another, because the culture of Jesus is that of the redeemed and redeeming community growing by the power of the Holy Spirit into the kingdom of God. Jesus remains with his Church throughout this process of growth. In the Church his words remain audible and do not pass away.

Thus the Church has the unity of the redemptive act of Jesus with which Christians are united. The Church is unified by outward expressions of this act: the Mass and the other sacraments. The Bible, the Creed, and defined statements of doctrine permanently express timeless truths. Thus the Church is not a whole series of different realities, not a process which never enjoys a stable identity. The Church is a reality within history but not essentially limited by time.

The key to the unity of the Church is that it is the body of Christ, the fellowship with God of human persons to whom God has revealed himself most perfectly in Jesus. Members of the Church can go wrong, but tendencies which would destroy any other society fail to destroy the Church, because Jesus continues to draw the Church to himself, to purify and vivify her.

In Jesus God has revealed himself as one who loves us, who wishes to make us members of his own family, to share all his perfection and glory with us. Revelation is not the unveiling of a transcendent object, but the communication of divine persons inviting us to intimacy. God reveals himself as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for whom and with whom we are called to live.

The personal revelation of God in Jesus is by his human words and deeds. The words interpret the deeds; the deeds give substance to the words. Revelation is not a theory with some practical implications; it is essentially normative, both by explicit commands and by norms implicit in actions. Jesus proposes his redeeming act as a community-forming act; he asks us to consent to what he does for us and to follow him in doing it.

The response to the primary norm of revelation, "Believe and be baptized!" is the obedience of faith. Since God reveals himself not only as truth but also as loving goodness inviting to personal intimacy, a fully adequate response of faith is not merely knowledge, but knowledge shaping love and action. Such faith is intelligent service to God.

Because one who wishes to follow Jesus and who asks "What am I to do?" expects an answer grounded in faith and because the Church is the community formed by faith, such a person can learn the mind of Christ from the Church.

Chapter 11: Faith as a Foundation for Christian Life

In general, belief gives us access to the truth of realities which are not available to direct knowledge. Faith in a person is access to the hidden truth of the person, which can be a basis for intimacy to come. Faith in a person has three aspects: One believes a person to the extent that one takes his or her word; one believes the truth of the person to the extent that one initially becomes acquainted with him or her by believing and thus has a basis for close friendship; and one believes in the goodness of friendship with this person. We take the word of others, accept what they tell us of themselves, and take seriously our relationships as mutually fulfilling friendship.

Christian faith is in God revealing, making his reality accessible to us in a human mode in Jesus, and holding out the promise of intimate knowledge in a perfect and lasting personal relationship.

Propositional truths of faith are not mere symbols or expressions, not mere extrinsic instruments of the reality of faith. Propositions are not linguistic entities. They are aspects of reality grasped by a human person. The words and deeds by which God reveals himself express his reality more fully than can be grasped by believers at one time. Still, revealed divine reality is grasped by us only through wonder shaped by the truths of faith.

The truths of faith always have a normative aspect; they shape the response of the believer toward increasing intimacy with God. Yet the distinction between doctrine and morality is legitimate and important, since faith affects all aspects of the believer's personality, not only those conditioned by free choice. Also, theoretical truths always can be abstracted from norms. For example, the norm which directs us to pray implies the truth that God can hear our prayers and answer them.

Faith is a response to the proclamation of the Gospel. Preaching and acceptance occur in a human relationship of communication and trust. An adequate proclamation of the word of God always includes good reasons which are sufficient to make the act of faith a morally responsible commitment. However, the act of Christian faith has an absolute certitude which cannot be explained by the merely human interpersonal motivation. This absolute certitude is caused by God himself who miraculously brings about the assent of Christian faith to the truth which is revealed in Christ.

The friendship toward which faith in the Lord Jesus leads is perfect sharing of life with God. One's interest in this good motivates the assent of faith despite the present lack of obviousness of its truth. However, one's interest in eternal life does not elicit spontaneous assent without one's free choice, because the morally normative truths of faith demand the setting aside of other interests, such as the satisfaction of passions and desires.

Faith, as a disposition and act of the intellect, is distinct from hope and from the will to do the works of love. However, faith calls for these complementary dispositions. Without them it is unstable. When choices are made which are incompatible with charity, then faith subjectively wavers. If hope is abandoned, faith also can be lost, despite its own inherent stability and absolute certitude. One who has embraced true Christian faith cannot lose it without personal sin.

Chapter 12: The Sharing of Faith and Its Infallibility

Infallibility is impossibility of error in intellectual knowing. The knowledge of God is infallible; revelation communicates divine truth. Thus the assent of faith to revealed truth shares the infallibility of divine knowledge. The assent by which one accepts a truth and asserts it to another is the same. Thus the truth of faith is infallibly asserted when it is proclaimed and handed on. The present chapter clarifies this point.

The words and deeds by which God reveals himself are one thing; the propositional truths of faith are another. Those who experience the words and deeds articulate and assent to propositions in understanding their experience. The experience varies to some extent with individuals, and the propositions differ even more, without being inconsistent with one another. Moreover, descriptions of the revelatory words and deeds will allow those who were not eyewitnesses to articulate propositions not formed by those who were.

To give his friends a share in preserving and interpreting the revelatory data, Jesus made a group of them, the Twelve, authorized witnesses and he appointed Peter their leader to maintain their communion and to serve as the criterion of their unified testimony. The faith of this group was based directly on companionship with Jesus revealing by his words and deeds. Insofar as their faith was in him personally and extended to all he said and did, they were completely one in faith. Insofar as their experiences and the propositions they formed varied, they grasped different but compatible aspects of the whole truth he revealed.

Together with others who immediately received God's revelation in Jesus, these authorized witnesses initially formed the Church. Their public proclamation was normative for others. Henceforth, the faith of the Church is the faith which comes from the apostles. The faith of the bishops who succeeded the apostles is not normative for the Church as is the faith of the apostles; rather, the faith of the bishops is a criterion by which one can recognize the faith of the Church. Even the faith of the apostles is not a medium of revelation as the knowledge of Jesus is. All Christians receive divine truth <u>in</u> and through Jesus; others receive the truth revealed in Jesus <u>with</u> and through the apostles.

Divine truth is incarnate in Jesus; the infallibility of divine knowing also is present in him. To deny that any human can share infallibility is to deny the reality of the Incarnation. Jesus truly revealed God to the apostles; his communication was really effective. Thus the same truth is present and infallibly accepted in apostolic faith. The faith of the Church is that of the apostles; thus the faith of the Church also is infallible.

The gift of infallibility in communicating faith ennobles those who bear witness. If revelation were given without human intermediation, it would not be more effective, but the benefit to those empowered to share their faith with others would be lost. To deny that human persons can share in divine attributes is to deny that they can share in the divine nature.

The public character and unity of the faith of the Church is a necessary condition for the common effort of believers as members of the divine family to contribute to the growth of God's kingdom. People can be saved without

a personal act of explicit faith, as in the cases of baptized infants and persons of good will who never hear the Gospel proclaimed. But without personally sharing in the believing of the Church, one cannot consciously participate in its mission, one cannot work together with others to build up the one body of Christ.

Chapter 13: The Faith Living through History

Tradition is the unity of faith--and of Christian life formed by faith--over time. It is the sameness of the faith accepted and handed on. Since tradition is the unity of the faith of the Church, it is never without hope and love. Tradition embodies living faith in Christian life and worship. The propositional truths of faith should not be opposed to the living tradition of life and worship in the Church; the truths of faith provide the inner meaning of life and worship.

Tradition also includes the only partially interpreted revelatory words and deeds of Jesus. These are preserved in the Church by descriptions and by imitation. Thus from her storehouse the Church can draw new things.

The New Testament contains much data more or less fully interpreted. The various books served diverse purposes in the activity of the early Church. But the first Christians believed in a reality to which they had access only by companionship with Jesus, by understanding what he said and did. They proclaimed what they received to others. Thus there is no reason to assume that the activity of the Church distorted the data. This assumption arises out of the supposition that Jesus did not really reveal anything and that faith is an ineffable subjective experience, which only makes use of words and deeds to express itself symbolically.

The Old Testament likewise contains saving truth. Yet not everything which seems to be a norm in it can be accepted as a standard for Christian life. Nevertheless, Christian morality restores, refines, and perfects the moral standards of pious Jews. Their morality was not a mere datum for Jesus and the apostles, as was the morality of pagan teachers. Jewish morality belonged to the lifestyle of the people of God.

The moral teaching of the New Testament is a witness to the faith of the Church and to action guided by the light of this faith. Moreover, the moral teaching of the New Testament has been accepted as normative for the Church and by the Church through the centuries. One cannot today say that the docility of the Church to the moral teaching of the New Testament has been an error.

The office of bishop is itself part of the tradition of faith. But this office is distinctive in that those who hold it oversee the handing on of faith with an authority derived from the same faith they hand on. All members of the Church share the responsibility for keeping and handing on the faith. But each member of the Church shares in its work of teaching in a way determined by that member's role in the Church. Those who are not bishops share in this work by teaching what the bishops teach, by proclaiming the Gospel as members of a chorus, not by speaking independently and expressing their own ideas in place of the common faith.

Chapter 14: Genuine Expressions of the Faith of the Church

As already stated, Holy Scripture contains a genuine expression of the faith of the Church, unique because it is inspired. The unique character and unalterability of Scripture make it a unifying and objective medium by which revelation presents itself in every age and culture. Scripture must be understood integrally in harmony with the living faith of the Church as a whole, a faith always nourished by prayerful meditation on the sacred text and constant use of it in worship.

The day to day teaching of the bishops proclaiming the faith and guiding the faithful in every aspect of Christian life also is a genuine and living expression of the Church's faith, an expression which serves Scripture and keeps divine revelation present, adaptable in expression, and thus an effective communication. When the bishops in communion with one another and with the successor of Peter agree in the same position on any point pertaining to faith and Christian life and propose that position as certain and binding, all can be certain that they express what is required by the faith of the Church, and thus their teaching under these conditions can be known to be infallible.

It is important to notice that the common content of received Catholic moral teaching concerning what matters constitute the stuff of grave sin meets the stated conditions by which we can recognize teachings infallibly proposed. This very extensive body of moral teaching was proposed at least for many centuries under the authority of all the bishops of the world. It was part of the common Christian heritage shared by orthodox Christians, protestants, and Roman Catholics. After the Council of Trent it was contained in the textbooks approved by the bishops for use in the seminaries where priests were trained to form the consciences of the faithful. Insofar as these moral norms were proposed as standards the violation of which by a fully deliberate and free choice would be a grave sin, these judgments surely were proposed to be held as certain and binding. Moreover, in many cases the norms were proposed as belonging to divine revelation either implicitly or explicitly, and so a fortiori were proposed as norms certain and binding upon every Christian.

Solemn definitions made either by an ecumenical council or by a pope speaking as pastor and teacher of all the faithful cannot fail to express the Church's faith in divine truth. Such definitions add nothing to revelation and presuppose the day to day infallible teaching of revealed truth. But definitions of faith can express propositions articulated by the Church through the ages, always taught by the Holy Spirit, and gradually understanding more perfectly what was revealed in Jesus. Definitions also provide formulae of propositions of faith which are irreformable standards of the Church's proclamation of faith. The Church refines and interprets earlier definitions in later ones but never disavows a definition once given.

The Fathers of the Church were bishops and men closely associated with bishops, living during the early centuries of the Church, and already universally recognized as saintly authorities by the beginning of the middle ages. Their consensus is evidence of the day to day teaching of the bishops.

For this reason, under the usual conditions, the common teaching of the Fathers of the Church can be accepted as an infallible expression of the faith of the Church. The earliest Fathers also exemplify the exercise of the teaching office of bishops who succeeded the apostles; the later Fathers exercised without separation the offices of bishop and theologian, and hence showed how these tasks should complement one another.

The sense of the faithful is another evidence of the Church's faith. What the whole Church believes cannot be mistaken. The concept of "sense of the faithful" also involves a subjective element, namely, an acquired instinct of one who is united with the mind and heart of Jesus to recognize what agrees with him and what is alien to him.

In recent years the "sense of the faithful" has been abused by some who would prefer their own wishes and feelings to the Church's constant teaching in moral matters. It must be recognized that individuals belong to the body of the faithful only by accepting the faith of the Church as it is objectively and publicly expressed. Moreover, Christians bear witness to their faith not by saying what they would like, but rather by their statements and actions which express what they received, even when they do not wholeheartedly accept it and try to live up to it.

The writings and teachings of Doctors of the Church and of canonized saints also contain important expressions of the faith of the Church. The fact that the magisterium recognizes them indicates that they are reliable as authorities. However, not every act of a saint is to be considered exemplary, because even the upright person falls repeatedly into venial sin.

Chapter 15: Development of Teaching, Theology, and Dissent

As time passes worldviews alternative to Christian faith present new and different challenges. New concepts become available by which to understand the revelatory words and deeds; to many people older concepts become less readily available. The proclamation of the Gospel in cultures which have not previously heard it also requires a fresh articulation of its truths. Led by the Holy Spirit, the Church gradually understands better what God has revealed and confided to her. Moreover, forms of language and activity become available or are invented as fresh media for expressing the faith.

In the domain of moral teaching, a deeper understanding of human goods and of the implications of the Gospel for the whole of human life leads to the gradual refinement of Christian moral norms. There also arise specifically new moral questions as new kinds of human act are excogitated. These new questions must be answered in the light of the Gospel.

There is no genuine development of Christian teaching unless two conditions are met. First, no proposition is an authentic development if it is inconsistent with the received teaching of the Church. Second, no proposition can develop Christian teaching unless it articulates the truth revealed by God in Christ. Thus even true propositions which pertain to merely human science will not be genuine developments of Christian teaching.

Time and place as such do not modify revealed truth or demand changes in its articulation and expression. But those domains which are shaped by

human understanding--for example, the spheres of economics and politics--do vary at diverse times and places, and the articulation of the moral implications of the truth of faith must take this historicity into account. However, a historicism which denies insight into stable principles underlying development renders unintelligible the continuity of propositions and expressions, and so renders unintelligible the identity of tradition. Such historicism inevitably ends by absolutizing some bias of the present time and using this bias to judge the faith in its prior articulations and expressions.

Theology has several important tasks. The theologian must gather genuine expressions of the Church's faith; he must try to understand them; he must purposely seek to develop doctrine; he should clarify the relationships among truths of faith; he should draw out previously unnoticed implications of faith, including implications for Christian life; and he should try to answer objections to the truths of faith. The theologian cannot demonstrate the foundations of faith; he should accept them as data. The theologian should not mix theology with human sciences in a way which confuses what pertains to revelation with what does not. The theologian must not use any extrinsic principle to judge what pertains to faith. The theologian should not propose his own opinion as a replacement for the teaching of the bishops as a norm for pastoral practice.

To the extent that doctrine must develop, there will be teachings proposed by the bishops from day to day which do not at once have the status of universal and constant teachings. Whether such developments correctly articulate the faith of the Church is necessarily uncertain until they are universally proposed. Thus when a particular bishop or group of bishops proposes a teaching whose status is unclear, the possibility of error cannot be wholly excluded. In a case of this sort, some members of the Church may not be able to assent to the teaching proposed, particularly if it seems to be incompatible with a proposition they already accept with the assent of faith.

Such a possibility of legitimate nonassent should not be confused with the legitimation of public dissent. Individuals can easily violate the requirements of prudence and give scandal if they publicly dissent from episcopal teaching. This is especially so if theologians usurp the role of the apostolic office and set themselves up as alternative authorities, as if the majority of those theologians who achieve some degree of academic status could not fail in their consensus to bear witness to the faith of the Church. However, there is no reason to suppose that such a consensus is infallible, and there are many reasons related to the conditions which make for academic status to think that the consensus of even a dominant group of theologians who attain it can be alien to the mind of Christ.

No one who acts with episcopal authorization has a right to exercise his office in a way which is incompatible with the teachings proposed by the bishops in communion with one another and with the pope. Finally, the greatest care is required to avoid dissent from teachings which have been infallibly proposed although they happen never to have been defined.

IV. FORMING A CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER

Chapter 16: The First Principle: Christian Love

In part three, we saw how the Church knows what one must do to follow Jesus. But what in general outline does the Church tell us to do? What are the most general norms for every Christian's life?

It is important to notice that there are general norms for Christian life, norms which allow us to shape our own lives intelligently. Christian morality is not a set of specific rules like a code of law which regulates external behavior and demands mere conformity. Both in Holy Scripture and in the Church's teaching, reasons always are given for any specific norms. Of course, these reasons are seldom articulated into logically complete arguments and they often seem absurd to nonbelievers. But the reasons given are adequate to permit the faithful to follow Christ intelligently.

Human acts express rational choices. The better one understands what one is doing, the richer in significance one's acts are. If an act is good, then the richer in meaning it is--other things being equal--the better it is. Goods can be realized in acts, and so can contribute to completion in Christ of themselves, only if they are in some way known by the one acting. Thus lack of understanding when understanding is possible detracts from the contribution one could be making. For this reason God desires rational service, not puppet-like unthinking responses, from us.

There also are several secondary ways in which an understanding of the general norms of Christian life will be helpful. First, the general norms help make clear what is special about the moral dimension of Christian life. Second, they are the principles by which the Church in its teaching can clarify and defend specific norms of Christian morality when these are misunderstood and disputed. Third, the general norms of Christian life are the necessary instrument for refining and developing received teaching--for responding to new questions in the light of faith. Fourth, these norms can be used to resolve supposed conflicts of duties.

In subsequent volumes of this work, many specific duties of Christian life will be considered. The general norms treated here will be used as principles for clarifying and organizing the specific norms.

We already explained in chapter four that since Christian life is communion with the Trinity and with created persons who share in divine life, the primary principle of Christian action is charitable love of God and of one's neighbor. This love itself is neither a free choice nor the consequence of a free choice. This love is a disposition of our will, arising from the love of God which is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given us and who enlivens us to be adopted children of the heavenly Father. By virtue of this love, which disposes us to the divine goodness both in the Trinity and in created persons who share in it by adoption, our human interests and thus our human choices can be directed in hope to the perfection of life in the completion of all things in Christ. Moreover, by this love we can rejoice in the divine happiness, always complete in the Blessed Trinity and already fully enjoyed by Jesus and Mary.

Although the love of God and neighbor which is the first principle of Christian life is not itself a free choice, norms which direct free choices refer to this love in two ways. First, charity requires that we make certain choices. If we fail to make them or make choices incompatible with them, then we separate ourselves from this love. Hence, the precept to love God and neighbor means to choose as love requires, to keep all of the commandments. Also, our personalities are complex; we can love God and neighbor truly but imperfectly. Thus the precept to love means to surrender oneself completely to charity, so that one will love God with one's whole mind, heart, soul, and strength, and will love one's neighbor as oneself in Christ.

As we explained in chapter eight, Jesus's redemptive act is his primary choice and commitment which follows from his perfect love; this basic commitment overarches and integrates his whole human life. The redemptive act insofar as it is a human act is the commitment of Jesus to do the will of his Father, to redeem sinful humankind and to do all in his power to bring about the growth of the heavenly kingdom toward completion.

The primary moral commitment of Christian life is to follow Jesus, to commit oneself with him to the good of completion to the extent that one's human action can contribute to it. One cannot make this commitment unless one already has died and risen with Christ, unless one already has received new life in him. The commitment is to act redemptively--to work out one's own salvation and to cooperate with Jesus in redeeming others--by uniting one's whole life with his redemptive act. In making this commitment, each Christian is similar to Mary in accepting a divine call to receive and to nourish the Word of God, to share in the work of redemption and to mediate the grace of Christ to others.

To follow Jesus is to contribute to the growth of the kingdom toward ultimate completion in Christ. A basic norm, "Seek completion!" corresponds to the human character of Jesus, who dedicated his whole life to inaugurating the heavenly kingdom, to serving God and his human brothers and sisters. He formed this character by his commitment to do his Father's will. Several subordinate general norms, articulated by Jesus himself, correspond to the various aspects of his character. We now turn to these norms and aspects of the character of Jesus.

Chapter 17: The Character of Jesus and Christian Moral Norms

By many sayings, Jesus proposed his own character as a model and urged his followers to imitate him. Often he proposed norms with an exemplary action in which his character-trait emerges. In this chapter, we are concerned only with the general norms and traits of character of Jesus, not with the specific norms he sometimes proposed.

Since every truly Christian act of every Christian's life contributes to the growth of the divine-human family toward completion, these norms guide the choices of the follower of Jesus in living toward completion. Because the following of Jesus is the response to the vocation common to all Christians, I call these norms which shape the whole of one's life in Christ "modes of Christian response."

The first mode of Christian response is: Seek first the kingdom of God. A Christian can desire many goods, but should pursue them only insofar as they contribute to completion in Christ. A Christian who really cares about truth or life will care more about the heavenly kingdom, and so will seek truth or life in it. The corresponding character trait is purity of heart, the singlemindedness of Jesus. There is no room in the follower of Jesus for a divided heart, duplicity, and self deception. Contrasted with the pure heart of Jesus is the duplicity of the pharisee, the duplicity of those who wish to serve both God and mammon, to say both "Yes" and "No" to the vocation to follow Jesus.

The second mode of Christian response is: Pray always. A Christian expects everything from God and accepts every good as his gift. Those who act as Christians will realize that their whole power and act is a gift, a part of God's generosity which includes in the completion human goods which are realized in human acts. The corresponding character trait is the humility of Jesus. Humility does not consist in self-depreciation, but in appreciation of the divine gifts without which creatures are nothing and without which fallen humankind is enslaved to sin and death. Like Jesus and like Mary--whose Magnificat is a hymn of humility--Christians must accept their own tremendous dignity as a divine gift, not act as if it were a personal achievement.

The third mode of Christian response is: Fulfill the will of the Father rather than one's own will. Jesus did not allow any other role or relationship to interfere with his total obedience to his Father's will that he fulfill the particular mission assigned to him. Similarly, the Christian must seek his or her personal vocation, what God wishes each one to do as a personal share in the cooperative work of building up Christ toward completion. The corresponding character trait of Jesus is his docility or submissiveness to his Father's command. Similar docility is expressed by Mary's response to the invitation to become the mother of Jesus: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

The fourth mode of Christian response is: Keep faithful watch! The commitment once made must be maintained against subsequent temptation, just as Jesus held fast in the face of death. Ready courage to resist interference and overcome obstacles is necessary. Commitments and promises bond Christians to Jesus and to one another. Such choices belong to the kingdom insofar as it already exists, and these acts will remain in the completion. The corresponding character trait is faithfulness or loyalty, to which the personal betrayal involved in any breaking of a commitment is opposed.

The fifth mode of Christian response is: Surrender everything but the good of the heavenly kingdom. The character of Jesus was marked by absolute detachment, a poverty so great that he was free to devote himself wholly to the Father's business. For the follower of Jesus, it is necessary to die with him, to put aside the old man, to respond to the counsels. The corresponding character trait is the liberty of Jesus with respect to everything but the redemptive work for the sake of the kingdom. Christians who give up everything receive a share in this liberty of God's children. Since

they surrender everything, they are perfectly united with Jesus in his *death*, and so they likewise share in the glory to which he is raised.

The sixth mode of Christian response is: Love enemies as the heavenly Father loves them. The fallen human race is enemy to God, but Jesus incarnates God's love of the fallen. Our love like his must not be limited to friends, to those who are good just insofar as they are good. Love must be a universal and unconditional willing of the good, a will to bring about good by healing and overcoming its privation. To love the enemy is to destroy the enemy as such by making good what is evil and thus turning enemy into friend. The character trait which corresponds to loving enemies is the meekness of Jesus, his attitude of nonresistance to hatred and evil which neutralizes its power by exhausting it in endless patience.

The seventh mode of Christian response is: Willingly undergo evil for the sake of good. If one cares only for the completion which God wills and if this can be furthered by suffering, then one must be willing to suffer. For one who accepts suffering, not intending or choosing evil but the good to which suffering leads, the evil which is suffered is transient. The example of Jesus shows this; resurrection quickly follows suffering and death. One is not identified with the evil one suffers but with the good one intends. Only the good lasts. The character trait which corresponds to this norm is self-oblation: the readiness to lose one's transient self for the sake of one's lasting self in the completion.

The eighth mode of Christian response is: Sacrifice oneself for others. One more fully loves others by doing works of love, especially works of love costly to oneself. The way to perfect oneself in love of God and neighbor, then, is to sacrifice oneself for them. Jesus was manifestly the man for others and he requires those who follow him to sacrifice themselves for him, for others in him. The character trait which corresponds to this norm is compassion or mercy. By mercy one is disposed to ignore one's own legitimate claims in the face of the needs of others.

These modes of Christian response are not sharply distinct from one another. They are not a set of principles subordinate one to another, but are aspects of a unified whole, just as the various character traits of Jesus are aspects of his unique, perfectly integrated character. The eight modes of Christian response all express the basic demand to act for completion insofar as human action can contribute to it.

But each of these modes does involve a somewhat different idea and each adds something to the others in guiding choices. Exclusive emphasis on any one of these modes would distort the mind of Christ by leaving out of account part of what one must remember if one is to think with him in deliberating.

Chapter 18: Christian Morality as True Humanism

Those who follow Jesus must do concrete acts and specific kinds of acts other than those which made up his life. Yet our lives in him still must do the works of love--must appropriately express and carry out his redemptive commitment with which we are united. Our lives must realize human goods as our contribution to the growth of the heavenly kingdom toward completion.

And our lives must exclude any act which would separate us from the redemptive act of Jesus and so from the love of God.

Fallen men and women ought to accept the grace of God in Jesus Christ; they ought to live their lives in unity with the redemptive act of Jesus. As is obvious when the actual human situation is considered in the light of faith, there is no other way in which to live an integrally good human life. An integrally good human life is one in which a person lives not for partial and apparent goods, but for the full well-being of human persons, a flourishing in goods on the part of both individuals and communities. Thus, the Christian basic norm--Live for the sake of the kingdom of God, for the sake of the completion of all things in Christ--alone adequately expresses the basic human moral demand: Act for the sake of human completion.

The principle, Act for the sake of human completion, presupposes an even more elementary principle of practical reason: Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided. Everyone naturally understands this most basic practical principle and always acts upon it, whether in doing good or in doing evil. A theory of human action which did not recognize this presupposition of all action would be unable to make sense of the place of intelligence and free choice in human life.

To the elementary principle of practical reason, the first principle of morality, Act for the sake of human completion, adds something which distinguishes morally good acts from morally bad ones. First, it adds a reference to the goods which constitute human well-being, the goods we discussed in chapter three. Second, it adds the unity of this whole set of goods, which constitute the full scope of human interests and concerns only when taken together. To act in a fully reasonable way, one must determine oneself in harmony with the whole set of basic human goods, not limit oneself arbitrarily in respect to them.

The various human goods differ and are incommensurable with one another; if this were not so, choice would not be free. But they also fall within the same field of choice; each of the human goods offers us something and so can be willed by us as an aspect of human well-being. Corresponding to this common relevance of the goods to us is something one about the goods themselves: Each of them is an irreducible way in which human persons can share in divine goodness. The human will can extend to all the goods in all their aspects, even in aspects not yet understood, because the human will is open to divine goodness. To treat any aspect of any of the human goods as if it were not good is to close oneself to it arbitrarily, to determine oneself to remain finite, to act as if one's heart were not made for God, and thus to reject any immediate share in the divine goodness itself.

To act for the sake of human completion is to do what is morally right. The principle of moral rectitude can be expressed in other words as right reason, as respect for human dignity, as unselfishness. All of these are ways of expressing insight into the basis of morality, an insight possible even without the light of faith. However, faith purifies and rectifies the reason of sinful men and women, restores and clarifies true human dignity, and makes clear what unselfishness means in a broken world.

Thus, Live for the sake of the kingdom of God, is a Christian understanding of what it means to fulfill the moral demand: Act for the sake of human completion. The basic norm of Christian morality presupposes and perfects an insight available even without faith, an insight into moral goodness which is not false but which in the actual human condition is not adequate apart from Christ's teaching on human completion and how to act for it. Similarly, the modes of Christian response considered in chapter seventeen presuppose and perfect a set of norms of morality which express certain requirements arising from human nature itself which must be met if one is to act for human completion. These natural norms of morality are modes of responsible living for human persons as such; they hold true regardless of the actual condition of humankind.

The natural modes of responsibility, considered in themselves, are more relevant for Christians in indicating what they must not do than in indicating what they must do. For what could not be done by anyone who was a good person may not be done by any Christian. But what needs to be done by human persons in the actual situation of fallen and redeemed humankind is unknown to anyone who lacks the light of faith. Thus the natural modes of responsibility must be understood in the light of faith and used with the Christian modes of response if they are to provide affirmative guidance adequate for followers of Christ.

In principle the natural modes of responsibility are available to the consciences of every person, even to the person who has never heard the word of God. Thus those who have not heard the Gospel are not ignorant of moral requirements and are not without responsibility for violating them. But in practice the meaning of the natural modes of responsibility is greatly obscured by social ideologies and individual self-deception. Christians do not depend exclusively upon human insight to grasp the meaning of the natural modes of moral responsibility. As already explained, they learn the modes of Christian response from the teaching and example of Christ. The natural modes of responsibility also are indicated in divine revelation and in the Church's teaching unfolding it. Moreover, as we shall see, the natural modes of responsibility are embedded in the modes of Christian response, and the former can be abstracted from the latter.

Chapter 19: The Rational Foundation of Christian Life--I

The natural modes of responsibility exclude irrational arbitrariness. If one's choices are to be morally good, one must at least determine oneself in view of intelligible human goods, not determine oneself arbitrarily in view of felt tendencies with respect to sensible goods and evils. The modes of Christian response, summarized in chapter seventeen, are specifications, intelligible in the light of faith, of natural modes of responsibility. Corresponding to each of the natural modes of responsibility is a virtue which is truly realized, although paradoxically transformed, in the redemptive character of the Lord Jesus. Each natural mode of responsibility is embedded in its corresponding mode of Christian response somewhat as a skeleton is embedded in a living body--the natural principle being a

framework which lives only within the organic whole of Christian life.

In this chapter, we consider the natural modes of responsibility corresponding to the first four of the modes of Christian response treated in chapter seventeen. The remainder will be treated in chapter twenty.

Underlying the first mode of Christian response, Seek first the kingdom of God, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not choose apparent goods known to be such. This norm forbids choices to fulfill sentient desires which correspond to no intelligible good except the partial self-integration to be gained by satisfying one's impulse and avoiding frustration. The natural virtue is self-awareness or moral honesty, which prevents one from hiding from oneself precisely what one is choosing and why. The directly opposed vice is self-deception or hypocrisy.

The norm is deepened by faith's teaching that creation is good, that intelligible goods are humanly fulfilling in a way that sentient satisfactions are not, and that the goods of persons made in God's image are rich and complex. The norm is further deepened by the Christian teaching that specifically human goods have a place in the completion and will last in it as merely sentient goods cannot.

The Christian overcomes the attraction of merely apparent goods by desiring divine things. In the fallen world human fulfillment is impossible apart from completion in Christ, and so the norm that one pursue real goods implies that one must pursue them only in subordination to seeking the kingdom. To the Christian virtue of purity of heart or singlemindedness corresponds a specifically Christian defect: worldliness. Worldliness is a disposition to choose intelligible goods without subordinating them to the kingdom, thus to choose them in a way which can provide only incomplete, temporary, and unstable fulfillment--fulfillment ultimately unreal.

Underlying the second mode of Christian response, Pray always, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not be prevented by inertia or laziness from acting for intelligible goods. This norm demands choices by which one will put oneself into action, unrestrained by the sentient reluctance to get moving. The natural virtue is the wholesome ambition of the energetic person; the directly opposed vice is laziness or sloth.

This norm is deepened by faith's teaching that God wills human goods and has the power to help realize them. Christian hope for the realization of goods in the completion in Christ gives the lives of followers of Jesus an urgency and energy otherwise impossible for fallen human persons.

The Christian avoids laziness by being ambitious for the higher things. The recognition that human effort is totally ineffectual unless it results from divine grace transforms the common human norm into the Christian mode of response, which requires us to seek everything in prayer. Ambition is transformed into humility. To this specifically Christian virtue there corresponds the defect of a specifically Christian form of pride: pelagian self-reliance.

Underlying the third mode of Christian response, Fulfill the Father's will rather than one's own, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not make a multitude of unorganized commitments, but live an integrated life.

This norm excludes the tendency to try to pursue all of one's interests without regard for the fact that the cooperation of others will be involved and that they must be protected from disappointments due to conflicts of duty. The natural virtue is the dutifulness of a person whose life is well organized. The opposed vice is the irresponsibility of those who overextend themselves and leave others down.

The norm is deepened by faith's teaching that we are all interdependent members of a human family watched over by divine providence. It is deepened even more by the Christian vision of the mystical body of Christ, which implies the duty of each member to fulfill specific functions for the whole.

The Christian avoids irresponsibility by attending to the one thing necessary and choosing the better part. The recognition that one's personal relationship with the Trinity is most important leads to a single commitment to obey them, to fulfill the vocation to which God calls one. Dutifulness is transformed into dedication to one's God-given vocation. The specifically Christian vice opposed to dedication is the disposition of the Sunday-Christian, who regards the demands of Christian life as one set of duties among others, rather than as a vocation which should embrace and integrate the whole of one's life.

Underlying the fourth Christian mode of response, Keep faithful watch, is the natural mode of responsibility: Persevere courageously. This norm excludes the tendency to desist from acting by an arbitrary choice motivated by fear of obstacles or frustration. The natural virtue is fortitude or strength of character. The directly opposed vice is irresolution.

This norm is deepened by the faith's teaching concerning the lasting importance of human acts. It is deepened further by the specifically Christian teaching that human goods contribute to the growth of the kingdom and are destined to last forever, that commitments made in Christ to others will endure as aspects of one's eternal life in the family of God.

The Christian avoids irresolution by fearing the Lord rather than others. Courage is transformed into faithfulness, for the Christian realizes that only separation from Jesus, not unity with him in suffering, is to be feared. The specifically Christian defect opposed to such faithfulness is false caution--the disposition to settle for a minimal and formalistic fulfillment of one's commitments.

Chapter 20. The Rational Foundation of Christian Life--II

Underlying the fifth mode of Christian response, Surrender everything but the good of the kingdom, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not become a slave to particular goals and habits. This norm excludes the tendency to become addicted to and dependent upon pleasures, possessions, status, and the like. The natural virtue is self-control, a disposition of a person in whom love of intelligible goods overcomes the temptation to become addicted. The directly opposed vice is the disposition to fall into an irrationally narrowed pattern of life, dominated by rigidity and habitual satisfactions. Avarice, lust, gluttony, and drunkenness are aspects of this vice.

The norm is deepened by the light which faith casts upon the human

condition. This light shows that human desires are distorted, that what is normal is not normative. Christian faith adds the assurance that such slavery in principle has been overcome; there is no necessity to remain locked into a pattern of behavior.

The Christian overcomes inordinate attachments by becoming completely attached to the love of God in Jesus. Insofar as one's life is transformed to the new life of the Holy Spirit, the norm is transformed for one who has died and risen with Christ into a surrender of all attachments to goods other than the fullness of Christ. The Christian counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience express this norm. To the virtue of the liberty of God's children there corresponds the peculiarly Christian defect of special attachments.

Underlying the sixth Christian mode of response, Love enemies, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not destroy goods out of hatred. This norm excludes the tendency to seek revenge, to cause damage out of frustration, and so forth. The natural virtue is self-restraint and tolerance in the face of provocation. The directly opposed vice is vindictiveness.

This norm is deepened by faith's teaching that everything is created good, and that evil is only a privation which cannot be directly destroyed. It is further deepened by the specifically Christian teaching that God loves his enemies and undertakes to overcome evil by healing, not by destruction.

The Christian overcomes vindictiveness by focusing hatred on the evils of sin and its consequences, not on sinners or those who seem wicked. Since evil can be overcome only by healing love, the norm is transformed into the demand to love one's enemies. The Christian virtue is meekness; to it corresponds the peculiarly Christian defect of self-protectiveness, which limits love when love demands some risk to one's own security.

Underlying the seventh Christian mode of response, Willingly suffer evil for the sake of good, is the natural mode of responsibility: Do not do evil that good might follow therefrom. This norm excludes the tendency to choose some goods in preference to others as if they were commensurable although intelligibly they are not so, but become so only in terms of one's impulses. The natural virtue is natural piety, by which one respects the sacredness of all the goods which contribute to the fullness of human persons. The vice directly opposed to this is inhumanity, which disposes one to use every means which seems necessary to attain one's ends.

The teaching of faith concerning divine providence deepens the norm. Christian hope for the coming of the kingdom, a hope based on the resurrection of Jesus, further deepens the norm that evil should not be done out of expediency. The fact that one must suffer evil with Jesus or do evil against him shows the Christian the uselessness of utilitarian calculation.

The Christian overcomes the temptation to engage in such calculation by the prudence which takes care not to risk separation from the love of Christ. The inevitable suffering a good person must accept to avoid doing evil can be made into a means of bringing about good. Thus the common norm becomes the law of the cross: Willingly suffer evil in order to share in the work of redemption. To the virtue of self-oblation there corresponds the peculiarly Christian vice of moral minimalism, which avoids generous self-sacrifice.

Finally, underlying the eighth mode of Christian response, Sacrifice self for others, is the natural mode of responsibility: One ought not to treat others as one would not wish to be treated oneself. This norm excludes the tendency to prefer oneself and those to whom one is specially attached when there is no basis for this preference in intelligible goods, which are interpersonally nondiscriminatory. The natural virtue is fairness or moral justice (as distinct from legal justice); the opposed vice is unfairness or preference of persons--moral injustice.

The teaching of faith that human persons are in a common situation as creatures who are fallen and redeemed deepens the natural understanding of fairness. The specifically Christian teaching that humankind is called to adoption in the divine family further deepens this norm.

The Christian overcomes the temptation to be unfair by identifying with Jesus and seeking a fuller self within completion in Christ. Jesus sacrificed himself for us, and we wish to enjoy the benefit of what he does. It would be unfair not to act similarly toward others. To the properly Christian virtue of mercy, which takes the needs of others rather than one's own legitimate claims as the basis for action, there corresponds the peculiarly Christian defect of insisting upon one's rights and looking out for one's own.

None of the preceding Christian modes of response requires anything incompatible with the natural modes of responsibility, although they might seem to do so. The Christian modes of response flesh out and give life to the skeleton of natural morality in the actual condition of humankind. As things are, there is no other way to fulfill the natural modes of responsibility.

It also is important to note that the vices directly opposed to the natural virtues are more radically incompatible with Christian virtue than are the specifically Christian vices. This is because the natural vices exclude not only the fullness but even the skeletal framework of Christian life. Nevertheless, the specifically Christian vices, which are not directly opposed to the natural virtues, are more tempting to Christians. These vices for those who have died with Christ and hope to rise with him in glory do not seem to be vices by merely human standards, the standards of the old man. But in the light of faith, considering the human condition as it really is, these vices are seen for what they really are.

Chapter 21: The Realism of Christian Morality

The most common objection made against Christian moral teaching is that its requirements are unrealistic. This objection can be taken in many ways, some of which will be clarified and dealt with here.

Christian morality will seem unrealistically difficult if its requirements are considered outside Christian faith as a whole, particularly if one who lacks Christian hope imagines himself or herself attempting to fulfill these requirements. Faith teaches that both the power to live a Christian life and the actual living of it results from grace, and that nothing is impossible with God. What weak human persons cannot do by themselves, they can do by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is given those who die with the Lord Jesus and rise to new life with him in baptism. Of course, Christians

know that many obstacles remain, and we shall consider them in part five. These obstacles can be met by following the way of Christ, which we will describe in part six.

Insofar as Christian morality presupposes the natural modes of responsibility, someone might suppose that a Christian is bound always to conform behavior to rational principles. Such a requirement seems unrealistic, since people normally act on impulse in many cases--for example, a married couple might make love without stopping to reflect merely because they are in the mood. The answer to this objection is that moral norms only govern choices and acts shaped or conditioned by choices. Indeliberate acts for sensible goods need not be morally excluded; they can be integrated into a good character. There is a difference between a loving married couple acting spontaneously toward one another in ways conditioned by their marital commitment and other upright choices, the same couple's choosing to act for the sake of mere pleasure when some reason for restraint comes to mind, and their acting spontaneously when they should reflect but fail to do so because of some prior sinful choice.

Sometimes it is argued that it is unrealistic to expect uncompromising fulfillment of the requirements of Christian morality because there are many norms which can make inconsistent demands and thus generate conflicts of duties. The first point in answer to this objection is that most supposed conflicts of duties really are oppositions between moral requirements and nonmoral demands of some sort. The second point is that various norms bind in diverse ways and do not generate conflict. All the natural modes of responsibility are negative, and it always is possible to fulfill all of them simultaneously. Christian modes of response do not specify which particular acts must be done. Genuine conflicts of duty arise not because there are many norms, but because an individual makes commitments which happen to demand contingently incompatible performances--for example, a person who is both a parent and an employee is needed both at home and at work simultaneously. If one has not been irresponsible in making the commitments which generate such a conflict, one is morally responsible for doing only what one can to fulfill all of one's duties. No one is held to the impossible.

Sometimes it is suggested that it is unrealistic to exclude intentional evil-doing, because one can hardly do anything whatever without bringing about some evil. Also in many cases doing good lends aid to another who is doing evil. This objection is answered by distinguishing between those evil consequences to which one determines oneself in one's choice and those which one foresees but only accepts as side effects incidentally brought about by one's actions. God foresees and accepts the evils of sin and death as side-effects in his providential plan, but his holy will in no way is set upon them; he sustains the evil of sin in sustaining the sinner in existence, but only because he will not annihilate what remains of good even in his worst enemy. Similarly, a human person need not violate any mode of responsibility by foreseeing and accepting certain results which it would be wrong to intend or choose. Likewise, while it always is wrong to choose to help another person to do wrong, it need not be wrong to choose to do good knowing

one's own behavior will incidentally facilitate the wrongdoing of another. However, if one chooses to bring about evil through another's performance, one is responsible for doing it. Moreover, although accepting evil is not doing it, one may not accept evil or incidentally facilitate another's wrongdoing if some mode of responsibility such as fairness or some Christian mode of response such as mercy is thereby violated.

Lastly, it might be objected that the unitary character of Christian morality--for example, its reduction of the whole of morality to following Jesus--is incompatible with the common moral intuition of upright people that morality is very complex, for example, that some immoral acts are worse than others and some morally good acts are better than others. But Christian morality need not eliminate or deny such complexity. For instance, there are many ways in which one can fail to follow Christ, some more radical than others. The natural modes of responsibility which are a rational skeleton for Christian moral norms provide a differentiated framework for Christian responsibilities. If one considers how each of the modes of responsibility relates to self-determination, one can see how, for instance, wrong choices can be more or less seriously wrong. It is one thing to care about the goods of persons insufficiently (the defect of those who are enslaved by desires or who are irresolute), another thing not to care about them (the defect of those who are lazy), another to care about them only in certain arbitrarily selected cases (the defect of those who are hypocritical, irresponsible, or unfair), and another to be ready to destroy the good either for the sake of an ulterior end or out of hatred (the defect of those who are inhumane or vindictive).

Chapter 22: The Variety of Specific Norms of Christian Life

Part of the complexity of moral life is that there are specific norms of many diverse kinds.

Some specific norms of Christian life pertain to all Christians; these will be considered in volume two. They include the responsibilities which fall under the theological virtues and the duties of social justice. Some specific norms pertain to some Christians but not to all, on the basis of the different roles they have in the Church and their diverse relationships to one another as members of the body of Christ. These include the responsibilities to other members of the Church of bishops, priests, laypersons, and so on. These will be considered in volume four. Some specific norms pertain to some Christians but not to others on the basis of other differences among them. For example, there are the duties of parents and children, of persons in diverse professions, and so on. These will be considered in volume three.

There are four kinds of specific norms of Christian life which pertain to all Christians. First, some pertain to all human persons and therefore to all Christians insofar as they are human persons. These norms can be understood by relating the natural modes of responsibility to the various basic human goods. Second, some norms pertain to all Christians insofar as they are members of a redemptive community. These norms spell out the

implications of the modes of Christian response and demand that one do what is appropriate for one's personal following of Christ, but they do not indicate the concrete acts required by general rules. Examples of such norms are the counsels. Third, some specific norms of Christian life pertain to all Christians as members of the family of God, who share in divine life and are called to maturity in it. These norms demand sacramental acts and the integration of one's life with the sacraments. Fourth, some specific norms of Christian life pertain to Catholic Christians as self-conscious members of the visible Church. These are the precepts of the Church which apply to all; they direct the members of the Church to unity in their life and worship. The goods to which these precepts are directed must be safeguarded unconditionally by action in accord with the spirit of the precept.

Norms of Christian life which apply to some but not to all Christians can be fully as serious as those which apply to all. The responsibilities of persons are differentiated in various ways.

Not all individuals are at the same stage of development; thus not all can have the same responsibilities. For example, children cannot have all the moral responsibilities of adults. The range of some norms also is restricted by individual differences in ability and opportunity.

The limitations of a culture also can limit the relevance of some norms. The very possibility of certain kinds of acts depends upon cultural presuppositions.

Differences of natural roles, such as the roles of parent and child, also differentiate responsibilities. The acts of one person can create a responsibility in another--for example, a person treated kindly has a duty of gratitude. One's own acts also can create responsibilities--for example, one who has treated another unjustly has a duty of restitution. Many differences in duties arise from one's personal commitments. One who makes a community-forming or community-joining commitment accepts a certain role with special responsibilities.

Christians can differ from each other in their responsibilities in all the preceding ways. Moreover, they differ in the gifts God chooses to give. Each Christian has the duty to respond to the grace he or she is given. The required response is certain if one does not offer resistance by choices immoral on other grounds. In this sense, the yoke of Jesus is sweet and his burden light.

In respect to what pertains to the sacraments and to canon law, one can easily see how and why different persons have different responsibilities. Partly individual conditions and partly different roles in the Church make different specific norms relevant to diverse individuals.

PART V: OBSTACLES TO FULL LIFE IN CHRIST

Chapter 23: Redemption: Gift and Task

The question to be examined in this part is: What are the obstacles to be overcome for the kingdom of God to come, for the redemption and sanctification of each Christian to be completed? In the present chapter we consider two prior questions. First: Why does God bring about his purpose gradually?

Second: What is there about human nature and the human condition which makes it possible that redemption and sanctification is already given yet still remains to be completed--that the gift also can be a task?

To understand why God is bringing about his saving purpose gradually, it is worth considering that he could have redeemed and glorified humankind without actions of our own, as he does in the case of the infant who is baptized and dies. But human choices and acts require the progression of human life and history, and God wills to enrich creation and the completion by causing human choices and by bringing about certain results by means of human persons acting in cooperation with his grace. Thus, God's reason for the gradualness of the redemption is that history is necessary for the purpose he has in view: completion in Christ, including the persons the saints are by their own acts--for example, including Mary's fiat--none of which would be possible without gradualness.

As to the second question, the reason why redemption and divine glory can be complete in the Lord Jesus, from the moment of his resurrection, without at once extending to the whole world is that the world to be redeemed includes a great deal of complexity and multiplicity. What is perfect in Jesus must be spread to other times and places, to all aspects of persons, to the subpersonal world. Only when everything either is redeemed from evil or triumphantly subdued by the love which suffers evil can all creation be united at the second coming of Christ in the glory of his resurrection.

Within a person who has charity and faith there can be choices incompatible with these principles of holiness. Many actions within a person are not well integrated; some are at odds with a person's fundamental dispositions. Not all acts are done with adequate deliberation and choice, and not everything voluntary is directly chosen. Thus the moral self is very complex.

One's thinking need not be completely consistent; there is room for cognitive dissonance. Thinking and decision both depend upon experience and emotion; such sentient content can be imperfectly integrated with a Christian's faith and love. And human life is not simply deliberation and choice; one's proposals and commitments must be executed in words and deeds. These require material media which can be more or less unsuited to the purposes of faith and love. Cultural entities in turn affect one's experiences and emotions, with further possibilities of dissonance.

Since human individuals are not autonomous and since Christianity is concerned with the whole of humankind, the complexity in human persons has relevant social as well as individual aspects. Hence, in morally significant actions, in cognition, in the sentient conditions, and in the cultural media of Christian life there is a complexity arising from the involvement of persons in each other's lives, the involvement of Christians in a non-believing world, the immersion of each generation in the whole process of salvation history.

No Christian's redemption and sanctification is in every way complete in this life, then, for each person's life is complex and every individual depends upon others whose redemption is in process. Only in a life like that which Mary now lives with Jesus can Christian life be perfect.

Chapter 24: Sin in General, Original Sin, and Personal Sins

Complexity and undevelopment are not sin; Jesus was subject to these conditions but subject to sin only as a victim of it. Angelic life does not involve complexity, development, and illness as ours does, but angels can sin.

Basically sins are immoral acts. Immoral acts are possible for created persons because they have self-determination. Intelligence and will open them to participations in goodness without determining their actions, and so they can determine themselves to be more limited than they need to be by arbitrarily closing this openness. Such self-closure is not altogether reasonable for human persons, but it is not simply irrational--like the nonresponsible behavior of an animal or insane person. Sin does respond to some aspects of one's nature, and so one can intelligently and freely commit it.

Sin adds to the notion of immoral action the idea of alienation from God and offense against him. Alienation from infinite goodness already is implicit in arbitrary self-limitation. But the character of sin becomes fully explicit to the extent that an unnecessarily limited self-fulfillment is consciously accepted in violation of a personal and intimate relationship with God. To sin is not only to act immorally, but to act impiously, irreligiously.

Sin is a violation of the law of God. But "law" here must not be misunderstood. God's law expresses his wisdom; it is truthful guidance. God does not make anything sinful by arbitrary fiat. He tells us what truly is for our own good, what is necessary if we are to leave ourselves open to share fully in his life. God is more a law-giver than a law-maker.

Human societies generally regard some acts as worthy of death or banishment--permanent exclusion from the society. So also the chosen people of God. The experience of their communication with God and of his holiness made clear to the Jews that prior to and apart from their community, in which they enjoyed God's favor, humankind as a whole was alienated and worthy of death.

We discussed certain aspects of original sin in chapter six. The essence of it is that in being conceived and born as members of the human family we are not members of the family of God. It follows that we are subject to death and to various disabilities which block us from using our power of free choice even to live a fully satisfying human life. Genesis explains this situation by reference to origins, indicating the role of the devil, of human free choice, and of human solidarity. Genesis also describes how sin spreads, so that the complexity and multiplicity of the human individual and humankind becomes division and disharmony.

Each human individual also can abuse the power of free choice and preclude personal friendship with God. Such personal sins are not to be contrasted with original sin as if personal sins were events while original sin is a state. Original sin is a state of one's human condition, one we find ourselves in with no choice. Personal sins also are states of one's character, but personal sins are self-determined states.

It is not easy to distinguish among the effects of original sin, of the personal sins of others upon oneself, and of one's own sins. Original sin leads to death, to concupiscense, and to detriment to intellect and will. Subsequent sins worsen the human condition generally.

Chapter 25: Mortal Sin and Fundamental Option

Original sin is an obstacle overcome by baptism. But within Christian life once begun, the most serious obstacle to redemption and sanctification is mortal sin. Not all immoral acts are equally sinful, because there are diverse modes of responsibility, different sorts of voluntariness, and, most important, different ways in which immoral acts relate to the fundamental commitments which organize Christian life. Since all immoral acts involve self-limitation in respect to some human good, they all imply self-closing against God's infinite goodness in which human goods participate. But not all immoral acts destroy friendship with God. For this, the implicit defect in love of God's goodness must be present together with something further.

The basic choices which determine one's Christian life are those to believe, to hope in Christ, and to live in unity with his redemptive act. These choices have specific features. Only immoral acts somehow incompatible with these basic acts of Christian life separate a Christian from the love of God. Other immoral acts are venial sins.

Any act which violates the basic commitments of Christian life involves a different fundamental option, but some such options are more totally destructive of the Christian life than others. The most radical options are those not only incompatible with living in union with the redemptive act but even incompatible with continuing to believe. Options which are less radical are comparatively nonfundamental, since one can still recognize one's sinfulness and seek forgiveness. But all mortal sins are fundamental insofar as they separate one from God's love.

A very young child does not make morally significant choices, but is in a premoral sense obedient or naughty. Initial moral choices are not related to Christian faith and love. But the time comes when the child can make a disobedient choice incompatible with the basic choices of Christian life. Such a radical act of disobedience would be present in a free determination to reject obedience altogether and to live willfully insofar as possible. This choice would be incompatible with the Christian commitment which involves willingness to obey the authority of God. Early and frequent practice of the sacrament of reconciliation with confession of particular sins of disobedience can protect children against a radical, mortal sin of disobedience. The possible decision to reject obedience--classically the sin of "pride"--always remains the primary temptation to mortal sin.

In addition to the sin of pride, there are certain kinds of acts recognized within the community of faith as always incompatible with living a Christian life. These acts are of various kinds, and an act of any of these kinds can be a mortal sin--a fundamental option against one's Christian option.

The adolescent faces sexual and other temptations which are sensed or known to be a threat to personal integration with a basic commitment to live in unity with the redemptive act. Acts of various kinds to which one's passions prompt are excluded by received moral teachings. At least part of the reason for this is that a life lived in response to one's passions and desires cannot be a life integrated with any demanding basic commitment. From puberty on it is possible to fall through weakness to such temptations without

changing one's fundamental option. (Sin of weakness will be discussed at length in chapter twenty-nine.) But to surrender to one's passions and give up the struggle against this sort of temptation always is to decide not to integrate one's life with the redemptive act. Such a policy of surrender always is a mortal sin.

From adolescence on, one can be tempted to do something seriously harmful to another. The harmfulness of the act makes clear the incompatibility between choosing it and maintaining a commitment to live in harmony with the redemptive act. Still, one can choose to harm another in order to solve some problem, with the presumptuous expectation that once the problem is solved one will return to faithfulness. Such a fundamental option infringes not only charity but also hope. The presumption nevertheless might be fulfilled by genuine repentance.

Again, one can be tempted to accept a lasting commitment recognized as incompatible with living a Christian life--for example, to engage in a sinful profession or to enter a bad marriage. Such a choice infringes hope in an even more drastic way, because it cannot be made without despair. One whose whole life is accepted in separation from Christ can no longer look forward in joyful hope to his coming.

Finally, knowing that one is in mortal sin, one can be tempted to seek escape from one's sense of guilt by seeking to extinguish the light of faith rather than by seeking the mercy of God. This is the most radical sort of mortal sin--sin against the Holy Spirit--and the most unqualified fundamental option against the principles of Christian living. Christians without faith are like prodigal children with amnesia; they can no longer set out for home because they do not know who they are.

Chapter 26: Grave Matter, Light Matter, and Venial Sin

To clarify the concept of grave matter, it helps to start from the fact that the community of faith began as the polity of the chosen people of Israel. The members of the society enjoyed God's friendship through their membership in the community, and so they realized they could not live the life of faith cut off from the community. Consequently, those kinds of acts which merit death or banishment from any human society and which were considered serious crimes in Israel were also recognized as grave sins by the Jews. No society can permit the unauthorized killing of its own innocent members and other seriously destructive acts; in a society which realized itself to be God's people, such crimes became death-deserving sins.

Living in the light of faith, the chosen people also recognized that certain acts would be disruptive of their society as a religious community although similar acts would have been tolerated in most societies. In Israel idolatry, for example, could only be regarded as a deadly sin. Also, experience shows that those who engage in certain practices tend to lose faith in an invisible God who demands loyalty to ideal standards. For example, those who engage in unrestricted sexual enjoyment tend either to regard immaterial realities as unreal or to despise material realities as evil. Moreover, in the light of faith experience showed that certain acts, including some not

expressed in outward behavior, lead to violations of one's responsibilities toward others. For example, coveting the wife or the goods of another of itself tends to interfere with the fulfillment of responsibilities. In most societies, such acts could not be crimes, for there would be no way to detect and punish them. In Israel, however, such secret acts were able to be sins, since the Lord reads the heart.

As we saw in chapters nineteen and twenty, the natural modes of responsibility are deepened in the light of faith, especially in the light of Christian faith. This deepening leads to increasing insight into the evil of many antisocial acts. Thus, for example, Jewish and especially Christian morality developed increasingly universal and strict norms in defense of innocent human life, norms excluding the destruction of incipient life and interference in the generative process to impede the handing on of new life.

Yet there remains a residue of immoral acts which are not recognized as incompatible with one's continuing membership in the people of God, the body of Christ. This point is especially obvious in respect to modes of responsibility whose violation hardly involves any harm or any self-determination against a human good. For example, to fail to keep in shape through laziness would be immoral, but an act of this sort does not seem incompatible with the basic commitments of Christian life. Such acts which are not recognized by the community of faith as somehow at odds with good standing and full participation in the life of the people of God do not involve grave matter.

There also are affirmative responsibilities which are not clear-cut duties, because they are not required by one's role in any community. Among such responsibilities, for example, is that to share one's possessions with those in greater need. It certainly is possible that one's refusal to fulfill such responsibilities can involve self-determination incompatible with the basic commitments of Christian life: "When I was hungry. . .." Yet it is possible in particular instances that failure to fulfill such responsibilities does not involve such ill will. Thus the omission to do this sort of duty is not grave matter.

In the actions of a society of which one is a member, there can be a personal sin which is not excluded by the difference between the evil one does and that which one merely brings about. Sharing the wrongdoing of one's society can be a grave matter. But where the society is involved in evil in which one takes no personal part, then one's responsibilities in respect to the evil are affirmative ones, yet are not clear-cut duties because they do not pertain to one's role. One's involvement is not grave matter.

Something not in itself grave matter can be chosen with malicious intent so that the act is more seriously evil than it has to be. Similarly, there are cases in which one freely chooses to do what is potentially a mortal sin, yet the sin is lessened by subjective factors. Either one's choice is made without sufficient reflection or without full consent. In either case, there is an aspect of diminished freedom, which we will consider in chapter twenty-nine in our discussion of sins of weakness.

The sins of others can be an obstacle to the Christian who wishes to help in their redemption. One must not judge others. Although it is possible to

discern the objective sinfulness in the acts of others and to know from their own account that some of their acts formally involve what Christians recognize to be grave matter, still one cannot know how far the free choices of others diverge from what they think their own fundamental commitments ought to be. What one's basic commitments are is by no means a matter of moral indifference, but it is a matter about which individuals can err with little personal fault.

Chapter 27: False and Inadequately Formed Conscience

Even Jesus had to think what to do and was not always altogether inclined to do what he judged to be his Father's will. Lack of perfect integration is not necessarily the result of sin. But natural lack of integration which is corrupted by sin introduces conflict into one's moral personality. One's real self and one's ideal self are at odds. A judgment in accord with one's ideal self is what is usually called "conscience." Conscience warns, condemns, and otherwise calls one's real self to respond to the ideal. Thus the judgment of conscience naturally seems to be alien from and above oneself. The believer thinks of conscience as the "voice of God."

There are various ways in which people judge what to do. They might use as a standard feelings, or intuitions, or promptings of an inner "spirit," or consistency, or the rational implications of goals which are taken to be naturally given, or which reflect one's actual desires, or which one has chosen as one's project of self-realization. All of these standards can express one's sinful self; if this were not so, there would be nothing problematic about the formation of conscience. All conscience which is not judgment in conformity with the mind of the Lord Jesus is an obstacle to life in union with him. Following one's heart, for instance, will be sound only to the extent that one's heart is united with the heart of Jesus.

Yet a personal moral judgment of conscience is indispensable, for one cannot live the truth without identifying with it, and this identification requires particularization: the application of the requirements of faith to one's own life. The teaching of the Church articulates the implications of faith to us; other sources may be used only to the extent that they amplify and in no way conflict with the requirements of faith.

If one is doubtful about what is right and there is no time for inquiry, one should ask oneself what Jesus would wish, pray for light, and decide. If there is time for inquiry, one must seek what the Church's teaching indicates and judge in conformity with it. In general, the faithful can rely upon the advice of priests and teachers who are loyal to the Church's teaching on matters often disputed, such as the morality of contraception.

Priests and teachers themselves can resort to the approved authors of moral manuals published until 1963. If no definite and relevant teaching of the Church is found to which one can conform one's judgment of conscience, one can consider permissible what the Church has not excluded. In this sense, a solidly probable opinion of an approved author can be followed safely.

A perplexed conscience is a type of doubtful conscience, when the doubt arises from apparently incompatible demands of conscience. Perplexity is to

be resolved in the same ways as other doubt. Seeming conflicts of duties are an important class of perplexities. Most such conflicts arise because authoritative status is given to some demand which is not in conformity with the mind of Christ.

One's conscience can be without doubt and yet be troubled. A correct conscience can be troubled by dissonant factors--for example, by the inappropriate feelings of anxiety and guilt of a scrupulous person. An erroneous and nondoubting conscience also can be troubled by a residue of one's better self. If one's conscience is troubled and erroneous, certitude cannot be maintained unless a process of avoidance and rationalization is carried on.

A confident and untroubled conscience also can be in error. This can occur through one's own fault and be due to an error of which one is aware and which one can correct--the error is culpable and vincible. The error also can be culpable and invincible, if one has blinded oneself through avoidance and rationalization to such an extent that one can no longer see one's sinfulness. The latter situation usually comes about only with the help of others, such as bad spiritual or psychological counselors.

A confident and untroubled conscience also can be in error without one's personal fault. This can occur through lack of development of insight, as when many Christians considered slavery acceptable. It also can occur through inadequate instruction, defect of intelligence, and the like.

Because Christian lives are important for their positive contribution to the growth of the kingdom, all erroneous conscience, even when sinless, is a serious obstacle. It is vital that one follow one's sincere conscience, but it also is important that one's conscience be objectively correct.

Chapter 28: Consequences of Sin: Death and Other Perversities

Not only one's personal moral judgment, but other cognitional acts are distorted by sin. Ideology is social rationalization. Much of what passes as common sense and science is ideological. Many sorts of ignorance and error are due to sophistic thinking and to failure to think as one should. Material sins and formal venial sins which affect thinking have very serious results in erroneous judgments in every field of knowledge.

Death results from original sin. Fallen humankind is not immune to death as humankind would have been had original sin not been committed. Many diseases and accidents and much pain and suffering result from personal sins, including sins of social injustice which involve whole communities.

God created bodily persons--humans in addition to angels--for the sake of the ways in which bodily persons can be like him that nonbodily persons cannot, for example, by marriage and parenthood, which reflect the communion of persons in the Trinity. The natural world was created for the sake of bodily persons. The potentiality for death is inseparable from organic life, but it was fitting that human persons be given immunity from death, since death in no way contributes to the goods for which they were created. This immunity need not be thought of as involving immunity from natural conditions, and it would not have involved endless earthly existence. Perhaps in the absence of sin, human persons would undergo a deathless transition from

earthly life to heavenly glory. In any case, immunity from death was lost by original sin with the loss of divine friendship.

If human persons were immune from death, the greatest source of anxiety would be removed from emotional life. Pain would be experienced very differently and so would pleasure, which would be less attractive inasmuch as it would not be pressed into service to remedy hatred, fear, and anger. When passions are distorted by fear of death, natural emotional reactions become concupiscence. This effect of sin not only alters individual life but also pervades all social relationships.

Concupiscence also affects perception and the formation of experience. Everything is seen through anxious eyes or with an eye to pleasure. Thus it is hard to understand things as they are, especially things which have practical bearings. Common sense is biased; the intellect is less able to direct action as it ought to be directed.

Language and products also are affected by sin. Language must serve not only as a medium of communication but also as a medium of concealment and deception. Products are affected by social injustice, which leads to the alienation of labor. The works of human hands also are perverted because of perverse desires, wrong attitudes, and artificial needs. It is impossible to distinguish the effects of original sin and of personal sin upon culture.

Everything which is disordered in the sociocultural world, everything perverse in language and products, constantly affects every person by altering experience and playing upon emotion. Relationships among persons and integration within each person are damaged by consequent misunderstandings and illusions, by inappropriate feelings and habits of behavior, and so on.

All these perversities are obstacles to the realization of human goods and to the building of genuine human community. In this way they are obstacles to growth of the kingdom toward completion in Christ.

Chapter 29: Sin of Weakness

As has been explained, sin not only affects action and character but skews every aspect of everything human. Crooked thinking, bodily degeneracy, and slip-shodness in speech and in work are typical results of sin outside the moral domain itself. It also happens that what is not in itself morally good or bad but is damaged by sin can limit personal freedom and so shape action with an indirect perversity. If this action also is directly sinful, it will be less seriously so than it otherwise would be insofar as part of its perversity is indirect; the sinful act expresses limited freedom. The sin of choosing such an action is a sin of weakness.

Sin of weakness is very important because such sin is a very common obstacle to full life in Christ. Among sins of weakness, those are especially important which would be mortal sins but for the effects of indirect perversity in limiting freedom and shaping the personally sinful act. Christians who commit such sins sometimes suffer greatly in their effort to cooperate with the Lord Jesus in the delicate work of their own redemption.

The concept of "sin of weakness" involves a paradox. Is there a free, self-determined act or not? If there is, how can it be weak? If not, how

can the act be a personal sin? Perhaps there are cases in which people deliberately but with no choice do an act which would be a sin if it were done by choice. This sort of act is especially likely in the immature and the psychologically disturbed. It also is easily understood in a person who is the victim of an immoral situation--for example, a poor child trained to steal. Such acts which occur wholly without choice are not typical sins of weakness. They can be called "sins" only analogously.

Typically, sins of weakness involve the following factors. First, the sinner acts in an abnormal state of mind, one affected by indirect perversity. Concupiscence is an important instance, but not the only instance, of indirect perversity. Second, the behavior is voluntary and involves at least at some stage a choice or omission. Third, in a normal state of mind the person would have a choice precisely with respect to the wrongful performance and would not choose to do it. Fourth, the sinner in a normal state of mind considers the action wrong and imputable, and so recognizes guilt for it and is remorseful.

There are several kinds of cases which meet these conditions, and so there are various types of sin of weakness.

First, sometimes a proposal is adopted by choice to do something in fact wrongful, but the proposal is adopted without attention to factors which make the act as seriously wrong as it is. To the extent that the lack of sufficient reflection is the fault, not of the sinner, but of the abnormal state of mind, the sin will be one of weakness.

Second, there are cases in which a person's failing to make certain choices or making some prior wrong choices leads to the performance of behavior which would be a sin if it executed a proposal adopted by choice, but the performance is done spontaneously without <u>itself</u> being chosen. (This is at least part of what was traditionally considered lack of full consent.)

Third, there are cases similar to the second type, except that the performance executes a choice, but not the same choice the sinner would have made in a normal state of mind. Also, the choice which is actually made is not as immoral as the normal one would be. (Those sinning in this kind of case also are said to act without "full consent of the will.") Cases like this are very common; much of the addictive behavior of sins of "bad habits" fits here.

Fourth, there are cases in which a sinful choice is made, but the conditions in which it is made are such that the alternatives are not the ones a person normally must consider. This type of sin of weakness does not mitigate guilt for the act, but does lessen the stability of the sin.

In general, how serious a sin of weakness is depends upon the seriousness of the actual choices and omissions which lead up to the sinful type of behavior. One cannot maintain that no sin of weakness can be a mortal sin. A discontinuation of the struggle against weakness cannot be chosen without grave sin if the matter is grave matter. But those who tenaciously persist in a struggle against sins of weakness and who do not clearly make any gravely sinful choice when they fall into such sins ought not to presume that they are sinning gravely despite the fact that what they do would be a grave sin if it executed a proposal adopted by a choice made in a normal state of mind. Even when not grave, sins of weakness are a serious obstacle to life in Christ.

PART VI: CHRIST'S WAY TO COMPLETION IN HIM

Chapter 30: Prayer and Sacramental Acts

All of Christian life is a process of communication, a conversation, with God. This conversation shapes the interpersonal relationship he establishes with us. God reveals himself, most perfectly in the words and deeds of Jesus, in his whole life. Our part is to listen to God, to hear and receive what he reveals, to keep his truth in faith, and to respond to him. Our part of the conversation, especially insofar as it is focused by cognitional acts, is prayer.

We must distinguish between acts of the Church as such and acts of members (including officials) of the Church. Both the Church as such and members acting individually and in groups hear God's revelation and respond to it. Liturgy is the prayer of the Church as such. The Holy Mass is the central liturgical act. The other sacraments and the divine office also belong to the prayer of the Church. Everyone who participates in liturgical prayer does so in an official capacity and so should perform what the Church directs.

A received definition of sacrament of the New Law is: A sacrament is an outward sign instituted by Christ to confer grace. This definition summarizes solemn teaching of the Church. It can be explained in the present context in a way relevant to the concerns of moral theology.

The sacraments are significant actions. As explained in part two, human actions are complex realities. Insofar as they are human actions, the sacraments are primarily one and the same human act: the basic redemptive commitment of the Lord Jesus. This self-determining commitment organizes his whole human life, as we saw in chapter eight. All of his particular behavior expressed it. The various sacraments are practices by which this same commitment is diversely performed and effectively instantiated at various times and places. Because the redemptive act redeems fallen persons, the sacraments are designed to effect this redemption in the various respects in which fallen persons need to be redeemed and sanctified.

Since Pentecost the outward performance of the redemptive commitment which is executed in the sacraments is by means of a human person, the minister, acting as the emissary of Christ. This agency of the minister makes the sacraments be acts not only of God and of Jesus but of the Church. The sacraments are essentially prayer because the redemptive commitment is essentially a prayer of Jesus to the Father, submitting to him in obedience and seeking from his mercy the reconciliation and glorification of humankind.

The valid performance of the sacraments effects redemption actively, but since redemption is an interpersonal relationship, valid reception of a sacrament requires at least the consent of a recipient capable of consent. The effective reception of the sacrament is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit; the human cooperation of the recipient with the sacrament is effective only insofar as this cooperation is itself the result of grace.

One can imagine God bringing about redemption and sanctification without the sacraments. But in this case, the human acts of the minister and recipient would be unnecessary; the work of redemption would not occur visibly as

it does; the sacramental acts would not be available as principles by which other human acts making up a Christian's life can be organized and integrated into the redemptive act of Christ. As God has ordained, the sacraments are vital operations of the Church by which it forms and unfolds its own life as the extended family of God visibly living in the world and in history. By the medium of the sacraments, the whole human life of a Christian can be grafted into the life of Christ.

Chapter 31: Conversion and Baptism

Basic conversion not only is altogether the work of God, but its positive reality can be exclusively the work of God and of persons other than the one converted. Those whose whole existence is marked by alienation from God, due to original sin and perhaps due to personal sin as well, are transformed into friends and intimates, members of God's extended family. Since the one who is converted need not contribute anything positive to this transformation, infants can be converted in baptism.

In those who are capable of taking a conscious part in their own conversion, God brings about this transformation in a way which respects and uses their own free human acts. God solicits to repent--that is, to desist from resisting his transforming act--those who have endorsed alienation from him by their personal sins. This divine solicitation has two chief aspects. First, God has made the human heart for himself, so that the sinner's condition is one of disturbance and conflict: the restless heart. Second, the revelation of God's love in Jesus is communicated by the preaching of the Gospel's message, which holds out hope of liberation from sin and its effects.

God effects the conversion of members of fallen humankind by the redemptive act of the Lord Jesus. The redemptive act brings about this primary effect in the sacrament of baptism, in which fallen human persons are united with the death of Christ and given a pledge of rising with him in glory. In administering this sacrament, the Church is the emissary of Christ acting as God's agency of adoption. The baptized are removed from the body of fallen humankind and given new life in the body of Christ.

No one is saved without baptism, without Church membership. Because Jesus personally formed the Church at the beginning, the initial members--including the apostles sent to baptize others--did not require sacramental baptism. The sending of the apostles into the world to preach and baptize all who believe and repent truly begins the baptism of all who do not make a personal commitment which is an obstacle to their receiving the baptismal grace. Still, the completion of the sacramental rite is important in order that those who are converted might be conscious of their new status and might be able to cooperate in the work of their own redemption and sanctification as intelligent and committed members of the Church.

The preaching of the Gospel which calls to repentance--evangelization in the strict sense--properly precedes baptism and seeks informed consent to the transformation God works. The teaching which forms Christian life, catechesis, presupposes baptism and a living faith. The incipient faith and hope required of adults who consent to be baptized need not be motivated by

charity. Baptism itself confers, together with divine life by adoption, the love of God and the perfectly Christian and living virtues of faith and hope.

The love of God revealed in the redemptive act of Jesus, with which one is united in baptism, overcomes the alienation from God which is sin. Only at this point is one a Christian, a new person freshly born from the womb of the Church. Therefore, only at this point can Christian moral life in the true sense begin. Other divine gifts provide all of the means necessary for one to overcome every obstacle to full sharing in the glory of completion in Christ.

The body of fallen humankind and this world is somehow mysteriously subject to the power of the devil. Baptism overcomes this power in principle and liberates the baptized from Satan. Yet faithfulness to the baptismal commitment is required to maintain liberty; a more than human power of evil comes into play in the world when the baptismal commitment is betrayed.

If anyone persists in resisting the converting grace of baptism, such a person's permanent condition will be alienation from God, exclusion from the eternal life of his kingdom. This exclusion is not a punishment arbitrarily imposed, but is an inevitable consequence of the reality and intrinsic permanence of the self-determination of a human free choice.

Those who have been baptized but who betray their commitment by mortal sin likewise can lose forever their share in divine life. However, until death they remain members of the Church, adopted although prodigal children of God, and therefore beneficiaries of divine mercy in ways in which they would not be had they not undergone the transformation of baptism.

Chapter 32: Reconciliation, Confirmation, Holy Communion, and Anointing

Baptism makes one be a Christian and so it provides the indispensable condition for one to live as a Christian. The sacraments of reconciliation, confirmation, holy communion, and anointing of the sick presuppose recipients who are already Christians. The acts of receiving these sacraments pertain to Christian moral life, and these acts should serve as organizing principles for the remainder of one's Christian life.

The four sacraments differ from one another. The sacrament of reconciliation overcomes sin within Christian life; it reconciles prodigal children with their Father, makes peace among members of the Church, and heals the conflict within the sinner's own heart. The sacrament of confirmation overcomes ignorance and error, makes faith permeate the conscience and life of the Christian, and dedicates this life to be a profession of faith before the world. The sacrament of holy communion overcomes social and cultural disruption, gathers the many members of the Church into the one body of Christ, and sanctifies each member in his or her personal work which contributes to the full life of the whole. The sacrament of the anointing of the sick overcomes the disruption in the Christian's sentient nature; it makes the process of illness and death into a surrender of mortal life for the definitive unity with the death of Jesus which leads to a share in his glory.

The sacrament of reconciliation presupposes contrition and a purpose of amendment; thus the sacrament is not primarily and directly concerned with

moral rectification--one who is not upright is not contrite and determined to *change*. Nevertheless, by demanding repentance as a precondition, the sacrament causes it. The sacrament, by the absolution of the authorized minister applying the redemptive act of Christ to the Christian sinner, transforms repentance (which perhaps only involves imperfect contrition) into a new and closer intimacy with God. The sacrament also makes peace between sinful members of the Church and the Church which has been wounded by their sins. The regular preparation for and worthy reception of the sacrament of reconciliation gradually overcomes inconsistencies in the moral life and character of the Christian. This overcoming of inconsistency is essential in the case of mortal sin--which is an altogether abnormal (even if not unusual) situation in the life of a Christian. It is extremely important in the case of venial sin, which is not an abnormal situation. The sacrament of reconciliation demands of the recipient appropriate penitential acts. It also integrates all subsequent good acts, which become works of reparation. Because of the unity of the Church, the penitential value of Christian life is shared, as the discipline of indulgences makes clear.

When the sacrament of confirmation is received, as it normally is, by a person of sufficient maturity, it presupposes that the recipient has made an explicit act of faith and that this faith has been nurtured by catechesis in the things Christ has commanded. By the sacrament one is called to shape all of one's thinking and life in accord with faith and is appointed to profess the faith before others, and thus to help in the work of handing on the faith. Because one is appointed in this sacrament to share in the apostolate, it is administered by the bishop or one specially designated. The specific role to which one is appointed in confirmation must be worked out by each Christian. This specification is one's vocation: the whole set of roles and commitments God wishes one to fulfill as one's personal contribution to the carrying out of the redemptive and sanctifying work of the Church. Because confirmation appoints one to share in the work of sanctification, which is the work of the Holy Spirit, one in a special way receives the Holy Spirit and his gifts through this sacrament.

The sacrament of holy communion presupposes the multitude of members of the Church and that they are already living morally upright lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. The sacrament gathers this multitude into a unity and thus knits together the body of Christ. Members of the Church consciously contribute their upright lives to the offering of Christ which the Church makes together with him to the Father. By incorporation with Christ, the human lives of his members are assimilated into the growth of the kingdom toward completion in him. Receiving the living body and blood of the glorified Jesus, each member receives also a unique share in his one and only life. Thus the sacrament realizes concretely the unity in diversity of the divine love which constitutes the extended family of God. The nurturing of community by the sacrament of holy communion leads to mutual help, and encourages members of the Church to bear one another's burdens for the sake of the common life they share in Christ. The use of language and cultural products in the liturgy enables the Church to purify and redeem the domain of culture.

The sacrament of the anointing of the sick transforms the suffering and dying of Christians into a process of surrender with Jesus in the definitive act of his redemptive life. Preparation for this sacrament extends through the whole life of the Christian; it demands the progressive surrender of existence in this world, including even the capacity to deliberate and freely act. This sacrament removes the terror of death from the life of a Christian; it thus mitigates the consequences of sin which result from consciousness of one's mortality. The words pertaining to the sacrament take the form of a prayer; the Church extends itself and applies the redemptive work of Jesus beyond its jurisdictional boundaries of earthly life.

By these four sacraments all of the morally significant acts of the life of a Christian can be organized into a single Christian life having four aspects: a life of penance, of apostleship, of building up the body of Christ, of willing undergoing of evil in union with the redemptive act of the Lord.

Chapter 33: Training in the Christian Life

The life of every Christian requires asceticism. "Asceticism" means practice, exercise, drill, and training. To live well as a Christian requires God's grace which provides both the power and the act. With God's grace the impossible is possible, yet it remains demanding and difficult. One must train and practice in order to be able to meet the demands of Christian life.

Because everything does depend upon grace, the first principle of asceticism is prayer, in which everything is sought and in which it is received.

The ascetical aspect of Christian life is especially concerned with the individual's redemptive work to the extent that it bears upon himself or herself. By ascetical practices Christians cooperate with the Lord Jesus not so much in redeeming others as in perfecting their own redemption, which is given in principle in the baptismal transformation. Although the avoidance of serious sin requires asceticism, the proper object of asceticism goes beyond the avoidance of grave sin to growth in Christian life by a gradual overcoming of obstacles to its fullness.

It is possible and helpful to consider ascetical practices from four points of view, corresponding to the four sacraments discussed in chapter thrity-two. From the point of view of penance, asceticism is careful avoidance of the occasions of sin, constant effort to eliminate venial sin, and practice of virtues for the sake of cultivating them. Self-denial with regard to permissible things is undertaken as penance. From the point of view of confirmation, asceticism is practice of the self-discipline demanded by one's vocation; it is generous sacrifice to fulfill one's duties and energetic work to do well the tasks one undertakes in response to God's call. From the point of view of holy communion, asceticism is preparing oneself to fulfill one's role in the Church and contenting oneself with this role. One accepts the human reality of the Church with patience and seeks to serve rather than to gain status in the Church. Finally, from the point of view of the anointing of the sick, asceticism is living one's whole life as preparation and rehearsal for death, detaching oneself from mortal life and worldly things, and totally surrendering oneself to God in union with the passion and death of

the Lord Jesus. The close integration of ascetical practice with the sacraments gives asceticism its due role in Christian life: the place of important and necessary means. As means, ascetical practice is neither nonessential to Christian life nor is it the whole meaning of life in Christ.

Besides prayer, which is the foundation of ascetical practice, fasting and almsgiving always have been recognized by Jews and Christians as appropriate ascetical practices. Fasting can be generalized: in a wider sense it includes the negation of all desires and interests which are not inappropriate for Christians precisely insofar as they are human persons but are inappropriate for them precisely insofar as they are Christians. Almsgiving is the service to others which is made possible by conceding to them the substance or the equivalent of what one has denied oneself. From this point of view, ascetical practice is what can only be seen to be necessary to be a good person in the light of faith, which makes clear that one cannot be a good person except by following the Lord Jesus and imitating his redemptive character.

A very important aspect of asceticism for Christians living in economically advanced, post-Christian Western societies is the need to accept considerable alienation from the common culture, its standards and expectations. One must not envy nonbelievers their sinful enjoyments; one must not expect to succeed, to be recognized, and to be fulfilled by one's work; one must not long for the privileges of status but settle for the yoke of service; one must not strive for security and immortality by financial shrewdness and technological devices. As always, we must be in the world, but not of the world.

Chapter 34: The Life of Christian Holiness

The end of Christian life is completion in Christ. This is holiness, the salvation of one's soul and eternal life with God. At the same time, it is the growth of the kingdom to its final completion, the mature condition of the whole family of God, the restoration of all things to the Father through Christ. The individual and social aspects are in no way opposed; they are two sides of the same reality, altogether inseparable from one another.

Completion in Christ is a superabundant fulfillment of human possibilities; human goods are included in the fullness of life in Christ. Among the human goods is the good of religion. Religion is itself a human perfection, which in Christian life integrates other human goods, such as truth, life, and peace. In Christ all human goods, which naturally are participations in divine goodness, become attributes of a divine person; the goods of all Christians are similarly transformed insofar as they are united with Christ. Thus the pursuit of human goods by Christians is demanded by the sacraments and fulfills them.

The foundation of Christian life as a life of holiness is prayer, not only liturgical but also personal prayer. Sacred scripture and the liturgy are the starting point for all prayer, but individual and intimate conversation with God also is required, and various devotional practices help diverse groups of Christians to mediate the prayer of the Church as such with the unique prayer life of each member of the Church. Prayer of contrition; meditation upon the mysteries of faith; prayer of praise, adoration, and

thanksgiving; prayer of submission--each of these has its role.

It is possible and helpful to consider the Christian life of holiness from four points of view, corresponding to the four sacraments discussed in chapter thirty-two. In one aspect, it is a life of peace-making; through the Holy Spirit of Christ present and working within oneself, one seeks to reconcile humankind and the visible world to God in Christ. In a second aspect, it is a life of response to one's vocation; one follows Christ according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. In a third aspect, it is a life of community building and sanctification of culture; by the power of the Spirit one transforms humankind and the world into completion in Christ. In a fourth aspect, it is living in the world the unworldly life of the kindsom already real and growing, although invisibly so.

The sacramentals are extensions of the sacraments. They are visible expressions of the communication of the redemptive commitment of Jesus to the whole of life and to the subpersonal world through the acts of Christian life integrated into the sacraments. This visible expression of the communication of redemption is important insofar as Christian life is communal and formative of a culture of its own.

As the obstacles to redemption are lessened, charity increases in the Christian, whose heart becomes more like the heart of Jesus. As one's union with God becomes more intimate, this intimacy is somehow experienced. The life within oneself of the Holy Trinity is a reality which can be ignored only insofar as one does <u>not</u> love God with one's whole mind, heart, soul, and strength. The experience of the mystics is an instance of this awareness of intimacy between the soul and God. However, classical mystical experience seems to presuppose the conditions of contemplative life, and contemplative life is not the common life of Christians. But while not all are called to be contemplatives, all are called to a life of holiness, and those who progress in holiness will experience their intimacy with God in ways he chooses which are appropriate to their condition and state of life.

The fruit of a life of holiness is action in accord with the Christian ideal, done now less with ascetic intent and more as a normal, joyful expression of the life of Christ and the power of the Spirit shaping one's new self from within.

The life of Christian holiness is more than a preparation for death. Such a life is the beginning of resurrection. It will be complete when the Lord Jesus comes again, and those who have followed him in death will be raised with him in life eternal, shared in the perfect heavenly banquet.

The Christian's spiritual life and moral life are not two lives but one. However, insofar as one focuses upon holiness, those aspects of Christian moral life which are formed by specifically Christian modes of response are seen in clear distinction from aspects of Christian morality which are formed by natural modes of responsibility. The latter can be articulated in general norms. But the former must be learned in more personal ways: from the personal appropriation of the word of God, the inner teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the example of the saints, of Mary, and of Jesus himself.