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

Draft of the Outline

Preliminary remarks

The following is a draft of the outline of the first book of a projected four-book synthesis of Catholic moral theology. As now planned, the four books will be:

I. Principles of Catholic Moral Theology

II. Responsibilities Common to All Christians

III. Responsibilities Related to Various Roles in Life

IV. Responsibilities of Priests and Bishops

Since the potential subject-matter of (III) is endless, only some of the more common, important, typical and/or difficult matters will be treated. The whole of volume (IV) will be devoted to the priestly life and ministry, because the work will be aimed especially toward clerics and seminarians.

My intention is that this work be faithful to the Catholic Church's traditional moral teaching, but also creative enough to deal with contemporary theoretical and normative moral issues in a manner which will clarify them and propose resolutions to problems. In treating the training of priests, Vatican II made a particular point of the need for renewal in moral theology:

> The following order should be observed in the treatment of dogmatic theology: biblical themes should have first place; then students should be shown what the Fathers of the Church, both of the East and West, have contributed to the faithful transmission and elucidation of each of the revealed truths; then the later history of dogma, including its relation to the general history of the Church; lastly, in order to throw as full a light as possible on the mysteries of salvation, the students should learn to examine more deeply, with the help of speculation and with St. Thomas as teacher, all aspects of these mysteries, and to perceive their interconnection. They should be taught at all times in the ceremonies of the liturgy, and in the whole life of the Church. They should learn to seek the solutions of human problems in the light of revelation, to apply its eternal truths to the changing conditions of human affairs, and to express them in language which people of the modern world will understand.
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> In like manner the other theological subjects should be renewed through a more vivid contact with the Mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. Special care should be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific presentation should draw more fully on the teaching of Holy Scripture and should throw light upon the exalted vocation of the faithful in Christ and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world. (Optatam totius, 16; notes omitted; emphasis added.)

The following outline attempts to respond to these injunctions. The Mystery of Christ and the history of salvation are the constant central reference

points. Biblical themes have first place. The interrelation of the principles of Christian morality as truths of faith is stressed. Throughout, the total divine-human vocation of Christians is treated in a balanced and integrated manner, and the dominance of otherworldliness and secularity equally avoided. Because the book outlined here is a treatment of principles of moral theology--corresponding to the prima secundae of the Summa theologiae of St. Thomas--it does not begin to apply the truths of faith to concrete human problems, although contemporary theoretical problems within its subject matter will be treated. However, the later books in the synthetic treatment will carry out the work of application for which this book is the indispensable foundation.

The outline covers a great deal of material. It might be objected that it covers too much--embracing topics which more properly belong to dogmatic theology, including the theology of the Church and of the sacraments. But these topics will be treated briefly and from the point of view of morality--that is, the point of view of human action. The inclusion of all the elements of philosophical ethical theory relevant to Christian morality is intentional; no one teaching a course in moral theology today can assume that all of the students will have an adequate philosophic foundation. The inclusion of the principles of ascetical and mystical theology within the framework of moral theology also is intentional. A formal plan of life without a strategy for making it operational is sterile, while moral dynamics without continuity with an intelligible plan of life are in constant danger of lapsing into a merely emotional piety and enthusiastic devotionalism.

Criticism requested

What follows is only an outline and only an initial draft of the outline. It is intended to stimulate helpful reactions. All sorts of criticism and suggestions for improvement will be welcome. My plan is to revise the outline in the summer of 1978 and to begin then to research the various topics which will be covered in the work.

The research work will continue until the fall of 1979. During 1979-1980 the first draft of the work itself will be written. Hence, criticisms of the outline and suggestions of specific books and articles which ought to be consulted as part of the research will be most helpful if communicated by 1 May 1978. However, I plan to make several drafts of the work, seeking at each stage criticism, advice, and help, especially from experts in areas in which I lack formal training--Scripture, patristics, history of doctrine and penitential practice, canon law, and Church history.

In reading the outline, one will notice that everything needs to be developed, illustrated, and annotated. In the work itself, this will be done in various ways. Points which are ordinarily treated extensively in dogmatic theology will be dealt with briefly, but the reader will be referred to more adequate discussions in other works. Points not treated in other parts of theology will be fully developed in this work, with examples; references to Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium; detailed explanations and argu-

ments; and a critical consideration of alternative positions.

In making suggestions, please bear in mind that the primary audience for the work will be Catholic seminarians. So any questions which are more subtle or more detailed than necessary will be avoided, and the essential matters expounded more amply, in a way suited to beginners. While I expect to read a good many scholarly articles and technical monographs in doing my research work, the book to be written will be rather a synthetic exposition than a series of erudite treatises.

Summary of the outline

The book will have six parts:

1. What is the Kingdom of God? It is a community of divine and human persons. The divine persons call human persons to adoption into divine family life. One of the divine persons, the Word, became man; he leads humankind in a struggle to overcome human evils, achieve human goods, and live as children of God.

2. How can humans help build the Kingdom of God? Humans missed their first chance to help, by reason of original sin. But by his redemptive act, one human, Jesus, provides the foundation and the framework for the Kingdom. By faith and baptism, human persons can unite themselves with Jesus, and help him complete his work. In this way, everything good will be gathered up and restored to the Father through Christ Jesus.

3. How do Christians know what to do to help Jesus build the Kingdom? Since Christian life is a special form of good human life, this question is partially answered by explaining how to live a good human life. The explanation will be a Christian philosophical account of moral principles, moral reasoning and moral judgment. No sound account of these matters is actually given except in the guiding light of faith.

4. Moreover, building the Kingdom is more than merely living a good human life. So Christians must learn from Jesus how to help him. We hear what he commands in Scripture, through tradition, safeguarded and unfolded by the magisterium of the Church. By faith we accept what Jesus teaches, put on his mind, judge all things by his loving heart.

5. What material have we to work with? Since a community is to be built, we must work with human persons, including ourselves, and institutions such as they now exist. Here we must study the elements of Christian moral psychology and Christian moral sociology. The material is complex, limited, and in process. It also is damaged by original sin.

6. Since the material is damaged and recalcitrant, it must be prepared--the necessity for basic and continuing conversion. Guided by the light of the Holy Spirit for which one must pray, each Christian must discern and organize his or her own part in the common work--the question of vocation. Discipline and training are needed to fit one to carry out this vocation--elements of ascetical theology. Finally, there must be a general strategy for living more and more intimately with Jesus--elements of spiritual and mystical theology.

The book will conclude with an epilogue, summarizing the vision of Christian life it articulates and relating this vision especially to the commitment and life of the seminarian. The life and work of the seminarian is directly and in itself--not merely in its later fruits--an important part of his personal Christian vocation. Living it well contributes immediately to the building of the Kingdom. A program of spiritual formation, including its ascetical aspects, is not an arbitrary set of hurdles one must jump to reach one's goal of ordination, but is an intelligible process of self-integration by which one strives here and now to follow Jesus.

It should be noticed that many topics will be treated in this volume insofar as they involve principles of the whole of Christian morality, but will be reserved for further treatment in subsequent volumes insofar as they relate to specific responsibilities. For example, the theological virtues will be considered here--charity in part one, hope in part two, and faith in part four--in their aspect of principles. But they will be considered again in the first part of volume two, insofar as the primary responsibilities common to all Christians pertain to these virtues.

Part 1: Our Calling: To Life in the Kingdom of God

What is the Kingdom of God? Jesus announced it in his personal preaching and used many parables to clarify the idea.

The Kingdom of God is a reality which is invisible. Nevertheless, it is actual, not merely potential; present, not wholly future. It is growing gradually. It is coming irresistibly, since it is ordained by providence. The Kingdom of God is not the culmination of world history if history is considered according to its inner order, nor is the Kingdom naturally continuous with any familiar immanent process. However, in Jesus we are called here and now to enter into the Kingdom and to contribute our work to building it up.

The Kingdom of God is a community of persons. Communities with which we are familiar include many defects and fall short in various ways of what they ought, even at a minimum, to be. The Kingdom is a perfect community of love embracing divine and human persons. God's reign is not an arbitrary imposition, but a fatherly education of human persons whom he invites to become his children, members by adoption of his own family.

In the family of God, all evil will be overcome. Every sort of enslavement will end. The children of God will enjoy the full liberty appropriate to them in their exalted status. So far as possible, divine and human persons will share their proper goods with one another.

What does "good" mean? "Good" refers to the fullness of being of any entity; the good of each kind of entity differs according to the measure of fullness marked out by the kind of entity it is. For the living, to be good is to live and to live more abundantly--that is, to flourish. This conception of what "good" means, which is confirmed by faith, is contrasted with erroneous alternative conceptions, which (1) identify goodness with a certain kind of reality, or (2) regard every object of desire as good, or (3) consider goods to be realities separate from concrete, particular entities.

According to a sound conception of good, evil is a privation--a lack of the fullness of being which could and should be present.

Divine goodness is not distinct from God's basic reality, for God does not grow up, evolve, struggle for identity. Therefore, the goods of divine persons, which they share with human persons, involve their basic reality: divine nature, life, knowledge, and love. Divine creativity (in the strict sense of "creativity") cannot be shared with human persons, for to be creators would be incompatible with the status of human persons as creatures.

In general, love is a way of being one while remaining distinct. Love between husband and wife, for instance, unites the two individuals without obliterating their distinctness--indeed, love unites them precisely by that which distinguishes them. God is love. The unity of the three persons by which they are one God although perfectly distinct in their personal relations with one another is the love which God is. This love has a special name--agape or charity.

The sharing by God of divine goods with human persons is based upon an opening of the Trinity to introduce human persons into divine love. In this way human persons are united most intimately with the divine persons and with other adopted members of the divine family; yet the unique personality and irreducible nature and creaturehood of each adopted member of the divine family is fully respected.

Thus love--agape--is the foundation and vital principle of the whole of Christian life. This love is not so much something one does nor a feeling one undergoes nor an experience one has, as it is a new way of being, a way of being united with God, of sharing in the mutual "in-ness" of the divine persons, while continuing to be oneself and becoming fully the self one can be. Yet while Christian love is fundamentally a way of being, it must be accepted freely and allowed to penetrate and unfold itself fully in all the aspects of personal and communal life.

Hence the first commandment is to love God above all things with one's whole self, and the second is to love one's neighbor as oneself. Through Jesus, the two commandments collapse into one, for God becomes in him man and neighbor, and human persons become through him sharers in divinity to be loved as adopted members of the divine family.

Human persons who enter into the Kingdom share their proper goods with the Trinity. What are human goods? How can human persons share them with their creator, who is in himself all-perfect?

Human goods are not the immaterial aspects of human persons; materiality is essential to human personhood and in itself is good. Nor are human goods ideals or arbitrary demands unrelated to human capacities and desires. Nor are human goods merely relative to human opinions and wishes. There are human goods which are instrumental--belonging to the order of means--which can be apart from persons. But basic human goods--those which are good intrinsically and belong to the order of ends--are inward aspects of the full-being or flourishing of persons. Persons flourish according to the kind of entity they are: in bodily life and the handing on of life, in

health and strength, in skillful work and refined performance, in sensitive appreciation and esthetic enjoyment, in knowledge of truth and orderliness, in submission and reverence toward God, in cooperation with other human persons organized fairly and enriched by fellowship, in self-shaping by free choice, in self-integration of all aspects of their complex and developing personalities.

Because human persons are created, their basic reality which marks out the fields of their full-being is a given, not alterable by human opinions and wishes. But since God made humankind in his own image and likeness, he has left all the aspects of human flourishing open to specification and unfolding by human intelligence and free choice. Hence, while Christian morality excludes relativism, it calls for human faithfulness to God's creative intention by a humanly intelligent and creative effort.

Two omissions from the preceding list of goods will be noted--pleasure or enjoyment and the Beatific Vision.

Pleasure or enjoyment is not a separate basic human good. This does not mean it is an evil nor that it is purely instrumental. It is one aspect--the felt side--of all the basic human goods. If pleasure is sought apart from the substantial reality of which it is ordinarily only the appearance, this is bad, not because pleasure is bad, but because one is seeking a mere illusion.

For quite different reasons, the Beatific Vision must not be regarded as one basic human good alongside the others. We must consider heavenly beatitude from two aspects. In one aspect, it is no mere human good, but rather is the divine life already communicated by Christian love when it will have fully penetrated and unfolded itself in the Christian personality and community. In another aspect, the Beatific Vision comprises in a supereminent but nevertheless real way all of the basic human goods in a manner which altogether transcends mere human capacity to achieve but which does not transcend human capacity to receive. This is so because human persons have not been created with a nature wholly specified to finite fulfillment. Had they been created with a definite limit of possibility, their hearts would have been made for a finite good and they would rest in that good for which they had been made. However, human intelligence has been created ample enough to understand the invitation to share in divine life and human freedom has been created ample enough to accept this invitation.

How can human persons share their goods with their creator, who is all perfect in himself? Creatures cannot enrich God, of course, but in two ways God is involved with human goods and is glorified by their achievement.

First, by the very fact of the Incarnation. In becoming man, the Word of God, through whom all things are made, shares in human nature, shares in its goods, shares in working for a more abundant life for humankind, and shares in the enjoyment of the fruits of his own work and in that of his human brothers and sisters. Human nature as the Word of God assumed it was not annulled; in the humanity of Jesus human goods are kept intact, restored to integrity, and raised to infinite dignity.

Second, although created goods add nothing to divine perfection, they do express and communicate the goodness of God. God wants each creature to share his perfection in its own way, and so in loving himself he loves each creature toward the fullness of its possible goodness. One who receives agape primarily loves divine goodness, but in loving God also loves every created good as God does, to the full extent of its goodness but also in harmony with all other goods. Thus the love of charity includes in itself the love of all the goods which contribute to the flourishing of human persons, and in charity each of these goods is loved perfectly and in due order.

Human efforts to achieve human goods do not involve any sort of competition with God; rather, such efforts fit into God's plan. The greater humankind is, the more God is glorified. Service to human goods here and now is not useless; precisely because God's inner reality is perfect in itself, we can serve God only by promoting the flourishing of his creatures. Human goods achieved here and now are destined to last forever; nothing truly good comes to be merely to be lost again in nothingness. The task of humankind, united with Christ Jesus, is to complete the work of creation, to humanize all which is not human, and thus to bring the created world within the fullness of divine life--"to restore all things to the Father through Christ." Thus, to promote human goods with charity is to build God's Kingdom.

From the vantage point already reached in this part, we can begin to distinguish acts which are suitable for a Christian from those which are unsuitable, and especially from those acts which are absolutely excluded. Those acts which contribute to the building of the Kingdom, which comply with the wise plan and loving will of God, will make up a life fitting for ones called to share in divine life. All other acts are unsuitable. But some unsuitable acts only fail in a negative sense--they do not express Christian love but neither do they exclude it in principle; these are called "venial sins." Other unsuitable acts disrupt the building of the Kingdom; by implying a fixation upon limited fulfillment they exclude openness to the plenitude of goodness; such acts are called "mortal sins."

It is important to notice that even mortal sins do not ultimately frustrate God's design. Yet the ultimate impotence of evil arises only because of the infinite wisdom, goodness, and power of God, who brings good out of the evil he accepts in creation. Therefore, the evil of mortal sin considered in itself can never be anything but privation. As sinner one may contribute unwillingly to the execution of God's plan, but one in no way cooperates in it unless one's acts express and embody Christian love.

Part 2: The Way for Us: The Human Life of Jesus

How can humans contribute to the coming of the Kingdom of God?

The most basic truth is that the Kingdom of God is wholly the work of God and the gift of God. God does not need the contributions of creatures as if he were in any way dependent upon them. Moreover, the whole reality of every creature, including all of its acts, is totally dependent upon the creative love of God. Thus human contributions to the coming of the Kingdom are them-

selves the work and gift of God. God desires these contributions solely in order to ennoble humankind, by permitting men and women not only to share in the enjoyment of goods but also to cooperate in causing them. If human persons received everything in such a way that they were enabled to do nothing, they would lack much of their great dignity and self-respect; by God's generosity human persons receive everything including the ability to do and the actual doing of great things, and so they share in a great dignity and self-respect, and so must be even more humbly grateful: "He that is mighty has done great things for me!"

When our first human ancestors initially came to the level of maturity required to exercise free choice, they could and should have formed a community in friendship with God, a community dedicated to contributing human activity to the fulfillment of God's creative plan. However, no such community in friendship with God was formed, and this failure was a grave fault. Therefore, by the very fact that subsequent humans are born as descendants of their first ancestors, all are conceived and born as members of a human society which--considered as a natural family--is alienated from God. This naturally unavoidable condition of alienation from God just insofar as one is a member of humankind is the core of the reality we call "original sin." This central reality of alienation from God develops further in various positive ways: in inherited tendencies which have survival value in the struggle for existence but which lead to brutal behavior, in various modes of social and institutional corruption, and in the imitation by each new generation of the bad models presented by the previous generation.

In this state of affairs, no ordinary human has the personal qualities and the authority to initiate a community of friendship with God, open to all human persons, as God had wished. Yet it remains suitable--and in a sense is demanded for human dignity and self-respect--that a human leader form the human community of friendship with God. Hence, the Word of God, who cannot be alienated from God, becomes man, to provide human persons with the leadership they need to respond to God's love and to enter into intimacy with him. In becoming part of humankind and fully accepting its alienated condition, the Word of God in this man, Jesus, overcomes human alienation from God; by allowing his brothers and sisters to associate themselves with him, Jesus frees them from their natural condition and gives them the power to become children of God.

Jesus carries out his redemptive work by human acts. Since his human acts serve as a model for our own acts joined with his--which will be the subject of all our subsequent discussion--we must analyze the whole integrated complex of the human acts which make up the earthly life of Jesus. (In view of our purpose here, we shall treat the Gospels as if they provided a more straightforward description of the public life of Jesus than is perhaps the case. However, the New Testament certainly does provide reliable testimony about the overarching commitment which shaped the life of Jesus, and its descriptions of particular words and deeds can be taken as typical of the sorts of things he said and did.)

In general, human acts are processes which emanate--or, in the case of omissions, do not emanate--from a person, such that the ongoing process has meaning from some outcome or goal or good or value which somehow goes beyond the process itself. The outcome or goal or good or value which gives meaning to a process and makes it an act can in general be called its "end," using "end" to mean that-toward-which-it-is. Acts have ends in various ways.

First, some natural processes such as eating, walking, and talking have a natural outcome or effect in which they terminate. The process as it goes on has meaning from this outcome or effect. All human lives can be viewed as a string of acts of this sort. In the Gospels there are numerous examples of acts of Jesus of this sort.

Second, some processes such as making tools, asking questions, and obtaining facilities are means to ends beyond the processes themselves. In such cases the processes have meaning from the ulterior purpose which they are carried on to subserve. Note that acts in this sense also are acts in the first sense. All human lives involve many instances of using means not prized in themselves for the sake of achieving ends beyond the very acts done themselves. Again, there are numerous examples in the Gospels of acts of Jesus of this sort.

Third, some very long and complex processes such as one's life-work are the execution of overarching commitments to the basic goods. Such goods always extend beyond the participation in them achieved in any individual human life. A human life has its meaning from the basic goods to which one is dedicated--or, in the case of a bad life, in which one is fixated. The life of Jesus is readily understood in terms of his dedication to basic human goods. All of them find a place in his style of life, for although he does not personally pursue every human good, he does approve, encourage, and bless those who do. High in his personal order of priorities is the communication of truth and the overcoming of sickness and death. But overarching everything is his commitment to the human good of religion: he is executing a divine mission, doing the will of the Father, redeeming humankind, establishing the community of friendship with God--all of these in reality one act executing his own single, most fundamental commitment.

It should be noticed that an act of this sort--that is, a fundamental commitment--includes and integrates acts in the first two senses and also acts in the next sense we shall discuss. Hence, what one is doing is more properly characterized from the point of view of one's acts in the third sense than from the point of view of acts in the other senses. Still, one cannot maintain a fundamental commitment while knowingly and willingly doing acts in other senses which are incompatible with it.

Fourth, some processes creatively unfold one's individual personality by dealing with problems and taking opportunities in a manner which expresses one's whole self shaped by basic commitments. Such acts bear the stamp of the genius of the individual. Many acts of Jesus described in the Gospels are good examples of acts of this sort.

There are diverse senses of "freedom," "responsibility," and "good" (or

"end") corresponding to each of the four senses of "act." Obviously, the centrality of the third sense of "act" makes equally central the meanings of these related expressions which correspond. "Freedom" here refers to freedom of choice by which one determines oneself to be the unique individual author of one's own life. "Responsibility" here means not the need to answer to another but the inevitability of the identity one has established for oneself. "Good" here refers to the more or less extensive and open sharing in possible human flourishing which one accepts in one's self-determination.

Fundamental commitments to the basic goods need not be exclusively individual acts. They can involve many human agents who mutually understand, appreciate, and endorse one another's commitments. In this way, the acts of many individuals form a cooperative self-determination, which is something more than the mere summation of the individual acts. Such cooperative acts form community. The overarching commitment of the life of Jesus--his redemptive act--is proposed by him as a community-forming act. He invites others--eventually all humankind--to understand, appreciate, and endorse his commitment, and so to make it their own and in so doing to be united with him in redemptive obedience to God, an act which establishes the community of friendship with God to which human persons were called from the beginning.

Thus human persons can contribute to the coming of the Kingdom by entering into the redemptive act of Jesus, making his overarching commitment their own, and integrating their entire lives by it. From this point of view we can see more clearly the significance of the basic choices made by the Blessed Virgin Mary and by other saints.

Fundamental commitments to basic goods are not in themselves events which happen during a particular stretch of time in the natural world. They occur only after certain natural, psychological conditions are given, and for this reason their beginning can be dated. Also, the process which expresses a commitment extends through a stretch of time. But the act of itself does not terminate by intervening natural happenings, such as sleep and distraction of attention. A commitment only ends if one directly or indirectly reverses it, by changing one's mind.

Ordinarily, of course, we consider that an individual's acts terminate at death. But the fundamental commitment of Jesus is neither reversed nor terminated by death. Hence, although the behavior by which he carried it out is long past, the act remains real and present. Human persons of every age are unable to enter into it immediately. This they do by accepting Jesus and being baptized--a matter to be discussed more fully in part four.

It must be noted that human acts, although directed toward human goods and not in themselves contrary to charity, would not be constructive of the Kingdom were they not united with the redemptive act of Jesus. As human persons can enter into his act by baptism, they can bring the whole of their lives into it by the Sacrifice of the Mass, which makes the redemptive act accessible in the form of concrete behavior homogeneous with behavior which is common to every human life. The sacrament of the Eucharist transforms human persons and their humanly good acts into the community of friendship

with God, which is the mystical body of Christ. This community has a real continuity with the Kingdom of God, for the Christian community present in the world is the beginning of the Kingdom which is to come.

Since the significance and effectiveness of human acts for the Kingdom does not arise wholly from themselves, but rather depends upon God's acceptance of human efforts as cooperation and the transformation of these works in the Eucharist by the power of the Holy Spirit, one who enters into the redemptive act of Jesus lives by hope. The whole significance of Christian life is never visible in it, but always remains hidden.

Within the redemptive act of Jesus, one hopes for one's own salvation and for the completion of the work of the redemption, not as if these hoped for goods were separate and opposed, but insofar as they are but two aspects of one and the same magnificent achievement to which Jesus dedicated himself. Similarly, one hopes for the fruits of the Holy Spirit of Jesus in the human works which fulfill God's will on earth and in the course of time, but one expects the full glory of these fruits of the Spirit to appear only when the face of the earth is wholly renewed, and the new heavens and new earth created to last forever. One accepts whatever role God assigns according to his providential plan, for one is confident in hope that one's contribution will not be vain.

There are somewhat different legitimate ways of fitting one's life into the redemptive act. One way is to focus one's whole effort on bearing witness to the hidden reality, by living so far as possible in conformity with the reality of the Kingdom insofar as it is already invisibly established. This is the life of the religious. Or one may focus on the work of leadership in maintaining and extending the community itself. This is to accept the role of an officer of the community, and to stand in for Jesus himself in relation to other members--the life of the priest. Finally, one may focus on protecting and promoting human goods in order to contribute them to the building of the Kingdom--the life of the secular lay person. All of these Christian lifestyles are alike in being responses to the common vocation to enter into the family of God; all are ways of cooperating in the redemptive work and helping to complete it.

From the vantage point reached in this part, we may further distinguish between human acts which are integrated into a Christian's basic commitment and those which are not. Those which are integrated are properly Christian acts. Some which are not nevertheless do not constitute a betrayal of the basic commitment--these are venial sins. But some do betray the basic commitment, and render it lifeless and ineffective--these are mortal sins. Even in this case, the commitment betrayed by the individual is sustained by the community and to the extent that the individual continues to belong, his or her vital participation can be reinstated.

Part 3: Our Task: To Make Human Goods Abound

How can one tell precisely what one must do to contribute to the work of the redemption--that is, to help Jesus help build the Kingdom of God?

Christian life is a particular style of good human life. No act which is humanly bad can be appropriate for any Christian. A Christian must be humanly good because God, who created everything good, wills not to nullify what he creates but to redeem and perfect it, because human goods naturally express the divine goodness in which they participate, because Jesus who is the Word of God also is truly man--the best and most perfect of men--and his human life is a model for ours, and because Christians are called upon to protect and promote human goods in order that these goods may be transformed and incorporated into the Kingdom. A Christian's style of life is special, for in the light of faith Christians are aware of important aspects of human possibility hidden from those who lack faith, because Christians are able to participate self-consciously in the creative work of building up the Kingdom of God, and because the life of Christians is overarched by the social redemptive act of Jesus, which demands that in its concrete style the life of each Christian conform to the law of the cross. The law of the cross is that evil is to be overcome by being undergone with patience and love.

In the present part the question is: How can one tell, in general, whether a certain action, about which one is reflecting, would be a humanly good or a humanly bad act to choose? This is the central question of ethics, and it must be answered by every person, Christian or not, who cares about living a good human life.

Several ways of answering this question which have been proposed must be rejected as inadequate, although each has some kernel of truth in it.

First, there is the view that human acts are good or bad in the last analysis only because God commands or forbids them. On this view, one can tell what is right and wrong only by receiving orders from God, either by a public communication of general rules (revelation of an arbitrary code) or by inward communication of particular directives (the "voice-of-God" theory of an absolute conscience). An approach like this makes the difference between right and wrong arbitrary and irrelevant to human goods, disregards the genuine autonomy and dignity of human persons, renders morality unintelligible, and so precludes a genuinely intelligent and free cooperation of human persons with God.

Second, there is the view--which is at the extreme opposite to the first--that acts are either good or bad only because a human person either wholeheartedly chooses them and unreservedly accepts the self constituted by them or merely conforms to a standard imposed from without. This is the view of Nietzsche and Sartre. This view also makes the moral difference arbitrary (altogether subjective), disregards the genuine sovereignty and lordship of God, renders right acts intrinsically unintelligible and unrelatable to anything beyond themselves, and thus precludes living one's life in the wider perspective of any true community--and a fortiori precludes living within the wider perspective of the redemptive community extending and building the

Kingdom of God.

Third, there is the view that human nature as a given contains a definite pattern, that acts are good or bad insofar as they conform or fail to conform to this pattern, and that moral qualities can be observed by inspection. This view is a version of natural-law ethics. Attempts to develop an approach along these lines import ethical assumptions into the purportedly descriptive account of human nature, or else they fail to derive any normative conclusions from reflection upon this nature, since it is logically impossible to derive what one ought to do (if one really has free choice) from what one is. The theory assumes a determinacy in human nature which is not in fact given; if it were given, the fullness of human reality would be so definitely specified as to preclude the participation of human persons in the good proper to divine persons.

Fourth, there is the view that acts are good or bad insofar as they are really human acts--rational and free acts--or not. This is Kant's view; he makes the standard of moral goodness be the act's determination exclusively by the person's rational nature, with no contribution except as to its subject matter from one's inclinations or any other source in experience. This view makes a morally bad act to be an irrational and unfree act, but such an act hardly seems to be of the person, except insofar as it is a kind of accident of which the person is the victim. Moreover, Kant's theory precludes the ordering of a good life to the protection and promotion of human goods, and thus rules out the possibility that humankind could contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God.

Fifth, there is the view that acts are good or bad insofar as they are expected to yield measurable good results or not. This is consequentialism, one form of which is utilitarianism. Currently, it is the most widespread account of morality. This theory fails because human goods promised by the alternatives considered for choice are not commensurable as the theory requires. If goods were commensurable, choice as we experience it would not occur, and a fortiori there could be no free choice. Moreover, if one holds that God accepts no evil in creation unless he can draw good from it and if one also is a consequentialist, then one ought logically to conclude that any act one can do will be justified by its eventual good consequences. But this conclusion must be rejected, for evil may not be done that good might follow therefrom (cf. Rm 3.8).

Sixth, there is the view that acts are good or bad insofar as these irreducible moral qualities attach directly to certain unique, concrete acts. The moral quality of acts is claimed to be observed by a simple, direct intuition (the intuition version of an absolute conscience). This theory is seldom proposed by itself as a total account of right and wrong; it is usually taken as a last resort by other positions when they encounter difficulties. This approach excludes rational reflection from moral life and so makes the moral significance of action incommunicable. It also detaches moral significance from human flourishing. Moreover, it precludes the formation of an orderly plan of life, in which acts are integrated into an intel-

ligible pattern. For all these reasons, this approach is incompatible with the Christian conception of a good life as cooperation in an ongoing communal work.

A coherent account of moral good and evil developed in the light of Christian faith is the following.

There are principles of practical reflection. "Good is to be done and pursued; evil is to be avoided," is the first principle, implicit in all human practical thinking. There are also several generic principles corresponding to the various modalities of basic human goods. Examples are: "Truth is to be sought and communicated, error avoided, ignorance overcome," and, "Life is to be preserved, health and safety promoted, disease resisted, pain eased." These starting-points of practical reflection are not deduced from anything prior, but they are grasped immediately in the facts of human inclination when one is in a practical frame of mind. All practical discussion and deliberation presupposes these basic principles; from time to time they are appealed to explicitly.

A morally right act need not promote every basic human good at once, but the proposal to do it will be consonant with all the principles of practical reflection. The proposal of an act which is morally bad will not be consonant with all of these principles.

There are several ways of showing that this is a sound conception of the standard of morality.

First, the account of human goods in part one made clear that goodness is in the fullness of each entity according to its kind; the account of human acts in part two made clear that morality is centered upon free choices which constitute one's moral self. A choice in harmony with all the principles of practical thinking is as inclusivistic, as open to fullness, as any choice can be, and thus is good; a choice at odds with any of the principles of practical thinking is to that extent exclusivistic, constitutive of an unnecessarily narrowed self, and thus is bad.

Second, only by maintaining oneself in harmony with all the principles of practical reflection can one maintain the basis for cooperation with others in the common pursuit of human flourishing in every individual and social way. A choice which is not consonant with any of the principles establishes against others a restriction of community, to the extent that they might dedicate themselves to the good which has been delimited just in that respect in which it has been delimited.

Third, one who maintains harmony with all the principles of practical reflection--which indicate the fields open to human flourishing--affirms his or her own wholeness. An act at odds with any of these principles is a kind of self-repression or self-mutilation. To understand the force of this point, one must keep in mind that free choices are self-determining, and that they are not passing events but lasting dispositions of the self which stand unless reversed.

Fourth, since all of the human goods are diverse ways of sharing in the infinite goodness of God, one who loves God will appreciate, respect, and

at least remain open to all the basic human goods. If one makes a choice at odds with any of the principles of practical reason, one withdraws one's love from the good it represents. This withdrawal entails withholding love of the infinite good which is the ultimate principle of the rejected good, and limiting one's love to some set of finite goods.

How does one apply the fundamental criterion of right and wrong to particular acts? There are two ways, one ideal and the other necessary in practice.

Ideally, as faith teaches, a person should love God with charity and in loving him love all human goods in due measure and due order. This love will firmly constitute one's self in a disposition which is morally upright. Also, ideally, every aspect of one's complex personality should be thoroughly integrated with this central principle of right love. In such a case, the dictum of St. Augustine would apply: "Love God and then, what you will, do!" The application of the general principle to particular acts will be by concrete tests, such as imagining oneself doing the act. Since the whole personality, by hypothesis, is properly integrated, one will be able to tell by the "feel" of the act whether or not it fits. This is judgment by connaturality, a type of intuition.

It is important to note that some judgments made in this ideal way, namely those reflecting incompatibility between a basic human good and precisely what was proposed for choice, would always be negative. The perfect Christian would never approve the committing of adultery, the killing of the innocent, and so on. Perhaps better, it would never occur to the perfect Christian to do such acts; the proposal simply would not come upon the floor of consciousness for deliberation. This point clarifies the traditional Christian conviction that there are some kinds of acts which are always wrong.

Yet it must be noticed that the ideal way of making moral judgments is severely restricted in practice. In the first place, it demands a personality totally integrated with basic Christian love and commitment to the redemptive act. The dispositions to act of such a personality are the Christian virtues in their full flowering, when the human and divine principles of action are so perfectly integrated that one lives by the Spirit. In practice, while there are some areas in life in which any sincere Christian is well enough integrated to act spontaneously in this ideal way, there remain some areas in most Christian lives in which conflict and temptation are experienced. In such cases, there is some defect in virtue. Rather than judging by Christian prudence and living by the Spirit, one must fall back upon conscience and carry out a reflective examination concerning what is right and wrong. As we shall see in part five, this reflection itself must be conducted within the framework of the Church's moral belief and teaching, so that the light of faith which informs one's basic commitment also will inform one's particular acts in such a way that they can in due course be perfectly integrated into the basic commitment.

In the second place, Christian action is often--even usually--a coopera-

tion in some common effort. If the common project is to be carried out intelligently so that each participant can do his or her part in an appropriate way, there must be worked out a discursive and communicable account of what the project is and why it is good. To understand this point, it is important to bear in mind that moral judgment is not merely a test by which some candidates for choice are excluded, but also is an intelligent planning of good acts. Such planning must go into the acts themselves, very much as an architect's plan shapes a building from within.

To guide the reflection of conscience, we can articulate modes of responsibility. These formulate in general terms aspects of the mentality which would be present in one perfectly integrated, one living by the Spirit.

First, once the redemptive act is accepted as the commitment which will overarch your life, make further commitments under it, determining the particular form of Christian life you will live. Then use this definite core of self-identity as the basis for adopting projects, regulating spontaneous behavior, and shaping your creative self-expression.

Second, proceed fairly, with no arbitrary discrimination in favor of yourself and those you like, or those toward whom you have a special sympathy, and with no discrimination against others, even your enemies.

Third, be prepared to cooperate with others in doing what is good.

Fourth, be faithful. Do not treat goods to which you are committed as if they were mere definite objectives of some particular project.

Fifth, be detached. Do not treat any particular project as if its success determined the meaning of your life.

Sixth, be efficient. Use resources and opportunities to serve the goods to which you are committed.

Seventh, be dutiful. Accept roles in societies which are suited for cooperation toward goods to which you are committed; regard as obligations the legitimate demands of such roles. Duties are not to be defined narrowly to limit responsibility as much as possible, but are to be approached with a creative openness which will seek new opportunities for serving the goods.

Eighth, never act directly against any basic human good; do not do evil that good might follow from it. This mode of responsibility reflects the point made previously, that there are kinds of acts which are always wrong--those, namely, in which there is an incompatibility between a basic human good and precisely what is proposed for choice.

In considering all of these modes of responsibility, it is important to bear in mind that "basic human goods" does not refer to some abstract ideals or arbitrary demands, but to aspects of the very flourishing of human persons. To violate such goods is always incompatible with something truly intrinsic to persons, and so is incompatible with love of one's neighbor and oneself, even if no injustice or measurable harm seems to be done.

In respect to the eighth mode of responsibility, one must distinguish between what people <u>do</u> and what they <u>bring about</u>. One only acts directly against a basic human good if one adopts a proposed project which is somehow adverse to the good. But one sometimes foresees that an effort aimed at

promoting some good or preventing some evil also will have certain consequences--will bring about some state of affairs--adverse to some instance of a basic human good. In such a case, the negative aspect of what one brings about is a side-effect of one's act, and one is not acting directly against the good. However, some other mode of responsibility might exclude the accepting of such a side-effect.

Each of the six approaches considered previously in this part has some kernel of truth which can be accommodated in the account we have given.

Although morality is not voluntaristic as the divine-command theory urges, God has in truth created human persons and their possibilities, and in doing so has established the principles of morality which human opinion and choice cannot alter.

And although absolute self-creation is ruled out, human persons can shape their own lives by free commitments, establishing unique identities for themselves, something impossible for subhuman creatures whose natures determine in advance precisely in what their fullness of being will consist.

And although this openness of the human excludes a static natural-law theory, which would limit moral reflection to the mere reading off of the conformity between proposed acts and a definite pattern given by nature, the principles of practical reason do express insights into basic human inclinations, which are naturally given, and which point to the whole unsurveyed set of fields of human possibilities.

And although these principles of practical reason are not purely formal as Kant thought but do have some definite content, still only morally good acts are consonant with all of the goods which are proposed by the first principles of practical reason, so that there is something less than reasonable about any morally evil act.

And although consequentialists are mistaken in thinking that goods can be calculated and morality reduced to efficiency in obtaining definite results, still morally good acts do really tend to promote the flourishing of human persons and communities.

And, finally, although reasons for moral judgments can be formulated, still morally good persons can judge right and wrong in a quasi-intuitive way, without reflectively articulating the relationship between the first principle--right love--and the proposed courses of action which are judged.

Part 4: The Truth for Us: The Word and Words of Christ Jesus

While nothing against human goods can become right due to special circumstances, particular styles of life which are in accord with human goods can become obligatory in certain conditions. Anyone who belongs to any community to which not everyone belongs has special obligations, arising from membership in that community, which not everyone has. In the situation in which God calls humankind to share in divine life, a special style of life becomes obligatory for every person who grasps this situation. In the redemptive community, established by the overarching commitment of Jesus, every man and woman who enters into the community assumes all the responsibilities of

membership.

Thus, Christians must devote themselves first to the Kingdom of God; other human goods take their place within the pursuit and promotion of this most excellent good. In the service of their primary dedication--which, nevertheless, must not be permitted to become a fanatical fixation, since even the pursuit of this end does not justify any and every means--Christians must forego otherwise humanly acceptable possibilities.

If the task of Christians is to help Jesus help build the Kingdom of God and if this task requires something more specific than that one merely live a humanly good life, how can we know precisely what we are to do? The answer is that we must learn from Jesus how to live Christian life. He taught by his words and deeds the whole of saving truth.

The overarching commitment of Jesus, his redemptive act, is first of all a human act. In the ordinary human way, Jesus explained his own identity which was shaped by this commitment and he communicated his identity sufficiently not merely in words but in humanly appealing acts. He sought acceptance from others on his own terms; he asked them to accept his basic commitment as their own and to cooperate with him in a style of life suited to creatively express this commitment. This human self-revelation of Jesus communicated the reality of his human life, a reality and truth not otherwise accessible, in the same manner in which human persons in general communicate intimately with others. Acceptance of such a communication as sincere depends in each case upon the willingness of others to join in community by an act of human faith.

But the human dimension of Jesus's act and the response he sought to it also is a vehicle for the divine act of making known and effectively communicating divine life and love, inviting human persons to become members of the family of God and really making them members by virtue of their solidarity with their brother Jesus. The more than human dimension of the reality of the act of Jesus and the possibility for other humans to enter into it is made known to us in two ways. First, God himself--the Holy Spirit--teaches inwardly the inner reality of Jesus; he not only tells about it, but makes the communication effective, pouring forth the love of God in human hearts. Second, God also teaches outwardly, by making public the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and providing for the testimony of many witnesses to the reality, thus confirming the truth and the efficacy of what Jesus had said and done. Confronted with the reality of the resurrection, human persons have an adequate basis for responsibly accepting the Mystery revealed in Jesus. (This is not to say that the resurrection of Jesus is no more than the seal of our faith, but to say it is at least this.)

The redemptive act of Jesus, considered in its fullness as both a human and divine communication, is community forming. The community which it forms is the Church of Christ. Entry into this community is by an act which corresponds in complexity to it. Central to the human act of accepting Christ Jesus is the commitment of faith. This commitment is not merely assent to propositional truths, but acceptance of the redemptive act as the overarching

act of one's own life. Nevertheless, as a human act, this total acceptance includes and presupposes certain propositional truths which shape it. No one who does not assent to these truths can make the commitment which they inform.

Outwardly, the commitment of faith is expressed in appropriate behavior --the behavior of submission to Jesus and association with his death, by means of the sacrament of baptism. Assent to the truths which inform the commitment of faith is expressed by the baptismal creed. In addition to these human elements, one who is baptized can receive the communication of divine love only insofar as the act of faith itself also has a divine aspect: the Holy Spirit acts with one to make the reception effective.

Someone who looked at Christian life from the outside and was told that we learn how to live from Jesus might suppose that we take as our guide a man who was, indeed, good and wise, but who died nearly two thousand years ago and who lived in a culture quite different from ours. How could this teaching have much relevance for men and women of the twentieth century?

From within faith, we see how distorted this observer's view is. Jesus did die, but he also rose from the dead, and he continues to live today. The way of life we learn from him is not merely a pattern of human wisdom, but a style of human life appropriate to those who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. The cultures--Jewish, Roman, and other--which provided a context for the earthly life of Jesus were very different from the predominant cultures of the twentieth century, but the Christian style of life provides a nucleus of its own culture, from which ancient and contemporary cultures are even more alien than they are from each other, because the culture Jesus shapes is that of the redemptive community called to build itself up into the Kingdom of God.

The handing on to us of the culture of Jesus is a tradition unlike any other. Something more than a common language and literature, a set of practices and institutions is passed on. Primarily what is passed on is the one redemptive act in all its aspects, and this unity is neither divided nor alienated from those who transmit it, but is stretched or extended by growth to incorporate in the same redemptive community each new generation who enter into it. The living Jesus remains present in the community as the primary agent of this act, and the Holy Spirit enriches the community with his gifts and thus continues the divine work of communicating divine life.

The Church as a whole is the primary bearer of tradition. That the communication might be according to a human mode and that human persons might be ennobled by sharing in this communication not only passively but even as coworkers with Jesus, God has seen fit to equip the Church with two instruments of communication which effectively bridge the gap between the men and women today and the experienced presence of Jesus in the world teaching, performing signs, dying, and rising. These two instruments of communication are the lasting evidences of tradition and the living magisterium.

Chief among the lasting evidences of tradition are the writings which form the New Testament. Allied with these writings are the liturgical prac-

tices and the institutional form of the Church. These enduring evidences are data which give the social reality of the Church features which can be perceived even by nonbelievers, just as the perceptible words and deeds of Jesus could be noted by everyone contemporary with him.

The living magisterium of the Church is the college of bishops who are successors of the apostles. The apostles were chosen by Jesus as normative recipients of his revelation. He chose them both to ennoble these companions by associating them in a special way with himself, and also to provide a permanent living standard of faith as a humanly accessible criterion of the identity of the Church. This criterion guarantees the genuineness of teachings and practices as belonging to the Church rather than as counterfeit or alien importations. The magisterium thus does not invent new truths or propose new lifestyles to mankind, but only receives, interprets, guards, and hands on the living tradition which constitutes the unity of the Church. In doing its work, the magisterium must always recur to the lasting evidences of tradition, especially to Sacred Scripture, which provide a set of unalterable data which must be respected.

Christian teaching, including moral teaching, can and does develop, in the sense that its requirements become clearer and its implications for new possible actions are drawn out. However, the scope for possible development is limited from several points of view.

The central and unifying act provides a constant and permanent principle of integration; what has once been discerned to be incompatible with this principle cannot later become compatible with it. Thus, once the whole Church has believed and taught that a certain kind of act is always wrong, this teaching cannot be contradicted. Moreover, the continuity of the Church as a single community implies the unalterability of the responsibilities which arise from membership in this community. Furthermore, as we have seen in part three, the Christian conception of humankind as created precludes any sort of radical relativism; although kinds of acts defined in terms of merely instrumental goods and human institutions can change their character, acts defined by reference to basic human goods cannot.

Jesus and the apostles did not adopt the lifestyle prevalent in their day, nor were Christian converts from paganism encouraged to conform to the standards of their culture. For example, if St. Paul made use of certain stoic forms for the linguistic expression of Christian moral teaching, the content he expressed in these forms is by no means stoic.

The only ethical system which made a substantial contribution to Christian morality was that of Judaism. One might say that this was to be expected, since Jesus and the apostles were Jews. From the point of view of faith, we can better say that in his dealings with the people he chose to share in the genesis of Jesus, God provided them with a moral formation which was sound in its essentials, although it needed to be perfected by the teaching of Jesus.

From this perspective, we can evaluate suggestions which account for the development of Christian moral teaching by regarding it as a series of reac-

tions to changing challenges and human situations. Challenges and new situations do elicit development, but a variety of responses to such factors is logically possible. What determines the response which constitutes authentic development is found in the always given core of Christian life.

With respect to the givenness of this core, we must remember that even Jesus himself did not propose a teaching of his own, but communicated only and all which he received from the Father. The apostles and their successors do really receive what Jesus reveals, for otherwise the Church would not truly receive redemption and divine life. Infallibility is a divine prerogative, but just insofar as Jesus effectively reveals God and communicates divine life to the Church, the faith of the Church shares in the prerogative, and the infallibility of the Church is present in those acts of the apostolic college and its head which are such that in them the Church itself expresses and hands on its faith.

Solemn definitions clearly are acts of this sort. But the Church also infallibly expresses and hands on its faith in the consensus of the whole Church, firmly and constantly assenting to the same truths and striving to live according to the same lifestyle. In cases of doubt as to where the genuine consensus can be located, the doubt can be settled by recourse to the consensus of the apostolic college, which provides the criterion of identity for the faith of the Church: "Although the bishops individually do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim the teaching of Christ infallibly, even when they are dispersed throughout the world, provided they remain in communion with each other and the Successor of Peter and that in authoritatively teaching on a matter of faith and morals they agree in one judgment as that to be held definitively" (Lumen gentium, 25).

The common substance of received Catholic moral teaching concerning matters which constitute the stuff of grave sin meets this criterion. This very extensive body of moral teachings was proposed at least for many centuries under the authority of all the bishops of the world, in the textbooks authorized for use in seminaries where priests were trained to form the consciences of the faithful by preaching, teaching, and confessional practice. Insofar as moral norms were proposed as requirements for salvation--that is, presented as standards the violation of which by a fully deliberate and free choice would be a grave sin--these norms surely were proposed as judgments to be held definitively. Moreover, in many cases the norms in question were proposed as belonging to divine revelation either explicitly or implicitly, and so a fortiori were proposed as moral truths to be held definitively.

The fact that the moral theory outlined in part three can provide a rational account of this body of received moral teaching confirms the adequacy of that theory, many elements of which also have been proposed explicitly or implicitly in the teaching of the Church. The fact that alternative theories lead to conclusions incompatible with the received body of Catholic moral teaching is sufficient by itself to establish the inadequacy of such theories.

Especially in recent centuries the magisterium has proposed much of the body of received Catholic moral teaching as pertaining to natural law. This characterization emphasizes that this teaching consists of moral norms, not mere disciplinary requirements which might be changed by human authority. Also, calling this teaching "natural law" emphasizes that it relates to the flourishing of human persons, that it is no mere arbitrary imposition. In the light of the role which human goods have in the building up of the Kingdom of God, we can see that natural law must not be opposed to the law of the Gospel, as if the former were something altogether different from the latter, but only inasmuch as natural law is merely a subordinate part of the law of the Gospel, which receives its validation and capacity to shape Christian life only from the redemptive act of Jesus and the action of the Holy Spirit inwardly carrying out the communication of divine love.

The consensus of the whole Church, as we have seen, is an infallible witness of faith. But the opinions of persons who disagree with received teaching cannot constitute or alter the consensus of the Church. Persons are qualified as members of the faithful not by their own view of their stance nor by criteria suitable for the polls conducted by opinion-takers but by their solidarity with judgments proposed by the whole apostolic college as truths to be held definitively. It must also be recognized that the faithful at large give witness not by their statements about what they would like Christian teaching to be, but by their statements and actions which show their recognition of what this teaching in fact is, even when they refuse to accept it.

Sometimes the magisterium of the Church must render a tentative judgment on a matter relevant to Christian morality with respect to which there is no explicit received teaching and no clear consensus in the apostolic college. Whether such a judgment is proposed by an individual bishop, by a group such as a national conference of bishops, by a council not teaching definitively, or by a pope exercising only his ordinary teaching authority, such a tentative judgment cannot be recognized at once as pertaining to faith and as infallibly proposed. Nevertheless, the making of such tentative judgments does belong to the prophetic office of the leaders of the Church; in this office, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and what they say is to be accepted with religious assent.

There is a possibility for licit nonassent to such teachings. But it must be noticed that the scope for such nonassent is much narrower than has been supposed by many in recent years. For, in the first place, there can be no legitimate refusal to assent to infallible teachings, and, as we have seen, there is a substantial body of such teachings on matters of morality, which a Catholic may not reject even though these teachings are not proposed with the seal of a solemn definition. Moreover, nonassent is essentially a personal act; individuals can easily violate the requirements of prudence and give scandal if they express nonassent in public dissent, and especially if they arrogantly set themselves up as a counter-magisterium and usurp the prophetic duties of those authorized to fulfill the apostolic office. Fur-

ther, no one who acts with the authorization of the bishops has a right to exercise the duties of his office in a way which is incompatible with the authoritative teaching they propose. One who cannot meet this requirement should surrender the office to which he is appointed rather than exercise it in a way which conflicts with the authorization which has been given.

In determining the essential content of Catholic moral teaching on any particular normative issue, one should always consider <u>together</u> several converging factors: the relevant evidence from Sacred Scripture; the historical evidence of the consensus of the Church, especially of the apostolic college; the current judgment of the magisterium; and the rational considerations which can be brought to bear upon the matter. Moreover, the inquiry ought to be carried out as a sincere quest for moral truth, not merely as a legalistic quest for some loophole which might permit oneself or persons one wishes to help to do as they please without feeling guilty.

Apart from the requirement to avoid everything which would be morally evil for anyone, what special requirements are set by Christian morality? In other words, what are the positive characteristics of the Christian lifestyle which distinguish it from other possible--at least logically possible--forms of good human life?

No one can deny that there are some special, positive requirements. For example, Christians must bear witness to Jesus; they must try to communicate to others what they have received. Further, they must engage in those acts which make concrete their commitment to Christ and the transformation of their human lives into the life of the Kingdom--acts such as baptism and the Eucharist.

Moreover, everyone must admit that there are certain kinds of acts which are appropriate and advisable for Christians, even if not strictly obligatory for every Christian. These are acts in accord with the counsels especially suited to those who elect the religious lifestyle, which in a unique way manifests the Kingdom insofar as it is already realized. Since the religious lifestyle and that of other members of the Church are not contraries but only differ in focus, other members of the Church also can practice the counsels in a manner appropriate to their own conditions and states of life.

But the counsels are only means to holiness, and every Christian is called to holiness. Every follower of Jesus is called to accept the law of the cross and to participate in redemptive activity; everyone who receives divine life in Jesus is expected to live up to the exemplar of divine life--the perfection of the heavenly Father. Hence the moral teaching of Jesus contains precepts which direct Christians to a distinctive style of life.

The sorts of requirements established by these precepts can be exemplified from the set of sayings gathered together as the "Sermon on the Mount" and from related material included elsewhere in the Gospels. Jesus begins from the moral teaching given by divine instruction to the Jewish people, taking it as it was actually received by them in his day. He proceeds to deepen, rectify, refine, and transform this morality.

First, he deepens the teaching by insisting that its demands extend not

only to outward behavior, but even to the inward dispositions of one's heart. In principle, it is not impossible for humans to know this, but in practice fallen humankind easily loses sight of it.

Second, he rectifies the teaching by excluding everything which arises from human efforts to deal with the reality of evil in human life in a "realistic" way. Thus he excludes divorce which seems necessary because of human incapacity to remain faithful for a lifetime. He excludes lying (and emphasizes this by excluding the oath-taking which is only necessary because of lying) which seems legitimate only because of the lack of real will to community which alone demands sincere communication. He excludes the animosity in resisting evil which seems to be an appropriate response to the malice of others. He prescribes love of enemies, which seems irrational in view of the fact that they are enemies.

Third, he refines Jewish teaching by prescribing that Christians accept the role of servants, that they prefer the good of others to their own good, that they thus share in a concrete way in the humble work of the redemption.

Fourth, he transforms the Old Law by proposing Christian morality not as a condition for receiving the reward of the divine promises but as a creative expression of the gift of divine life which has been given.

While the literary form in which Jesus expresses himself must be taken into account and the propositions he is asserting must be disengaged by a careful interpretation which avoids exaggerating what he says, there can be no doubt that he is articulating a moral pattern of life which is obligatory for all Christians. He is not merely sketching an ideal which can be allowed to remain practically irrelevant. Nor is he to be understood as laying out an unrealistic plan of life on the mistaken assumption that the world would end shortly. The morality he proposes is for the last days, but all the days from his resurrection to his second coming in glory are the last days. Moreover, for each one of us, the world will end shortly.

Of course, it must be kept in mind that the positive precepts of Christian morality never can require anyone to do what would be humanly evil. Thus, love of enemies does not free one from a duty to protect the rights of the innocent and helpless.

Not mere reluctant testimony but energetic work in the service of the Gospel, not mere fairness in sharing scarce resources but humble self-denial, not mere stoic acceptance but patient joy in suffering--these are to characterize the lives of his followers as Jesus describes them. Moreover, he exemplifies in his own life everything which he prescribes, answering by his human performance the challenge that his demands are beyond human possibility, and providing the primary model of their fulfillment. The lives of the saints confirm that the requirements of Christian life are not altogether impractical for "ordinary" people.

We say "'<u>ordinary</u>' people" because Christians are not ordinary people and their fulfillment of the requirements of Christian morality can never be the fruit of strictly human activity. To the extent that they continue to engage in human acts, their acts must be shaped by prayer, a constant con-

scious awareness of who they are and what they have received, so that these acts really can creatively express the basic commitment of their lives. One must keep the Kingdom in mind if one's work is to contribute to its building; one must be conscious of the redemptive act of Christ if one's life is to complete it.

Moreover, the living of Christian life is not merely a matter of human action. One must constantly seek, accept, and give thanks for the work of the Holy Spirit, whom one has been given as a permanent gift and whom one has as one's own. The Christian is made docile to the activity of the Spirit by his gifts, so that he acts within the soul and in no way imposes upon the human will. Moved by the activity of the Spirit, action emanates from the Christian as more than human action--in reality, as human-divine action like that of Jesus himself.

Everything said in this part up to this point leads to the answer to the question: How do we know what we must do as Christians? Since one's best judgment as to what one ought to do is called "conscience," this question concerns the formation of the Christian conscience. (Here we use "conscience" in a broad sense, not as opposed to "prudence" as it was used in part three.)

Ideally, the Christian conscience would be formed by a consciousness of the mind of Christ, a consciousness gained through contemplating the truths of faith, constant prayer, submissiveness to the light of the Holy Spirit, a conformity of the whole of one's personality to one's basic commitment to Christ Jesus, and a careful examination of the facts with which one was confronted. One who met all of these requirements would "see" at once what to do. There would be no perplexity, nor would there be any discord between the judgment as to how one should act and the judgment to act thus. What is usually called "conscience" would not even come into play.

If a Christian is perplexed about what is right to do, the situation is less than ideal. In this case, the perplexity usually can be resolved by recourse to the Church's received moral teaching. The common and constant teaching of the Church can be followed with confidence and cannot be acted against unless one is morally certain that the teaching <u>does not</u> pertain to faith and <u>is not</u> in fact correct. In following the Church's teaching, a Catholic is not accepting an alien principle of judgment. The perplexity would not arise to begin with unless there were some division within the self, and the Catholic has identified himself or herself with the moral thought of the Church by the conscientious and free commitment to belong to the Church. In these circumstances, to follow the Church's teaching is merely to be consistent with oneself.

If in a given case there does not seem to be any definite moral teaching of the Church adequate to resolve a perplexity, then a Catholic must judge the matter for himself or herself. In making such a judgment, the likelihood that those who share the faith and who have more knowledge and experience--and especially those whose lives are marked by holiness--will be in a position to give good advice should be taken into account. Also, we are

taking for granted that the process of reflection is not shaped by a legalistic desire to discover the minimum necessary to avoid moral evil, and so no perplexity will arise if a possible course of action might gravely harm someone, give scandal, invalidate a sacrament, or the like.

In considering questions about the perplexed conscience, we must always bear in mind that the final practical judgment cannot be reached except by derivation from some principles or others. An individual does not encounter perplexity unless there is a lack of a relevant principle or a seeming conflict among principles. Once such a lack or conflict is encountered, the defect must be made up in one way or another. The suggestions made in what has preceded for the resolution of perplexity assume that one will wish to proceed with the greatest likelihood of reaching moral truth. From this point of view, once more, it is clear why the faithful Catholic clings to the Church's sacred and certain moral teaching and uses its light to form conscience.

The phrase "freedom of conscience" has been widely used in confused and misleading senses in recent years. Civil society is directed toward a limited common good; outside the field of its concerns, persons ought to be at liberty. The teaching and acceptance of a religious faith or other basic worldview does not fall within the competence of civil society. Therefore, there is a legitimate liberty of conscience and religion in relation to the claims of civil society. But in general conscience is not a principle of freedom; rather, conscience is an expression of moral obligation. The Christian, who has committed himself or herself to Christ through a conscientious act, and who has thus become a member of the Church, certainly does not have liberty in relation to the teaching of the Church in the very field comprehended by the basic commitment.

Precisely because one's judgment of conscience is--by definition--one's best judgment as to what one ought to do, one is bound to follow one's conscience, nor can anyone release a person from this obligation. However, the indispensable character of the duty to follow one's conscience provides no guarantee that one's conscience is not mistaken. If this mistake arises through no fault of the individual concerned, then one who follows an erroneous conscience is blameless. Even in this case, the blameless error can lead to serious human harm, since human acts not only realize moral goods, but also impinge upon other substantive human goods. But if one's conscience is in error through one's own fault, then one both is obliged to follow the erroneous judgment yet is not blameless in so doing.

Persons who are professionally engaged in attempting to help others--for example, physicians and clergymen--often are tempted by sympathy for those who come to them in severe distress to approve or otherwise cooperate in courses of action which injure absent third parties or otherwise violate moral requirements. One form of this temptation is the urge to give too easy and too lax moral reassurance--that is, to tell people that something they suspect is wrong will be morally acceptable for them to do. The great danger in following this urge is that people will be helped to do what they still

fear or even believe to be morally wrong.

Even if a moral mentor is personally completely confident of the correctness of the moral advice given, one must follow the teaching and example of St. Paul in being careful not to scandalize a person who cannot act with confidence of rightness. No one should overestimate his or her own power to set the consciences of others at liberty. People who have been encouraged to act with some degree of bad faith are left in a worse condition than that in which they were found, for they have a large additional obstacle to clearly discerning and admitting a guilt from which they nevertheless are not wholly free.

From the vantage point arrived at in this chapter, we can more clearly indicate what morally differentiates the human acts of a Christian. Those acts are good and right which conform to the ideally formed Christian conscience, and those acts are morally upright which are in conformity with a sincere Christian conscience, any defect in which is not one's own fault. All other acts will be wrong. Gravely wrong are those acts which one does despite one's awareness that they conflict with one's Christian conscience, and does with a fully free choice. But when one acts on impulse other than one's Christian conscience--impulses which are not integrated but which are not contrary to conscience--and when one acts without sufficient awareness and freedom, then one's acts are venially sinful. They detract from Christian life but they do not attack the love which is the principle of this life.

In part five, we will more fully explain the various conditions which can lessen the guilt of an act which otherwise would be gravely evil.

Part 5: Fallen Men and Women in a Broken World

This part will have two main sections. The first will describe the stuff of which the Kingdom is to be built. The material is human persons, beginning with ourselves, and human societies, beginning with those in which we directly participate. This material according to its own nature is very complex and is temporally processive--it develops. Furthermore, the human material from which the Kingdom is to be built is damaged; the effects of original and actual sin are present in the human.

The second section of this part will build on the descriptive base to deal with several topics. These will include a summary of the effects of sin and the problems posed by this state of affairs; the critique of psychological and sociological theories; a description of the factors which limit free choice and moral responsibility, and an account of habits, including their formation and alteration. Macroeconomic and political society includes elements of justice and community, but it also includes injustice and exploitation. Evil does not remain merely sporadic; systems must take it into account. To some extent the corruption of sin shapes every large-scale human society. Hence, although the world is influenced by the redemptive act, it is not shaped by it, and there is no reason to suppose that it ever will be. Therefore, this part will conclude with a treatment of the way in which the

community of those united with Jesus can try to survive without animosity and without compromise in the midst of the world from which this community must be alienated precisely to the extent that the world is alienated from God.

The first section will begin with a description of the human individual considered as a living body belonging to the natural world. The human person essentially is a body; bodiliness is not an accident which supervenes upon a basically spiritual reality. Thus it is erroneous to think of the human person as incarnate spirit or as spirit in the world or as conscious subjectivity using a bodily instrument. Yet the human person is a special sort of body. Hence, while every sort of dualism must be firmly rejected, so must every version of reductionism which would deny to humans the aspects of their reality by which they transcend the natural world.

Human individuals insofar as they are bodily are animate--that is, they have sensory cognition and emotion, and their behavior anticipates. Since all outward behavior consists in bodily movements and making noises, and since these must be elicited at the sensory level, the emotional dynamics of human persons must be understood. Human bodiliness also is a fundamental aspect of human limitedness and vulnerability, for every person has bodily needs and is subject to fatigue, injury, disease, and death.

As bodily realities in the natural world, humans are not isolated individuals. A man and a woman require each other to reproduce; every individual depends for a long time upon the care and protection of others; and a group of a certain size and make-up (which varies depending upon the environment and type of economy) is necessary even for bare survival.

Sexuality, understood in a broad sense to include all the functions and relations involved in the handing on of life, is one of the basic matrices for all human interaction. Individuals are largely formed through such interaction before they are able to initiate action themselves. However, sexuality is not the only matrix for human interaction; also basic is the collaborative relation of a group of peers engaged in some activity, such as a game or task. Individuals establish themselves by gaining recognition within such groups and complete themselves by belonging to them. Emotions of affection, dependence, caring, dominance, submission, self-respect, loneliness, and so on grow out of these basic situations.

Human interaction with the natural world specifies and transforms the world, marking out from the remainder of nature the artificial world of objective culture. Anthropologists distinguish the human from other animals by the evidence of objective culture--tools. Tools are objects prepared for use as instruments to attain ulterior ends. Language also is characteristic of human groups. Objective culture facilitates the collaborative acts not only of a group of persons contributing at the same time but also of groups of persons making contributions at different times.

From one point of view, objective culture tremendously increases human power and facilitates the effective service of many substantive human goods. But objective culture also incorporates human acts in a stable and detached

form. Hence, if there is anything defective about these acts, this defect also becomes stabilized and takes on a life of its own. Furthermore, as objective culture becomes more and more complicated, it gains more and more of an autonomous inner dynamics, which makes it increasingly difficult for anyone to understand the objective culture or any group to control it. The complexity of economics is an example.

Individuals are in many ways shaped by the objective culture in which they are born. One is compelled by one's basic needs to conform to the demands which the culture makes as conditions for the satisfaction of these needs; one does not have the option to satisfy needs in an alternative way which a different--perhaps simpler, but no longer extant--culture would permit. Since the means provided by one's culture facilitate the promotion of good, one must have and use such means, but one thereupon takes on the burdens of safeguarding and caring for them. Moreover, the growth of objective culture establishes an ever-increasing distance between the acts of individuals and the actual satisfaction of persons by their participation in goods. One aspect of this distance is the need to prolong education, so that individuals will be equipped to deal with increasing cultural complexity. All of these factors are subjecting contemporary men and women to psychological challenges and exposing them to temptations which are different in kind than those experienced in earlier centuries.

Individuals are not wholly passive in the face of objective culture. It is possible to reflect upon one's own and other cultures critically. Moreover, the creative or inventive insights of individuals are required for the growth and the transformation of cultures. The ability of men and women to understand universals and to appreciate human goods as open-ended possibilities ensures that humankind need never be locked into any cultural form. Radical cultural relativity is a self-defeating theory and is in fact false.

Yet the work of intelligent criticism also depends upon collaboration. Human thought, including the most basic thought, demands the creative contribution of individuals but only makes significant progress through long and extensive dialectic. Almost everything anyone thinks he or she knows is actually accepted on the testimony of others. The foundation of all thinking is a body of common sense opinion which has a strong bias toward vulgar materialism and pragmatic concerns.

If collaboration in thinking and in other human activities is to be most effective in the pursuit of truth and other goods, then those involved must accept common norms which direct their activities and coordinate them in a way likely to be conducive to the common goods. What is commonly called "law" is in part a system of norms of this sort. But much of law is only an instrumentality of the control of the less powerful by the more powerful members of society--that is, a set of orders backed up by threats. Macroeconomic and political society is neither a wholly fair system of cooperation among persons of equal dignity working together for common goods nor a totally corrupt system of exploitation. It mixes both of these inextricably in one and the same set of institutions.

The reason for this is that society originates in the basic commitments of individuals, commitments which by the medium of objective culture can continue to shape society long after the individuals are dead. Some of these commitments are morally good; others are evil. Those which are good may have been elaborated with little creative ingenuity, and so may have had little social effect. Those which are bad sometimes are worked out--for purely expediential reasons--in the form of institutions largely compatible with the collaborative acts of persons of good will. Thus the moral situation of society is very complex.

This exposition completes the first, descriptive section of the part. The second section begins with a treatment of sin and the effects of sin, and then goes on to the problems raised by the fallen condition of men and women and the brokenness of the human world. Although the distinction between original sin and the residue of subsequent sin has been made in part two, above, no effort will be made here to distinguish between the effects of sin, because even a phenomenology proceeding in the light of faith cannot sort out the effects on sin, and because such sorting, even if it were possible, would serve no practical purpose.

Sin has been considered briefly in each of the first four parts, and its nature and modes gradually clarified. Here these points will be drawn together into a more systematic treatise, and the whole filled out from Scripture and tradition.

As to the effects of sin, one of them is the nonintegration of the person. Each human capacity demands satisfaction in what is suited to it and protection from what is unsuited to it, with no regard to other aspects of the person. This state of affairs is at least one aspect of what has classically been called "concupiscence." Ideally, humankind would be in friendship with God, men and women in harmony with one another, the outward lives of individuals in harmony with their fundamental commitments, and the capacities within each individual in harmony with each other, being integrated by a good basic commitment. The lack of harmony in any sphere entails an interrelated lack of harmony in the other spheres. Hence, alienation from God leads to a basic state of dynamic conflict among the capacities of persons.

Even prior to an individual's ability to understand this situation and to deal with it, integrating tendencies within the personality, some of them working at a preconscious level, introduce some sort of relative order and stability. This dynamic stabilization of the personality and the mechanisms it involves thus confront each individual when self-awareness begins to dawn. The basic shaping of the personality will be more or less defective and will present larger or smaller obstacles to mature goodness. These obstacles depend upon many factors which are not thoroughly understood but include the degree of goodness and of integration of parents and others with whom an individual relates in infancy and early childhood.

The objective culture also includes the objectification of the defects of sinful acts. This objectification not only constitutes an impersonal form of bad example and provides numerous occasions of sin, but also facilitates

the doing of immoral acts and in many cases makes it very difficult for individuals to satisfy basic needs except by using culturally provided means which involve collaboration in immoral acts.

Furthermore, human thought is pervaded by efforts to rationalize sin. Many practical and technical disciplines prostitute intelligence for the service of complex, long-term immoral acts. Many theories proposed in the humanistic disciplines, in the social sciences, and in philosophy are ideological in character, either directly rationalizing immoral social acts or working out the implications of conceptions of human personhood adopted to exclude human freedom and responsibility. This state of affairs, together with the distorting bias to which common sense is subject, makes confusion about what is right and wrong a very important consequence of sin.

Finally, sin results in the inextricable mixture of good and evil in all social relations, institutions, and laws. All human relationships in the larger society are rendered an ambiguous mixture of exploitation and collaboration; all participation in the larger society involves a reluctant acceptance--at best--of evil embodied in it for the sake of the good which is achieved in such participation.

Many theories in contemporary psychology and sociology, together with certain theories of education and politics, largely--although not exclusively --are occupied with attempts to understand the unsatisfactory aspects of the human individual and social conditions which result from sin, and to propose "solutions" to the "problems" which are defined--solutions which can be implemented by new forms of educational practice, therapy, social control, communication, revolutionary practice, and so on and so forth. These ideological disciplines accept from Christianity the conviction that the human condition is not what it ought to be and that it can be better--the hope for redemption. But they reject the Christian account of sin and redemption. In general, they deny that human persons can make free choices. In denying this, they turn the mystery of human evil into a problem which ought to be able to be managed with sufficient technical methods once the causes of the problem are understood and the methods for altering the causal conditions are invented and refined.

In the light of faith, we must regard such disciplines, their accounts of various aspects of the human condition, and especially their practical recommendations with great critical reserve. Fundamentally, Christians should recognize that any theory which includes the rejection of free choice is an alternative to Christian faith and morality.

At the same time, there has been some work done in these same areas which has not been based upon the rejection of free choice and which is not incompatible with any other essential element of Christian anthropology. Such work must be evaluated in terms of its own conditions--what it is trying to do and the methods used for doing it. The results of such work can be of help in elaborating a more adequate Christian understanding of humankind and a more adequate plan of human life.

Even the results of studies based upon suppositions at odds with faith

contain many factual descriptions and some insights which can be disengaged and made use of in developing Christian thought. However, one must watch out for the skewing of descriptions and insights by false suppositions. Deterministic psychological theories, for example, cast a good deal of light upon those respects in which human freedom is limited and human behavior results from various determinisms, but the descriptions often conceal some data and the theories and practical proposals are inadequate and dangerous to the extent that they leave no room for divine grace and human free choice.

Still, free choice is limited--and thus sin is mitigated--in many ways. To begin with, no one can make a fundamental commitment in which free choice in the full sense is operative until he or she becomes aware of the capacity to dispose the self with respect to all human goods. In other words, children who take certain ends as fixed and unquestionable are capable of choices in the sense that they can deliberately select various means to their ends, but children only act at the first and second levels until they become aware that they can accept or reject--and establish their own order among--the human goods which have been invoked to define all the ends given to them.

Very likely, the capacity to exercise free choice and to make fundamental commitments does not emerge before early adolescence, and emerges at times which differ considerably depending upon the intelligence of individuals and the extent to which the culture offers stimulus to reflect upon basic principles of action, and either to endorse or to rebel against the ends which have been proposed.

Lack of knowledge about options or the formation of opinions which make it impossible for individuals to regard possibilities as genuine options limit choice in such a way that what cannot be practically considered simply cannot be chosen. Persons cannot freely commit themselves to participation in the redemptive act of Christ unless they have the Gospel preached to them and proposed in such a manner that the option becomes practically intelligible and somewhat attractive. Errors about right and wrong which are not the fault of the individual create perplexity of conscience and limit the ability of the individual to choose in a free and morally responsible way.

The lack of integration of the personality limits the effectiveness of basic commitments in determining behavior. Operative principles of behavior, including preconscious mechanisms, often are released with some conscious and deliberate awareness but without the making or altering of an act of fundamental self-determination. This limit of freedom, which has many aspects, has generally been called "weakness."

Objective culture and established institutions limit freedom by providing the facilities for certain modes of behavior and creating more or less grave obstacles to other modes.

In dealing with all these limits of freedom, one must notice that they limit but do not--in the case of normal adults--eliminate it altogether. For example, individuals who are addicted or locked into some form of neurotic behavior may not have freedom to refrain once the opportunity for the be-

havior is given, but they may have the ability to choose to avoid the occasion or to seek some sort of help which might alter the condition of the personality which leads to the inappropriate behavior. In each case, one is obliged to exercise the freedom one can exercise with respect to the options which are in fact available.

"Habits" normally is used to refer to behavioral mechanisms or automatisms. We have been discussing some such habits as limits upon freedom. There are also very complex patterns of behavior which can be triggered voluntarily, including such skills as driving an automobile. These are habits which can be useful, and their moral quality arises from the neutrality of the behavior involved in them and the good or bad ends for which they are used. In addition to habits of these sorts, classic moral theology distinguishes morally significant character traits. We shall call these "dispositions" rather than "habits," to distinguish them from the more elementary patternings of behavior already discussed. Morally good dispositions of character are called "virtues"; morally bad ones "vices."

Dispositions of character must be distinguished from temperamental dispositions. The latter are given factors which tend to integrate one's behavior and give one's life a personal style. They can be morally good or bad, depending upon the actions to which they incline one. Dispositions of character are not given; rather they are established by bringing other aspects of the personality into accord with one's fundamental commitment. The self-determination which is the core of any disposition of character is the taking of a certain stance toward basic human goods which establishes their relative position in one's personal hierarchy of goods.

Virtuous character and vicious character are not precise counterparts of each other. Morally good character will be thoroughly consistent, will comprehend all of a person's capacities and needs, will be open to adaptation to changing opportunities, and will promote a creative unfolding of a unique personality and style of life. Morally bad character can never be thoroughly consistent within itself; it suppresses certain aspects of the self by a kind of existential self-mutilation; it tends to rigidity and nonadaptability in the face of changing conditions and opportunities; and it leads to stereotyped behavior according to one or another recurrent pattern of immoral life. The lives of saints are always interesting and fresh; the lives of sinners, regarded closely, are standardized and dull. Superficially, the lives of neurotics and sinners resemble one another in many ways, but the unfreedom of the neurotic is a given, while the unfreedom of the sinner is a deliberately accepted compromise between the natural human desire for good and the indeterminate capacity for goods.

Naturally speaking, dispositions of character are formed by conscious efforts to engage all of one's powers in putting one's basic commitments into effect in all the opportunities which arise in one's life. Insofar as one's basic commitment is to participate in the redemptive act of Christ and this act is the vehicle of charity, the dispositions of a Christian's character also are formed by the action of the Holy Spirit who molds the personality

according to the model of Jesus.

Because human persons are social through and through, the cultivation of character in individuals requires the cooperation of a community of like-minded persons. The foundations for virtue must be consciously laid in the habits which are established in childhood, in the ideals which are proposed, and so on. The making of a basic commitment must be supported by the community, and one's efforts to integrate oneself in accord with such a commitment need the moral support of the community. The importance of positive reinforcement has perhaps been underestimated in recent Christian practice; persons need the approval and appreciation of others who share their commitment. Furthermore, the obstacles presented to an upright, Christian life by an objective culture and set of social institutions which are more or less deeply corrupt cannot be overcome by individuals acting on their own. Hence, it is essential if the morality of Christ Jesus is to be lived that Christians truly do bear one another's burdens.

In practice, this means that the small churches within the one great Church--the parishes, religious communities, fraternal organizations, and so on--need to be developed to provide the mutual support and strength of extended families. Christians must recognize the extent of the world's corruption and the impossibility of becoming well-adjusted members of it. Their living arrangements must be based upon a realistic acceptance of the fact that they must live as an alienated minority. At the same time, complete withdrawal from the larger society is impossible and would be incompatible with the mission of Christians even if it were possible. Hence, the attitude of Christian communities must be one of willingness to fulfill all just duties in the larger society, to contribute generously to any social cause which is good, to try to defend the just rights of others by nonviolent means, and to accept unjust treatment and exploitation for themselves rather than to cooperate in inflicting injustice upon others. By virtuous lives, Christians may win reluctant acceptance as relatively harmless members of the larger society; they should not hope to "make it" as part of the establishment of that society.

Part 6: Our Life: Human and Divine Life in Jesus and His Spirit

This part will be concerned with the general strategy for living Christian life. It will include the principles of ascetical and mystical theology. Emphasis will be upon the common teachings in these matters of those teachers who have been especially commended by the Church. At the same time, it will be pointed out that variations according to differences of state of life, form of community, particular mission, and ultimately unique personality dispositions are necessary. Hence the general strategy outlined will be proposed as a mere point of departure for an indispensable work of developing a personal strategy. In carrying out this work, individuals can profitably seek the help of a regular spiritual director, but no one else can replace one's own creative effort, or dispense one from personal responsibility for the decisions which will shape one's own Christian life.

Basic conversion is the fundamental act of Christian life. But basic conversion is far more a work of divine grace than a matter of human action. Hence, it pertains more appropriately to dogmatic theology than to moral theology. The most important formulation of Catholic faith concerning basic conversion is the Decree on Justification of the Council of Trent. This decree makes clear that in adults there is a role for free will, under the movement of divine grace, to accept grace and make the fundamental commitment by which one makes the redemptive act of Jesus the overarching act of one's own life. This act is carried out publicly in one's acceptance of and cooperation in the Church's administering of the sacrament of baptism, in which the seal of God's justifying work is applied to each person who is incorporated into the Church of Christ.

While basic conversion occurs in one instant, it is not a mere event which ends in the instant in which it begins. The baptismal act perdures in one's whole Christian life; all the rest can be seen as an unfolding and specification of it. Certain particular practices bear in an especially appropriate way upon the keeping and intensification of the baptismal commitment.

The goodness of God which is identical with charity is the end for the sake of which the commitment to share in the redemptive act of Jesus is made. Hence, one ought always to bear in mind the divine goodness in creating humankind, in redeeming us, and in making us cooperators in the glorious work of the building of the Kingdom. Meditation upon and praise of God's goodness must integrate consideration of the human goodness of Jesus and emotional sentiments of affection for him as a loving brother.

The hope of resurrection and an unending life of perfect divine joy and human fellowship in the completed Kingdom also will tend to help one intensify commitment.

By contrast, one must not despise created and this-worldly goods. But one must recognize the self-limiting and ultimately unsatisfying reality of a life surrendered to the satisfaction of a host of nonintegrated impulses or of a life chained to a quest for worldly success and status. One also must bear in mind the unrealism and self-destructiveness of a life lived in a struggle for illusory autonomy, domination, and the originality to transcend all standards. One is fulfilled much more perfectly be cooperating faithfully and creatively in the magnificent work of the redemption--in building up the Kingdom of God.

The reiteration and intensification of basic conversion is not only a task for individuals but a constant task of the Church and for the little churches within the one great Church. The Church does this work in the liturgy, and does it communally also in the constant effort to renew herself. Little churches must participate in these movements and foster the renewal of the baptismal commitment in their own members.

All Christians have but one vocation--the call to holiness, to share in divine life, to commit themselves to the redemptive work, to aid in building up the Kingdom. But, as we already saw in part two, there are diverse

legitimate styles of Christian life within the one community. Moreover, the concrete work which is to be done by each man and woman differs. From this point of view, we can speak of the personal vocation of each Christian or--to use a different expression for the sake of clarity--the individual mission of each Christian.

The determination of one's individual mission must be made by intelligent inquiry into one's own abilities and the needs which one might be able to serve. Active investigation ought to be carried out and the advice of others should be sought. The group of long-term commitments--for example, to marry a particular person, to engage in a certain profession, and so on--should be made consciously as one's way of living one's basic Christian commitment. They should be chosen to form a harmonious whole. An attitude of dedication to the goods at stake will dictate that one not make too many such commitments. The desire to be a complete person in oneself is at odds with the willingness to subordinate one's life in Christian service to the higher cause of building the Kingdom. Final decisions should be made only after prayer for guidance and for the strength to make a true commitment to which one will be able to remain faithful.

The sacrament of confirmation integrates one's personal commitment to one's individual Christian mission with the acceptance of this mission by the Church and the incorporation of it by the Holy Spirit into the work of the redemption.

There is the possibility and the need for the continuous unfolding or authentic development of one's individual mission. However, one must regard what one has attempted as part of a continuous work, not simply as an experiment which can be broken off and set aside. Hence, if some change in plans can be justified, this justification must be by proceeding in a way which makes sense of what one has been doing as a providential preparation for that which one next undertakes.

Commitment to the specific content of one's individual mission becomes the principle for shaping one's ascetical life. The demands of the mission, if one is really committed to it, will require self-discipline, the setting aside of alternative goods, and the undergoing of pain. If one does not encounter these requirements, then either one is not really committed to a mission or one is not taking on enough work in fulfillment of one's mission to make life as difficult as it should be.

Each state of life provides appropriate helps for individuals who are ready to undertake ascetic discipline. For example, the vows of religious life are, among other things, a considerable help in this regard. Again, the immediate presence and evident needs of one's dependents are a great help for a married man or woman.

The formation and development of good character dispositions--the virtues --is a work for the individual trying to integrate himself or herself into a perfectly effective instrument in the service of the individual mission. The works of charity toward neighbor--the practices epitomized as "almsgiving" --are carried out by giving everything one has to the fulfillment of one's

personal mission which is, after all, to the service of some human goods which will be realized in other persons and enjoyed by them. One effectively loves one's enemies by furthering the goods to which one is dedicated in the wider society, from which the Christian must remain to some extent alienated, as well as within Christian communities in which the Christian is at home among friends.

Because one is not perfectly integrated, one will be tempted at times to betray one's basic commitment. If one does so, the sacrament of penance is absolutely necessary as a kind of second baptism to reinstate basic conversion. ("Absolutely necessary" must be understood correctly to allow for forgiveness of sin by perfect contrition.)

Far more often, one will fail to live up to one's basic commitment and will engage in acts with diminished responsibility which would destroy the basic Christian commitment if they were done with full freedom. Such sins arise from various sources. First, one's impulses are not fully integrated. Second, one is tempted to strive after success and selfish fulfillment in one's work, rather than to conduct it always with an attitude of dedicated service. Third, affection and sympathy toward those for whom one is responsible can tempt one to make compromises. Fourth, the high demands of Christian perfection can lead one to try to limit one's obligations to a certain set of definite acts, thus avoiding a more generous attempt to fulfill responsibilities. Short of perfection, every Christian's motives always are somewhat mixed; this situation can be taken as an excuse for accepting venial sin as inevitable and no longer striving to overcome it.

But the Christian is bound to continue to strive for perfection. In this effort, the sacrament of penance serves an important, ordinary function in Christian life. God permits venial sin, rather than perfecting those to whom he communicates his life all at once, since in this way each person can help Jesus carry out the work of his or her own redemption. One brings to the sacrament of reconciliation one's disintegrity, one's regret, one's suffering with one's own imperfection, and receives endorsement of one's fundamentally sound commitment and transformation of one's inadequacies into a genuine participation in the sufferings of Jesus. Moreover, the realistic recognition of the extent of one's own sinfulness prevents one from forgetting one's total dependence upon the mercy and grace of God.

The effort to overcome venial sin must be a continuous struggle. In case the matter is grave, the struggle can be especially painful, since the penitent (by hypothesis) remains fundamentally committed to Christ yet easily recognizes the gravity of the matter. Such a person truly works out his or her salvation "in fear and trembling." In all cases of venial sin, but in cases especially in which there is grave matter, one must make every realistic effort to change the conditions in which failure occurs or to alter oneself. The possibility of progress must never be surrendered. Both confessor and penitent must realize that underlying conditions of personality--for example, rebelliousness against authority or evasion of the demand for higher levels of spiritual growth--may underlie the moral fixation involved in a

habit of sin in one ordinarily eager to please God.

Those who wish to avoid sin and to escape from a pattern of life in which it is practically inevitable often are confronted with real problems which require financial or other practical help to resolve. The resources of Christians ought to be made available most readily in this charitable work. It seems obvious that assistance to fellow Christians who are trying to escape sin should take priority over some traditional forms of charity, especially when even the larger society accepts responsibility for satisfying certain human needs of a more obvious sort.

The fruits of each individual's personal mission are incorporated into the common work of the Church and transformed into a contribution to the building up of the Kingdom of God through the Mass and the Eucharist. Here the redemptive act of Jesus is made present, the work of human hands is offered in unity with it, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit changes our offering into the Body of Christ and returns this gift to us as the principle of our further transformation in Christ. The liturgy of the Eucharist is the supreme public prayer of the Church.

But individuals must not limit themselves to liturgical prayer. Each Christian requires an appropriate personal life of prayer and devotion. Only such personal prayer and devotion can touch every aspect of the complex reality of each unique individual and so bring the wholeness of the individual into unity with the liturgical prayer which is the common center. The lack of individual prayer and devotion is one reason why various efforts have been made in recent years to "personalize" the Mass; those engaged in these well-intentioned efforts have tended to forget that in making them they impose individual styles of prayer and devotion on the community at large, many of whose members do not find the "individualized" liturgy congenial.

Personal or private devotion need not be altogether individualistic. It can take the form of traditional devotions such as the saying of the rosary, the making of the Stations of the Cross, the carrying on of novenas in common. It also can take the form of the small, voluntary prayer group, or the special retreat for a small community or group who share some common interests.

Personal and private devotion can and should emphasize individual relationships with Jesus, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, with the holy angels, and with particular saints. The intensification of relationships of human fellowship with heroic models in the redemptive work will help each individual fulfill his or her personal mission better. Moreover, the prayer of intercessors is an effective help in living the Christian life.

In private meditative prayer, one converses intimately with God, makes the hidden reality of the Kingdom psychologically real for oneself, and so keeps oneself present to God and to one's own authentic Christian self. As one's life of prayer develops, the soul becomes--at least from time to time--more receptive and less active, as one listens to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit and allows them to take full possession of one's heart and to penetrate one's entire self.

One should not seek in prayer to achieve a mere personal experience--a certain state of mind, a certain feeling of peace or exaltation. To pursue experience in this sense is always wrong; it substitutes the felt side for the reality of participation in a good. Nevertheless, genuine conversation with the Lord naturally carries with it consolation, peace, and joy, and these experienced gifts must not be despised.

Just as one who loves any friend wishes at times to be present with that friend and to feel the friend's presence, so all who love God desire not only to be united with him but even to feel the presence in oneself of the divine persons. The mystics testify that God gives himself very generously to some souls in precisely this way; this gift is the core of Catholic mysticism, to which the more spectacular manifestations of divine activity are incidental. Moreover, it seems fitting and it seems to be the case that authentic experience of the presence and activity in the soul of God--that is, of the divine persons--is not reserved to a few, but in various degrees and forms is given to everyone who loves God and who constantly seeks to please him. Charismatic prayer, for example, apparently provides for many who share in it a genuine experience of the immediate presence and working of the Holy Spirit.

The normal pattern of Christian life will involve ups and downs, as does any personal relationship. But if progress is being made, the difficulties and trials--although not less severe or painful as time passes--will be at a more profound level, a level of deeper intimacy. The self becoming more and more intimately united with Jesus will be more and more content to accept his Father's will, to share the sufferings of the heart of Jesus, and to respond to the gentle promptings of his Holy Spirit.

At the same time, the outward life of the Christian can be expected to deteriorate. The world ever persecutes Christians and more bitterly attacks those who are more perfect. Steadfastness in dedicated commitment and unwillingness to compromise will lead to disappointment and defeat in many projects undertaken because of one's personal mission. The beatitudes clarify this situation and show its relationship to the unfolding of the hidden Kingdom.

Finally, continuous progress toward ever more intimate union with the sufferings and death of Jesus prepares the Christian for his or her own ultimate human passion and death. The sacrament of last anointing consecrates the Christian's body for death and for perfect unity with Jesus. And so the Christian is prepared for the second coming of our Lord, when all who have died with him shall rise with him in glory, to live in the perfect divine joy and human fellowship of the Kingdom, forever and ever. Amen.