

Towards an Inclusive Vision for Moral Theology Part II: An Agenda for the Future

James F. Keenan

Abstract: In this article, which follows Part 1 published in the previous number of *Pacifica*, the author argues that that we need to reintegrate moral and practical theology so that the ordinary life of the Church addresses not only the matters that we should avoid but also the matters we should pursue. "We must propose to the Church ways to improve the character of our membership as ethically embodying the Gospel. Above all we must highlight how we are responsible for developing our relationality with God, nature and neighbour." As a particular case, the author focuses on the church's failure to respond to violence against women.

1. MY PREMISE

CALLING OUR ATTENTION to the need to correct an enormous oversight, Charles Curran opens his new book with these words: "Catholic moral theology in the past has paid little or no explicit attention to the church and its influence on the discipline."¹ I agree with Curran and argue that now, more than ever, Catholic moral theologians need to address the life of the Church.

We must more self-consciously acknowledge the ecclesiastical responsibilities that fall to us as a result of our training, competency and profession. Indeed, much of the extraordinary growth in the writing of moral theologians, today, results from the declericalisation of morals and from the variety of points of view that were never really entertained by clerical theologians before. But these contributions that directly affect ethicists and their students must be directed to Church members and leaders as well.²

1. Charles E. Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1999) 1; for an example of how differing ecclesiologies influenced moral theologians at the beginning of this century see his *The Origins of Moral Theology in the United States: Three Different Approaches* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1997).

2. On the change from clergy to lay theologians, see Richard McCormick, "Moral Theology 1940-1989: An Overview", *Theological Studies* 50 (1989) 3-24.

For instance, in *Practice What You Preach: Virtues, Ethics and Power in the Lives of Pastoral Ministers and Their Congregations*, twenty-three Christian ethicists engage the ethics of their respective churches. Contributors discuss the screening of seminary candidates and subsequent promotion processes, pay scales and the treatment of women religious, the ethics of intercommunion and inclusive language. These contributors look at a variety of Church practices and ask the question, "but are they ethical?"³

In another book, *Catholic Moral Theology in the Service of HIV Prevention*, thirty-six moralists – six from each continent – talk about their local problems with HIV prevention and the moral theological resources that could be used to help Catholic communities understand that the moral tradition exists not to impede preventative measures against HIV but to promote them.⁴

We moralists need to remind one another that our competency in moral theology is not only for the academy (would that we accomplished something there!) but also for the church. We must realise how political (in the full Aristotelian sense of the word) we should be. Unfortunately, however, we moralists present ourselves as thinkers instead of as practical theologians aware of church polity.

In saying this, I do not deny at all the magisterial authority of our episcopal leadership, but I insist on the authority that moral theologians have as well. We must exercise that authority by addressing what our church teaches as moral theology and how it practices its mission.

Here I think of the recent investigations of theologians like Tissa Balasuriya, Anthony DeMello and, more recently, Jacques Dupuis. While many debated the proper theological and canonical standards for these cases, moralists needed to pose the question of whether ethical imperatives are equally observed. Similarly, in questions about women and leadership in the church, we must ask not only what our ecclesiology permits but also what ethics demands.

One of the great interests among ethicists today is how can we respect local culture while observing universal standards. That very important question, which will be raised throughout the next century, must be applied to the church: though it has its own local culture which is shaped by its practices and canons, still, fundamental universal standards must serve as critical tools for analysing church conduct. Not only are universal ethical standards available, however; there is within the church's own ethical tradition a rich legacy that needs to be critically applied to the exercise of power and authority in the church today. This

3. James F. Keenan and Joseph Kotva, *Practice What You Preach: Virtues, Ethics, and Power in the Lives of Church Ministers and Their Congregations* (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999).

4. James F. Keenan with Lisa Sowle Cahill, Jon Fuller, and Kevin Kelly, *Catholic Moral Theology in the Service of HIV Prevention* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000).

essay, then, is written in the hope of creatively engaging the ecclesial context in which we live and in which we propose our understanding of ethics.

We need to reintegrate practical theology so that the ordinary life of the church addresses not only the matters that we should avoid, as moral theology has taught for the past four hundred years, but also the matters we should pursue, as ascetical theology has taught us for the past four hundred years. We need to reintegrate what moral theologians separated for four hundred years so that we have a view of the whole person in the whole Church along with an understanding of the whole call of being a disciple of Christ.

2. A LITTLE HISTORY OF THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS

Previously, I have argued that the most important task for contemporary moral theologians is to repair the harm done by those theologians who from the seventeenth century until Vatican II argued that moral theology should only address matters of sin, that is, matters which we should avoid and not, matters of spiritual betterment. The latter, moralists argued, was for ascetical and not moral theology. Here, I want to argue that this work of integrating the two into one practical theology has begun and will continue well into the next century.

This century's major reformers each turned to ascetical theology when they tried to *amplify* the task of moral theology which had the long-standing, singular purpose of knowing, describing and parsing sin. They did this by culling some of the work of Aquinas and integrating it into the positive, relational concerns of ascetical theology. The first was Dom Odon Lottin, who wrote his monumental work, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles* tracing the historical development of scholastic thought, challenging classicist moralists like Slater about their objectivist notions of moral truth as universal, eternal, and immutable. By focusing on the human as knower and judge, Lottin offered a view of the moral person as a self-directed agent. This model was strikingly different from Slater's which was directed at the humble penitent. Later, Lottin would turn his historical research into an extraordinarily positive and goal oriented text, *Morale Fondamentale*.⁵

Fritz Tillman, a scholar who left biblical theology because it was too controversial, became a moral theologian and developed in the thirties a moral theology based on the scriptures. He proposed the discipleship of Christ as the fundamental moral role for all Christians, integrating spirituality with morality throughout the text and overriding the notion

5. Odon Lottin, *Psychologie et morale aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, 6 Tomes (Louvain: Abbaye du Mont Cesar, 1942-57); *Morale Fondamentale*, (Tournai: Desclée, 1954). See Mary Jo Iozzio, *Self-Determination and the Moral Act: A Study of the Contributions of Odon Lottin, O.S.B.* (Leuven: Peeters, 1995).

that morals are exclusively concerned with sin.⁶ Undoubtedly one of the most important works of the century, Gerard Gilleman's *The Primacy of Charity*, proposed an explicit spirituality-based moral theology.⁷ Under the influence of René Carpentier, Gilleman wanted to retrieve the Thomistic notion of charity as the gift of a fundamental union between God and the human being. From that union of love, Gilleman proposed a deeply animated, motivated and affective moral theology. The moral philosopher Josef Pieper published his *Four Cardinal Virtues*, an extraordinarily popular work, and described them in the language of ordinary life that we find in ascetical theology.⁸ Bernard Häring followed Tillmann and reconstructed all of moral theology, basing it on the ascetical response to Christ's call. Häring turned right to the *imitatio christi* as the context for his discipleship ethics, emphasising the virtues throughout his *Law of Christ*.⁹ Josef Fuchs followed Lottin in developing a positive goal-oriented ethics and provided the foundations for what would later be called an autonomous ethics.¹⁰ Finally, Louis Janssens pursued the notion of moral truth in a personalist context.¹¹

This entire movement would later be validated by the Second Vatican Council, which demanded that moral theology's "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,"

6. Fritz Tillman, *Die katholische Sittenlehre; die Idee der Nachfolge Christi*, (Düsseldorf: L. Schwann, 1934); *Handbuch der katholischen Sittenlehre* (Düsseldorf : L. Schwann, 1934-1938); *Die Verwirklichung der Nachfolge Christi* (Düsseldorf : L. Schwann, 1935-1936); *The Master Calls: A Handbook of Christian Living* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960).

7. Gerard Gilleman, *Le primat de la charité en théologie morale : essai méthodologique* (Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1952); *The Primacy of Charity* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959).

8. Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966).

9. Bernard Häring, *Das Gesetz Christi : Moralthologie, dargestellt für Priester und Laien* (Freiburg im Breisgau: E. Wewel, 1958); *The Law of Christ* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1961); *Free and Faithful in Christ: Volumes 1-3* (New York: Crossroad, 1978-81).

10. Josef Fuchs, *Situation und Entscheidung: Grundfragen Christlicher Situationsethik* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1952); *Natural Law: A Theological Investigation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965); *Human Values and Christian Morality* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970); *Personal Responsibility and Christian Morality* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1983); *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1984); *Christian Morality: The Word Becomes Flesh* Trans. by Brian McNeil (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987); *Moral Demands and Personal Obligations* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1993); *Für eine menschliche Moral* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997). See my "Josef Fuchs at Eighty", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 59 (1993) 204-10. Reprinted in *Theology Digest* 42 (1995): 137-140; "Josef Fuchs and the Question of Moral Objectivity in Roman Catholic Ethical Reasoning", *Religious Studies Review* 24 (1998) 253-8.

11. Louis Janssens, "Personalist Morals", *Louvain Studies* (1970-1) 5-16; "Ontic Evil and Moral Evil", *Louvain Studies* 4 (1972-3) 115-156; "Norms And Priorities in a Love Ethics", *Louvain Studies* 6 (1976-7) 207-238; "Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Question of Proportionality", *Louvain Studies* 9 (1982-3); "Ontic Good and Evil: Premoral Values and Disvalues", *Louvain Studies* 12 (1987) 62-82.

(*Optatam Totius*, 16). That charge to moral theologians was precisely the charge that ascetical writers performed for the previous eight centuries. In sum, the renewal of moral theology developed from its theologians seeking to integrate ethics into an ascetical vision.

3. SETTING AN AGENDA FOR THE NEXT CENTURY WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE DARK SIDE OF ASCETICAL THEOLOGY

In endorsing the need to appropriate from ascetical theology some of its insights for an integrated vision of moral theology, we need to acknowledge the darker side of ascetical theology. However, that darker side comes characteristically from the same period as the moral manuals, that is, from the seventeenth century to Vatican II. Compared with the contemporary moral manuals, that kind ascetical theology still provided a richer, deeper, affectively strong, practical theology. However, certain real problems emerged from it.

While the twelfth century marked the discovery of the self and the thirteenth celebrated evangelisation and with it the birth of the renaissance leading up to the age of discovery in the sixteenth century, the subsequent centuries were an institutionalisation of the foregoing. Rather than the new, the creative, and the exceptional, the neo-scholastic texts from the seventeenth to the twentieth century generally demonstrated a distinct preference for the universal, the eternal, and the immutable. If the language of virtue characterised the twelfth through sixteenth centuries, the language of law dominated the later ones. In this context, the conscience, which was so powerfully promoted and defended by Thomas Aquinas, Erasmus, and Ignatius Loyola, is in most later texts inhibited and reduced to subservience.

Virtue still appeared in the context of law, but it functioned not as a guide to human flourishing, but rather as a restraint. For instance, the virtue of prudence functioned from the twelfth to the sixteenth century as the practical, self-directing wisdom for consistently moving forward; from the seventeenth century on, it was the virtue of caution, reluctance, and self-restraint.¹²

The christological images that these ascetical writings promoted also contributed to this inhibiting anthropological vision. In later devotional literature, the understanding of the imitation of Christ remained quite introverted. From the humble one born in a manger, to the pious one who sought prayerful places, to the obedient one in the garden or the patient one on the cross, Catholic devotional literature for the last three centuries has found plenty of virtuous images of the humble, obedient, pious, patient Christ for the pietist reader. But those images did not

12. John Treloar, "Moral Virtue and the Demise of Prudence in the Thought of Francis Suarez", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 65 (1991) 387-405.

include the Christ who fed, taught, healed (on the Sabbath!), served, welcomed the stranger, and so on.

Thus, virtues dealing with human flourishing, imagination, justice and fairness, friendship and personal growth appeared almost exclusively in the earlier ascetical texts, where there was a richer and more active Christological vision. But later the obedient Jesus who became the reigning "Christ the King" wanted ancillary like obedience, patience, chastity, meekness, steadfastness and temperance, virtues that served to help us carry out his commands. They controlled the human spirit, harnessed human passions and sublimated any sense of personal uniqueness.

Though we are familiar with the triumphalist ecclesiology of this period we should recognise that, not only did the decisions of the hierarchy foster the ethos that predominated during this time, but also the moral and ascetical texts did as well. In particular, the anthropological identity that the ascetical texts offered harnessed women with a piety that served well the patriarchal world that the hierarchical Church actively promoted.

Women were and are routinely and systematically ignored for their leadership and sanctity. For instance, between the years 1000 and 1900, 87% of those who were canonised saints were men.¹³ Women were not only overlooked, but the model of virtue that was proposed to them was designed to "keep them in their place". Exploring the "social dynamics of virtue", Anne E. Patrick remarks on the process of canonising Maria Gorretti and notes the underlying anthropological vision that was proposed: maintaining a woman's own sexual purity was more important than any other task she could perform; if necessary she should die for the cause. Against that iconography, Patrick invites us to explore an entirely different notion of virtue, embodied for instance in the intelligence, vision, and care for the marginalised as witnessed in the life of Dorothy Day.¹⁴

The ascetical theology of the last three centuries also provided a virtual stranglehold on the passions as well. While Hildegard, Julian of Norwich, Ignatius Loyola, and Lanspergius looked to the passions to discover how intimacy with Christ could be achieved, more recent texts singularly aimed to control them. Patricia Beattie Jung has convincingly argued that moral theology needs to attend to the deep rich energetic roots that the passions provide, for the passions offer to us their own

13. Philip Sheldrake "Spirituality in History: A Social Perspective", *The Way Supplement: Spirituality and Social Issues* 63 (1988) 38-50, at 45.

14. Anne E. Patrick, "Narrative and the social dynamics of virtue", Dietmar Mieth and Jacques Pohier (eds.), *Changing Values and Virtues* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987) 69-80.

rich way of absorbing and grasping the highly-charged, relational world in which we live.¹⁵

Finally, since the ascetical manuals of the past three centuries were as inhibiting as the moral manuals, they were also hardly relational. While Jean Gerson, Desiderius Erasmus and Martin Luther, for instance, stressed the virtue of neighbour-love, later ascetical texts were much more concerned with protecting oneself prudentially than aiding one's neighbour. In fact, many texts warned readers to be very careful of the company they kept.

One could illustrate the difference between the earlier and later ascetical theology from the fact that the former recommended hospitality, while the latter hardly mentioned it. Those earlier writings reflected the hospitality that we find in the Scriptures and in the early church practices. Similarly, contemporary attempts to reflect on the virtue and practice of hospitality in the Christian tradition almost always return to scriptural narratives and injunctions and early church practices.¹⁶ Earlier ascetical theology, then, was relational, positive, embodied, and self-directing; later ascetical theology was not.

As we look forward toward a more integrated vision of moral/ascetical theology, I suggest three important contemporary trends for the future of moral theology: autonomous ethics from Europe, virtue ethics from the United States, and liberation ethics from Latin America.

15. Patricia Beattie Jung, "Sanctification: An Interpretation in Light of Embodiment", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 11 (1983) 75-94; see also, Paul Lauritzen, "Emotions and Religious Ethics", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988) 307-24.

16. For the most part, the best work on the topic of hospitality looks to the early church where the spiritual theology animated the moral imperative to welcome the stranger, see John Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981); David Gowler, "Hospitality and Characterization in Luke 11:37-54", *Semeia* 64 (1994) 213-251; L. Gregory Jones, "The Virtues of Hospitality (2 Kgs 4:8-17; Lk 10:38-42)", *Christian Century* 109: (1992) 17-24; E. A. Judge "The Quest for Mercy in Late Antiquity", in P. T. O'Brien (ed.), *God who is Rich in Mercy* (Sydney: Macquarie University Press, 1986) 107-121; James Keenan, "Hospitality", *Virtues for Ordinary Christians* (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1996) 106-111, and "Jesuit Hospitality?", in Martin Tripole (ed.), *Promise Renewed: Jesuit Higher Education for a New Milenium* (Scranton: Scranton Univeristy Press, 1999); John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), and "New Testament Hospitality", *America* 155 (1986) 6; Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Victor Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22 (1992) 3-11, and "Hospitality and Hostility in Judges 4", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 (1991) 13-21; Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Thomas Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Fortress Press, 1985); Parker Palmer *A Company of Strangers* (New York: Crossroad, 1986); Robin Scroggs, "The Social Interpretation of the New Testament", *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980) 164-179; Marta Sordi, *The Christians and the Roman Empire* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986). For me, the finest account was in Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton: Princeton Univedrsity Press, 1996). For the most insightful argument for a new direction in the practice of hospitality, see Christine Pohl, "Hospitality from the Edge: The Significance of Marginality in the Practice of Welcome", *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (1995) 121-36.

Before we proceed, let me note here that most of my argument is written from a feminist perspective. I am seeking to outline an integrated, embodied ethics that is suspicious of any historical retrieval that does not discern the difference between patriarchal and egalitarian-feminist paradigms of ethics.¹⁷ This ethics insists on the primacy of an individual's experience while claiming a constitutively relational anthropology and endorsing the option for the poor. In short I am maintaining that the future of fundamental moral theology is constitutively feminist.¹⁸

4. THE AUTONOMOUS CHRISTIAN

Undoubtedly, the most important contribution out of Europe these last twenty years is an autonomous ethics in the context of faith.¹⁹ This ethics, which uses the insights of Lottin, Tillman and Fuchs, rests on an ethical and a theological claim.²⁰ First, all moral reasoning must be arguable and communicable, that is, ethics is not a matter of fiat or obedience, but of understanding, truth and judgment. As an *ethical* claim, the autonomy of moral reasoning refers, then, to the rational character of moral statements. Second, because we are created in the image of God and redeemed by Christ, we can only take our call to discipleship seriously if we acknowledge the primacy of the conscience and the individual Christian responsibility to form it. As a *theological* claim, then, the autonomy of moral reasoning holds that the specificity of Christian ethics cannot be primarily found in specific moral teachings, but rather in its promotion of the personal conscience where God animates the person to follow Christ. As a thesis about *Church teaching*, then, the autonomy of moral reasoning helps protect the conscience from being overthrown by any outside authority, in general or the

17. Anne E. Patrick, *Liberating Conscience: Feminist Explorations in Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1996). See also her "Power and Responsibility: Changing Paradigms of Virtue [patriarchal and egalitarian-feminist paradigms]", William O'Brien, (ed.), *Jesuit Education and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Washington, DC: Georgetown UP, 1990) 31-49;

18. A helpful reader on this enormous topic is Charles E. Curran, Margaret A. Farley, and Richard A. McCormick (eds.), *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996). For an integrated theory see Christina Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, forthcoming); Denise Lardner Carmody, *Virtuous Woman: Reflections on Christian Feminist Ethics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).

19. See our extended discussion of this in Keenan and Thomas Kopfensteiner, "Moral Theology out of Western Europe", *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 107-35.

20. See the recent collection of Auer's work; in particular, "Die Bedeutung des Christlichen bei der Normfindung", *Zur Theologie der Ethik*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1995) 208. His interest in the thesis from an ecclesiological perspective stems from an early article "Nach dem Erscheinen der Enzyklika "Humanae vitae" – Zehn Thesen über die Findung sittlicher Weisungen", *Theologische Quartalschrift* 149 (1969) 78-85; the classical work remains his *Autonome Moral und christlicher Glaube* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1984).

magisterium, in particular. The Church's teaching must be made plausible by dialogue and rational argument to all people of good will.

In pursuing the agenda of autonomy, a responsible ethics locates the conscience as the privileged point of departure for determining right conduct, but it does so appreciating the dangers of subjectivity. Brian Johnstone locates the responsible conscience between two extremes: a conscience that makes up its own moral values solipsistically and a submissive conscience that simply heeds the "objective" law.²¹ Johnstone names this midpoint between the Scylla of subjectivism and the Charybdis of objectivism, "critical conscience within a living tradition".²²

While I think of bioethics – for instance, Norman Ford's *When did I begin?* – and when I think of the Australian contribution to moral theology, reading Johnstone I realise that, as the Europeans have promoted an autonomous ethics, the Australians have promoted the primacy of the conscience. Johnstone has already established himself in the field,²³ but I can think of the early writings of Eric D'Arcy,²⁴ the famous lecture tapes of Walter Black, as well as the written work of Thomas J. Connolly,²⁵ William Daniel,²⁶ Terence Kennedy,²⁷ and Gerald Gleeson,²⁸ together with the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference "Pastoral Letter to Priests" in September, 1974. These writers define the primacy of the conscience specifically in the context of being mature Christians called in faith to make their lives a vital response to Christ's call of discipleship. They understand conscience as "inextricably connected with commitment."²⁹

21. Marciano Vidal, "Conciencia", *Diccionario de ética teológica* (Navarra: Estella, 1991) 107. See Patricia Lamoureux's thoughtful critique, "The Criterion of Option for the Poor and Moral Discernment: The Vision of Marciano Vidal", *Louvain Studies* 21 (1996) 261-87.

22. Brian Johnstone, "Solidarity and Moral Conscience: Challenges for our Theological and Pastoral Work", *Studia Moralia* 31 (1993) 65-85, at 85.

23. Brian Johnstone, "The Experience of Conversion and the Foundations of Moral Theology", *Eglise et Théologie* 15 (1984) 183-202; "Moral Experience in the test of history", *Eglise et Théologie* 16 (1985) 319-38; "Learning through Suffering: The Moral Meaning of Negative Experience", Raphael Gallagher and Brendan McConvery (ed.), *History and Conscience* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1989); "Erroneous Conscience in *Veritatis Splendor*", in Joseph Selling and Jan Jans (eds.), *The Splendor of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made by Veritatis Splendor* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1995) 114-35.

24. Eric D'Arcy, *Conscience and its Right to Freedom* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

25. Thomas Connolly, "Hospital Policy and Individual Conscience", in Neil Brown (ed.), *Faith and Culture: Issues for the Australian Church* (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1982) 114-41.

26. William J. Daniel, "AIDS and the Use of Prophylactics", *The Australian Catholic Record* 65 (1988) 330-42 and "Towards a Theology of Procreation", *Pacifica* 3 (1990) 61-86.

27. Terence Kennedy, "L'Idée Coscienza Morale secondo San Tommaso D'Aquino" and "Coscienza e Scienza: Michael Polanyi e la Lotta per la Libertà intellettuale" in M. Nalepa and T. Kennedy (eds.), *La Coscienza Morale Oggi* (Edecal: Rome, 1987).

28. Gerald Gleeson, "When a Good Conscience Errs", *Pacifica* 8 (1995) 53-73; and "The Moral Life as Christian Vocation", *The New Catechism* (Manly, NSW: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1994) 69-78.

29. Johan Taelis, "Ethics and Subjectivity: A Reversal of Perspective", *Ethical Perspectives* 2 (1995) 165-80. Other important works on conscience include Paul Valadier,

Borrowing from Pope John Paul II, Johnstone introduces "solidarity" to consider this social formation of the conscience and argues that a proper notion of conscience requires one to "think with the other", especially the oppressed, in order to challenge critically the established forms of domination and to become self-purifying through self-criticism.

Johnstone's insight that the conscience stands in solidarity with others gives evidence of a significant shift in autonomous ethics over recent years.³⁰ While arguing that the moral task for each person is to realise in conscience the anthropological gifts that we have been given, these moral theologians insist that we are constitutively relational and that that relationality is with nature, God and humanity. Let me briefly look at these three ways of being in relation.

Our interaction with nature reflects both our responsibility for nature (of which we always remain part) and our ability to mould nature in light of human purposes.³¹ Our interventions in nature, in other words, will reflect our commitment to respect and enhance the conditions for future human action in the world. This insight of the Europeans has enormous repercussions for the growing field of environmental ethics.

Our relatedness to God begins with the recognition that we are created in God's image. In particular, being in the image of a triune God means that our nature is, like God's, constitutively relational. The ramifications of this were noted in the twelfth century by Richard of St Victor and in the twentieth century by Catherine LaCugna³² and Margaret Farley.³³ Recently, Edward Vacek has argued that relationship with God is not primarily elective, but originally natural: each person as

Éloge de la conscience (Paris: Seuil, 1994); Jean-Yves Calvez, "Au Centre de la morale, la conscience", *Lumen Vitae* 49 (1994) 261-70. For an interesting discussion on erroneous conscience see Josef Fuchs, "Was heißt 'Irriges Gewissen'", *Für eine menschliche Moral* (Freiburg: Herder, 1997) 54-64; James Keenan, "Can a Wrong Action Be Good? The Development of Theological Opinion on Erroneous Conscience", *Eglise e Théologie* 24 (1993) 205-21; Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Wahrheit, Werte, Macht: Prüfsteine der pluralistischen Gesellschaft* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993); Werner Wolbert, "Problems Concerning Erroneous Conscience", *Studia Theologica* 50 (1996) 162-175; "Probleme mit dem irrigen Gewissen", *Fundamente der Theologischen Ethik* 313-41.

30. See the important survey by Franz Furger, "Christlich-theologische Ethik-angefragt und in Frage gestellt", *Theologie der Gegenwart* 39 (1996) 209-34.

31. Klaus Demmer, "Natur und Person: Brennpunkte gegenwärtiger moraltheologischer Auseinandersetzung", Bernhard Fraling (ed.), *Natur im ethischen Argument*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1990) 64-70. See also, Enrico Chiavacci, "Für eine Neuinterpretation des Naturbegriffs", Dietmar Mieth (ed.), *Moraltheologie im Abseits? Antwort auf die Enzyklika 'Veritatis Splendor'*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1994) 110-28; Philipp Schmitz, "Natur im ökosystematischen Denken", *Natur im ethischen Argument*, 110-112.

32. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

33. Margaret Farley, "New Patterns of Relationship: Beginnings of a Moral Revolution", *Theological Studies* 36 (1975): 627-46. She also develops this in "Fragments for an Ethic of Commitment in Thomas Aquinas", David Tracy (ed.), *Celebrating the Medieval Heritage: a Colloquy on the Thought of Aquinas and Bonaventure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 135-55.

creature must rediscover her connectedness to God.³⁴ This is not simply a religious call, but an ethical challenge.

To discuss our relationship with fellow human beings, I will turn to the virtues, but in concluding this section, I want to note that moralists must, for the next century, advance the claims of the Christian conscience not only by defending its primacy and insisting on its social dimension, but also by providing clear accessible tools that help people from a variety of backgrounds form their own consciences. Moralists must develop a variety of pedagogical skills in order to help others understand better the call to form and heed their consciences.

Moreover moralists must remind hierarchical leaders of their responsibility to awaken in the community of faith an understanding of the demands of conscience. This means not that they provide church members with a list of rules to obey, but rather that they preach and teach, as Paul and Aquinas did, the primacy of conscience as an identifiable trait of being Christian.³⁵

5. DEVELOPMENT OF VIRTUES

Though often unacknowledged, the recent retrieval of virtue ethics is certainly indebted to the work of ascetical theology.³⁶ As Slater and other ethicists noted, ascetical theology alone promoted the virtues as positive dispositions for Christian growth. Not surprisingly, then, any return to the virtues would prompt eventually an historical turn to the ascetical theology that sustained them during these last four centuries.³⁷

Not only are the virtues a natural expression of the moral life that could evolve from an ascetical theology, but they also provide Christians with a healthy program for conscience formation. Yet, these virtues must take into account the relationality of human nature. A

34. Edward Collins Vacek, "Love for God: Is It Obligatory?" *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, (Chicago: Society of Christian Ethics, 1996) 203-221; "The Eclipse of Love for God", *America* (March 9, 1996) 13-16.

35. Demmer, Klaus "La Competenza normativa del magistero ecclesiastico in morale", in: *Fede Cristiana e Agire Morale*, edd. Klaus Demmer and Bruno Schüller (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 1980) 144-169; Fuchs, "Teaching Morality: The Tension between Bishops and Theologians within the Church", *Christian Ethics in a Secular Arena* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1984) 131-153; Hughes, Gerard *Authority in Morals* London: Sheed and Ward, 1978); McCormick, "Bishops as Teachers and Jesuits as Listeners", *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 18.3 (1986). Similarly, see the questions raised in James Torrens, "A New Form of Papal Teaching", *America* (April 3, 1999) 19-20.

36. See my "Catholic Moral Theology, Ignatian Spirituality, and Virtue Ethics: Strange Bedfellows", *Supplement to the Way: Spirituality and Ethics* 88 (1997) 36-45. In the same issue, 26-35, in her "Virtue Ethics and Its Significance for Spirituality", Jean Porter claims that moral theology ought to precede ascetical theology.

37. Joseph Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*, (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 1996).

relational view of the self requires a re-examination of our understanding, not only of the self, but of morality.³⁸

To accommodate this relational anthropology, I have proposed elsewhere a new model for the cardinal virtues.³⁹ Aquinas' cardinal virtues perfect an individual person's powers (the will, the practical reason, the irascible and the concupiscible). Thus, Aquinas' virtues aim at parts of an individual's personality. I propose, instead, that virtues perfect not parts of an individual but rather ways that we are constitutively related.

As persons, we are relational in three ways: generally, specifically and uniquely. Each of these relational ways of being demands a cardinal virtue: as a relational being in general, we are called to justice; as a relational being specifically, we are called to fidelity; as a relational being uniquely, we are called to self-care. These three virtues are cardinal. Unlike in Thomas' structure, none is ethically prior to the other: they have equally urgent claims and each should be pursued as an end in itself. Thus we are not called to be faithful and self-caring in order to be just, nor are we called to be self-caring and just in order to be faithful. None is auxiliary to the others. They are distinctive virtues with none being a subset or subcategory of the other. They are cardinal. The fourth cardinal virtue is prudence, which determines what constitutes the just, faithful and self-caring way of life for an individual.

Let me consider each way in which we are relational. First, our relationality generally is always directed by an ordered appreciation for the common good in which we treat all people as equal. We belong to humanity and are expected to respond to all its members in general equally and impartially. Paul Ricoeur notes that from Aristotle to Rawls justice is always associated with equality⁴⁰ and, as Bernard Williams notes, justice is about ordering all our interior dispositions so that in our relationship with anyone the claim of equality originates from within.⁴¹

If justice urges us to treat all people equally, then fidelity makes distinctively different claims on us. Fidelity is the virtue that nurtures and sustains the bonds of those special relationships that we enjoy whether by blood, marriage, love or sacrament. Fidelity means that we should treat with special care those who are closer to us. Thus, if justice rests on impartiality and universality, fidelity rests on partiality and

38. Paul Lauritzen, "The Self and Its Discontents", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 22 (1994) 189-210, at 206.

39. James F. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues", *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 709-29.

40. Paul Ricoeur, "Love and Justice", Werner G. Jeanrond and Jennifer L. Rike (eds.), *Radical Pluralism and Truth: David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*, (New York: Crossroad, 1991) 195.

41. Bernard Williams, "Justice as a Virtue", in Amelia Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) 189-199. See also Seamus Murphy, "The Many Ways of Justice", *Studies in the Spirituality of the Jesuits* 26 (1994) 1-40.

particularity.⁴² Fidelity here is like Reinhold Niebuhr's love in his "just-love" dialectic.⁴³ It is also like the claim that Carol Gilligan made in her important work, *In a Different Voice*.⁴⁴ Gilligan criticised Kohlberg for arguing that full moral development was found in the person who could reason well about justice as impartial and universal. She countered that the human must aim both for the impartiality of justice as well as the development of particular bonds.

Paul Ricoeur also studies these two virtues as dialectical. Rather than reducing one to the other, eliding the two, or making of them a pure and simple dichotomy, Ricoeur places them in a "tension between two distinct and sometimes opposed claims."⁴⁵ Ricoeur's insight that the virtues are distinct and at times opposing stands in contrast with Thomas' strategy of the cardinal virtues where justice is supported by fortitude and temperance and none contradicts, opposes, or challenges the claims of the other. But today, many argue that only when one cardinal virtue stands on equal footing with another cardinal virtue can there be a dialectical tension wherein the virtues challenge and define one another, and, as Ricoeur suggests, "may even be the occasion for the invention of responsible forms of behavior".⁴⁶

Neither of these virtues, however, addresses the unique relationship that one has with oneself.⁴⁷ Care for self enjoys a considered role in our tradition, as for instance, the command to love God and one's neighbour as oneself. Thomas, too, through his order of charity⁴⁸ developed the

42. See a similar insight in Spohn, "The Return", 72. In several questions dealing with charity Aquinas argues that we have greater obligations to those with whom we enjoy specific relationships, see *Summa Theologica* II. II. 31.3 and 32.9.

43. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, (ed.), D. B. Robertson (Louisville: Westminster, 1957); on a similar insight see Karen Lebacqz, *Justice in an Unjust World* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987); Jose Miranda, *Marx and the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974).

44. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982).

45. Ricoeur, "Love and Justice", 196.

46. Ricoeur, "Love and Justice", 197.

47. Feminist therapists use the term self-care in professional ethics. L. S. Brown, "Ethical Issues in Feminist Therapy: Selected Topics", *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 15 (1991) 324-333; Katherine M. Clarke, "Lessons from Feminist Therapy for Ministerial Ethics", *Journal of Pastoral Care* 48 (1994) 233-242. For another example, see Marc Lappe, "Virtue and Public Health", Earl Shelp (ed.), *Virtue and Medicine*, (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985) 289-303.

48. The concern for self-care runs throughout the *Summa*, from I.5.1c and 48.1, which concern the insight that all nature seeks its own perfection, to I. II 27.3 which insists that it is natural to prefer oneself over others and 29.4 that it is impossible to hate oneself. In II.II, Aquinas argues that though inordinate self-love is the source of sin (25.4, 28.4.ad1), self-love belongs to the order of charity and is prior to neighbour love (25.12, 26.4). He adds that from charity comes peace that aims at ending conflict not only with others but also within oneself (29.1).

love of self that Stephen Pope⁴⁹ and Edward Vacek⁵⁰ each address in their recent works.

Finally, prudence has the task of integrating the three virtues into our lives, just as it did when it was among the classical list of the cardinal virtues.⁵¹ Thus, prudence is always vigilant looking to the future, trying not only to realise the claims of justice, fidelity and self care in the here and now, but also calling us to anticipate occasions when each of these virtues can be more fully acquired. In this way prudence is clearly a virtue that pursues ends and effectively establishes the moral agenda for the person growing in these virtues.⁵² But these ends are not in opposition to nor in insulation from one another. Rather prudence helps each virtue to shape its end as more inclusive of the other two.

Inasmuch as all persons in every culture are constituted by these three ways of being related, by naming these virtues as cardinal, we have a device for talking cross-culturally. Still, this device is based on modest claims. The cardinal virtues do not purport to offer a picture of the ideal person, nor to exhaust the entire domain of virtue. Rather than being the last word on virtue, they are among the first, providing the bare essentials for right human living and specific action. Thus, inasmuch as the word "cardinal" derives from the word for a hinge, the cardinal virtues provide a skeleton of both what human persons should basically be and at what human action should basically aim. All other issues of virtue hang on the skeletal structures of both rightly-integrated dispositions and right moral action.

6. LIBERATION ETHICS

One major reason for discussing this matter across cultures is to consider the option for the poor and marginalised. Though there is much else that we can take from Latin America's enormous contribution of liberation ethics,⁵³ the option for the poor⁵⁴ has become an essential universal expression of the Christian identity. The extraordinary success of the option of the poor entering into the canon of identifiable

49. Besides *The Evolution of Altruism*, see his "Expressive Individualism and True Self-Love: A Thomistic Perspective", *Journal of Religion* 71.3 (1991) 384-99.

50. Vacek, *Love, Human and Divine*, 239-73.

51. Joseph Burroughs, *Prudence Integrating the Moral Virtues According to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University, 1955).

52. See Daniel Mark Nelson, "Karl Rahner's Existential Ethics: A Critique Based on St. Thomas's Understanding of Prudence", *The Thomist* 51 (1987) 461-79; *The Priority of Prudence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992).

53. The finest collection on the topic remains Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (eds.), *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 1993). The best bibliography in English also remains Thomas Schubeck, "Ethics and Liberation Theology", *Theological Studies* 56 (March 1995) 107-22.

54. Gustavo Gutiérrez, "Option for the Poor", Ellacuría and Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 235-50.

Catholic values is attributed, in part, to spirituality: the self-understanding of communities of faith, in the light of the Gospel, saw and appropriated the option as a constitutive expression of union with God.

The option for the poor means that the poor and marginalised have a privileged perspective and relationship with God, who dwells with them. Anyone who wants to draw near to God, therefore, must draw near to those who enjoy this privilege.

It is on this insight that I wish to close, illustrating my point by turning to an urgent matter. I have argued that we need an integrated moral theology that upholds individual conscience, yet is profoundly ecclesial and profoundly relational, that respects cultures and yet can promote cross-cultural dialogue. I have also argued that moralists must address the ordinary, must be practical in their teaching and become more aware of the service they can provide to the churches. We must propose to the Church ways to improve the character of our membership as ethically embodying the Gospel. Above all we must highlight how we are responsible for developing our relationality with God, nature and neighbour.

7. A NEW STANDARD: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In light of the option of the poor, I would like to offer a new standard for knowing how effectively we moral theologians are serving the church. Here I remember the oft-quoted remark of Leo Tolstoy, who said that if we wanted to know how good a country was, we should see how they treated their prisoners. Similarly I suggest that if we want to know how good a local church is, we should see how it works to end violence against women.

This challenge is long overdue: when we examine the literature on violence against women, and, in particular, domestic abuse, this enormous topic and its all too common practice remains on the margins of church reflection and professional ethical writings.⁵⁵ First, we need

55. Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar : Violence against Women and the Church's Response* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995); Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and M. Shawn Copeland, (ed.), *Violence Against Women* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994); Myra Burnett, "Suffering and Sanctification: The Religious Context of Battered Women", *Pastoral Psychology* 44 (1996) 145-9; Carol Schlueter, "Creating a New Reality: No More Domestic Violence", *Currents in Theology and Mission* 23 (August 1996) 254-64; Marc Cwik, "Peace in the Home? The Response of Rabbis to Wife Abuse Within Judaism", *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 20 (1996) 273-348; 21 (1997) 1-82; Marie Fortune, "Picking Up the Broken Pieces: Responding to Domestic Violence", *Church and Society* 85 (1995) 36-47; Alberta Wood and Maureen McHugh, "Women Battering: The Response of the Clergy", *Pastoral Psychology* 42 (1994) 185-96; Jim Bowman, "Is Male Headship Linked to Spousal Abuse?", *Christianity Today* 38 (June 20, 1994) 62; Linda Midgett, "Silent Screams: Do Evangelicals Hear the Cries of Battered Women?", *Daughters of Sarah* 20 (1994) 43-45; Lutheran World Federation Council, "Resolution on Violence Against Women", *LWF Documentation* 33 (1993) 120-21.

to recognise that the churches lack a will to respond to it. Despite the amount of violence done against women, we do not hear about it in our sermons, parish meetings, or the prayers of the faithful. The practice of domestic abuse has been hardly criticised by bishops, preachers or ethicists. The movements that we see against violence in the form of capital punishment, abortion, and euthanasia vastly overwhelm any conscious, organised, and reflective attempts to address the much more familial phenomenon of domestic abuse.

Secondly, we need to be converted to a will to eradicate domestic abuse and the systemic supports that make it happen. We need to become resolved in our deepest convictions that our inability is due to a wilfulness that has accommodated domestic violence into ordinary life.

Thirdly, we need to repent, individually and communally, for not bothering to examine the causes and occasions of violence against women. We need to recognise that our ignorance was culpable.

Fourthly, we need to recognise that men are the causes of most domestic violence and that we continually see instances of male rage played out whether in a Columbine High School or on a crowded highway. We need to ask why, if we are so interested in violence in the form of abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment, we are not more vocal about forms of violence that are more ecclesial and domestic. We need to see that male violence – whether in the shotgun view of a high schooler or the bullying stance of a prelate – is a violence at home in a variety of social, cultural, legal, and ecclesial structures.

Fifthly, we need to learn more about domestic abuse by listening to those victims who have developed voices that can instruct and inform us. We need to encourage the work of narrative to capture these experiences, so that we can learn to recognise how our laws, culture and religion systematically protect domestic violence. Those narratives might lead us to examine the civil and ecclesial structures that directly and indirectly prolong this extraordinarily barbaric conduct.

Sixthly, in light of that recognition, conversion, repentance, and learning, we need to become vigilant to the causes that prompt it, to the structures that support it, and to the methods that hide it. In our vigilance we need to be ready to act. We need to recognise that no option for the poor can be better realised than that of standing with women whose well-being is threatened.⁵⁶

56. Feminist theologians have begun to make a connection with liberation theology. See Maria Pilar Aquino, "Women's Contribution to Theology in Liberation" and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Defining our *Proyecto Historico*: *Mujerista* Strategies for Liberation", *Readings in Moral Theology* No. 9: *Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition*, 90-119 and 120-35.

Seventhly, since domestic abuse is common across cultures,⁵⁷ we need to propose virtues to build up a social anthropology that promotes, through justice, the actual and full equality of all men and women; through fidelity, a marital love that rejects the use of force in family life; and, through self-care, the recognition that no one created in the image of God should allow themselves to remain in a situation of being victimised by brute force.

Only when the depth of one's ascetical commitments are called in faith to be expressed in the moral life will we have an effective, life-giving moral theology that can lead the entire Church toward its mission. We need urgently to develop it now.

57. See the writings of Susan B. Sorenson, "Violence and injury in marital arguments: Risk Patterns and Gender Differences", *American Journal of Public Health* 86 (1996) 35-40; "Violence Against Women: Examining Ethnic Differences and Commonalities", *Evaluation Review* 20 (1996) 123-145; "Physical, Sexual and Emotional abuse by Male Intimates: Experiences of Women in Japan", *Violence and Victims* 9 (1994) 63-77.