

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

CAPUS MINISTRY

Bishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., D.D.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Dr. Vicente J.A. Rosales, M.D.

A STUDY OF "A STUDY OF SIN"

Fr. Manuel Piñon, O.P.

WHATEVER BECAME OF SIN IN THE "NEW THEOLOGY"?

Fr. Benito Sandalio, C.M.

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EDITORIAL

Campus Ministry

"We are the center and the heart... The time can be told by our clock." These words of Peguy about youth have never been so true as today.

On the basis of sheer number alone, the youth cannot be ignored without paying a high price. Their increase at a surprising rate is one of the principal reasons mentioned by the Second Vatican Council for the substantial influence of the youth on modern society. (AA, 12). Our country, like most Asian and other developing countries, is a land of very young people. It is estimated that at least 67 percent of its total population is between the ages of 25 and 13 years old and about 40 percent, 12 years and below. All this means that, by 1980, 74 percent of our people will be below 40 years old. This also means that, since growth in this present age is still in its infancy, the greatest advancement will occur mostly in the generation of the young of today.

But inspite of this decidedly immense advantage, the youth appears to be unable to cope adequately with the new burdens imposed upon them.

Since much of the leadership in our country is provided for by the universities and colleges, campus ministry becomes an urgent imperative of our pastoral concern. For this reason, the Second Vatican Council urged "all pastors of the Church," not only to

seek the spiritual welfare of students in Catholic institutions of higher learning but also to ensure that "at colleges and universities which are not Catholic, there are Catholic residences and centers where priests, religious, and laymen who have been judiciously chosen and trained can serve on campus as sources of spiritual and intellectual assistance to the young people." (GE, 10).

Campus ministry is the Church's presence on the college and university campus. It includes pastoral service to the entire campus community: students, administrators, faculty, and staff. Especially in non-sectarian institutions, students often receive uncritical exposure to modern ideologies, ethical standards and religious movements. Campus ministry must therefore create an alternative forum for philosophical and religious inquiry through classes, seminars, lectures, and workshops. It also seeks to form a community of faith on campus through liturgy and other exercises. Campus ministry should also be carried on in cooperation with local diocese and parish community. In fact, it should aim at an integration of its apostolic ministry with other ministries of the local community and the diocese.

Among the challenges facing campus ministry today are the marked decline in the number of priests and religious engaged in Catholic institutions of higher education, the increasing number of students who have not attended church-sponsored elementary and secondary schools, and the political and legal constraints which directly or indirectly limit the options of pastoral service within the campus.

But the more serious problems appear to come from the lack of awareness for a greater pastoral action by the Christian community in favor of campus ministry. Though in some areas the student community is larger than some of our dioceses, and undeniably requires a special approach, the pastoral attention given to the campus ministry in terms of personnel and resources is meager and almost everywhere insufficient. Though they are confident and have unshakable hope in the future, the campus ministers often feel unequal to the challenges that have come so rapidly on them. This is due principally to the imbalance between personnel and resources against almost unlimited demands.

Campus ministry, therefore, requires an adequate staff, if it is to realize even the minimum expected from it. The staff can

include not only priests but religious and lay persons, including faculty and graduate students working as a team. This, in turn, requires the existence of a formation team to train the trainors. This leads us necessarily to a very important decision: campus ministry must have its proper place in the plan of every diocese where there is a school. The selection, preparation and continuing education of the men and women of campus ministry should have a high priority in diocesan educational planning.

Only then can we give meaning and witness to the words of **Gaudium et Spes** when it says: "The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for their living and hoping." (31).

MONS. L.Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.

In This Issue

The moral implications of Family Planning continue to be a much debated question. Proof of this is the fact Cardinal Sin discussed this topic with U.S. Vice President Walter F. Mondale during the latter's visit to the Philippines. Hence we give our readers an opportunity to brush up on the morality of Family Planning through the articles of Dr. Vicente J.A. Rosales, M.D., Fr. Gabriel Pastrana, O.P., and Fr. Majin Borrajo, O.P.

An article by Fr. John Balsam, O.P., "A Study of Sin in the Theology of Vatican II", which we published in June-July 1977, elicited some strong reactions. We now publish two: Fr. Manuel Piñon's **A Study of "A Study of Sin"** and Fr. Benito Sandalio's **Whatever Became of Sin in the 'New Theology'?** For the present, Fr. Balsam answers these reactions with a short note we publish under "Communications".

PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilecto filio **PROTACIO GUNGON**, curioni paroeciae Sancti Josephi Artificis in urbe Manila — electo Episcopo titulo Obbensi atque Auxiliari Archiepiscopi Manilensis, salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem. Divinum explentes mandatum totius dominici gregis pascendi Nobis traditum, quod etiam munus comprehendit recte auxiliandi sacris Ecclesiarum particularium Pastoribus, putavimus iam tempus eess ut hisce Apostolicis Litteris sub plumbo expeditis Venerabili fratri Nostro Jacobo S.R.E. Cardinali Sin, Archiepiscopo Manilensi, satisfieret, qui ob augescencia suae Ecclesiae pastoralia negotia petiit ut alius sibi Episcopus Auxiliaris daretur. Audito igitur, hac de re, Venerabili fratre Nostro S.R.E. Cardinali Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecto, cuius sententiam comprobata ratam habuimus, potestate Nostra Apostolica te, dilecte fili, Episcopum titulo **OBBENSEM** eligimus et memorato sacro Praesili ut Auxiliarem tradimus, iuribus quidem auctum huius muneris tui propriis, quae in Litteris Nostris "Ecclesiae Sanctae" die VI mensis Augusti anno MCMLXVI datis describuntur facultatem tibi facimus ut ubivis ab eo quem malueris catholico Episcopo ordinationem episcopalem iuxta liturgicas normas suscipias, dummodo id post fiat quam coram eodem aliove sacro Praesule professionem fidei feceris atque fidelitatem erga Nos et Successores Nostros rite iuraveris. Mandamus praeterea ut formulas ad id adhibitas, easdemque sueto more subscriptas sigillogue impressas, cures brevi ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis transmittenda. Te denique, dilecte fili, cui ampliorem ad dignitatem evecto gratulamur, hortamur ut, graviore considerato munere tibi credito, prudenter te agas atque sedilam operam tuam consocias cum sacro Pastore Manilensi, cui mitteris auxiliandi causa. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die decimo mensis — Septembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo. Pontificatus Nostri XV.

JOANNES CARD. VILLOT
Secretarius Status

Proton. Apost.
JOSEPHUS DEL TON,

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

By

Vicente J.A. Rosales, M.D.

(Text of keynote address to the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council of Hongkong, on the occasion of its 10th annual convention in November 1975, by Vicente J.A. Rosales, M.D., Director of the Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction and Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines).

It gives me very special pleasure to be able to join you and to participate in this observance of your 10th anniversary in the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council. It is no doubt for you, an occasion for joy and celebration, as well as a pause to take stock of the past as you look into the future. And I am certain that it is not merely this sense of joy that leads you to let me, and others like me from outside your immediate and intimate circles, join you on this occasion, but also the sense of universality you have in your work that prompts you to extend a hand of welcome and brotherhood. There are many of us, like you, who have dedicated our energies to efforts in the broad area of family life work, and who feel for you and for one another, the strong bonds of solidarity that ties those working towards common goals.

In the spirit of this sharing, then, I would like, with you, to examine more closely the theme of your conference, and devote these few minutes with you to consider natural family planning and the role it plays in the broader field of family life, or what is more accurately, for your purposes here, Christian marriage. In the spirit of your theme, I will not consider natural family planning as the one licit method approved by the Church but consider rather its many other aspects, in terms of the particularly human values it enhances.

It is important to do this, I think, because there are many, and among them dedicated and devout Catholics, who do not see in natural family planning any positive redeeming value except perhaps the penitential sacrifice imposed by an ethical system that binds under pain of obedience. For, indeed, at first glance, natural family planning would seem to be, at best, an impractical choice,

and those devoted to its practice, a group of hopeless idealists hung-up on doing simple things the most difficult way possible. Its teaching is slow and time-consuming and it depends for its success on the willingness of a husband and a wife to practice constant and repeated acts of observation, decision, and, yes, selflessness that are not often easy. It has, for a reputation, a notoriety that has led to endless quips of pregnant humor and is viewed by a large part of the medical profession, particularly that part of the profession most unfamiliar with it, as a relic of the past that survives only because a benighted and medieval church still wields an iron influence over some of its adherents.

Yet it is imbued with values and offers benefits that none of the birth control techniques can even approximate because it is, in the spirit of the theme of this meeting, the human solution to what are eminently human difficulties. It is these human values that you are gathered here to consider — these values which set natural family planning apart from the rest of what is commonly called family planning — that make of it a system far superior to any other that the ingenuity of man has been able to devise.

Physicians, particularly, feel uncomfortable with natural family planning because they exercise little or no control over its practice. This feeling of being a spectator on the sidelines is completely foreign to the experience and training of the doctor. He is accustomed not only to being an active participant, but generally to being in firm control of a situation. He diagnoses the illness, he prescribes the regimen, and he rests his trust on the pharmacologic effectivity of the drugs he administers. For good or ill, the patient has little to do but to be passively treated. It is the doctor who commands, and it is through his authority that his orders are carried out, and the patient usually becomes little more than the battlefield on which the war is waged against disease.

Even in family planning, this remains the usual state of affairs. When a physician ligates a tube or severs a vas deferens, it is his surgical skill that insures infertility. When he inserts an intra-uterine device or prescribes pills, it is the action of the device or the effect of the steroid that he relies on. But when he offers or suggests natural family planning, he passes on the burden and the privilege of decision to the husband and wife, and he must sit uncomfortably back and hope, that they will opt to abide by the rules of the game, night after night, occasion after occasion.

Historically, it might be noted that the family planning or birth control movement was started by doctors and other members of the health professions and this medical outlook has tended to

pervade most family planning efforts. There are now good reasons to insist that the bulk of family planning activity should be the responsibility of non-medical personnel — this particularly so in natural family planning — but physicians still tend to play an important role in most programs, and their attitudes continue to reflect in the non-doctors who have taken over their tasks. Like the physician, the usual family planning worker feels uneasy when decisions have to be made by the married couples rather than the family planner or the physician.

This is a difficult pill for the physician to swallow. He can be sure of his surgical skill, certain of the pharmacology of the steroids, but in the case of natural family planning, he must depend on the decisions — repeated decisions — of others, who are not even his colleagues. And how can he rely on anything as fickle and as unstable as the human mind and the human will, when he knows from experience that often as not, they cannot be depended upon. Because natural family planning places the burden of decision on the spouses who would wish to avoid a pregnancy. And it does this, not just once, but repeatedly, so that each act of abstinence is a deliberate choice, and hopefully, so that each act of intercourse is an act deliberately considered and consented to.

What would appear to some as natural family planning's greatest defect is, in reality, one of its special virtues. The exercise of conception control by such a means — by repeated acts of observations, by repeated decisions to abstain and by deliberate consent to an act of love open to the possibility of new life — makes of the spousal relationship an exercise of sexuality at a most human level, humanizes the libidinal urges and the emotional forces that pull man and woman together at a primitive instinctive level, by adding the features of knowledge and purposeful consent.

Natural family planning, therefore, by placing responsibility totally on the shoulders of the spouses, provides both the husband and the wife with opportunity to mature, to grow, to develop, to become self-reliant and independent, and to become liberated from the slavery to gadgets and technologies which more and more rule our lives in this century. Science and technology were meant to liberate man, but they have, rather, enslaved him, because man has become increasingly dependent on them — dependent to a point of physiologic addiction. Man feels lost and inadequate when there is a technological break-down. He is bored to death when there is a communication failure that cuts off television and radio. He depends on theaters and telephones, amplifiers and X-ray machines, laboratories and instant foods. And when he is cut off from them, he is lost at sea, because he no longer has the resource-

fulness and the reliance on himself to be able to live and even survive. It is fine for man to utilize technology as an extension of his personality, but technology is meant to serve him and not to dominate him.

The great bulk of the birth control programs of today are technology dependent. The spectre of total disaster haunts the population control planners should that technology suddenly collapse. It is a nightmare they live with constantly, a sword of Damocles hanging precariously over their contraceptive and abortive minds. In the event, admittedly unlikely, that good medical reasons exist to ban the pills, the devices, and the suction machines, the entire world program will fall apart because these gadgets and technologies are what the program rests on almost exclusively. Should such thing happen, the result will be, from their point of view, nothing short of catastrophic. And it will be so because of their almost total dependency on modern technology.

It is also this modern world of science and efficiency that militates against the special values of natural family planning. Ours is a world that is goal-oriented and concerned with an efficiency that will not tolerate shortcomings. In birth control programs, that goal is the prevention of pregnancy, or if you will, the prevention of children, because the world has reached a point where it no longer cares very much whether a pregnancy exists or not as long as no child is born. Methods of attaining this goal are measured by their efficacy in frustrating the early reproductive process. And natural family planning, unless practiced by couples with particularly strong motivations, is characterized by a frequency of failure that even its adherents sometimes find embarrassing. It is a system inadequately assessed by the yardstick of pure efficacy, and by that yardstick it cannot offer a significant alternative to pills, devices, vasectomies and abortion.

Many, although unsympathetic to natural family planning, are ready enough to admit the educative and non-contraceptive values inherent in a system of periodic abstinence. But they quickly point out, these values are unmeasurable, non-quantifiable, and in the scientific world that worships at the altar of accurate measurement, what chance does natural family planning have? Furthermore, they add, the goal of family planning programs is birth regulation and it is exclusively against that objective that any system should be evaluated.

But the point to natural family planning is the process, not the goal. And to practice natural family planning properly is to be

process-oriented, rather than goal-oriented. The process is the thing; one might even say, the process, in natural family planning, is the goal, and the prevention of conception merely an effect of that process. Wardell B. Pomeroy, in his book "Your Child and Sex", beautifully illustrates this difference in orientation by pointing out that the difficulty encountered by many couples in their marital relationships lies in the fact that their sexual lives are dominated by a goal orientation to orgasmic satisfaction. What is important, he says, is the interpersonal relationship between husband and wife, the love they have for each other, the manner in which that love finds expression. This is the process to which attention should be given. If such is the case, whenever there is a love experience between the husband and the wife, an orgasmic climax is an effect, and when it fails to occur, there is none of the deep personal frustration that fills a spouse whose only purpose in showing his partner little acts of affection and concern is the organic climax which is his goal. For in that case, he has labored for nothing. The caress, so to speak, is the process, undertaken for its own sake as a means of expressing affection; the sexual climax merely a fruit of that process. Under such circumstances, the caress will be there, always for its own sake, as an expression of the bonded unity of the spouses. Otherwise, it merely becomes a means to the attainment of a sexual climax, and thereby loses its meaning and value, because without that climax it is a pretense and a frustration.

The key to a marriage is, after all, the interpersonal relationship between the spouses. Each one of them is an individual, a person, possessed of a dignity and humanity that all are bound to respect, specially so in the Christian context. The stability of that marriage demands of the spouses a constant and open relationship that seeks ever deeper understanding and ever tighter bonds which can arise only from mutual respect and selflessness, from the willingness to see the union not only in terms of self, but also in terms of the other. It is this that natural family planning requires, that each spouse see the union of the couple as resulting from the interaction between them, the result of affection and understanding, of giving and sharing, so that never is one spouse used by another, never is one taken advantage of by the other. Each retains the dignity and individuality of his own unique personality, yet at the same time, participates in the oneness that has been established with another. It is for this very reason that natural family planning fails for some couples — because they are not able to approximate the sharing that true marital union, and more particularly Christian marriage, requires. To enable such a

couple to use natural family planning, there must first be a growth and maturation into the fulness of manhood and womanhood that they have yet failed to attain.

In human terms, therefore, natural family planning is the goal to be achieved, the ideal to be striven for. It would be totally unrealistic to assume that all married couples will be able to practice it and use it well. That would be a quixotic notion and by no means true. There are many of us for whom the demands of natural family planning are, at least for the moment, beyond our capacities. For those of us for whom that is the situation, it may be necessary, again for the moment, to resort to other means that fall short of natural family planning in terms of human values. For those of us in that situation, some dependence on technology may be necessary, at least temporarily. But the ideal is there, not merely to be attained but, in the human situation, rather to be striven for. And that is what we are all called upon to do: to strive for genuine humanity, no matter how frequent the failures, and no matter how, for one individual or another, how unattainable the goal. Once more, it is the quest that matters, more than the achievement. Because perfection is for another world and another existence; for us, it is the struggle that purifies. The process becomes no less than the purpose.

If we are concerned with family planning, then, let us concern ourselves with its totality. Let us not focus our attention merely on techniques of contraception and the interruption of the process of pregnancy. The reproduction of man has been badly misunderstood. It has usually been viewed all too narrowly as extending only from the coital act, through fertilization and implantation, pregnancy, and finally the delivery of a living child. At this point, we have tended to consider the reproductive process complete and finished. But it is far from finished. Any intelligent being unbiased by the usual current thinking, who is told that the child is the completed product of the human reproductive process will object, because there is such an obvious discrepancy between the infant child and his adult parents. To limit the notion of reproduction so that it extends merely from the parental coitus to maternal delivery is to propose an extremely restricted view. Man has not been reproduced until the infant is himself or herself an adult, capable of repeating the process.

The planning of a family does not, then, begin with intercourse and end with delivery. It extends way beyond delivery to the formation of the child physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, to the point where he or she can assume the responsibilities of parenthood unto another generation. But this maturation cannot be left to chance. This maturation can best be insured by the child growing and developing within the context of a truly human relationship in marriage, where by exposure he learns the meaning of life, the meaning of values, the purpose of interpersonal relationships. It is in the context of his own family, and the example provided by his own parents, that the child learns the meaning of love and responsibility, of selflessness and commitment. And what better context within which to demonstrate the meaning of spousal concern and commitment than in the observance of natural family planning, with all its inherent human values and respect for the individual.

The planning of a family is a never ending cycle that goes from one generation to the next. From the birth of an infant, his growth and physical well being, the formation of his character, the infusion of values, his awareness and increasing control of his own reproductive and, let us say its sexual forces, until he forms a lasting bonded union of marriage with another, and the exercise of responsibility and knowledge within that union until, as a fruit of that love, he shall start new life which will be brought into the world after nine months of intrauterine existence. Then, for the cycle to repeat itself. That is responsible parenthood. That is family planning in the full sense. Anything short of that is inadequate. Anything short of that is merely coital planning.

There are those who refuse, understandably, to speak of natural family planning as a method, in the sense that the other birth control procedures are methods. Natural family planning is not a method, it is a process, it a philosophy, it is an outlook and a perspective. And unless it is understood in that sense, it is not understood sufficiently. It is the human way of facing a human challenge. It is the way to a human perfection that we are all called upon to seek and strive for.

Your choice of theme for this meeting, therefore, seems to me, to be particularly fortunate. You are not concerned so much with methods, programs, approaches, in this theme, as you are

with a philosophy. This is not to say that methods, programs, and approaches are of no value. Far from it. But they are meaningless without a philosophy to guide and direct them. All the more so in the context of a Christian view of life. Because Christianity underscores all the values that are properly human and elevates them to the Divine, imbues them with supernatural meaning that enhances, not diminishes, that humanity.

I can only hope and pray that the Divine Son shall shower upon you and your work all the blessings you need to make of your labors a satisfying experience, a fruitful effort, and a divine apostolate, in the many years that, for you, lie ahead. And so may it be.

RESPONSIBILITY AND PHILIPPINE POPULATION CONTROL

By

Gabriel Pastrana, O.P.

Much has been written about the world population growth and population explosion. The controversy, however, as to how critical the problem is and where to rank it in the priority list of world problems promise to continue unresolved. The state of the question does not seem to be as clear as it had been initially assumed. It would not be exaggerated to say that the United Nations Declaration of 1974 as World Population Year brought about wider results than those originally envisioned. More concretely, the World Population Conference held in Bucharest in August of that year, did in fact stir up world-wide awareness concerning the urgency of the problem. However if the existence of the problem was not denied, a partial view of the same was seriously questioned and its top rank priority was challenged precisely by the delegates of many of the countries which allegedly were most critically affected by population explosion. Post-Bucharest reactions and studies have shown that previous and generally held malthusian theses have to be revised and that more research is needed to support former contentions. More important than that, it has become clear that population explosion or population as a problem is a relative term affecting unevenly different parts of the world and in different manner the people of the same country. How to relate the many issues and factors contributing to the problem is not altogether clear.

Leaving aside the complex and complicated international dimensions of the world population explosion, we will concentrate our attention on the Philippine situation. The present study will offer some notes and comments on the book edited by Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J.¹ More than this, it will provide an opportunity to present our view on some of the issues of the population problem as it affects the Philippines.

¹Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J. (ed.), *Freedom and Philippine Population Control* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1976) 1-XIX, 1-388. Further quotations of or reference to this book will be made within the body of the article by indicating the corresponding page.

THE PHILIPPINE SITUATION

We do not have any difficulty in accepting Fr. V. Gorospe's assumption that the present Philippine population growth rate has the characteristics of a problem; one which seriously affects Philippine society and consequently demands serious attention on the part of all concerned. If some sectors still question the present population growth rate as a problem it would be perhaps out of sheer ignorance or lack of sensitivity. Available demographic data stand unchallenged. Sheer numbers by themselves are deprived of meaning, it is often claimed. However it is not just a question of playing with numbers and its statistical deviations. One has to take those numbers, ratios and figures, as they refer to concrete situations and express the existence of millions of Philippine couples and individuals, to understand what is meant. When a 2.7 population growth rate or the doubling of the population within the next five years affect very intimately the lives of millions of individuals and practically all the aspects of national life, numbers then acquire a very real meaning and refer to a very concrete problem. Ignoring it would smack of unjustifiable negligence. To make this point clear a more detailed presentation of the demographic aspects of the Philippine population situation than that offered by the schematic essay of Mercedes B. Concepcion (pp. 97-106 of V. Gorospe's volume) would have been desirable.

The cognizance of the existence of a problem is a considerable and positive step towards its solution. It is expected that the present volume will contribute substantially along this line. An advantage of a collection of essays is the fact that it brings under the same cover the views of well-known experts on the subject. The significance of the collection depends on the efforts that the experts have exerted in their particular contribution. However, this has not turned out to be the case. In the present volume the essays are not only of different length, but also, and very definitely, of different value. Some were written purposely for this volume, a few are texts of lectures given for different occasions; others have been previously published elsewhere as long as four or five years ago, a considerable lapse of time to make them as actual and relevant as they may have been then. The unity of the collection is assured by the common theme all the essays refer to and by the expertise of its editor with the general introduction to the volume and particular presentations for each chapter. Except for a few instances where the reader is cautioned about some statements or conclusions of some of the contributors, Fr. Gorospe adopts a very conciliatory and diplomatic attitude, displaying a somewhat exaggerated generosity of words towards his contributors.

More serious than this, one cannot avoid the impression that he readily accepts a number of official slogans, doctrinal positions and otherwise not yet fully proven conclusions without much questioning. Concrete instances of this will be seen in the pages that follow. Notwithstanding this, one would easily agree with the statement on the back cover: "**Freedom and Philippine Population Control** is truly a must for very important library."

In the rest of our study, rather than take each essay in and by itself, we shall deal with some of the most important issues of the problem of population as it affects the Philippine situation making concrete references to the essays that will touch upon those issues.

POPULATION CONTROL — WHOSE CONCERN?

It is readily admitted, at least theoretically, that if the population growth rate has the characteristics of a problem, limitation of births is first and foremost the concern and responsibility of the couple. It is the individual who is primarily involved in such an intimate and personal activity as reproduction and is personally responsible for its consequences. These however go beyond the realm of the individual's concern; human reproduction affects more than the family: society is also concerned. Society and the state thus have some say in whatever measures are deemed necessary to promote or to limit existing populations. Furthermore, human reproduction and its extended consequences have ethical dimensions. In the exercise of such a personal right and because of the consequences that follow, reference is to be made to a desirable order which in turn determines the ideal situation, so that the Church and any group whose primary concern is the ideal state of things as it befits the demands of the human condition, will also be involved. Human reproductive activities are, then, the concern of the individual person, of society, and of the Church. Assigning which responsibilities correspond to each of those entities is a difficult task, especially when in the practical order of things the exercise of those responsibilities would seem to come into conflict with other no less important personal rights or societal concerns.

THE INDIVIDUAL'S RIGHT TO PROCREATION

Within an anthropological tradition which considers the dignity of the human person and its transcendence over the material world as fundamental tenets, the right of the individual to procreation had been established long before it was done so by the U.N. Declara-

tion of Human Rights.² Nevertheless the U.N. recognition of the rights of the parents "to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children" reinforced that well established tradition. The same belief was restated at the International Conference on Human Rights in Tehran (1968): "Couples have a basic human right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and a right to adequate education and information in this respect." More recently, and laying special emphasis on the aspect of limitation of births, the World Population Plan of Action agreed upon in Bucharest (1974), stated that "because couples and individuals have the basic human right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, countries should encourage appropriate education concerning responsible parenthood and make available to persons who so desire advice and means of achieving it."

It is to be noted that the United Nations recognition of the individual's right to procreation is stated in an indirect manner. What is directly stated is that, for the individual's free and responsible exercise of such a right, appropriate education and information be provided and means be made available to achieve limitation of births. It is easy to discover that, as a matter-of-fact, the U.N. recognition of the right to procreation is expressed having contraception as the background. Furthermore, at the level of implementation, and because of the societal consequences of reproductive behavior, the U.N. country-members are free to interpret the nature and extent of such an individual right. Particular demographic conditions of each country, and more fundamentally, the philosophical understanding of man and his relationship to society, would account for a diversity of interpretations.

A traditional interpretation which sees human rights as categorical expressions of the fundamental moral characteristics of every human being aims at a consensus as widest as possible. The strongest claim for such an understanding of human rights is the inherent human dignity which goes beyond the policies of any group of persons, society or government. Rights are seen as fundamental claims to satisfy human needs that make the process of humanization possible.

² See the interesting study prepared by the Yale Task Force on Population Ethics, "Moral Claims, Human Rights, Policies", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 35, n. 1 (March 1974), 83-113. Also, Arthur J. Dyck, "Procreative Rights and Population Policies", *Hastings Center Studies*, 1.1 (1973), 74-82, and Daniel Callahan, *Ethics and Population Limitation*, (New York: The Population Council, 1971), 1-45.

There is however a hierarchy among human rights based on how necessary are the needs they satisfy in the process of humanization. The individual's relationship with society, — the milieu within which his realization is made possible is intimately and inter-dependently interwoven. How the right to procreation stands in this hierarchy is not well defined even within this traditional understanding of rights. Certainly it is not an absolute right. Secondly, and because of the societal consequences that follow, society and the state will have some say in the exercise of reproductive behavior of the individuals. It would be safe to conceive the right to reproduction as an intermediate right, one between personal and social rights. Personal and inalienable in itself, yet under certain limitations and restrictions put forward by society as guidelines for its exercise, depending on how serious other needs of society may be, such as welfare, development, and improvement of the quality of life of the rest of the members of that society.³ Since absolute extreme situations, such as extinction of mankind on the one hand or excessive over-population threatening survival of society on the other, are realistically unthinkable, a happy and balanced medium should be found where freedom and responsibility of the individual is assured, while at the same time actual reproductive patterns of behavior do not constitute an unsurmountable obstacle for society to carry out a plan of progress and development that will guarantee the satisfaction of the individual's rightly aspirations as a human being. Policies of the past favored heavily pro-natalist attitudes because high fertility rates were seen as necessary to satisfy specific goals of society. When those needs, problems or goals, not only have ceased to exist, but have been replaced by others that affect present society, at least some countries in particular, i.e., heavily populated countries, it seems reasonable to expect that the societies concerned will exert certain influences to change the procreative behavior of their individuals. From an ethical standpoint, that recognizes on one hand the personal and inalienable character of the right to procreation, and on the other takes into consideration the societal consequences of the exercise of such right, such policy can easily be justified, as long as certain necessary conditions could be assured. One of these conditions or characteristics of such a policy would be to give special emphasis to personal responsibility; thus, any element of coercion should be eliminated. On the other hand, it would be expected from the individuals or the couple that the personal right of procreation is in fact responsibly exercised.

³ We are following here the Summary that the Yale Task Force (see n. 2.) makes of the Roman Catholic tradition as expressed mainly in the social encyclicals *Rerum Novarum*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Mater et Magistra*, and some documents of Vatican II.

It seems to us that for society to assure this, the best methodology would be to provide appropriate education and proper information to the constituency about all the aspects of the different methods of birth-control, while availability of means is also made sufficiently accessible. Within a framework of social justice, distribution of cost and benefits should be proportionately allotted to the different sectors of society, while at the same time the government supports these family planning policies with an honest, clear, and well defined program of national development where the needs necessary to assure a minimum of human existence get the highest priority and most immediate concern. Another important factor would be the willingness of the Government to accept, and even to invite, criticism that can help in revising and perfecting present policies, something possible when the different sectors contribute their opinion, even if at times these may be different or critical of actual government undertakings.⁴

THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE

"In the Philippine context, who is actually making the decision?", Gorospe asks. (p. 3). In the Philippines, family planning programs were initiated by the private sector. It was not until a few years later that the Government got involved in population programs. For our purpose it would be important to distinguish initial programs of the late 60's and early 70's and recent Bucharest-inspired efforts. The early years of the government's population control programs were characterized, as Mary R. Hollnsteiner reports, (pp. 245-254) by communication-education efforts, straight KAP studies, eagerness to satisfy acceptor-quota requirements, massive efforts to reach the ordinary barrio residents, and distribution of all kinds of artificial contraceptive devices. In other words, the emphasis was heavily contraceptive, while the questions of rights, freedom, personal characteristics of the people for whom those programs were designed were not seriously considered. Hollnsteiner laments that the socio-cultural characteristics of the target population were not significantly present in those early programs.

A classical example of his approach is, perhaps, that of Reuben R. Canoy's **Model City Project** (pp. 145-162) which is definitely one that corresponds to the pre-Bucharest mentality. While reference is made to the United Nations' call for respect of freedom of the individual, prominence is given to the growing menace of over-

⁴ See Donald P. Warwick, "Ethics and Population Control in Developing Countries", *The Hastings Center Report*, Vol. 4, n. 3 (June 1974), 1-4.

population to plain and carry out at the grassroots level the national objective on family planning and population control." Reactions from the conservative sector, identified with the Catholic Church, were considered as obstacles to the project and were altogether ignored. A massive campaign of information "to erase fears and uncertainties about family planning" was launched, with a KAP survey serving as baseline for the program. Initial success of the program was measured by the number of acceptors or vasectomies performed. Another feature of the project was the requirement of attending a family planning seminar prior to the issuance of a marriage license, notwithstanding the contrary opinion of the U.P. Law Center which termed such measure as unconstitutional. Though reference is made to "an integral approach that takes into consideration the whole modernization process, and the experiment aims at bringing about the total well-being of the community in its economic, cultural, political and religious aspects", the program, as presented, relies heavily, if not exclusively, on birth-control measures. The project started on May of 1972 and was intended to last for five years. Canoy's paper was submitted at a U.N. symposium on Law and Population held in Tunis, on June 1974, just two years after the start of the experiment. Even at that early stage, Canoy writes about the "dramatic breakthroughs and successes." For this publication and up-dated more evaluative study should have been required.

With the inherent risk of generalizations, the **Model City Project** exemplifies well the initial approaches of family planning programs in the Philippines which in turn reflect the well established and known attitudes of birth-control programs as envisioned by international agencies involved in the field of population and exported to underdeveloped and developing countries.⁵ The features of said programs include massive information campaigns, training of family planning motivators, easy availability of means of contraception, with lists of acceptors as parameters of success. When expected results were not obtained, more contraceptive measures were devised, first with country-wide programs of sterilization, and ultimately abortion as a last resort.⁶ A well defined Plan of Action following the above characteristics was to be presented at the World Popula-

⁵ Robert Veatch, "The Moral Message of Bucharest", *Hasting Center Report*, 4 (December 1974). For an interesting presentation of the different schools on family planning and its consequences on the international scene, see Donald Warwick, "Population Policy: Contemporary International Issues", a mimeographed article to be published in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Bio-ethics*.

⁶ Cf. James T. Fawcett, *Psychology and Population*, (New York: The Population Council, 1970), 7-20. See also B. Berelson, "Beyond Family Planning", *Studies in Family Planning*, No. 38, 1969, pp. 1-16.

tion Conference in Bucharest, in August of 1974. The world-wide campaign for awareness to the problem of population explosion was thought to provide a fertile ground with assurance that the said plan would be easily approved. What was needed was a renewed enthusiasm, more dedication and a firm commitment to the Plan of Action by the underdeveloped and developing countries as designed by the developed nations. What was in store at the international meeting of the Bucharest for the neo-malthusians was a complete failure of their plan and a source of frustrations. Third World countries' delegates reacted vigorously to the imposition. Development and world social justice were considered top priorities of concern. The confrontation between survivalists and developmentalist brought about a compromise or middle school where family planning and development programs are jointly considered in the new version of the World Plan of Action.

THE TOTAL INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH (TIDA)

In December of 1974, soon after the delegates to the Bucharest conference were back home, the Population Commission of the Philippines sponsored a multisectoral national population conference to thresh out various population questions and to study some suggested resolutions which were to serve as guidelines for those directly responsible for population policies.

Taken in general, reports Dr. Rafael A. Esmundo, until recently Executive Director of POPCOM, "the recommendations of all three commissions seem to converge in one crucial area: the necessity of assuming a point of view, not only with regard to population planning but towards development as a whole. The felt need then, was the verbalization of a humanistic approach to the population problems" (p. 76). The new thrust of the national population policy came to be known as **total integrated development approach** or TIDA. The basic philosophy behind this new attitude is the concept of human development understood both as a process of liberation and of humanization, following the line of thought of Charles Elliot, of D. Lebreton and T. Suavet of the French group **Economie et Humanisme** and of Pope Paul VI in **Populorum Progressio**. This new approach implies first of all a re-examination of past population policies and its projection in future plans of actions. Esmundo summarizes the point in the following manner:

"First on the agenda then was a reappraisal of the population program's rationale behind its operations. Next was a critical self-evaluation on how far primary objectives have been attained, and whether the means of attaining them

have been effective. Most important was weighing the impact of what has been attained — and not attained — against the new philosophy's basic premises. Did we, in our overwhelming desire to reach our quotas, ride roughshod over our fellowman's basic right of choice? Have we really made the options clear, or have we merely been content to pursue what was the universally popular approach to the population problem? Have we really analyzed the needs of the people we are seeking to serve, or could it be that what we have done is merely to hand over to them, lode stock and barrel, the components of a contraceptive package top-level planners have decided the masses must need?"

Esmundo's report is a candid, sincere and straightforward analysis of past population policies; the questions raised clearly point to areas of concern that may have seriously been neglected. Thus, central to the new attitudes is the felt need of "a reappraisal of our values as people of a preoccupation with the dimensions of what makes us human". (p. 81)

The new national family program is defined, specifies Dr. Conrado D. Lorenzo, by the following basic points: 1) a policy of **non-coercion**, whereby the program recognizes the right of every couple to choose their own method of family planning, according to their own convictions and religious beliefs; 2) a **policy of integration** by which the government uses existing structural, manpower and resources in areas where family planning could be fitted. The government takes note that "the population problem cannot be solved in isolation and that, to be truly effective, the program must link itself with a wide range of development efforts" (p. 67); 3) through the policy of **multi-agency participation**, efforts of public and private entities are unanimously combined to answer the functions of research, training, information-education-communication, and clinic services.

Three years after the adoption of the new national program of family planning might be too short a period to submit its implementation to an evaluative analysis. All that we will attempt to do at this instance is to offer some comments and raise a few questions.

It is unfortunate that a person so committed to population activities in the Philippines and so much involved in the framing of the new national population program as was Dr. R. Esmundo, had to sever his connections with the Population Commission as of recently. It is hoped that his wholistic approach to the problem of population and his humanistic attitude had nothing to do with his resignation as Executive Director of the POPCOM.

Notwithstanding the merits of the new and integrated approach of the population policy as has just been pointed out, instead of accepting it uncritically, a wait-and-see attitude would seem to be more prudent, especially in regard to the implementation of such policies. As an expert remarked, it is possible that after all the changes of attitude that the Bucharest confrontation brought about, many national and international family planning agencies may just continue with a business-as-usual policy. Evaluation of implementing efforts are possible when informational data, progress reports, research studies and the like are readily available. In the present Philippine situation these are rather scarce and so it becomes quite difficult, if not impossible, to attempt a thorough evaluative analysis.

One thing that seems to be clear is that present population programs continue to place an almost exclusive emphasis on artificial methods of contraception. The natural, or rhythm method is still included in the "cafeteria approach" of the program, but little importance is given to it, and the number of acceptors for such a method is not considered for quota requirements or other official purpose, as recent and occasional incidents in government hospitals have made it clear. The question of incentives is a delicate one,⁷ and in regard to its implementation as far as official requirements are concerned in terms of quotas, promotion and financial remuneration, recourse can easily be made to coercive means; again private and occasionally heard comments, with, admittedly, the limited value that they may have, cast some doubts as to the sincerity of publicly defined policies.

Recently a prominent Health Officer of the Metro-Manila area criticized the Population Commission for its "isolationism"; the POPCOM, he said, concentrates its efforts solely on family planning and does not adopt a comprehensive view about health care to yield maximum results, a claim that was immediately denied by POPCOM's officials.⁸ In the Five and Ten Year plan for health, nutrition and family planning that has been recently submitted for government approval, new efforts have been made to integrate health, nutrition and family planning programs. The project proposal says in part:

⁷ For an interesting discussion of what is the role of incentives in population programs see, Robert M. Veatch, "Government Incentives: Ethical Issues at Stake", and comments on Veatch's article by Edward Pohlman, "Incentives, not Ideal, but Necessary", both, in *The Population Crisis and Moral Responsibility*, J. Philip Wogonon (ed.), (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1973), pp. 207-224, and 225-232, respectively.

⁸ See *Philippine Daily Express*, June 21, 1977 and *Bulletin Today*, June 22, 1977.

The maintenance of the desired health, nutritional and population levels of the nations, depends, to a large extent, on the maintenance of a desirable balance of improvements in the various socio-economic programs of the country. Oftentimes, the most effective tools to control population and to improve health and nutritional welfare are beyond the sector's ordinary range of activities. Among these are income generation and distribution, food production and prices, and the attitudes and habits of the population which are influenced by economic, agricultural and educational activities. Thus, cross-sectoral linkages are encouraged in the plan formation and implementation. Specifically, close linkages are recognized and encouraged within the sector, namely, health, nutrition and family planning. An improvement in the level of one reinforces the welfare of the others. A smaller family size leads to greater shares for mother and infants in the family's daily food basket and to greater health/medical allocations for all members. On the other hand, there is direct mutual interaction between health and nutrition and their improvement is seen to promote the practice of family planning in the long run.⁹

On the strategies for action, however, emphasis is still placed on maximizing facilities and manpower especially for family planning activities, where most of the efforts and training are geared to develop skills and efficiency of family planning programs. It is not surprising then, that at the public hearing to which the said plan was submitted, the lone representative of the Catholic Church, while acknowledging the comprehensive character of the new plan, showed some concern about the use of possible coercive measures in the implementation of family planning programs, and emphasized that, "the nature of family planning population efforts as a non-coercive program should not only be preserved, but every effort should be made to safeguard the non-coercive nature of the program so that the individual conscience is respected. This means of course, a respect for the individual conscience of the family planning acceptor and also that of the family planning workers themselves. There are constraints in terms of salary, efficiency ratings, promotions, compliance (for example, with the Department of Labor directives), which reduce the freedom of those who make decisions, and are, therefore, to that extent, coercive. Such situations violate the non-coercive nature of the program and should zealously be guarded against".¹⁰

⁹ Mimeograph report, FTYF — HNFP — August 1, 1977 Chapter 9, "Health, Nutrition and Family Planning", p. 3.

¹⁰ Statement delivered in behalf of His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, at the public hearing conducted by the sub-committee on Health, Nutrition and Family Planning, held at the Philippine Plaza Hotel on 9 August, 1977, read by Dr. Vicente J. A. Rosales. (Mimeographed).

STERILIZATION AND ABORTION

Behind these sound policies and honest efforts, there are other aspects of population programs that are presently implemented which cannot receive the same commendation and approval. Once the criminal aspect of sterilization was removed from the Revised Penal Code by the Secretary of Justice and because of the effectiveness of the procedure to avoid further conception, sterilization in various forms has become one of the most important methods of the family planning programs of the government. "Surgical sterilization as a contraceptive measure", it is advertised, "fills the need for a simple, inexpensive and permanent method".¹¹ Since the program was initiated in 1973, some fifty thousand operations have been performed. This official policy is difficult to understand for at least two reasons. First, since the program is intended for a population the majority of which are Catholics, such campaign and practice stand in clear defiance to a moral position that the Catholic Church has firmly stated, namely, the immorality of direct sterilization. Though recently some well known theologians have questioned the traditional understanding of the intrinsic malice of sterilization, no one would admit the possibility of using it as nationwide method of contraception.¹² Understood as a kind of mutilation that affects radically the individual, its justification would require a much more serious reason than a program of family planning can present. Secondly, and more directly in regard to the officially established national policy, wide spread recourse to sterilization would seem to constitute a flagrant violation of the non-coercive aspect of said national policy. This is not to say that most of the operations are performed under well established evidence of force or intimidation. But the circumstances under which the operation is carried out, in many a case, are far from those that would assure the freedom of choice of the individual. Quite often the idea is "sold" to the indigent patient when she is in the delivery room, under the constraints or fears of a difficult delivery, when an additional mouth to feed looms as an unwelcome reality; these and other not so well known circumstances hardly guarantee a decision freely chosen.

¹¹ See Alejandrino A. Vicente, "The Philippine Sterilization Program: Crossing the Barriers", *Initiatives in Population*, a quarterly magazine of the Population Center Foundation of the Philippines, Vol. 2, n. 1 (March 1976), 16-26.

¹² Charles E. Curran, "Sterilization: Roman Catholic Theory and Practice", *The Linacre Quarterly*, Vol. 40, n. 2 (May 1973), 97-108; Richard A. McCormick, S.J., "Sterilization and Theological Method", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 37, n. 4 (November 1976), 471-477.

And then there is the problem of abortion. Fears have been raised that, as has been the case in many countries before, once indiscriminate use of contraceptive methods, including sterilization, has been approved, abortion will follow suit. Strict analysis of the above way of thinking indicates that it lacks logical connection: it just does not follow that because artificial contraception or sterilization are approved, abortion will be next; but the experience of many other countries which have gone through similar process might indicate otherwise and lend serious support to justify those fears. In the Philippines induced abortion whether intentional or unintentional is punished under the Revised Penal Code which considers abortion as a crime against person and as a destruction of life (p. 116). The highest authority of the country has repeatedly stated that abortion will not be approved as a measure of family planning. Internal and external pressure however, the clamor for change, and the "politization" of the issue could bring about a reversal of said national stand. Now and then veiled attempts about the idea are being made, apparently to test the grounds of public opinion. "Compulsory contraception, legalized abortion and introduction of divorce, such radical moves might become necessary if the Philippines is serious to its announced goal of reducing its fertility to replacement levels by 2000 A.D., an authority on population trends said recently", reads a recently published newspaper feature.¹³ "If we are serious", the report continues, "about achieving the target of a net reproduction rate of units, as set by the Commission on Population in 1976, I do not believe this can be achieved by entirely voluntary means." Answering a question as to whether there would be a need for more radical measures to reduce the population growth rate faster, Dr. Concepcion further says that "the possibility of introducing far more radical means, not only of contraception but of birth control, is not unlikely. The experience in other countries has shown abortion to be the most effective means for reducing birth rates. If we are serious about this target, then abortion will have to come into the picture much more than it is now. Recognizing and legalizing it may be necessary." Though the Dean of the UPPI qualified her answer by adding "I am speaking of possible radical measures. I'm not advocating them. I was asked for radical measures and I'm giving them", her comments marked a definite pattern of thought that is trying to find its way in the Philippines situation. Not long ago, Dr. Malcolm Potts, a medical consultant of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, lectured at a symposium sponsored by the Family Planning Organiza-

¹³ "Legalized Abortion and Divorce", *Philippine Daily Express*, May 24, 1977, p. 18.

tion of the Philippine and urged to liberalize abortion laws. "No country in the world has brought down its birth rate effectively without considerable recourse to abortion".¹⁴

Subjected to this kind of influence, it is feared that the national policy may soon give in. More so when other kind of pressures can be exerted by national or international family planning agencies, or other groups involved in development and progress of Third World countries. At the level of the masses a progressive change of attitude is already detectable; when people face the problem of abortion, the question, as Dr. V. Rosales points out, is no longer, why? but rather why not?¹⁵ It would not be long, it is avowed, before we find ourselves entangled in the classical abortion controversy that has preceded the liberalization of laws in other countries. It will be unfortunate if that happens for, as the well-known and leading American theologian Richard A. McCormick, S.J. says, society's acceptance of abortion, more than a solution to the debatable questions of whether the fetus is or is not a person, the right to privacy of the woman, etc., reveals the systems of values and mores prevailing in said society.¹⁶ In many of today's developed and industrialized societies, economic factors, comfort of living, individual utility and contribution to society, non-transcendence of the human person are the ultimate parameters that define the worth of man whether at the beginning or at the end of human existence. Assuredly, Filipino values are entirely different and in many instances opposed to those values mentioned. A re-definition and re-evaluation of what exactly are the values that constitute the uniqueness of the Filipino people is most important, if only to have a fair knowledge of what would be traded-in if and when Philippine society decides to accept abortion as a means of curbing down population growth rates. The Catholic Church, and other churches and pro-life groups, has an important and urgent role to play in this regard offering to the faithful well organized educational services, stating publicly and repeatedly her unwavering stand and prudently checking the sincerity of national population policies which, as officially promised, will not include abortion. In turn, a more positive contribution and close collaboration with national efforts in solving the problem of rapid population expansion could perhaps be expected from the Church. A few suggestions could be offered on how exactly this could be done, but it would lead us too far from the point of our present concern which is to keep the issues involved in population policies clearly defined. In this

¹⁴ *The Times Journal*, August 2, 1977.

¹⁵ See his essay in Fr. Gorospe' volume, p. 227.

¹⁶ Richard A. McCormick, "Notes on Moral Theology", *Theological Studies*, Vol. 35, 2. (June 1974), 354-359.

regard, as we have gathered from some sectors, an invitation was recently extended by the Population Center Foundation of the Philippines to the Catholic Hierarchy for a more direct involvement of the latter in the field of family planning. The offer made was to support financially any program that the Catholic Church will choose to organize, with no other requirement than to submit periodically progress reports of said program. The invitation was turned down, apparently, for fear that association with the Foundation could be interpreted as an official endorsement of other activities of the Foundation which may not meet the Church's approval! In this most important field of family planning, and at a time when coordinated and co-sponsored efforts of non-conflicting nature should not only be welcome, but even sought, such conservatism and shortsightedness are difficult to understand.

A LESSON FROM THE PAST

It would be naive to deny that ever since family planning programs became a Government major concern, considerable progress has not been achieved. On the other hand, continuous change of strategies and new and all-out efforts in favor of more drastic and irreversible birth-control measures, indicate that actual results are far from initial expectations. While population increase continues to be a major concern for family planners, the nagging question that persists is how to make recalcitrant couples change their mind and take the pill, have an IUD inserted or go through a sterilizing operation. In planning for future activities a look at the past may prove to be most helpful.

Mary R. Hollnsteiner and Lourdes V. Lapuz, leading authorities in their respective field of anthropology and psychology, provide very enlightening insights in their essays for the understanding of the Filipino family in general and fertility behavior in particular.¹⁷

As Felipe Landa Jocano sustains, family size is an adaptive response to the socio-cultural environment.¹⁸ Past efforts in family planning, Hollnsteiner laments, have been predominantly guided by communication-education and management schools of thought, while not enough attention has been given to socio-cultural and psychological factors of the Filipino family. "Unless the structure of the Philippine Society undergoes some radical changes successful limitation will remain a planner's dream or a nightmare", she says (p. 246).

¹⁷ See Gorospe's volume M.R.H. pp. 245-254; L.V.L. pp. 255-266.

¹⁸ Felipe Landa Jocano, "Small Family Norm for Filipinos", *Solidarity* 7, (Jan 1972), pp. 24-29, as cited by Gorospe, p. 245.

If the POPCOM's widely projected slogan of the 1975-1976 campaign, "A small family is a happy family", is contrasted against the deeply rooted cultural and traditional belief that "A large family is a happy family", the latter is bound to prevail. Factors, attitudes and values other than those revealed through KAP studies and surveys will have to be taken into consideration in designing family planning policies, if these are to have a better chance to be accepted by the people and remain in consonance with the essential assumptions of the Total Integrated methodology. Both Hollnsteiner and Lapuz consider a list of values and beliefs that define the Filipino family, affect the individuals in understanding their specific roles as husband or wife, and determine their respective behavior. For one thing, a strongly favored pro-natalist attitude enjoys a long and traditional standing. Parents view their children as helpers and source of security in old age. The Filipino husband measures his masculinity by begetting children, a belief that is reinforced by society's expectations, while the wife sees her role as being defined and fulfilled by her ability to bear children. These and other socio-psychological factors become more important and decisive when, as Lapuz affirms, "the family is possibly the most cherished value of the Filipinos. This is where the individual fulfills his needs to belong, to be cared for and protected and where he expects to achieve his identity as man or woman as the head of the family." (p. 260). But it is often the case, as Hollnsteiner points out, that "values at the lower levels of the hierarchy rarely permeate into policy formation." (p. 254). Other external influences, such as those exerted by the school or the church, are nevertheless important but of much lesser weight than the above beliefs and cultural values in shaping the conscience and performance of the individuals or the couple in fertility behavior.

When limitation of family size is offered as a new alternative, the Filipino couple confronts an entirely, and at times contrary, set of values. The approach to be adopted is of paramount importance. A hurriedly sold "package-deal" alternative with emphasis on individual and family economic advantages, societal benefits and national interests, and superficially understood by the individuals, will surely be a guarantee for a prospective drop-out. Added to this will be the psychological difficulties and other side effects inherent in all artificial methods of birth control. Still more regrettable will be hurt feelings and a sense of failure and frustration if sterilization was accepted under any degree of pressure. Until and unless the values and benefits of family size limitation are personally understood and accepted by individuals and couples, family planning programs are doomed to fail. In this sense we wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Lapuz that in this setting responsibility and education are the key concepts (p. 262).

This assumption differs more significantly than at first it may appear from Fr. Gorospe's constant emphasis on the individual's freedom as the highest value to be preserved in the complex field of family planning. Theoretically, we will not have much difficulty with Fr. Gorospe's thesis. Our difference is one of methodology; albeit, an important one. Before we can arrive at that level of personal freedom, the sacred framework within which the individual is to exercise his choice of action, there is a long process of education, responsibility and conscience formation. This need is especially true when within the complex, often unpredictable and at times contradictory Filipino personality, there is the tendency to refuse responsibility and to shrug-off self-discipline. Regarding the point that we are considering, the argument of couples not yet convinced of the benefits of family planning could go this way: let the government or any other agency bring to us family planning programs; let us show our readiness and interest, if only to manifest somewhat our desire for modernization, and let us... just continue going our way. More than failure of freedom, it would have been a failure of responsibility, and prior to that a failure or lack of proper education. "Ultimately, it will be the capacity for self-discipline which will give the Filipino the will to translate authentic freedom into living-terms" concludes Dr. Lapuz (p. 265).

In "Responsible Parenthood and Family Life in the Philippines Context Today" (pp. 286-327), Ramon A. Tagle, Sr., offers an excellent analysis of what responsibility means for husbands and wives in regard to their fertility behavior. Responsibility is the ability to give proper responses to the needs, problems, successes and failures of husband and life, to respond properly to their mission as individuals vis-a-vis themselves, their children, God and society. It is the ability to free oneself from those things that stand negatively in one's own aspirations and become free to concentrate in those that are viewed as essential to that of self-realization. Responsibility then, within our context, is the proper response to free the family from 1) economic and financial hardships, especially from those extremes of poverty, misery and disease; and 2) from cultural beliefs and attitudes held more by force of tradition and custom than by conscious adherence, and the value of which could seriously be questioned in the set-up of today's society. Though the process of modernization and industrialization has affected particularly the urban family life, its impact has been extended to and felt by the rural family, even if in a lesser degree. In such a context the proper exercise of conjugal responsibilities by the spouses, of their understanding of human sexuality, and their concepts of maleness and

femaleness, of their mission as parents, need to be viewed from different and new perspectives more in consonance with the nature, role and needs of the family in a changing society. In this situation, proper education is of absolute importance. We have in mind a concept of education which is entirely different from the directly contraceptive concept as expressed by the stereotyped reference to "appropriate information and education", of the U.N. documents and family planning agencies' creeds. On the other hand, this wholistic concept of the nature and mission of the family and the responsibilities of family life has some reference to family size limitations, but goes far beyond that. Fertility behavior is but one of the consideration towards an all-embracing understanding of marriage and family life.

Acceptance of this concept of the family will require on the part of the spouses a long process of re-evaluation of past attitudes and traditionally held values and a confrontation with the needs and aspirations of today's society as they affect marriages and family life. Through this process of education the individuals become aware of the different alternatives, in terms of economic, educational, moral, social and national values and advantages within which they can make a free and responsible choice. It is only then that personal freedom and responsibility can be assured. Possible legal modifications, as those proposed by Irene R. Cortes (pp. 127-128), and other government constraints and limitations could then be well understood and justified, because the individuals have seen the need for it and accept them as contributing to personal and social welfare. If family planning efforts were conceived along this line of freedom and responsibility, the role and place of the Church in population activities would be both necessary and most effective, for those activities could be geared towards the protection and promotion of a Christian understanding of marriage and family life in the present society. Family size limitations would be included within that whole view of marriage and family, and the contraceptive aspect of family planning, often projected by classical action-goal programs, would be minimized to concentrate on other ethical dimensions that would safeguard the freedom and responsibility of the individuals.

ETHICS AND ARTIFICIAL METHODS OF CONTRACEPTION

Gorospe rightly points out that the much broader ethics of population as a problem should not be identified with the more concrete aspect of the licitness or illicitness of the various artificial methods of birth control. In his analysis of the latter, however,

there are certain points that appear ambiguous, making his presentation wanting in depth and clarity. A few comments will be in order.

Looking for a justification of the position of the Catholic Church he says that "if the Catholic Church were more interested in world popularity than in the truth of the matter, how much more acceptable its position on population control would be if it changed its teaching againsts contraception. However behind its unpopular stand lies the Catholic Church's total vision of man and its sensitive commitment to human dignity and basic human rights and values." (p. 19).

Well and good. But then, immediately afterwards, Gorospe draws a distinction between "the level of principles, what is officially taught by the Catholic Church and the level of facts, what is being held in practice by its members." What follows next is an attempt at justifying ethically the level of facts, i.e., an ethical justification of the general practice of many Catholic couples choosing an artificial method of contraception, — except abortion and perhaps sterilization, that in conscience fit their particular situation. This position, we must say, is not that unpopular. As a matter of fact, if it were to be officially sanctioned by the Church it would give her a lot of popularity. It would seem to follow, then, that the total vision of man and the sensitive commitment to human dignity and basic human rights, which is behind the unpopular stand of the Church, is not present in the minds and hearts of so many Catholic couples who, though reluctantly, hold in practice a different and more popular position than that of the Church. If that is the case, an ethical justification of said position will be most difficult.

Gorospe then tries to gather new evidence in favor of the unofficial Catholic position. The argumentation that he presents is very similar to that of Gerald W. Healy S.J. in "Theology of Population Control", (pp. 175-189). The new evidence is presented to justify the fact of the growing dissent in theory and in practice from the Papal teaching as it was explicitly stated in the encyclical **Humanae Vitae**. Four sources are mentioned from where this evidence is drawn. These are: the statements issued by various National Conferences of Bishops shortly after the appearance of the encyclical letter, the writings of a good number of well-known Catholic theologians, the liberal approach of many priests in the exercise of their pastoral ministry, specially that of the sacrament of penance, and finally the general practice of contraception of countless Catholic couples.

What can be said of all this new evidence? Definitely, it has considerable theological weight which cannot and should not be

easily disregarded. The argumentation, as it obviously appears, is aimed at building up a strong case to justify a conscientious dissent from the official position of the Church. Before that is accepted however, a few questions can be raised which might help to evaluate the weight of the above evidence.

In regard to the somewhat dissenting statements of some episcopal conferences, those of Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa are most frequently mentioned. A few others could be cited which, if not as explicit as the mentioned above, allow for a more liberal position than a literal interpretation of the Papal document would suggest. But then, what do these local, official dissenting positions amount to? How about the many other episcopal conferences that fully endorsed the Papal document? If importance is to be given to statements of episcopal conferences, one has the duty, it is presumed, to look first at one's own episcopal leaders. And that is precisely what Fr. Gorospe proposes: "It is up to our own Filipino Hierarchy (and Clergy) to assess our own situation and interpret officially the pastoral application of *Humanae Vitae's* teaching for Filipino Catholics" (p. 23). But the Philippine Hierarchy has explicitly and in several instances stated its position. Those, however, who are convinced of the urgency of the problem of rapid population growth in the Philippines and are aware of the conflicting situations in which married Catholic couples find themselves, will think that the Bishops' stand is too restrictive and does not respond to the reality and needs of the faithful. A more open attitude, similar to that of the Bishops of Mexico, Indonesia and South Africa, would have been desired. But things being as they are, and as far as the Philippine situation goes, to accept the authority of the latter and disregard one's own episcopal leaders might not be theologically sound. If one chooses to do so, some other aspects will have to be considered.

As to the liberal attitude of many Catholic priests in the exercise of their pastoral functions in many other parts of the world, the situation might not be entirely the same with respect to the Filipino clergy. Doubtless, even in the Philippines, differences of age, of place, of work, and of training would account for substantial diversity of attitudes. In the absence of a national survey on the subject, it would be quite safe to presume that in regard to this point, as well as to many other **disputed** theological questions of today, the attitude of the majority of the Filipino clergy would be rather conservative. A different result would be quite surprising.

With the attitude of the Bishops and the clergy thus defined, what is to be said of the wide and increasing acceptance of artificial contraception by Filipino Catholic married women? Does it reflect

the sentiment of the faithful (*sensus fidelium*) and can it be looked upon as a theological source? At the outset, it would be unfair to say that many of those Catholic couples who decide to use some artificial means of birth-control do so without any moral thinking or soul-searching. On the other hand, if the increasing acceptance of contraception by many Catholic women reflects the sentiment of the faithful, and thus constitutes a theological source, it will have to be presumed that those Catholic couples reached that dissenting decision after a long and serious reflection where due weight was given to the teaching of the Church, as interpreted by the Catholic Hierarchy and so preached by their priests. This is perhaps a presumption that might not correspond exactly to reality. Family planning government reports on the number of acceptors and the religion of the same — allegedly, mostly Catholic, reveal that the majority of them are indigent families, come from low class or rural settings where religious education is deficient and serious religious reflection might not be reasonably expected. The reality perhaps is that many Catholic couples are drawn to reach such a decision by the demands of concrete circumstances, dramatic at times, of human existence where the most essential elements for worthwhile living are absent and hope for a brighter future is nil.

The failure, we tend to believe, has been in the absence of a serious theological and pastoral reflection on the part of the **intelligentsia**; hierarchy and theological sectors. True, the writings of leading Catholic theologians from other parts of the world have reached these shores. But they appeared conflicting and were received with misgivings. Meanwhile, local theological literature has been scarce and for the most part of a markedly conservative tone, with most of the efforts concentrated in analyzing the ethical aspects of family planning from the narrow perspective of the licitness or illicitness of the pill or the IUD, failing to adopt a broader view of the problem of responsibility and family planning. In another place we have already attempted to show that other much richer concepts are at stake, such as the nature of marriage and family life, the concept of conjugal love and its responsibilities, and an understanding of human sexuality over and above the dimensions of mere physiological laws. These are concepts that can serve as guidelines for an ethics of family life where the Christian spouses understand their God-given mission in a spirit of freedom and responsibility and where birth-control and its ethical dimensions are but one aspect of the broader reality of responsible parenthood and family life.¹⁹

¹⁹ For a more extensive exposition of these arguments see our article, "The Nature and Meaning of Human Sexuality", *Unitas*, 50, 4 (October 1977).

THE RHYTHM METHOD AS A WAY OF LIFE

Dr. Vicente J.A. Rosales' "Reproduction, Contraception, and the Catholic Choice of Rhythm", (pp. 213-241) is a most interesting and original contribution. Dr. Rosales' essay, states Gorospe, is a "bold paper", "an invaluable contribution", "a scholarly article written by a layman who at the risk of unpopularity makes a well documented case for natural family planning and implicitly gives the rationale behind what appears to be the prevailing conservative position of the Philippine Catholic Hierarchy on the birth-control controversy". (p. 166). Dr. Rosales, "foremost Philippine authority on natural family planning", Fr. Gorospe generously admits, unmasks the many biases and myths of the rhythm method, clarifies crucial distinctions between the different methods of contraception, puts an end to the controversy on the Groden method, considers the IUD as abortive, and offers an "incontrovertible presentation" in regard to the question of the beginning of human life and the abortion issue.

Dr. Vicente J.A. Rosales is a scientist with many other talents that he cultivates as brilliantly as his medical practice and research. He finds himself at ease in the field of ethics and theology, and it would be difficult to determine whether it is because of his serious personal attitudes, family background, scholastic training or professional associations. Perhaps each one of the above has its share in Rosales' ability at theologizing.

Rosales' theological position, at least in regard to the question of family planning, is quite explicit: it falls within what has been termed as the conservative school. A few of his theological statements may need some clarification. Admittedly, the controversy that followed the publication of *Humanae Vitae* caused a lot of confusion inside and outside the Church, with the clergy getting most of the blame. His conclusions, however, go a little too far. Rosales' difficulties in understanding the odd attitude of ministers of the Church contesting "official" policies, and his comparison with ambassadors who cannot deviate from their countries' official stand without being in a position of self-contradiction, would be clarified if the nature and role of theology is properly understood. In regard to this, as well as to any other disputed doctrinal questions, theological dissent is possible and it can prove to be most helpful and healthy, even if religious assent has been given. The confusion that this particular controversy has caused is most lamentable, especially when it is due to the irresponsibility and the imprudence of some. Likewise, Rosales is perfectly right in saying that it is not because the majority behaves in a certain manner that ethics are determined; but it does not follow that the behavior of the minority or con-

forming with an unpopular ethics is what makes right a set of rules. Definitely, there is only an ethics of reason, but in what this ethics consists is a matter of discovery. Rosales' argument in favor of the ethics of the minority begs the question. Other personal differences with Dr. Rosales' position, particularly in regard to the question of the beginning of human life and whether the IUD is contraceptive or abortive stem from the philosophical analysis that one does of the available empirical data.²⁰

Rosales is at his best when presenting the nature and rationale of the rhythm method. Unreasonable and unfounded biases are due to the ignorance of the majority and the negligence of those who by profession should know better. Sexual abstinence, total or periodic, has always had a bad press. For one thing it requires self-discipline and personal restraint, an attitude difficult to find in a world which exalts the love of ease and satisfaction. For another thing, sexual abstinence, as a birth-regulating measure, was thought to be ineffective, and consequently discredited by powerful international family planning agencies, whose interests do not go beyond a reduction of number of births. It would be unfair to think of rhythm as when it was first conceived by Ogino or Knaus. Research in reproductive biology and physiology has brought about new refinements and precision: a slightly over 1.0 effectivity on the Pearl Index achieved in some recent studies should attract enough attention to consider it on an equal basis as any other method of birth limitation.

A strong case has recently been presented against the rhythm method. This time it is not the traditional argument about the effectivity of the rhythm method that is questioned. Natural measures of family planning are now questioned on ethical grounds. The objections come from the well-known German theologian Bernard Haring.²¹ The case could be stated in the following manner: Recent research has demonstrated that if fertilization takes place when the spermatozoa and especially the ova have reached a stage of overripeness, the frequency of spontaneous abortion is quite high. Second, and most seriously, the union of overaged, overripened gametes is responsible for a relatively high frequency of chromosomal abnormalities. In the practice of the rhythm method, because of the temporary abstinence that is imposed on the partners, and because of the difficulty to determine with exactitude the moment of ovulation and the life span of both the sperm and the ovum, conception often

²⁰ See our article "Personhood and the Beginning of Human Life", *The Thomist*, Vol. 41, n. 2 (April 1977), 247-294.

²¹ Bernard Haring, "New Dimensions of Responsible Parenthood" *Theological Studies*, Vol. 37, n. 4 (March 1976), 120-132.

takes place. In many instances, because of the above reasons, it will be a case of fertilization of overaged gametes, where either one of these two things will follow: waste of fertilized gametes, ending up in spontaneous abortion, or chromosomal abnormalities will develop that will affect the fetuses. The charges are quite serious and pose "new problems of conscience especially but not exclusively to the users of the rhythm method" (p.121).

Bernard Haring takes as the point of departure for moral evaluation the results of fertility research carried out by R. V. Guerrero and O. Rojas, and a few other studies. Though such studies indicate a very significant trend, the scientists themselves admit the limitations of the same, especially when not all the factors that can possibly bring about an spontaneous abortion or be responsible for chromosomal abnormalities are under control. A warning is made about generalizing the conclusions, a cautious attitude very different from that of Fr. Haring, who speaks of "compelling conclusions," and "overwhelming evidence." Moreover, Haring keeps referring constantly to "the rhythm method, as traditionally practiced", using as symptoms of ovulation the rise of temperature and calendar calculations. It is difficult to understand that being familiar with references and studies on this matter, Fr. Haring has not come across with a good number of studies that present the rhythm method in a much improved, accurate and effective manner.²² At any rate this new moral evaluation of the rhythm method is conditioned by the empirical data, presently available and until more definite conclusions are established, Fr. Haring's objections and concern about the use of the rhythm method appear ethically paradoxical and scientifically premature.

Notwithstanding our position in regard to family planning looking at it from the broader view of marriage and family life, a view that would allow for a moral evaluation of some methods of contraception different from the one officially sanctioned, we readily admit the value and the positive aspects of the natural methods as a way of life.

It is significant that more and more women are switching to natural family planning methods, specially in modern and sophisticated societies, and this for a variety of reasons. Lack of side-effects may be one of them. Despite the decreased dosage of newer and more perfected formulas of chemical contraceptives,

²² For a list of references on new scientific studies on this point, see *Reproductions*, Vol. 4, n. 50 (June 1976). Publication of the Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, Faculty of Medicine and Surgery — U.S.T., Manila.

frequent reports published in medical journals, translated then into simple terms and reaching the masses through the daily press, warn about the inherent dangers of continuous use of artificial contraceptives. Moreover, women are becoming concerned with their inner environment and consider the pills, foams and IUD's as foreign objects polluting their bodies. Recent research on natural methods and their much improved effectiveness have attracted the attention of the scientific community and the interest of the female population. As Dr. Rosales reports, NFP programs designed for the simple folk of rural areas have shown that these methods can be easily understood and practiced. A special advantage in the use of the natural method is the opportunity it brings, to those practicing it, to acquire a new and special knowledge about themselves. Sexual changes affect the organism in a variety of ways. Becoming aware of those changes makes it possible for women to control their bodies, to discover how those changes affect them physiologically and psychologically, to plan their work, their activities and their interpersonal relationships, accordingly, to adjust and accept otherwise unexpected moods and attitudes; a whole field of personal knowledge. From a higher perspective there is the Christian feminine attitude by which women recognize and accept themselves for what they are as an expression of the creative plan of God, accepting all the differences between them and men, as well as the equalities. Reference is made to the nature and meaning of human sexuality and its normative character. Sexual behavior and gratification play an important role in married life, but a limited one. To overemphasize that role could be as disastrous as to ignore it. A balanced understanding of the same would constitute the virtuous sexual life of the Christian spouses.²³

The objection that natural methods destroy the spontaneity of the sexual relations of the spouses has little weight, if at all. One has to accept constraints and limitations in regard to practically all sorts of urges, feelings or impulses no matter how genuine they could be. Yet it is argued that the periodic abstinence required by the practice of natural methods further extend those restrictions. Certainly, the claim is correct, but it must be added that those restrictions can be properly understood and accepted when the spouses have discovered the meaning and role of sex, as well as of love, sacrifice, children, the meaning they themselves play in the vocation they are called to live. It is in this perspective that natural methods of family planning can be understood as a way of life.

²³ Among other studies where these reactions are reported, see Sheila and John Kippley, *The Art of Natural Family Planning*, (Cincinnati: Couple to Couple League, 1975), Susan M. Moser, "A view and better birth-control method", *U.S. Catholic*, Vol. 40, (October 1975), 16-21.

Summary and Recommendations:

After this long discourse we will venture to bring forward, by way of summary, a few points and offer some recommendations.

1. It is imperative to recognize the present population growth as a multi-dimensional problem affecting the country and the individual. At the level of the family, a large number of children constitutes for countless families a most serious difficulty in their continuous struggle to provide for their members a minimum of living conditions which would qualify as survival level. Other requirements and expectations of a decent human situation such as standard nutrition, health care, education, and decent and ample housing facilities, to mention a few, are hardly met or are most seriously deficient. At the national level, the present population growth, even if a small decrease may have been attained during these past few years, presents a most formidable obstacle for the government in its efforts towards development, requiring continuous adjustments in its programs designed for national progress and improvement.

2. With the problem of population thus understood, it is expected that family planning would be a major program of the government. A lot of efforts and resources have been and will continue to be allotted to bring down population growth. Likewise, a considerable number of government employees are involved in family planning programs. These employees, together with those for whom the programs are designed, find themselves in the midst of a difficult moral decision process. Government employees are bothered as to how to reconcile their individual conscience as Christians with what is professionally required of them. The situation is no less perplexing for thousands of Christian couples who, striving to live a Christian family life, yet burdened by a large number of children and a host of other difficulties, are offered to plan their family in a way not entirely in agreement with the official position of their Church. Both groups, those implementing family planning programs, and those at the receiving end, are in dire need of help and moral guidance. To simply repeat what has been officially said is no help at all. To ignore their plight, keep silent and let them solve their problem the best way they can, may well mean a dereliction of duty on the part of the officials of the Church; at the same time such an attitude could bring about a further separation from the official Church of those who asking for help and guidance may feel abandoned and/or misunderstood.

3. It would be naive to expect from the officials of the Catholic Church in the Philippines a turn-about and for them to adopt an attitude similar to that of some episcopal conferences in other countries. Not yet, anyway. Difficult and confusing as the problem of population and family planning in the Philippines may be, a more positive attitude from the Catholic Church could be expected. To recognize fully and sincerely the complexity of the problem will already be a good point of departure. To accept the responsibility of facing the problem as it affects thousands of Catholics and the very life of the Church will follow next. In terms of positive contribution, and as long as the present doctrinal impasse remains unsolved, the field of education and motivation provides the best opportunity and role that the Church can play in regards to family planning. The most serious difficulty that the government has met in promoting family planning programs is one of apathy, reluctance and ignorance on the part of the masses. The idea of planning one's own family is not yet accepted nation-wide. Yet responsible parenthood, or as Ramon A. Tagle describes, the able-response of the couple to accept their duties as partners and parents in regard to God, themselves, their children and society is a most serious obligation and an important part of the parents' understanding of the message of salvation. Vatican II is most eloquent in regard to this point. Through the Catholic School System and the Parochial institutions the Catholic Church could offer a very positive contribution which will have lasting results in regards to the problem of population and responsible parenthood. At present, courses on human sexuality, sex education and family planning in Catholic schools are, if at all existent, quite defective. Well-trained teachers are lacking and teaching facilities are deficient. Whatever progress may have been acquired along this line is due to the Department of Education insistence rather than to the school's initiatives. Catechetical instruction at the parochial level could also be used to bring about this idea to the Catholic faithful. Pre-marriage instruction and counselling, as it is presently conducted, is too short and superficial and serves more to satisfy an official requirement than to offer a substantive help in understanding the responsibilities that the couple is about to accept. A Church-sponsored group, composed of experts in the field of Sociology, Demography, Economics, Anthropology and Culture, Ethics and Philosophy could provide a most needed assistance to Church officials in the study and evaluation of population and population related problems. Presently existing groups of similar nature established by some schools or institutes and even some committees of the Episcopal conference,

are limited in their membership composition or exist to satisfy certain concrete school goals. These efforts and accomplishments, though laudable, are inadequate and do not provide all the assistance and expertise needed. More coordination and closer collaboration would be desirable. A topic of special interest, if only to mention one area of interrelated study, would be a study of the Filipino values, particularly those related to population and family planning, determine the nature of their relationship, how they are affected by the new ideology that progress and industrialization seem to bring about, and lastly, how they are influential in living one's own faith.

Obviously this direct and explicit involvement of and concern for the problem of population on the part of the Church will require a good amount of resources. Private and public assistance, perhaps, should be requested; and even government support should be sought, and if offered, welcomed.

This will be, we believe, a much more positive and realistic attitude about the whole problem of population and family planning, one that will give the Church more credit and will make its involvement in this respect more authoritative specially when checking and denouncing policies and practices that go outright against values and mores that have been traditionally upheld and remain valid and in consonance with the dignity of human life and with human aspirations.

CONSCIENCE, GUILT, AND REGULATION OF CONCEPTION

By

Magin Borrajo, O.P.

Conscience is a human phenomenon. It leads us not only to meaning but it also may lead us astray. This is part and parcel of the human condition. Conscience may err (GS., 16), and one cannot know absolutely for certain whether his conscience is right and another's conscience, which tells him something differently, is wrong, or whether the reverse is true. Not that there is no truth; there is, and there can be only one truth. But nobody can be absolutely sure it is he who has arrived at the truth.

Our conscience is **personal**, the sanctuary where we meet God, inviolable, and leads from within (GS., 16, 17; DH., 3, 14), but will the individual ever get rid of his **unconscious conscience**, hereditary and transmitted (cultural patrimonium and family traditions, Freud's Super-ego), and develop a **free personal moral conscience**?

The Holy Synod, Vatic. II, affirms that people have the right to be encouraged to weigh moral values with an upright conscience and to embrace them by personal choice (GE., 1), but are we motivating people in this direction, or are we still purporting a **pre-rational**, customary, or group morality, versus a rational, personal, reflective, interiorized morality?

Our conscience needs to be educated. Our conscience is primarily a quest for truth. We all have a never ending task of educating our conscience, and we never quite succeed in this task. Conscience calls us back from the talk of the market to be ourselves—true selves in the making (Heidegger). St. Thomas speaks of our intellect as “*potentia libera*” selfless openness, “*cura veritatis*”, “*appetitus illimitatus*”. Its function is not to be violent against the truth, but to reveal it, to care for it. And again there is no end to knowing. Surely, in many ways we know more than did the men before us, but if we are just beginning the first degree of the “noosphere”, we hope that those who come after us, let us say a hundred years from now, will be kind enough not to laugh at our mistakes!

St. Thomas speaks of this dynamism of man. Man has teleological structures: his perfection is still in the future; man is separated from his completion, his fullest achievement (*actus*

ultimus). We are human beings (primus actus) but in the form of having to be or to become what we can be (ultimus actus). In other words, we are potential beings, beings on gestation, on the way to a full completion or perfection, (S. Theol., I, q. 5, a. 1 et ad 1).

In the formation of conscience there is polarity or even tension between **objectivity** and **subjectivity**. There should not be conflict between subjective autonomy and the objective demands upon it. However, human experience reminds us that the danger of **subjectivism** is perennially present. On the other hand, Psychology reveals a deeper knowledge of subjectivity: in our deepest core we are still unknown, unspeakable. If conscience is the "sanctuary where we meet God", and speaks of the "unsearchable depths of the soul" (Gs., 16; Decree on the Ministry and life of Priests, n. 11, footnote 140), can we disregard, subjectivity?

Should our conscience be more objective or subjective today? There is no simple answer to this question. We can say that in the past in the formation of conscience we have been too juridical, and we have to be de-legalized to a certain extent, and emphasized more: biblical theology, respect for subjectivity, greater sincerity, charity, openness and responsibility. In the Catholic Community the voice of the Magisterium occupies a pre-eminent position, but it is not the sole repository of truth. There is a community of other Christians who also incarnate truth. And in fidelity to conscience Christians are joined with the rest of man in the search for the truth (GS., 15-16).

In the Vatican II we are reminded that in the sciences "The nature of man is more clearly revealed" (Gs., 36, 44) and that "new roads to truth are open" (Ibid., 36). To the extent that Moral Theology has done without the aid of the sciences of man, it has proceeded with an inadequate, and sometimes false, view of man and his condition.

* * *

MORTAL GUILT

In the past the Manualists spoke of "full advertance", "full consent", and "matria gravis" which more updated Theologians would consider very problematic. "**Full advertance**"? Isn't it an illusion to think that all in me come to clarity? I am in my deepest region, in my "unconscious", unknown to myself!

"**Full consent**"? Are we really free enough to say yes or no in the traditional sense that the Manualists attach to this word? Are we really free to do what we want? We have heard many times

the phrase: "where there is a will, there is a way", and yet experience has taught us that often there is a will, and yet there is no way! To what extent are people who violate standards of conduct responsible? Are those who violate standards of morality free, guilty, sinful, or maybe not-well, sick, and immature? This is very problematic!

"Materia gravis"? Is there parvity of matter in sexual sins? All the commandments of God are serious, and mankind has to strive to do God's will wholeheartedly. But isn't **Christian Life an ongoing conversion**? In christian life we fail normally not because of malice or evil intention, but because of human weakness. This is particularly so in matters of the sixth commandment. Hence, the possibility that many human failures are not "mortal" but are less or more grave venial sins because of man's imperfect freedom.

The sexual sins have to be judged like all the other sins. The most important law is the law of love of God and neighbor. If there can be parvity of matter in sins against love, justice, etc. why not in matters of sexual sins? The sixth commandment has to be treated like all the other commandments.

In the Bible, **sin** (amartia) is not used as an external act of breaking the law, but as a breaking of relationships with God, the neighbor, the world. Sin is always much more than an action, it involves the "core" of the person, and it couldn't be a common occurrence (St. Thomas, S. Theol. II-II, 24, 12 ad 1).

In our concept of dynamic morality we emphasize fundamental options. Our life grows in terms of multiple relationship with God, the neighbor, the world. Some of our acts deepen this relationship, some lessen it, and some break this fundamental relationship. Sin is a reality present in the Bible and very obvious in the world, but when applied to humans, sin is more than an individual act, is more like a way of life, a process, a relationship and in a way, usually in the venial sense, "homo simul justus et peccator".

This concept of sin is reflected in the New Rite of Penance. In the past it was emphasized Confession (enumeration of sins); nowadays, the Church speaks of "Reconciliation"; in the past with Confession we were very individualistic; today with Reconciliation we emphasize the communal aspect: We sinful people, usually in the venial sense, celebrate with gratitude God's mercy and forgiveness.

We can always speak "our truth" but humbly because we do not necessarily have it. In the Gospel message we are reminded not to judge. And if we have the weakness of judging we ought

to be broadminded for "the judgments we give are the judgments we will get". In order to sit in the throne of judgement we must: first, know the truth, secondly, be good. But who knows the truth about God, about ourselves, or for that matter about morality? And who is good, but God alone?

Regulation of conception. What is the Catholic attitude toward regulation of conception and the role of the Church?

We spoke of the dynamism of morality. In this context, the church as **Mater et Magistra** of man should try to understand and share with man the truth she possess. As **Mater** she must continue striving to understand the difficulties of married couples in planning the number of children they should bring into the world. The Church must also understand the urgency and complexity of the population growth in the Philippines and wholeheartedly collaborate with the government in searching for reasonable solutions (Cf. Gs. nn. 51, 87). The church as **Mater** of man must also learn to live with **pluralism** on this matter and in many others especially when a number of episcopates, many moral theologians, marriage counselors, and married couples have dissenting views.

The Church as **Magistra** must share with men the truth she possesses. The Church's truth is always a growing truth, subject to evolution in many subjects. This is especially applicable to **noninfallible** Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff. We do not doubt that the Pope is especially assisted by the Spirit (Lg. 25), but he is always a **man** in the collaboration with the Spirit. This human element gives ground to human frailty and possibility of error. The Pope could fail in consulting the Scriptures, the critical works of biblical scholars, theologians (the various school of theology), and the "sensus fidelium" or the "public opinion in the Church".

In **humanae Vitae**, Pope Paul asked for "internal and external obedience to the teaching authority of the church" (HV. 23), but can one obey internally when he has well-established reasons to disobey? In the Second Vatican Council we are reminded:

Let it be recognized that all faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and thought, and freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence. (Gs. 62)

In this context it would be very interesting to know whether theologians and competent bishops are sincere in their statements on **Humanae Vitae**. On this matter conformism is safer, but for whom? For us or for the community? Needless to say, for those who are conscious of this pluralism in the church, that dissenting opinions must be expressed in a manner that will not weaken the

bounds of faith, hope, and charity that unite all men in the Church. Respect must be shown for the Vicar of Christ on earth. We all must learn to understand that tensions do not have to destroy the unity of confession, the will of obedience, and the bond of love.

With regard to the **regulation of conception** there are two different questions: first, whether spouses should control the transmission of life; second, if so, what means are morally acceptable.

The first question is answered clearly and firmly by the Second Vatican Council: the transmission of life, the size of the family, and the interval between pregnancies are matters of responsible conscious deliberation by the spouses. We do not consider ideal the attitudes: "bahala na", "children are just born", "God sends them" God has given people intelligence and wants them to be sharers. And co-workers in his creative love according to that intelligence. Nobody can decide the family size but the couple themselves. They should take into consideration their family situation, their capacity not only to give shelter and food to the children, but also to educate them harmoniously and, above all, to transmit to them the greatest gift, faith in God, and capacity to love their fellowmen. They should also consider the social situation. In overpopulated countries it might be a virtue not to have many children.

The second question about the **means** has caused a certain **pluralism** in the Church especially when there is a **conflict** between responsible parenthood or transmission of life and the exigencies of conjugal harmony love. And Catholics must learn to respect and to live with this pluralism.

There is a consensus, however that abortion should be excluded as a means of "birth control". That is why it is advisable to avoid the term "birth control" and to use the expression "conception control" or "regulation of conception".

Other than abortion, to explain the morality of the other means to regulate conception, I will invoke again the dynamic concept of morality and two structural elements which form the unity of the human action. The intention or motivation (formal elements) receives emphasis and specifies the moral action. What one does is revelatory of his subjectivity.

Petrus Lombardus, who wrote *Quator Libri Sententiarum* (1155) maintained that one has to take as starting point the **external action** or the **action in itself**. He would say that one can make a **moral judgment about an action in self** apart from the intention or end of the acting subject. Thus, for him we can have intrinsically good and evil actions (*actio in se bona vel mala* or *actio*

intrinsic *bona vel mala*). Historically, St. Thomas has been interpreted through Petrus Lombardus, and thus there has been much confusion about the true teaching of St. Thomas. In the St. Theol. I-II (De Fine ultimo) St. Thomas reacts strongly against this current of thought of considering an *Actio* intrinsic *bona vel mala* apart from the acting subject. He even gives an example: to kill a human being (*occidere hominem*), isolated from the end (intention) or motivation of the subject who killed, one is not yet in the moral field, one is considering an action **sub speciae naturae**, the act itself cannot be considered moral or immoral. For St. Thomas what species morality is the formal element or the intention. (Cf. I-II, q. 1, aa. 1-3, q. 6, a. 1; q. 8, a. 3 q. 12, a. 4).

Pope Paul VI, in **Humanae Vitae**, follows the line of thought of Petrus Lombardus **Guadium et Spes** emphasizes the end of subjects. Thus, whereas in **Humanae Vitae** the use of contraceptives are **actiones in se malas**, in **Guadium et Spes** it would be justified to use contraceptive means if it is possible to prove that a contraceptive act is not opposed to the demands of conjugal love and human procreation (ends).

Are contraceptives opposed to the demands of conjugal love and precreation? This is the main question and today we understand it better due to the progress of culture, science and technology. We have witnessed an evolutionary process taking place and also an elaboration of new values: e.g. from biological (only procreation) view of intercourse we pass to a view which sees the conjugal act within the whole life of Love lived out between two persons.

From St. Augustine to St. Thomas, and even further in the middle ages sexual intercourse was considered as a biological act (*actus naturae*) whose inner finality (coming from God) is procreation so that only procreation would justify it. Today we consider sexual intercourse as a relational reality in as much as it expresses and improves conjugal love (Gs. n. 49) which (conjugal love) has to be source of a really **human** procreation or responsible parenthood (Gs. n. 503. We see here an important historical evolution. And it is possible that in the future human sexuality will reveal new values and significance which we do not even suspect. Culture is a historical reality and its progress develops new possibilities from which through the experience of moral life new values will be explicitated. The desirable human is inexhaustible and the possible desirable human hopefully will continue to expand. Keeping the above things in mind I can answer the question of the Means to regulate conception:

a.) First possibility is the practice of periodic continence. Periodic continence is an ideal worthwhile striving forth. But for many couples we must admit that it is impossible. With regard to sexuality within marriage the maximum of temptation is combined with the maximum of opportunity. Often sexual relations must be maintained to preserve marriage, the concern of the spouses for one another, etc.

It is possible that periodic continence can be practiced out of egoistic motives, i.e., in order to avoid the measure of responsible parenthood in their concrete situation. In this situation there is an inner contradiction between the action and the end, and thus the practice of periodic continence is morally wrong. If periodic continence is practiced within the framework of responsible parenthood their action is morally good.

b.) The second possibility is that of a non-contractive complete conjugal act during the fertile period. Here again we have two alternatives: If the action is performed to procreate within the framework of responsible parenthood, it is morally right. But if the procreation of a new human life is not justified within the limits of responsible parenthood, then the act of intercourse performed non-contraceptivity lacks due proportions and it is morally wrong.

c.) The third possibility is the use of contraceptive means. Applying the same principles that we have used in the two preceding possibilities we conclude that, if the use of **contraceptive means** is in accord with the demands of responsible parenthood, then the use is morally right. If, on the other hand, contraceptive means are used out of egoistic motivation, there is an inner contradiction between the action and the end of responsible parenthood, and their use is morally wrong.

The good intention of married couples in sexual intercourse must be to improve their conjugal love and to procreate responsibly (Gs., 49-50). No marital act may be in contradiction to this **finis debitus**. The agent's intention — **finis** — must not be contradicted by what he does. Therefore, if the spouses use contraceptives in order to prevent responsible parenthood, what they do contradicts the **finis debitus**, and their action is morally wrong. If, on the contrary, they use contraceptives to keep responsible parenthood, and the use of contraceptives does not obstruct them in their expression of conjugal love, the use of contraceptives would be proportioned to the demands of the end of marriage (**finis debitus**), and it would be morally justified.

d.) Role of the Government officials, doctors, nurses, midwives in relation to the control of conceptions? The right to procreate is personal and inalienable. This is constantly defended in the Social Encyclicals, but at the same time these encyclicals link procreation and family life with social realities beyond the individual person and the family. Some theologians begin to classify this right also as a social right. So it does not seem unreasonable that the state or the government exercise some control of this right, especially in those societies undergoing rapid population.

The state should inform its citizens of the methods by which the spouses can be helped in arranging the number of children. (Cf. Gs., 87)

The Government officials and all those concerned with distributing methods or techniques to prevent conception should be aware that some of these methods involve certain risks and bad side effects. The couples resolving to use contraceptives have the right to be well informed and they must be aware of the risks involved. Their informed consent is necessary.

The government should not force any employee, whether doctors, nurses, or social workers to get directly involved with contraceptives techniques and methods against their conscience. Employees of Government, like other humans, are not "objects" which can be used against their conscience. Conscience is the "sanctuary" where we meet God; there we are alone with him; nobody has the right to interfere. (Gs. 16) Respect for people is a must no matter where they are at. To respect people means to recognize their dignity, their rights, but never to crush and oppress them. To respect them means to help them to self-actualize themselves, and to help them make their own decisions in a truly free and responsible way.

A STUDY OF "A STUDY OF SIN"*

By

Manuel Piñon

Comments apropos "A Study of Sin in the Theology of Vatican II"
by John B. Balsam, O.P., *Boletín Eclesiástico*, June-July 1977, p. 337-410.

The title of the article "A Study of Sin in the Theology of Vatican II", is rather too grand by comparison to the ration that it dishes out to the reader. The only theology of Vatican II that one finds are a few tangential passages on Original Sin and its damages (p. 340) and the recommendation to take into account the advances in biology, psychology and the social sciences in the renewal of theological studies, which is a matter of common sense. The bulk of the article deals with the lucubrations of some post-Vatican II "theologians" concerning mortal sin, with no critical evaluation as to whether the said lucubrations are rightly or wrongly taken. It simply takes for granted that the new interpretations doled out in favor of a pre-empted "insight" on the nature of mortal sin are rightly taken. The impression it creates on the reader that he might be standing before rationalizations in favor of a presumed insight cannot easily be dispelled.

From the outset one can observe that precision of thought is set aside in favor of rhetorical outbursts. The style adopted is that of a journalistic reporter doling out for a popular magazine the views of the more vocal, thought not necessarily authoritative, theologians. There is too much vagueness that rules out the claim of genuine scholarship. Take, for example, the following concept which is repeated as fundamental in the article. "Leon Bloy once wrote: 'Sin lies at the heart of Christianity.' It is still there." (p. 340). The statement is plainly false. Sin lies not in the heart of Christianity, but in the hearts of men including non-Christians. Christianity was introduced to help men rid themselves of sin and minimize its evil effects. How could sin lie at the heart of Christianity when it was already in the world, even before Christianity appeared?

The article-writer continues: "For inscrutable reasons known only to the allwise God, sin is an integral part of the divine economy of salvation." We do not know what the writer means by "integral part". But, if what he says is true, then the divine economy of salvation is something sinful! Certainly sin cannot be an integral part of God's plan of salvation, because this plan is directed against

sin and its effects. With such slipshod manner of thinking it should not be surprising that the article should proceed from one wrong identification to another. It will be too tedious to single out each flaw. So, we shall merely concentrate on the fundamental ones which are taken as premises for the "modern" doctrine on mortal sin presented and espoused in the article.

I. THE SCRIPTURAL PREMISES GIVEN

We shall first deal with the interpretation of the Scriptural passages, which is presented as Scriptural doctrinal premise.

By way of conclusion the article-writer presents the core of the purported study of sin in the Scriptures in the following terms: "From this brief study of the notion of sin as found both in the Old and New Testament we can assemble a sort of synthetic composite of what the two periods of Scripture tell us of sin. First of all, sin is seen as a breaking of the bond or covenant of love with God" (p. 351).

Unfortunately, the Old Testament passages denouncing Israel's violation of its covenant with God in the metaphorical terms of marital infidelity may not be simply applied to any mortal sin. The sin involved and referred to in the given passages is not just any mortal sin, but the specific sin of turning to idols or other gods in quest for favors.

The Scriptural references to God's covenant with Israel in the Old Testament, couched in metaphorical terms of betrothal, must be viewed within the framework of the "henotheism" of the ancient Israelites. Henotheism is the belief in one God or supernatural Lord, without the exclusion of other supernatural Lords. It is analogous to the practice and belief that a woman must be married to one husband only, without excluding the concept that there can be other husbands for other women. As a people the ancient Israelites were originally not strict monotheists, even if gradually they subsequently arrived to the concept of strict Monotheism or the belief that there is only one true God; they were originally henotheists. They had entered into a covenant with Jahveh to acknowledge Him as their only supernatural Lord or God, with the exclusion of the supernatural lords or gods of the neighboring or other peoples.

In the view of the ancient Israelites, Jahveh is their supernatural Lord; therefore He is their God. The natural lord was their human ruler or king. If we are to view matters the Christian way, we should say; Jahveh is God, therefore He is the supernatural Lord. It is only within the mentioned Israelitic conceptual framework

that we can understand the sequence and logic of the first words of the ancient Covenant of God with Israel: "I am the Lord, your God... You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20, 1; 24,7). Understandably the turning of Israel to idols and the gods of their neighbors, on the excuse that they were not getting sufficient attention from Jahveh in their request for favors, was comparable to marital infidelity. The Prophets made use of this simile time and again in order to drive home into the minds of the "no read, no write" Israelitic folks the gravity of their sin, in a manner that they could easily grasp.

It is true that the rejection of the offer of God's love and/or of our obligation to love Him is a mortal sin. It is also true that in every mortal sin there is implied the rejection of God's offer of love and of our obligation to love Him. But, it is not true that every mortal sin is directly focused on the rejection of the offer of God's love. In most cases the sinner does not see any good forthcoming from the direct rejection of God's offer of love, so as to engage in such rejection. In most instances when a man is placed between the alternative of remaining faithful to the obligation of loving God above everything else and remaining faithful to His commandment, and the alternative of loving and pursuing an unlawful object, he opts for the latter and forgoes the former.

The rejection of God's offer of His love, more particularly of God's offer of salvation, is a deadly sin, not in the sense of the ordinary moral sin which does away with charity and the life of grace in man; but in the sense that it also carries with it the rejection of any further good use that man may make of God's mercy and pardon, which are the last recourses that afford to man the chance of salvation. Sinful man cannot attain salvation without the mercy and pardon of God; and he cannot have the pardon of God if he rejects God's offer of love and mercy.

In the New Testament, the "sin unto death" mentioned by St. John (1 John 16-17) is not just plain mortal sin. It is the rejection of God's offer of salvation through faith in, and acceptance of Christ after the saving Gospel of God has been sufficiently proposed, according as Christ said: "He who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16, 16. Conf. Acts 13, 48; 1 John 5, 11-12; John 3, 18). It is a sin that formally involves the contempt of God's offer of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ, as happened when the Pharisees contemptuously called Christ a "demoniac" (Mark 3, 28; Mat. 12, 31-32), after Christ had shown to them the works of His Father by way of divine credentials (Conf. John 10, 37; 15, 24; Luke 10, 16). It is a sin that leads to damnation in an irremediable manner.

The use by the article-writer of the parable of the Prodigal Son in order to illustrate his concept of mortal sin as "the breaking of the sinner's bond and of turning his back to God in full deliberation" (p. 348) is a mishandling of the parable. Therewith, Our Lord did not specifically intend to illustrate the case of mortal sin, but the alienation of the gentiles from the Heavenly Father and their return to God at the time of Christ's coming and preaching of the Gospel. The grumbling and complaint of the elder son presaged the opposition of the early Jewish Christians to the admission of the gentile believers into the Church (Conf. Acts 11, 2 fol.), and to an equal treatment of the latter (Conf. Acts 6, 1). The parable served to forewarn the Apostles and to disclose to them the nature of God's kingdom and plan of salvation in the New Testament. In any case, what the prodigal son sought and what mortal sin offenders seek is not directly the severance of ties with God, much less the direct rejection of His love, but the living of their lives and the handling of their affairs independently from God, that is, without minding God and His law.

We admit that the malice of mortal sin consists formally and principally in the aversion from God; but that does not also mean that mortal sin starts with the aversion from God and with the direct rejection of His offer of love. Mortal sin usually starts with man's conversion to the inordinate commutable good, which carries with it the forgoing of the observance of God's law and of man's duty to love God through the observance of His divine laws. If mortal sin should start from the aversion from God, then it would rarely be committed, as the article-writer subsequently defends; because men do not ordinarily see any benefit or good to be obtained in the direct rejection or aversion from God. The contempt and rejection of God's love can impress as good only to one who has hit the rock-bottom of wickedness, as Scripture says: "The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth" (Proverbs 18, 3; Douay).

The pretentious Scriptural premises alleged by the article-writer in favor of his views with regard to the nature of mortal sin are not premises at all. The presentation of Scriptural texts is made on a selective basis and overlooks other pertinent passages, e.g.: "I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment, however, insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You Fool!', shall be liable to the hell of fire" (Mat. 5, 22; RSV). Hence, the article-writer's thesis that mortal sin, as grounded on Scripture, must start with the aversion from God and the rejection of His love is far from proven.

II. ORIGINAL SIN AND THE "SIN OF THE WORLD"

In the article-writer's discussion on sin, we also find a beffuddled concept of Original Sin. This is rather surprising, considering the allegation of the writer that: "One of the most striking and truly significant things that have taken place in the theological world over the past two decades or so has been the volume of literature published, together with the in-depth study made on the subject of sin in all its aspects and implications. It has been nothing short of phenomenal. These scholars... have clarified, explicated and set in balanced focus the true notion of the reality and workings of sin..." (p. 354). If these statements are true, then we are surprised that the article-writer still identifies original sin as "sin of nature" (p. 358). "It is a sin of our nature", he expressly says (p. 361). We wish to point out that nature does not sin, but the individual person, or persons.

After the alleged advances in the theology of sin we should expect a better identification and rendition of the Latin original "*peccatum naturae*". For purposes of clarification, we wish to point out that the Latin term "*peccatum*" is analogous, which means that it has different meanings as it is applied to different things: as applied to the intellect, it means "error"; as applied to the will and the free doings of men it means "moral delinquency"; as applied to nature in general it means "damage" of nature; as applied to human nature in the sense of race, it means the "guilt" of the human race. This is just a matter of knowing a little of classical Latin and of some common sense.

In the case of our First Parents original sin was a personal and original sin on their part. Now, whereas at the time of its commission they comprised the whole human race, it also became the guilt of the race; and we are said to inherit that guilt by way of generation, because it is thereby that we become members of the race. The privation of sanctifying grace and the disorder that we experience in our powers is the damage of nature that resulted from the original delinquency of our First Parents. This damage is also expressed as the privation of the original righteousness or right order in the powers of man, wherewith the mind of man was rightly ordained to God through charity and sanctifying grace, and the lower powers were rightly subordinated and functionally integrated to the mind of man.

The article-writer continues: "But whether one holds to polygenism or monogenism does not substantially affect the fact of original sin and its presence and profound effect in salvation history" (p. 358). Original sin has profound effects in the history of

mankind, rather than in the history of salvation. With regard to Polygenism, that is, the view "that there existed true men on earth after Adam" or contemporary to Adam or even prior to Adam, "who did not take origin from him through natural generation as the First Parent of all, or that Adam signifies a multitude of first parents", Pius XII has declared: "It does not transpire in any way how this statement can be reconciled with the teachings that the sources of revealed truth and the documents of the Magisterium of the Church propose concerning Original Sin, which proceeds from the sin truly committed by Adam, which through generation is transmitted to all men, and is found in each one as his own" (*Humani Generis*. Denzinger: *Ench. Symbolorum*, n. 2328, ed. 31).

In this connection the "Sin of the World", which to take away the Lamb of God came into this world (John 1, 29), is nothing else than the original guilt of the race. It is not what the article-writer fancies when he writes: "We might best describe the sin of the world as a **sin-situation**, a sin-existential, a condition of sin, sin-environment" (p.363). If this were true, then Christ did not deliver from its bonds through His redemptive and expiatory death on the Cross, those who become beneficiaries of God's pardon through their integration with Christ in baptism: for, the sin-situation of the world still remains for the latter. In his confusion the article-writer attempts at clarification, saying: "The sin of the world is a hybrid sin" (p.363). "The world's sin is a sort of moral composite, a synthetic product of all the sins of mankind, a "massa" or cauldron of the world's evil from the beginning of human history, of salvation history. It is the sum total of original sin with all its dire consequences, the heap of human wickedness of every kind and all the human debasement, injuries, sorrows and physical and mental pain that followed and still follows in its broad wake" (p. 365). What a theological dunghill! Is this the theology of modern scholars? We wonder if it can be called theology at all!

This deadweight of the sin of the world viewed as sin situation, is also viewed as hamstringing the psychological freedom and likely to diminish the moral imputability of the wrongdoing of men.

III. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FREEDOM OF THE WILL

The freedom of the agent, that is the free command over his acts is a prerequisite or "conditio sine qua non" for the agent's possibility to exercise virtue, or to commit sin. If an agent is not free in its doings, then it is not responsible for them. In the matter of man's responsibility for his actions and his sins, the freedom

to be taken into consideration is primarily the psychological freedom of the agent with regard to his acts, rather than the situational or external freedom from pressures and encumbrances. Now, with regard to the internal psychological freedom of man's will over his acts, we have to bear in mind that the area of the freedom of man's will has two planes. One is the horizontal plane, that is, the freedom of choice with regard to objects or objectives, with regard to acting or not acting, and with regard to specific internal or external imperable acts. The other is the vertical plane of freedom, that is, the dominion or mastery that the will enjoys over its elicitive and imperable acts, and over its exercise of action. It is this kind of psychological freedom covering the horizontal and vertical planes, that sets man apart from brute animals and other natural agents. It is because man enjoys freedom of choice as to his objectives of action, and mastery over his options and exercise of action that man is responsible for the acts that he does knowingly and voluntarily.

In this connection the article-writer writes: "There is what theologians call the philosophical freedom of the will and the **psychological freedom** of the will. The type of freedom they exercise is not the same. Philosophical freedom is what might be called basic or core human freedom: the power to do or not to do, to choose or not to choose; in a word, means the freedom of the will from coercion or force. Such Freedom to will or not to will is absolutely necessary for any human act" (p. 369). We wonder why the article-writer identifies **freedom of choice** as **philosophical**, because it is an integral component of the psychological freedom of the will. The will's freedom of choice should not be explained, in a word, as "freedom of the will from coercion or force"; because freedom of choice is selective freedom bearing on objects, whereas freedom from coercion or force is riddance from the overlay of external force. St. Thomas teaches that the will and its internal elicitive acts are not susceptible of external force, but only the acts of the imperable limbs. And the reason is that for the effect of coercion the act that is extracted must be done not with consent or voluntarily, but against man's will. Now, under a supposed coercion, either the will desires what it is coerced to desire, or not. If the will desires, then there is no more room to speak of coercion; because no one can be coerced to do what he desires to do. If the will does not desire, then there has been no coercion done, but perhaps an attempt at coercion. In this manner, the will cannot be coerced even by God.

It should be borne in mind that all the internal elicitive acts of the will are done from its reflexive desire, even the main act

of desiring, because if the will does not like to do so, it will not elicit any of them. But, perhaps, the article-writer introduced freedom from coercion when speaking of the will's freedom of choice, considering that external coercion channels the will to opt for something like e.g., when a holdupper sticks a knife to a man and says: "either your wallet, or your life". In such instance it is commonly said that the man is "given no choice, and is compelled" to hand in his wallet against his will. However, the aforesaid are just manners of speech. The truth of the matter is that when a man is placed between the alternatives of either his "life" or his "wallet", he voluntarily opts for the former and his will is not internally coerced to elicit the said option. He is said to be "compelled" to hand his wallet against his will because he does so not according to his pleasurable desire, but according to his regretful desire from the threat of serious harm. He still acts from his own desire, although it is a regretful desire. If a man under a similar "compulsion" commits murder, he will not be totally absolved from guilt although he may have a mitigating circumstance; because he would still be acting from his own option, although a regretful one, and with mastery over his action.

"Psychological freedom", the article-writer continues, "is something a bit more complicated, more sensitive to factors and influences outside it. It is more sophisticated than the more root metaphysical form of freedom of will, philosophical freedom. By **psychological freedom** we mean freedom from forces, pressures, influences, fears, impulses and urges — the litany of such factors that affect the free and untrammelled exercise of our choices could be extended almost without limit" (p. 370). Now, all this prattle on the one hand says too much, and on the other hand says nothing. On the one hand it says too much, because if we take time to consider we shall understand that there is practically no human being who is free, that is, unencumbered from influences, pressures, emotions, nurture, nature, etc. Hence, it would follow that there is practically no human being who has genuine psychological freedom. In fact, the article-writer says: "None of us lives in a hermetically sealed, impenetrable life compartment. We are all both susceptible of, and vulnerable to, so many influences, suggestions, impressions, persuasions of such varied and sophisticated variety" (p. 370).

On the other hand, the explanation afforded by the article-writer says nothing relevant: for, brute animals and other natural agents could possibly and conceivably be more "free" or rid of such influences, pressures, etc.; and in that case they would theoretically have more psychological freedom than human beings. This is preposterous! Such factors are all external to the will! But, the foregoing misrepresentation serves to give credibility to the thesis of

"modern" theologians to the effect that mortal sin may not frequently be committed, owing to the reason that man rarely enjoys adequate or perfect psychological freedom, as understood according to the foregoing wrong interpretation. For the effect of man's enjoyment of perfect psychological freedom, in the vertical sense, as to his internal option, what is required and is sufficient is the knowledge of the nature and morality of the option and his will's mastery over it.

By way of conclusion the article-states: "Doubtlessly, many of these factors will influence, at least to some degree, the free choice of the will and both the conceptual and evaluative knowledge of the mind in daily moral living" (p. 374). We beg to ask: Which "freedom" of choice is meant? Is it the mastery of the will over its choice, or the riddance from external encumbrances? Then, again, there are two different issues involved in the conceptual and evaluative knowledge: one of them is the moral nature of the act concerned, whether good or bad; and the other is the practical evaluation whether the act is to be done or refrained from, here and now. Pressures, influences, passion, etc., do not usually influence the moral evaluation. In any case conscience is there to correct a wrong moral evaluation and to attest to the true moral nature of the act concerned. Pressures, influences and passion are likely to influence man's other evaluation, i.e., that the act should be done even when the man perceives that it is a morally bad act. Pressures and passion also influence man to rationalize against the dictate of conscience and to form a contrary persuasion in order to stifle conscience. But, then, this kind of influence on a man's evaluation does not excuse or reduce imputability. Man's voluntary ignoring of conscience is usually the cause of his weak perception of its voice.

The article-writer winds up: "Indeed, it is possible that because of the intensity and the powerful influence of these factors one may be excused from all culpability in a given act or even a series of acts" (p. 374). Nothing new is said herewith. But, the ancient theologians were more specific when they indicated that such an instance takes place when fear or passion so swamps a man's use of reason that his rational evaluation as to the nature and morality of the act is seriously impaired.

IV. THE BASIC AND/OR FINAL OPTION

By way of preliminaries the article-writer says: "The root of every sin, of whatever kind, is an **offense against love**, and always against the absolutely gratuitous, indeed utterly prodigal love of

God" (p. 377). This is either a loose statement, or a mere postulate. Mortal sin is not more against the love of God as against the goodness of God. The formal reason and malice of mortal sin is man's disowning of his dutiful love for God from man's preference of the inordinate commutable good over the observance of the law of God. This disowning by man of the dutiful love he owes to God is quite different from the offense against the love of God; this would be the specific sin of hatred of God, or the contempt of the love that He offers. Now, the root-source or beginning of sin may be either the "love of money", as St. Paul says (1 Timothy 6, 10); or "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life", as St. John says (1 John 2, 26; Conf. James 1, 14; Daniel 13, 56) Continuing in his loose style, the writer says: "Love is the **determinant** of all virtuous and God-centered living. It is the **very core** of a full moral life" (p. 377). It would be less ambiguous to say that: Charity is the formal principle of all virtuous and God-centered living. It is the **perfection** of a full moral life.

Entering into greater detail the article-writer states: "The acceptance of the invitation, the agreement to living the covenant is our free choice and responsibility. We can neither choose nor love God through a substitute. Indeed, this will be the most personal, the most self-committing choice we shall ever make. It involves our whole life and being—the length, the breath and the depth of it! That is why it is called by such sobering and soul-searching names as, a 'moral life policy', 'basic' or 'fundamental option', 'moral life-style or life-choice', 'moral orientation', 'life-decision', etc. The essential elements in such a choice are that it involves, penetrates one's whole life, conduct and being—for the whole of one's life" (p. 378). It does not involve or influence one's whole life actually, but only potentially; because the said life has not yet been completed and lived out thoroughly. "Hence", the writer continues, "it is a complete, definitive, and lasting decision, though like all man's free choices he can abandon it" (p. 379). It does not transpire how such decision can be complete, definitive and lasting, if man can abandon and change it for another. The latter considerations are incidental and non-essential.

Among the flowery and poetical expressions given above, we shall concentrate on that of "basic and fundamental option". The others are given, rightly or wrongly, by way of interpretations. Now, the relevant question to be answered in this connection is: Why is the said option called "basic" or "fundamental"? Is it from the reason and interpretation taken by the article-writer, to wit, that, "it is the most personal, the most self-committing choice we shall ever make", as if there is no more room for an equally personal dif-

ferent option or even a more self-committing choice of a different kind? Or, is it because "it involves our life and being — the length, the breadth and the depth of it", which we have pointed out is not true? No, not for such reasons. The said option is said "basic and fundamental" because it deals with and is concerned with the ultimate end. Now, this is a truism known in all moral and ethical sciences, that the "ultimate end" discharges the role of fundamental principle with regards to all practical deliberations of man and, therefore, it influences in all man's practical decisions. For this reason, the particular ultimate end that a man takes by way of option does as guiding star of his life and actions, unless he debunks it for another specific ultimate end. Understandably, man's option for a specific end as his ultimate end is a basic and fundamental one. The basic option is also formally considered a "final" one, in the sense that while it is standing and has not been revoked man has no other ultimate end; not in the sense that it is the definitive and last one, so that there is no further room for change.

With regard to the "basic option" the article-writer says: "Hence, we are dealing here with no flash in the pan decision but with a stable, enduring, sustained life stance or life style in the moral realm. From the way we function, we know that such life-forming and life-determining decisions and stand will not be made in one fell swoop" (p. 382). The latter is a postulate. How many gamble and lose a fortune in a moment, and consign their families to a life of misery! How many decide on a marital commitment for life and do so, after a love "at first sight"! One thing is that men should not act rashly, and quite another thing is what they actually do. To act rashly is the less difficult thing to do, and it is the kind of action that is usually involved in sin. The article-writer continues his theorizing: "Thus, ordinarily, such life decisions are not made, **at least made well**, by an overwhelming 'bright idea, dramatic experience, hunch or impulse'" (p. 382). By that the article-writer himself makes a distinction between acting simply and acting **well**, that is, prudentially, which involves careful thinking; and yet, what may be properly applied to the latter, he simply ascribes to the former.

He explains further: "They (life decisions) will not be made in one stroke of the pen, nor of the will, but only after the build-up of an attitude or stance." Now, here we have the proverbial "placing the cart before the horse". If the fundamental option is the ground for the life stance involved, how may it be logically said that the life stance or attitude must be built up before one may make the fundamental option? The article-writer continues: "And precisely here is where the difference between mere conceptual knowledge and the more critical and searching evaluative knowledge comes

into pay. Generally, it will only be after a series or concatenation of judgmental evaluations about oneself, the purpose of life, the reflection about what is morally right and wrong, the notion of final retribution, and thus of one's existence, immanence and transcendence of God (according to one's lights) and His action and divine providence in this world and on our lives — it is only after such deep searchings (and they need not be academic or sophisticated) that one becomes equipped to make such a life-embracing choice" (p. 383). It is amusing to observe that for the effect of enabling the individual to make the basic option the writer should require "deep searchings" covering comprehensively the Chapters of Ethics and Theodicy which are outside the reach of most mortals, and when he becomes aware of it, he comes out with the excuse that "such deep searchings need not be academic or sophisticated!

Here the article-writer has failed to distinguish plain psychological deliberation or vertical evaluation for the effect of the ordinary human action, from prudential deliberation as premise for a prudential human action. For the effect of a prudential deliberation and prudential action when there is uncertainty, as e.g., when a man intends to invests ten million pesos, he takes time, days, perhaps weeks, in evaluating circumstances and risks. But, then this is not the case in ordinary human life, as e.g., when a man eats an apple, or goes to Church. This is not even the case with regard to prudential action when there is sufficient evidence concerning it, like sending one's children to school. In spite of the theorizations of the writer, we recall that St. Paul made his life commitment to Christ in a moment, and the "good" thief was also converted to Christ in a moment. Likewise, the Apostles who, heeding the invitation of Christ followed Him with a life-commitment on their part, did so in a moment; and the three-thousand who, on Pentecost, made a life-commitment to the Faith after hearing just one sermon of St. Peter, did so in a moment (Acts 2, 41).

The article-writer winds up: "And just as such a stance is prepared for ahead of time, and does not burst forth in one flash, neither, generally, is such a stable life position, embedded as it is in our whole being by a long line of actions and situations, lost by one isolated action or even a series of actions if one never fully and in depth abandoned this stance by such actions" (p. 383). The conclusion drawn by the writer is true only in relation to the premise of a life-stance as specifically qualified by him, not of any life-stance or basic option. Hence, taken as a general conclusion it is only a postulate and false. Along this line of thinking we

could argue that, as long as a man has been devoted to his wife he should not be considered as unfaithful to his wife from one isolated act of adultery, or even a series of adulteries, as long as he has not set in his heart to abandon her. This is plain permissiveness and doing away with moral principles!

Giving a free rein to his thought the article-writer says: "One of the most fruitful areas of recent scientific analysis emerges from the literature surrounding what we might call the fundamental option. Several conciliar statements *seem* to suggest, even suppose this analysis or moral activity" (p. 386). He qualifies as "scientific" what is plain subjective interpretation and, on the basis of a pre-empted evaluation, "it seems", he lobs the subjective interpretation onto the lap of the Council. He continues: "The term 'fundamental option' is used by moral theologians to refer to the free determination of oneself with regard to the totality of existence, the fundamental choice between love of self and love of the saving Lord" (p. 386). There is no necessary opposition between the one and the other: you can love the Lord and love yourself too! "Because man's eternal salvation, his basic position for or against the God of salvation, is at stake in such choice, they must involve a man's total disposition of himself, out of the radical center of his being. Since this is the case, these choices will involve a depth of the person's being formulating (or reflex) consciousness, and hence will escape adequate conceptual formulations" (p. 386).

Let us put the things that have been said in clearer perspective: "Because man's eternal salvation is at stake in his basic option for or against God, it must involve a total disposition of man himself, a depth of the person's being." How is this necessary involvement effected? By virtual implication; and not necessarily by frontal conceptual consideration and deliberate intention. To claim that it necessarily entails the latter would be a mere postulate.

V. THE BASIC OPTION, MORTAL SIN AND "SIN UNTO DEATH"

To the young man who inquired: "Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?", Christ answered: "If you would enter life, keep the Commandments" (Mat. 19, 17 RSV). To His Apostles He subsequently said: "If you love me, you will keep my Commandments" (John 14, 15 RSV). Nothing is said about a "basic option". What we are given to understand is that, no one can presume to really love God, if he does not keep the Commandments of God, and for that effect all of them. One may think or fancy that he still loves God or can still love Him, ignoring or transgressing once in a while this or that Commandment; but that will be

a matter of self-deception. He who transgresses the Law of God, even just one of the Commandments, necessarily destroys the formal righteousness in himself, which consists in the ordination of his person and life to God as ultimate end; he destroys within himself the love of charity, which is the regardful love of God above all things. Without charity and the correct ordainment of man to God as ultimate end, there is no more ground basis for sanctifying grace which is the principle of supernatural life in man. Deprived of sanctifying grace and supernatural life man is spiritually dead in the supernatural order. Hence, mortal sin, which destroys charity and the supernatural life in man, is commonly identified as the deliberate and willful transgression of the law of God.

It is true that one who does not love God and does not tend to Him as ultimate end is also a transgressor of the Law, in particular of the First and greatest of the Commandments. Nevertheless, one cannot rightfully claim, that in order to commit a mortal sin a man must first direct his potshot against the First Commandment or the love of God above all things. One who transgresses any of the Commandments of God therewith gives a practical show that he does not place much importance in the observance of God's Commandments and by implication concurrently demonstrates that he has no effective regard and love for God above everything else. For this reason, no one can rightfully claim that he may transgress any other Commandment of God's Law without transgressing the first. That is automatically achieved through the transgression and is included in it. Hence, no transgressor of any Commandment of God can legitimately claim that he did not intend to violate the First; just as he cannot eat his pie and have it at the same time.

An analogue of mortal sin can be seen in a criminal transgression. One who e.g., commits a murder, automatically places himself at odds with the state authority, even if he should claim that he had no intention to do so. Thereby he may not rightfully claim to be in good graces with the state authority on the strength of his previously untarnished record and because he transgressed only once or twice, or because he violated only the rights of private individuals. He has violated the state law. It is true that he may directly cross path with the state authority through armed rebellion; but that is not the only way to do so. One can also do so indirectly, from necessary implication, through the commission of a serious crime and violation of the state law. For the effect of the criminal offense and guilt, the wrongdoing must be done deliberately and willfully. Owing to the mastery that a man's will enjoys over its acts and the use of the imperable limbs, no one

can claim innocence and non-responsibility for a crime, from the reason that he was moved to it by the command of another, by passion or evil influences. As long as the individual at the time of the commission of the wrong-doing had full knowledge of the nature of the act and did it on his own volition, he is guilty. There may be mitigating circumstances; but they do not always rule out the gravity of the crime and guilt.

Let us not sidetrack the issue claiming that for the effect of mortal sin the individual must have full knowledge and perfect deliberation. First, let us not confuse perfect deliberation in the psychological sense with prudential deliberation. One has perfect deliberation in the psychological and moral sense when he knows the nature and morality of the contemplated act, e.g., the nature and morality of eating an apple. Like in the case of psychological freedom, knowledge has its horizontal plane and its vertical plane. One who knows what eating an apple is, has full or perfect knowledge of it in the vertical sense; even if he should not know which muscles come into play, what kind of activity of neurons is involved, which area of the brain controls the act and what may be the possible results. And when the man eats the apple from such knowledge, he does so from full knowledge and deliberation in the vertical sense. In the horizontal sense, only God can have full knowledge of things and of the actions of men. To claim that full knowledge horizontalwise is a necessary requirement for the effect of mortal sin so that for such effect a man has to know all the consequences of his action, including the eternal ones, is tantamount to saying that only God can sin! This is preposterous. And yet, that is the tenor of the teaching of the so called "modern" post-conciliar theologians. Let us hear again from the article-writer:

"More recent theologians, especially from the time immediately preceding Vatican II and thereafter, have tended to shift the stress in mortal sin to the knowing and willing elements, while still taking into account the part played by the so-called gravity of the external act in sin. ... Sin is not something, some action or deed 'out there'" (p. 388). Here we can observe a dichotomization introduced between the formal malice of sin and the evil deed, and the transfer of the former to the agent: one thing is the formal malice of the external deed, and another thing is the malice of the intention of the doer. "What is now more closely analyzed and evaluated is the more formal and constitutive element of sin, namely, the degree of depth and fullness with which one commits himself and his person to sin. If in any particular moral choice one fully and freely, from the depth of his being with complete definitive and finality rejects and ruptures the salvific covenant of love between himself and God, he commits a 'sin unto death', unto his spiritual

death and ruin" (p. 388). The article-writer in one sweep has passed from the malice of the external grave transgression to the malice of the internal mortal sin in the intention of the agent, and furthermore confuses the latter with the special and specific sin of "maliciousness".

Now, it must be borne in mind that when we speak of the sin "of malice" we do so, not precisely to designate grave or mortal sins in general, but to distinguish some particular mortal sins from others that are called sins of "passion" or of "habit". The latter have passion, or the lingering disposition of habit as root causes or motivators; whereas the sins of malice have the elective malice of the will as cause (Conf. St. Thomas: Summa Th., 1.2, q. 78, arts. 3 & 4). Unlike most mortal sins which carry the disruption of the right ordainment to God as ultimate end only by way of necessary implication and result, the sins of malice start from the will's perversion and evil disposition with regards to God and His law. They do not proceed from man's weakness against the impulse of passion or against the urge of vicious habit, but from plain elective perversion of the will.

Now, whereas the individual who has sinned mortally from the influence of passion or from the urge of the lingering disposition of vice does not view matters in the same manner once the passion or urge of habit have dissipated, and the mortal sin that appealed to him as good no longer appears so, specially in the case of a renounced vice; hence for the individual who has sinned grievously from consent to passion or to the urge of vice there is room for repentance afterwards. This is much more so, in the case of one who has transgressed the law of God from ignorance. But, he who has sinned mortally from the elective malice of his will is not subject to a change of mind afterwards from the nature itself of his sin. For this reason grievous sins committed from the elective malice of the will are not just ordinary mortal sins that involve the loss of charity and of sanctifying grace, but of their nature are not open to repentance and are "deadly" in another analogous and more obnoxious sense with relation to damnation (Conf. Revelation 20, 14), inasmuch as they place the sinner in the path of no return to spiritual life and health.

In a similar sense metastasis of cancer is said to be "deadly" because it places the patient in a point of "no return" in the downward path to death. Of the category of "sins of malice" are the sins of contempt for God and for His Commandments; or the contempt for the salvation He offers through Christ which redounds to the contempt of God Himself (Conf. Luke 10, 16); or the contempt

of God's merciful call to repentance and salvation. On the one hand, the contemnners of God's mercy deserve from the justice of God not to be given more mercy, whereas those who cooperate with His mercy deserve from His mercy to be granted pardon (Conf. Luke 18, 14); and on the other hand the said contemnners have no use for God and for His mercy (Conf. Job 21, 14-15; St. Thomas, Summa Th. 2.2, q. 105, art. 2, reply 2). The Pharisees of the time of Christ were guilty in a special manner of this sin of contempt for God's goodness and mercy, when, after God had gone to the extreme of sending His Son to invite them to salvation (Conf. Mat. 21, 37 fol; Mark 12, 6 fol.) and after Christ had convincingly demonstrated to them the divine origin of His saving gospel through the performance of miracles, they contemptuously branded Him a "demoniac" (Mat. 12, 31; Mark 3, 28; Luke 12, 10). In instances of this nature, salvation can come only from the omnipotence of God (Conf. Luke 18, 27).

In attempting to clarify matters the article-writer hammers on the confusion he has made of mortal sin with the "sin unto death". "This calls for further elucidation, for the whole question of mortal sin hinges on the right understanding of this 'total choice'. Mortal sin, 'sin unto death', is imputed only by a fully personal, all-out, complete, basic self-disposing of one's moral life and being to an action or situation which would destroy the bond of love between God and oneself. This refusal or rejection of God's freely given love must be done with full consent and clear evaluation of what is taking place, and with a like consent to, and a knowledge of its necessary and eternal consequences. Hence, if a total option or choice involving one's core being (Joseph Fuchs uses the expression 'tota persona') is called into play in the instance or situation in question, and one wholly identifies himself with and commits himself to this choice, since the choice in question rejects God and his covenant of life, the resulting sin is likewise rejective and destructive" (p.388).

The foregoing passage is full of impertinent postulates and confusions. For the effect of destroying the bond of love between oneself and God, the article-writer requires as premise that the sin should be mortal and imputable; the latter is not a premise but the result of the voluntary destruction of one's love for God through the voluntary transgression of His law. Mortal sin is not the refusal of the love that God offers, as the writer contends; but the refusal of one's dutiful love to God. Mortal sin does not require the knowledge and refusal of the love that God offers, much less the knowledge of the eternal consequences of such refusal. These are impertinent postulates for the purpose of claiming afterwards that

mortal sin rarely takes place. In like manner mortal sin does not effect the destruction of the bond of love between man and God, by the total involvement of man's core and personally in rejecting love from the part of God, but by man's rejection to love God above all things that goes with the transgression of any of God's Commandments.

Pursuing the course of the confusion made, the article-writer continues: "Here, therefore, the underscoring is not the gravity or seriousness of the action or situation considered in itself. What is far more determinative of serious imputability is the degree of self-commitment and self-involvement with which one identifies and expresses himself and his life-choice with whatever it is that is disruptive and destructive of the mutual covenant of love" (p. 389). Owing to the confusion that the writer has made earlier of ordinary mortal sin with the sin of malice, which primarily is an internal sin of perverse choice, he logically underestimates the gravity of the external mortal transgression and shifts his consideration to the gravity of the perverse option that is disruptive of the bond of love on the part of man to God. But, setting aside the said confusion committed by the writer, the natural order of matters is the following: the gravity of the sins as mortal stem from the gravity of the transgression; the degree of imputability stems from the degree of knowledge and free voluntariness, not from the degree of the involvement of self or of one's option to the transgressive act or situation. And, finally, the malice or mortal sin stems from the rejection of one's duty to love God above all things, not from the formal rejection of the love that God offers — this takes place with the special sin of contempt for God —, nor from the destruction of the mutuality of love between God and man.

In truth, if men could commit mortal sin only by way of a "total option or choice involving one's core being, 'tota persona' in the instance or situation in question so that one wholly identifies himself with and commits himself to this choice, which results in the rejection and destruction of God's offer of love", then men would not be rational beings but angelic beings. The said manner of committing mortal sin is proper to angelic beings who cannot sin from ignorance, passion or from the urge of a previous bad habit, but only from malice and with the full conversion of their person and spiritual being to the object of their sinful option. It is also the manner wherewith the impenitent souls of men respond to their sinful option once they have crossed the threshold of death and attain the condition of spirits. Hence, in the teaching of St. Thomas there is no way and room for recanting and repentance in the fallen

angels and in the disembodied souls of evil men; and therefore, they must be excluded from the City of God for all eternity (Conf. Quaest. Disp. De Malo, q. 16, art. 5).

The criterion, therefore, of mortal sin is its transgression of the law of God, because the latter cannot coexist with charity and the right ordainment of the individual to God as ultimate end (Conf. St. Thomas, Summa Th., 2.2, q. 105, art. 1). The criterion of serious imputability is full knowledge of the nature of the transgression of the the law of God and perfect free voluntariness, in the vertical sense as explained. The criterion of the "Sin unto death" is the contemptuous rejection of God and His offer of salvation. The latter kind of sin is "unto death", because the individual guilty of it has no further use for God and for His divine mercy, wherefrom alone he can obtain salvation. In the words of the Apostle St. John, from whom the expression "sin unto death" has been taken, "Anyone who sins at all breaks the law, because to sin is to break the law" (1 John 3, 4; Jerusalem Bible). "If anybody sees his brother commit a sin that is not a deadly sin, he has only to pray, and God will **give life to the sinner** — not those who commit a deadly sin; for there is a sin that is death, and I will not say that you must pray about that" (1 John 5, 16; Jerusalem Bible).

VI. FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BASIC OPTIONS

It must be borne in mind that the basic option as it refers to man's election of the ultimate end, is essentially of two kinds. One is directed towards the incommutable good, God; and the other is directed towards the inordinate commutable good or creature as the ultimate end. Now, there are other important differences attendant to the one and the other that must be observed. First, the basic option that takes God as the ultimate end is not easy to make. It needs the action of grace and cooperation with grace involving a difficult decision, to wit, a decision for a life commitment to the observance of the Commandments and of virtue, despite temptations and difficulties. Whereas, the basic option that takes the inordinate commutable good or creature for ultimate end, does not need the action of and cooperation with grace, nor does it involve the difficult decision regarding a commitment for life to the observance of the Commandments and of virtue regardless of difficulties. It merely has to take the path of least resistance and give in to the cravings and deadweight of fallen nature.

Now, whereas it is true that, owing to the difficulties that must be overcome in the disowning of fallen human nature and its cravings, the basic option in favor of God as ultimate end is a

difficult decision to take, and so it is not usually done in a moment; yet, we may not conclude "*a pari*", that the basic option in favor of the inordinate commutable good as ultimate end, e.g., self-gratification above every other consideration, is also a difficult decision to take and may not be done in a moment when the craving of fallen nature or temptation is very strong. For the effect of the latter option one merely needs to let go and follow the drag of fallen nature downwards; whereas for the effect of the former option one has to put up a continuous struggle against fallen nature. Hence, we cannot argue that, whereas one does not take a basic option in favor of God and virtue in a moment; therefore, neither does one take a basic option in favor of the inordinate commutable good as ultimate end in a moment. A greater amount and a higher kind of deliberation are needed in order to make the basic option in favor of virtue because of the great renunciations involved, than to let go and follow the drag of fallen nature. Basic options regarding whichever object is taken as ultimate end, whether God, or the inordinate commutable good, carry with them a life stance regarding the particular object chosen as ultimate end; no additional explicit consideration of the mind, or act of the will is necessary for the latter effect.

It is true that morality of life is not the same as morality of action, or even of a set of actions. But, is not true that in order for a man to commit a mortal sin in transgressing the law of God, he must first opt for a life of sin. That would be identifying morality of action with morality of life. It is not true that e.g. for a man to be guilty of the mortal sin of infidelity he must first decide for an adulterous life; or, that he may not be charged with serious infidelity if he falls from weakness even time and again, as long as he has not taken a life decision of unfaithfulness to his wife and still remains in his heart devoted to her. The latter view on the part of an adulterous husband can only be a matter of self-deception and wistful thinking, which no sensible wife would admit to be valid. Nevertheless, this is the conceptual stand taken by our article-writer when he writes:

"Modern theologians tend to see morality more in terms of tendency or orientation morality rather than individual or specific acts or transgressions morality. More stress is placed on one's moral core orientation, one's moral life-direction and life-choice" (p. 395). One thing is orientation-morality, and another thing is action-morality. For the reason that we assign greater importance to the former, is not sufficient reason to water down or deny the latter. The writer continues: "Individual acts or transgressions are often, though not always, indicative of one's basic moral stance or life-

style." The correct expression would be thus: Individual acts or transgressions are not always indicative of one's habitual basic moral stance e.g., the once in a while religious almsgiving by a robber is not indicative of his habitual basic moral stance; but, they can manifest voluntary deviations from it. Through a deliberate and willful transgression of the law of God, a man shows that he does not regard God above everything else and as his ultimate end; and so, even if he should have previously taken a life option in favor of God as ultimate end, his subsequent deliberate and voluntary transgression of the law of God involves and manifests there and then a turning back and dismissal of God as his ultimate end.

The following rationalizations of the writer are sophistical and erroneous: "Such actions or such conduct can be 'signs', though not infallible signs of one's inner moral state. But we can say that such actions do not necessarily indicate the true and full stance of a person. For it is quite possible that he may, through weakness, passion or because of a sin-laden situation, fall into sins which are serious in nature but in truth do not represent his core moral stance before God. He has not reversed his basic life-style, he has not rejected his commitment to God and His love. His actions represent more a 'peripheral' surrender to this or that evil action, without his turning back on God in the depths of his being. His sin or sins, even though they be serious in nature, are not mortally so, they are not 'sins unto death'. He did not make a life-decision against God and for this evil" (p.395). Herewith we wish to point out again that, one thing is morality of living or life, and another thing is morality of action. A physician or professional who murders his wife does not necessarily thereby change his life-commitment or basic life-style of morality; but that does not mean that he is not guilty of a "capital" offense.

The individual who knowingly and voluntarily prefers to trespass the law of God than to obey it, turns his back to God as ultimate end because he no longer prefers God above everything else. And if he has had God as ultimate end previously, no matter for how long a time, by his subsequent transgression he takes a different posture attitude and relationship towards God because he no longer regards God as his ultimate end. With the adoption of this new posture dismissing God as ultimate end and taking something else instead, it is a false postulate to argue that no change in basic option has taken place. It is also a false postulate to claim that therewith the individual's life-style, life commitment and core moral stance in the depths of his being are not necessarily changed "inter-

nally", because he did not intend to do so — that outcome is not the result of one's intention —, or because he still professes the same external life-style or life commitment.

The basic flaw of the article-writer and of the "modern" theologians quoted by him, is the confusion of ordinary mortal sin with the "sin unto death" or deadly sin mentioned by St. John (1 John 5, 16). It is to be observed that the Apostle St. John expressed pessimism for those guilty thereof and did not recommend prayer for them (Conf loc. cit.). It boils down to the sin of contempt for God and for His offer of salvation. But, this is not an ordinary mortal sin. It is a sin that is "unto death" in a very special sense, because the individual guilty thereof has no use of God and of His mercy and, therefore, neither of God's pardon, without which the sinner cannot attain salvation. But, option under this specific formality does not often cross the path of ordinary men; and when it does cross the path of men, only they who have hit the rock-bottom of wickedness can, because of their wickedness, consider the contempt of God and of His offer of salvation as something good and desirable. As Scripture says, "When wickedness comes, contempt comes too" (Proverbs 18, 3; Jerusalem Bible). The sin of contempt for God and His goodness is also the special sin against the Holy Spirit, for which Christ also expressed pessimism. On the basis of the confusion of ordinary mortal sin with the latter "deadly sin", and from the lack of the necessary distinction of "full" knowledge in the vertical sense from "full" knowledge in the horizontal sense, the article-writer has the following to say:

"'Sin unto death' presupposes a total confrontation of a person from the depth of his being, involving a choice of an enduring and all-embracing moral life decision and life style. Such a momentous decision must be made with sufficient evaluation and a practical not mere textbook knowledge of the eternal consequences of such a course. Such a decision must be made with the full awareness of the magnitude of one's offense against God and His love — and against one's own true and lasting good" (p. 391-2). It is rather off-tangent to insist and harp on the change in the core and depths of man's being and in his moral life style, in speaking of mortal sin because the said change is consequential and secondary. The essential thing concerns the transgression of God's law, and the primary and fundamental change that is involved is the replacement of the inordinate commutable good in place of God as ultimate end. It is also off-track to harp on the consideration and evaluation of the eternal consequences of the transgression when what is essential and needed is just the vertical awareness of the nature and morality of the transgression. The latter awareness is not difficult to obtain because it is readily supplied by conscience.

Another serious flaw behind the aforementioned argumentation of the writer is the assumed false postulate that for the effect of committing moral sin one must opt for a life of sin. Mortal sin as an act is not the same as a life of mortal sin. One does not ordinarily commit a mortal sin starting from the aversion from God, but from the conversion to the inordinate commutable good which necessarily involves the aversion from God as ultimate end. For that effect there is no need to directly intend the shifting away from God as ultimate end, just as for the effect of departing from port one does not need to intend it directly, but simply to take the boat that goes to another destination. Ordinarily speaking there is nothing attractive in the idea of aversion from God; so that, if in order to commit mortal sin one must start from that, mortal sins would be rare happenings as the article-writer subsequently contends.

Furthermore, a full awareness in the horizontal sense that covers the eternal consequences of mortal sin, as condition for the commission of mortal sin, is not only irrelevant but also impossible for man to have. In human affairs we do not require a full knowledge of the consequences of a capital offense in order to convict a person of it; the knowledge of the nature of the capital offense freely committed is sufficient. Yet, the article-writer demands for the effect of mortal sin full knowledge in the horizontal sense: "All this is not to say that a person can not sin mortally by one transgression. He can if he does so with his total moral being, with full consent and evaluative knowledge of the eternal consequences. ... To make that basic change in moral stance and conduct the person in question would have to engage himself and his full moral being in changing over to opposition to God and His love. Ordinarily, therefore, this will not be accomplished by one isolated act or even by a number of such acts if one's moral life-thrust is for God and one's basic choice for God is not fully engaged in such acts" (p. 395).

We agree that what makes the grave transgression of God's law a mortal sin is the aversion from God that such transgression involves. But, we deny that the said aversion from God is not incurred in, concurrently, from man's preference of the inordinate commutable good over the observance of God's law. To claim that the effect of aversion from God as ultimate end cannot be achieved by the deliberate and voluntary transgression of the law of God is to postulate falsely. It is also a mere postulate to claim that aversion from God involved in mortal sin must be achieved only through man's engaging himself and his full being in direct opposition to God and His love. Man does so, only in the special mortal sins of hatred of God and of His love, and of malicious contempt for

God. Hence, the writer's conclusion that man's aversion from God as ultimate end "will not be accomplished by one isolated act or even a number of acts" of transgression of the law of God, is groundless. His other view that man may engage in such transgression while maintaining his moral life trust and basic choice for God, can do only on the premise that God is not taken under the formality of ultimate end or the greatest object of man's love according to charity. In this manner, a man who has taken a life-decision or life-stance in favor of non smoking does not totally do away with that decision or life-stance, if he smokes once in a while.

The writer insists: "One does not necessarily change his whole moral life in one stroke, in one deed or action, nor even in a number of such actions, as we saw above. To change one's whole moral life-course full circle, will ordinarily call for preparatory and dispositive change in attitudes, in moral values, and finally in one's basic moral stance and relationship in regard to God and the whole economy of salvation, precisely as it affects the person himself in his innermost being. There is question here of a 'process' of moral deterioration, of cumulative, tumorous rupturing which finally results in a bursting of the bonds of the covenanted love between God and man" (p. 396). The article-writer writes thus on the assumed premise that mortal sin is directly concerned with the change of one's moral life-course full circle, etc. Unfortunately, mortal sin is not concerned with effecting such changes, but with the grave transgression of the law of God. The article-writer has still to establish that man need not be averted from God as ultimate end through the deliberate and voluntary serious transgression of the law of God; or that therewith man can still maintain a regardful love for God above all things according to the requirement of charity. He still has to prove that man's relationship with God as man's ultimate end, or as the object man loves above everything else,, is not severed effectively from man's deliberate and voluntary grave transgression of the law of God. What Christ has said is still true: "If you love me you will keep my Commandments" (John 14, 15); "If you keep my Commandments you will abide in my love" (John 15, 10).

VII. THE FREQUENCY OF MORTAL SIN. IS IT A "RARA AVIS"?

If we bear in mind that mortal sin is directly concerned with the transgression of the law of God and that it entails the aversion from God as ultimate end only indirectly by way of necessary implication and result, and if we consider that man is frequently tempted to transgress the law of God from passion and too many

allurements; then, it will not be difficult for us to understand that mortal sin may be easily committed, and we may expect that it will be committed with some frequency. However, the conclusion that the article-writer infers and sustains is that mortal sin is not easy to commit and, therefore, mortal sin is not a frequent occurrence but a rarity. He takes this stand on the premise that in order to commit mortal sin, one must have "full" knowledge in the horizontal sense, including the eternal consequences of the transgression. The other premise is that one must first change his basic life-stance and moral life-style with regard to God, and be opposed to God's love in a total manner and according to the full depth of his being. We have seen that the said premises are not true. They deal with matters that are not directly concerned with mortal sin as involved in the deliberate and willful grave transgression of the law of God. Another flaw that lurks in the mind of the article-writer is that to commit mortal sin with some frequency is to "jump in and out of sin" as on a trampoline.

"One does not tumble in or out of such a life-decision; one does not jump on or off, or up and down in such a core moral choice as on a sort of moral trampoline! Hence, in this whole matter there must be stability, sustained thrust and on-going tending towards one's life goal and one's God. For if depth of commitment or sincere and total dedication is lacking, there is no real fundamental option, though there may be the semblance of one" (p.393). In the last sentence the writer slackens somehow. He says, "If there is no depth of commitment and total dedication, there is no real fundamental option." The trouble is that the author postulates that in most men prior to mortal sin, there is "depth of commitment and total dedication and sustained thrust toward God", which can easily be denied. Furthermore, the article-writer postulates that if there is a "fundamental option" with regard to God, there is also "depth of commitment and total dedication" involved. This is not true, because a fundamental option in favor of God merely means taking God as one's "ultimate end", and this can be done without depth of commitment and total dedication but merely in a weak manner. He himself admits later that, "an option for or against God can be deepened and strengthened, or weakened." (p.393).

"The opposite of this basic option or life-choice for God and His love is a like choice for a life of sin. It is 'sin unto death'" (p.393). There are several confusions made here. An act of mortal sin is not the same as a "life of sin". He who opts for a mortal sin in lieu of obedience to God in a particular situation, does not thereby chose a "life of sin". The article-writer takes mortal sin, which he calls "sin unto death", as tantamount to "life of sin",

and says: "But here again, one does not 'fall' into and out of sin like a tumbling circus clown" (p.393). True indeed. We should be careful to distinguish between the "state of mortal sin" and the "act of mortal sin". One who from the commission of the first mortal sin is in the state of mortal sin, can more readily commit other mortal sins; because in the man's state of aversion from God as ultimate end, the commission of other serious transgressions of God's law that align with the said aversion, do not impress him as severely damaging to him anymore. And then, if he commits one mortal sin after another, that would not mean that he jumps in and out of the state of mortal sin like a circus clown on a trampoline.

In order to corroborate his view the article-writer quotes another modern theologian in the following terms: "Choices originating out of the core of one's being, concerned as they are with the acceptance or rejection of God's enabling grace and salvation, have unique dimensions and intensity" (p. 394). The statement reflects the postulates of "modern" theologians that the basic option is so, because it involves the core of one's being and is concerned with the acceptance or rejection of God and His love. An option is basic because it is concerned with the ultimate end, in particular with the acceptance or the rejection of God as ultimate end. Most men when confronted with the alternative of either obeying God's law and retaining Him as ultimate end, or turning their back to God's law and to Him as ultimate end, do not have an explicit concept of God's offer of His love and enabling grace. God's enabling grace and salvation do not impress many as a vital issue, because they expect to get rid of the guilt and retrieve grace and the path of salvation afterwards through contrition and the sacrament of reconciliation.

The quoted theologian continues: "This excludes the possibility of frequent and repeated transitions between spiritual life and death. As St. Thomas noted: 'Although grace is lost by a single act of mortal sin, it is not however, easily lost. For the person in grace does not find it easy to perform such an act (mortally sinful) because of a contrary inclination' (De Veritate q. 27, art. 1, reply 9). This suggests that truly serious moral acts are not as frequent occurrence as catalogues of serious matter would suggest" (McCornick, R.A., S.J.: *An American Catechism*, II, p 249, sec. 19).

This text of St. Thomas is true not of every man, but of the person who lives his life of grace. One who lives the life of grace has experienced how, time and again, grace struggles for survival in the face of serious danger. Yet, even if grace is not easily lost, we cannot infer that it is difficult to lose grace or to commit mortal sin. Thus, it may not be easy to climb to the third floor, but it may

not be precisely difficult either. We have to bear in mind that strong evil inclinations still lurk in our fallen nature (Conf. Genesis 8, 21) despite the presence of grace, in particular if one has not been too serious and keen in living out the life of grace. And so, the article-writer himself in an earlier passage has written: "Indeed, St. Thomas tells us that it is comparatively easy to sin and correspondingly difficult to be constant in the practice of virtue" (p. 390). The article-writer must have forgotten this earlier statement which he had made. For the effect of not sinning, one needs to cooperate with grace in resisting the nagging desires of fallen nature.

By comparison it is easier to sin mortally in the face of temptations, than not to sin mortally. The reason is that in order not to be able to consent to mortal sin, the individual must have evidence that mortal sin is the greatest or a most serious evil for him, here and now. This kind of evidence is enjoyed only by the Blessed in heaven, but not by men in his mortal life. On the contrary, very often mortal sin appears to us seductively attractive. It is only in the abstract that we know that mortal sin is the greatest evil, because it is a serious offense against God but not to man. We do not have a direct palpable evidence that it is evil. Whereas, mortal sin in the concrete is e.g., a great fortune that may be easily acquired dishonestly; or a beautiful, warm and responsive paramour. The contest is between abstract evil some time in the future life, and an experiential good that is evidently so, "here and now". Now, observe that, whereas in order not to be able to sin mortally one must have evidence that mortal sin is the greatest evil for him, "here and now"; on the other hand, for the effect of committing mortal sin the only thing required is for man to know that the act under consideration is a grave offense to God. This kind of knowledge is not sufficient to inhibit the individual from committing the mortal sin; because what man theoretically knows as great evil against God, does not always impress as grave evil for man, but oftentimes impresses man as a great good for him, or a great opportunity not to be missed. This is attested to by our own experience and the experience of our fellowmen.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

What more can we desire if the doctrine of "modern" theologians were true, to wit: 1) that mortal sin is something difficult to commit; and, therefore, 2) that mortal sin is rarely committed! It would simplify matters both for penitents and for confessors. It would be a great relief for humans and would make their life much sweeter! But, if on the contrary, their doctrine is not true, then there can

be nothing more deleterious to the eternal salvation of men. It would be the proverbial, "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Proverbs 16, 25; RSV). Unfortunately, we cannot take the foregoing conclusions of "modern" theologians as proven. We have seen that the entire dissertation and argumentation drawn by the article-writer in favor of the said conclusions are based on: 1) misinterpretation and misapplication of scriptural passages; 2) a largely postulative and false interpretation as to the nature of and elements covered by the basic option"; 3) the confusion of the ordinary mortal sin with the special Scriptural "sin unto death"; 4) several other false postulates gratuitously taken.

In particular, we deny that every fundamental option with regard to God as ultimate end involves a "depth of commitment and total dedication and sustained thrust toward God". This is a fanciful postulate based on the interpretation of the "basic option" introspectively rather than teleologically. At the beginning of a virtuous life, or after conversion from mortal sin even in the wake of a perfect contrition, the weight of the former bad habits that still linger in the powers of man hinder such "depth of commitment and total dedication and sustained thrust toward God". Neither is it true that every man who has theoretically, and as to purpose of intention, taken God as his ultimate end, may not do so only in a half-hearted manner, merely for the purpose of avoiding hell and eternal damnation. This is not an uncommon thing. In such condition where is the "depth of commitment involving the entire person, and the total dedication and sustained thrust toward God"? In like manner, we deny that for the effect of committing mortal sin the individual must change his "core moral stance and basic moral life-stance and life-style in opposition to God and His love". The Pharisees who rejected Christ did not according to their evaluation and the evaluation of the people, change therewith their core moral stance and their basic moral life-attitude and life-style. On the contrary, their core moral stance and basic moral life stance and style remained that of total dedication to God and His service according to the revelation given to Moses. And yet, when they rejected Christ after He had shown to them the works of His Father as divine evidence of the truth of His mission, they committed a mortal sin and an unpardonable one according to the testimony of Christ (Conf. Mat. 12, 31-32; Mark 3, 29-30).

The greater stress that must be given to one's core moral orientation or to one's moral life-direction and life-choice, rather than to individual specific moral acts, should be understood to the effect that, unless one is internally good, external acts of sanctimoniousness or charitable acts undertaken once in a while, would avail

little to the individual but only make him pharisaical and hypocritical, as Christ indicated when He called the Pharisees of His time "whitened sepulchres". There is nothing new in understanding the matter in this manner. The said stress should not be misunderstood as the "modern" theologians and the article-writer have done, to mean that the transgression of the law of God are not mortal or deadly, as long as one maintains a life-orientation and option towards God; as if were possible for man, on the one hand, to maintain the option in favor of God as the ultimate end and on the other hand to deliberately and voluntarily transgress seriously God's law time and again. Unfortunately, the latter erroneous understanding has been so popularized that it is the "sign of the times"; and it is the characteristic of "modern" theologians that they hardly mention the transgression of the law of God, natural and supernatural, when they speak of mortal sin. They hardly have any idea about what the natural law is, or have any regard for it.

Hence, we cannot admit the article-writer's contention that there are "grave sins or transgressions" which are "not mortal sins or sins unto death" (p. 398). This conclusion of the writer stems from the wrong identification in meaning of the term "mortal sin" with the "sin unto death" of which the Apostle St. John makes mention (1 John 5, 16-17), for the guilty of which he did not recommend prayer. Christ likewise ignored the Pharisees, after they responded with contempt to the offer of salvation which God tendered to them through faith in Christ. He who is guilty of contempt for God and His offer of salvation is guilty of a "sin unto death" or eternal damnation, because he has no further use for God and His mercy, wherefrom alone he can obtain the pardon of his sin and salvation. He is guilty of a sin that is deadly in quite another sense by comparison to the ordinary mortal sin, because the man who is guilty of the ordinary mortal sin alone, has indeed lost charity and sanctifying grace which is the principle of the supernatural spiritual life; but, because he does not have God and His mercy in contempt, he may still repent, beg for God's mercy and thereby obtain the pardon of his sin.

On the basis of the wrong identification of mortal sin with the "sin unto death", which is the special sin of malice or contempt toward God, and on the basis of the modern contention that there can be grave sins or transgressions of the law of God which are not mortal sins, some moderns push the imbroglio farther, affirming that such grave sins are "venial" sins. According to this view and nomenclature, venial sins may be either light ones, or the grave ones mentioned because they are not mortal sins. The

corroboration for this new nomenclature is the Latin original "venia", which means **indulgence** or **pardon**. Such grave transgressions or grave sins are alleged to be **venial**, because they are **pardonable**, unlike the 'sin unto death' which, of its nature is unpardonable. But, this is making theology of mere words, not of the subject matter. The said grave sins or deliberate and voluntary transgressions of the law of God are plain mortal sins.

"Modern" theologians need more than a superficial catechetical knowledge concerning sin and its classification, before they may presume to venture on "new" theologies on sin. Their tendency to glorify the subjective element and to ignore the Natural Law is rather obvious. There is danger therefrom they may come out with statements that are shocking even to pagans. An example of the latter may be seen in the new views on sexual ethics proposed by the commission of the Catholic Theological Society of America which, among others truly shocking, included the following: "Extra-marital relationships that are truly 'creative' and 'integrative' for all involved are morally acceptable" (Conf. **Time**, June 13, 1977, p. 24). This stands in frank opposition to the teaching of St. Paul: "Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6, 9-10; RSV).

An identical warning is given by God in the book of Revelation (21, 8); "For the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars, their lot shall be the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." One can be guilty of cowardice by following rationalizations instead of moral principles; and one can be guilty of lying by peddling out the lies of men instead of the truth of God.

WHATEVER BECAME OF SIN IN THE "NEW THEOLOGY"? THE "FUNDAMENTAL OPTION" REJECTED BY THE CHURCH

by

Benito Sandalio, C.M.

It has become a fashion in our days to sell scholarly elaborations of modern theologians under the label of "Theology of Vatican II", when as a matter of fact such lucubrations are in no way supported by the documents of Vatican II, nay, they have been openly rejected as false and erroneous by the Church, both before and after Vatican II.

One case among many others is the new theory developed and propagated by post-Vatican II theologians on the "fundamental option" required for a **mortal sin**. This theory, more or less veiled or openly advocated, has been sold, not only in the classrooms of seminaries and ecclesiastical faculties, but also to the great public and to the masses of the faithful in articles of "Catholic" magazines, in lecturers of spiritual retreats, and in such **enlightened** works as the **New (Dutch) Catechism** endorsed by the Hierarchy of Netherlands in 1967, and the so-called **An American Catholic Catechism** in 1973 and 1975, co-authored by such "progressive" theologians as Gregory Baum, Charles Curran, Avery Dules, Bernard Haring, Richard McBrien, Richard McCormick, Thomas Sullivan, etc.

The situation created is well described by a contemporary writer:¹

"It appears that many of our moral theologians are attempting to tack a 'Going Out of Business' sign on their science, in their feverish attempts to dilute, if not eradicate, the reality of human sin. If this were an intramural sport in Moral Theology it might be judged a pleasant folly. Unfortunately the moralists insist on playing their game in the public forum where the Christian Conscience is becoming the chief casualty.

"Our moralists have relaxed their game rules: firstly, by their enthusiastic endorsement of Situation Ethics; then, more elastic was added by their predilections for the multiple ambiguities in

¹ Mons. Nelson W. Logal, "*Are We Opting Sin Out Of The Ball Park?*", ap. L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Engl. ed., June 27, 1974, pp. 5.8.

the Ethic of Love. Lately they have added another dilutant by welding the theory of Fundamental Option to the traditional concept of Mortal Sin, which has the effect of making a sense of sin even more remote in the popular conscience.

"Moral amnesia has resulted as the shock waves of this 'New Moral Theology' have spread through Christian ranks. Today people are wondering if there is such a thing as sin any more — and rightly so, if moral theologians are to be taken seriously. The 'big-name' moralists are feeding their ruminations into the popular magazines, which in turn are being reprinted in diocesan weeklies, and from there are being further popularized in catechetical texts and lesson plans by bright-eyed 'hep' teachers in Catholic schools and CCD classes. The thundering silence about sin in the pulpit reinforces the prevalent impression that sin is no longer a very relevant concern because (1) it is a very rare occurrence, and (2) abundant love washes away its stain.

"In the first case, the fusion of the theory of Fundamental Option with the concept of mortal sin has converted grave sin into a Luciferean choice against God, so horrendous that it becomes only a perverse mythic possibility for the great majority of people. In the second case, the treacle of 'love talk' and the easy dispensations of personal situational demands attenuate the reality of sin into a thin vapour of moral meaninglessness which hangs over human behaviour like a gentle morning's dew.

"In either case, sin is done in. If it is a trivial matter, why be concerned with it? If it is so completely diabolical that an average person would recoil in revulsion at the mere thought of it, it is not a relevant concern in decent lives.

"And so the way is open to paint the moral world with the gleaming white of innocence. A return to paradise has been achieved — if not by the redemptive graces of Christ, at least by the absolving theory of the moralists. So even though we walk knee-deep in the slime of sin, scandal, and crime, none of it clings to our boots — thank to the magical alchemy of the "New Moral Theology".

"Since I hopefully believe that the sentimental slop of the Love Ethics is beginning to sicken people, and that the accommodating re-assurances of Situation Ethics are being recognized as suspiciously convenient escape hatches for harried sinners, I am not going to bother with these familiar territories in this discussion. However, the current proposal to equate a sinful exercise of Fundamental Option with Mortal Sin is catching on as the chic way in

which to exercise the sense of mortal sin by so magnifying it that it becomes unreal. The latent laxism in this theoretical overstatement demands that it be critically examined".

What does "Fundamental Option" really mean.

"Fundamental Option" is a term just recently adopted among theologians. It really means a **"persistent will or attitude that shapes a person's life: the basic intent to live as one who believes God's word and accepts His call to a new life, or to decline to do so".**² It is a **"decision which totally commits a person, from the depths of his personality, to take up or ratify a fundamental attitude towards God or people".**³

In this sense the term "fundamental option" may be fully acceptable to explain "the full knowledge and full consent" that our catechisms and moral manuals of old demanded for a mortal sin. Indeed, when a person deliberately, i.e. "with full knowledge and full consent" transgresses "in serious matter" any moral law, obviously he takes an **attitude that shapes his life**, he makes a **basic intent to decline God's call to a new life**; he makes a **decision totally committing him to a fundamental attitude towards God or people**. In other words, he has made a "fundamental option". And it is in this sense that the Church has recently declared that "in reality, it is precisely the **fundamental option** which in the last resort defines a person's moral disposition".⁴

The mythical "fundamental option" among modern theologians.

However, many modern theologians have gone quite beyond this concept of the "fundamental option" required for a mortal sin. To quote just from a very recent study, mortal sin implies always a "fundamental option" that is "the rejection of the effective love of God and neighbor"; "a life-decision, a life policy of conduct and of a moral life stance before God, a definitive offense and break with God"; "an offense against love, against the...love of God"; "sin strikes God's love in the face"; "rejects and ruptures the salvific covenant of love between man and God"; "it is a refusal or rejection of God's love with full consent and clear evaluation

² *The Teaching of Christ — Catholic Catechism For Adults*, edit. by Ronald Lawler, O.F.M.Cap., Donald W. Wuerl, Thomas Comerford Lawler, OSV, Huntington, In., 1976, p. 305.

³ *DECLARATION On Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, from Sacred Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith, approved and confirmed by Pope Paul VI, Rome, 29 December 1975 (cf. AAS., 31 Jan. 1976, pp. 88-89)

⁴ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

of what is taking place, and with like consent to and knowledge of its necessary and eternal consequences"; "a self-commitment which gathers up the whole person against God and His".⁵

For the Jesuit Fr. Ladislaus Orsy of Fordham University in the United States, the "fundamental option" involved in any mortal sin is "a free and permanent option by man to remain alone and to exclude God from the life. Its consequence is damnation: God ratifies what man chose freely. If the gates of hell were opened, there would be no volunteers for Heaven... It is a fatal moral choice".

Commenting on this awesome and grim view Msgr. Nelson Logal pointedly remarks:

"Two unsound alternatives are associated with this identification of mortal sin and (such idea of) fundamental option. Mortal sin is considered to be irreparable — a final election and self-predestination of damnation; or it is made to appear as practically non-existent because most sinners (and who is not a sinner?) do not elect Satanism in their sinning.

"Both these alternatives constitute equally inhuman and unrealistic descriptions of the human condition of sinners. Man is neither an angel nor a devil; he is a weak human being with a nature open to the Grace of God. He loves God in many diverse ways. He struggles through the confusing world of mixed goods and his moral choices often reflect his weaknesses as well as his strengths. In the debility of his nature he is often confused by the varying appeals of the "good" he finds in life. The fog of ignorance the heat of passion, and the gravity of weakness often temper his choices and deflect him from his struggle toward God. He is something of a gambler. He often is willing to risk a curable loss of friendship with God (mortal Sin) for the acquisition of some lesser good.

"At times how will even gamble eternity against the chips of temporary solaces which, however lamentable, does not make him a Satanist. His very willingness to make the awful gamble is prompted by the shimmering assurance which he has of God's loving mercy and the compassionate pledge of Christ's sacrament of Penance in his hours of sincere contrition. From time to time his choices may extinguish the life of God within him for a time without involving him in the terrible and irrevocable state of self-chosen damnation.

⁵ John B. Balsam, O.P., "A Study Of Sin In The Theology Of Vatican II"; ap. BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, June-July, 1977, pp. 375; 367; 377; 387; 388; 389.

"Mortal sin does not cause a paralysis of evil in the sinner and it does not irreparably extinguish the love of God in his soul. Its commission does testify to the weakness, the ignorance, and sometimes the malice to which men are prey. Few men, I hope, elect damnation in their sinning.

"Father Orsy's grim version of Mortal Sin in the sense of Fundamental Option (as understood by him) is indeed a depressingly inhuman and theologically imperfect concept which raises more problems than it purports to solve.

"It seems that the theory of Fundamental Option (presented by the "New Theology") is a useful explanatory myth which helps one to visualize in an emotionally imaginative manner, the varied moral directions which are taken by people in the course of their life experiences.

"The theorists of (such) Fundamental Option maintain that at some critical hour or the other, each person will be confronted with the necessity of opting between radically basic and meaningful alternatives — between God and evil. They maintain that the actual alternative which is chosen in this moment of Fundamental Option sets up or reveals an irrevocable and irreversible magnetic center in that person's life ... When will either lead the person to God or away from Him into a world of isolated selfhood in conflict with God or into the evil density of a world unlighted by God.

"Such are the terrible, awesome implications inherent in this theory of Fundamental Option. However, I find it impossible to agree that this fanciful theory of Fundamental Option describes a real, concrete, existential moral functional mechanism which is temporarily or functionally capable of being isolated in moral choices.

"This theory of Fundamental Option belongs to the poetry rather than to the science of Moral Theology. It may be helpful in attempting to describe the psychodynamics of moral choice, but it falls short of being a satisfactory account of the existential categories of human sinning. It has about the same relationship to moral Theology as Freud's quaintly intriguing descriptions of the psychic mechanisms and functionings of the Mind had to Psychology".⁶

Sources of this error of the "New Theology"

"If I am not mistaken — continues Msgr. Logal — the theory of Fundamental Option originated in discussions of Divine Grace. Moralists recently imported the theory into the field of moral dis-

⁶ Nelson W. Logal, op. cit., l. c.

cussion. Long ago, Maritain, in using the concept of Fundamental Option, treated it illuminatingly as being a choice for or against God made at some critical stage in life (usually at an early stage) which gave a moral coloration and impetus to subsequent moral choices of life. However, Maritain did not propose that it involved an act of self-predestination to damnation; he did not consider it to be irrevocable, and he certainly did not confuse it with mortal sin.

"Today moralists, however, are making these extensions with resulting confusions, complexifications, and blurring of categories. Father Orsy's views (mentioned above) illustrate the confusion very clearly. He describes Fundamental Option as a **'radical break with God'**... so radical that it involves a choice for damnation — which ultimately means that only a Faust or an avowed Satanist is capable of committing mortal sin".⁷

How could these theologians have gone so far? Let us try to detect the source of their error by following the trend of their lucubrations. I quote from another recent article of a contemporary theologian:⁸

"One might sum up the way in which the contemporary theologian understands sin by saying that a few words have been dropped from the old-catechism definition of it. Where the catechisms said: 'Sin is an offense against the law of God', today's theologian says: 'Sin is an offense against God'.

"We could summarize the development in the understanding of sin, then, by saying that religious educators have passed from seeing sin primarily in terms of law, to seeing it primarily in terms of the personal reality of God Himself. Or, we have passed from a more legalistic to a more personalistic view of sin".

Once more we see here the current fashion of "modern" religious writers to begin their "new" discoveries by deriding or blaming the ideas of the teachings in the past. It seems they cannot construct anything without destroying or pulling down what their ancestors built. Leaving aside the question of an over-legalism in the past, one thing is sure. St. Thomas Aquinas, 700 years ago, in his *Suma* 1-2. q. 71, a. 6, said: "for theologians, sin is considered **principally** as an offense against God's eternal law". And what our Catechisms before St. Augustine, *Contra Faust*, 1.22 c. 27) "a word, deed or desire against God's eternal law". And what our Catechisms before Vatican II taught was that "sin is a disobedience to God's laws" (cf. the Interdiocesan **Catholic Catechism** of the Philippines, 1956) or a "transgression (infringement, violation) of God's law, **knowingly and freely** committed" (*Catechismus Cardinalis Gasparri*, Rome, 1933). It is true that "strictly speaking, we do not offend laws; we offend persons"; but,

⁷ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁸ Norbert J. Rigali, "Contemporary theology of sin", ap. *HOMILETIC & PASTORAL REVIEW*, New York, N. Y., January 1977, pp. 31-32.

we "infringe, violate, disobey laws" and that is what the old catechisms said; and by reminding us that for a sin, such violations should be done **knowingly and freely** they gave us a quite **personalistic view of sin**.

But let us go ahead with the "contemporary theology of sin":

"The contemporary way of defining sin (as an **offense against God**) reminds us that we are called to be conformed to God Himself: 'You must therefore be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt. 5, 47). Sin is our failure to be conformed to God, the true Absolute in our life. Secondly, and only secondarily, it is our failure to be conformed to His law, which serves only to tell us how we will be conformed to Him.

"We are called to be conformed to God because we are called into an **interpersonal love relationship with Him**. The ultimate thing, therefore, that we can say about sin is, not that it is a failure to be conformed to God. Even more basic is that sin is a **failure to enter into or sustain the interpersonal relationship with God**".

Up to here, so far so good. We can subscribe unhesitatingly to all these elaborations. But then, the author tells us: "It is for this reason that one frequently reads in contemporary theology that sin is the breaking off or **refusing of a personal relationship with God**".

Voilà! Here slips the source of the error! Indeed, sin is a **breaking off** of an interpersonal love relationship with God. But **breaking off or rupturing one's relationship of love with God**, actual **separation from Him**, which is caused by mortal sin, is not the same as a **"refusing of the love relationship with God, a rejection of the love of God (much less with full knowledge and consent of its eternal consequences!)**, a self-commitment against God and His Love, **striking God's Love in the face!**

One may well **break off his love** for something, or **turn away** from it, without necessarily **refusing or rejecting** his love of it (or much less, **hating** it). In the course of human choices, how many times can well be said, "it is not that I don't love that, but I love this more!" The prodigal son turned his back to his father, not because he refused to love him, or wished to strike his father's love in the face, but simply because he preferred to enjoy loose living far away from home (cf. Lk. 15, 12-13); St. Paul's companions in the storm-tossed ship threw the cargo overboard, and the wheat out into the sea, not because they did not like the cargo or the wheat, but because they wanted to lighten the ship as a safety measure (cf. Acts 27, 18, 38). A leg with a gangrenous wound is amputated, a womb, with cancer is removed, in spite of the patient's love for those members, because he esteems more his health and life.

Official Church doctrine on sin.

And this is precisely what the Church has officially pronounced in the past and today regarding **mortal sin**. Back on August 24, 1690, Pope Alexander VIII condemned as **scandalous** and **erroneous** the doctrine that there can be **no mortal sin**, involving a **breach with God**, worthy of **eternal damnation**, if the sinner does **not actually think of God**.⁹ Lately, in our days already, Pope Pius XII openly condemned the **error** of those who say, "there is a grievous sin only when one must answer for an act placed, not only with full knowledge of its opposition to a divine law, but with the **explicit intention to offend the Lord, to break union with Him, to refuse to love Him**".¹⁰

And more recently still, as if it were yesterday only, the Church Magisterium made on December 29, 1975 the following DECLARATION approved and confirmed by Pope Paul VI:¹¹

"There are those who go as far as to affirm that **mortal sin** which causes **separation from God**, only exists in the **formal refusal directly opposed to God's call**, or in that selfishness which completely and deliberately closes itself to the love of neighbour. They say that it is **only then** there comes into play the **fundamental option**, that is to say, the decision which totally commits the person and which is necessary if mortal sin is to exist.

"According to the **Church's teaching**, mortal sin, which is **opposed to God**, does **not** consist **only in formal and direct resistance** to the commandment of **charity**. It is equally to be found in this **opposition to authentic love** which is **included in every deliberate transgression, in serious matter**, of each of the moral laws.

"A person, therefore, **sins mortally, not only** when his action comes from **direct contempt for love of God and neighbour**, but **also** when he **consciously and freely**, for whatever reason, chooses something which is **seriously disordered**. For in this choice, as has been said above, there is already **included contempt for the divine commandment**: the person **turns himself away from God and loses charity**".

Hence, when this same DECLARATION tells us that "the fundamental option is precisely what in the last resort defines a person's moral disposition", evidently it is not referring to the "fundamental option" as understood by the "new theology". To allege these words of the DECLARATION as a proof and confirmation of that "funda-

⁹ Denzinger-Schönmetzer, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. XXXIV, Herder, 1967; n. 2291.

¹⁰ cf. *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, V, 189.

¹¹ DECLARATION, op. cit., l.c.

mental option" so explicitly and repeatedly condemned by the DECLARATION is to abuse and distort the plain meaning of the words.¹²

The "fundamental option" of the "new theology" is a myth that has been openly rejected by the Church at least in its application as a requirement for **mortal sin**. The doctrine of the above DECLARATION is the authentic true "Theology of Vatican II" on sin. As we can easily notice, nothing has been fundamentally changed from what we learned in our catechisms and moral treatises of old.

When does a person commits a mortal sin?

It is true that it is not so simple to judge when a mortal sin is committed. We cannot and should not "categorize in an overly simplistic and impersonal fashion such a true "life and death" issue like a serious or mortal sin. Today, moralists supported by the data of behavioral sciences, the medical profession and psychiatry, stress the influence of such factors of modern living that affect the free and untrammelled exercise of our choices (phobias, fears, compulsory neuroses, emotional immaturity in any of its many forms...) No one can tell for certain to what degree imputability is decreased by this army of intangibles, often imaginary, often real, but always capable of exerting their influence like 'silent persuaders'.¹³

When, then, does a person commits a mortal sin? In many cases, if not in most of them, we might just say, **God only knows!** The inspired word of God has told us of old, "No one knows whether he is worthy of hatred or of love" (cf. Eccles. 9, 1); "It is the Lord who judges... who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart..." (cf. I Cor. 4, 4-5); "Who can discern his errors? Clean Thou me from hidden faults!" (Ps. 18, 13).

The above cited Fr. Orsy, "the leading celebrant of the nuptial rite between Fundamental Option and Mortal Sin", "suggested that a new category of sin, '**Serious Sin**', be introduced to fill the gap left by his escalation of **mortal sin** into sinful exercises of Fundamental Option. He writes: **Serious Sin** would be a new category. Under it belong many acts that betray evil trends in the nature of man, but do not necessarily bring about a radical break with God. They are like the failings in a loving family. His 'tentative

¹² cf. Balsam, op. cit., p. 410.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 389; 370.

analogy drawn from the New Testament' in which he cites Peter's denial and Judas' betrayal of Christ does not clarify his new category.

"In connecting his concept of **Serious Sin** to the Petrine experience of denial, Orsy describes it 'as serious but not the conclusion of a deterioration... It was a serious failure through weakness but it remained in a long context'. To say this much is to say nothing new. It simply reworks the traditional discussion of how an objectively **mortal sin can become venially** sinful in the context of **circumstances**. For centuries we have talked about 'the determinants of morality' and 'the **circumstances** of the act' as factors in human acts which either **lessen or aggravate** human **guilt**.

"I believe that it is utterly unwarranted for any observer brashly to judge either the gravity of Peter's denial or of Judas' treachery, for that matter. Only the individual sinner and God are capable of judging the complex moral factors that enter into the guilt of any concrete sinful act. Traditional Moral Theology, at least, had the virtue of **no attempting clairvoyant determinations** of the degree of **guilt in individual sinful acts** placed by **others**. The conscience of the sinner was left uninvaded. Orsy's discussion in this instance revives the excessive theological estimates of guilt in the old casuistry.

"The greatest threat in the Jesuit's proposal to enlarge the categories of sin is the elimination of the concept of mortal sin in the traditional sense, which was looked upon as a **temporary rupture** of a person's **relationship with God**, but which **in no way** left his soul in **irreparable** ruin. At the risk of introducing a sentimentality into this severe discussion, I might compare the traditional concept of mortal sin to a **lover's quarrel which seldom precludes the possibility of reconciliation**. On the other hand, the Orsy view of mortal sin precludes this possibility of reconciliation. As such only Satanists are capable of such a sin. I hope there are few Fausts in this confused word".¹⁴

Far removed from all these complicated elaborations of **modern** theologians, that tended to minimize, if not deny outright the reality of mortal sin, at least in people's actual lives, were the simple questions and answers of our old catechisms, and the clear-cut explanations and lists of possible sins given in devotional booklets to help the faithful examine their conscience and prepare for Confession. But there is a tendency nowadays among the learned and erudite teachers of religion (or "theology" as it is pompously

¹⁴ Nelson W. Logal, op. cit., l.c.

styled today any simple catechetical instruction!) to deride "the simple questions, and, by hindsight, the simplistic answers which generations of Catholics had to learn from their catechisms which remained, substantially, unchanged for score of years and for millions of faithful..."¹⁵

However, unfortunately for these contemporary theologians who want to invent the gunpowder by their novel lucubrations, and in spite of their boasted "marvelous discoveries" of the "new theology", the Church Magisterium, which is the only one appointed by God to "teach all nations" has not found even in our own days any other better formula to explain **when do we commit a mortal sin**, than the "**simple triadic formula**" of our old catechisms and moral manuals: "A person **sins mortally** when he **consciously** and **freely** chooses something which is **seriously** disordered. A mortal sin is any **deliberate** (ie. with **full knowledge** and **full consent**) transgression, in **serious matter**, of each of the moral laws". (DECLARATION, 29 December 1975.) "**Roma locuta, causa finita**": Rome has spoken; let all the theologians hold their peace!

For all practical purposes in Christian life we should have some way to **define** a mortal sin, and know, as far as we can, **when it may be** committed. An the Church teaches us today that there is no better way for that than what our catechisms and moral manuals of the past have taught us, although those teachings should certainly be updated, not with controversial and dubious theories, but with the correct and undeniable new findings and insights of human sciences.

Dangers of the "new theology" of sin.

The Church has pointed them in the recent DECLARATION. "The observance of the moral law . . . has been **considerably endangered**, especially among the less fervent Christians, by the current tendency to minimize as far as possible, when not denying outright, the reality of grave sin, at least in people's actual lives".

1) As we have already seen, if, according to the "new theology" **mortal sin** is identified with a **radical, definitive, life-decision, an irrevocable choice of self-damnation, that strikes God's love in the face with full awareness of its eternal consequences . . .**, then mortal sin must be a very rare occurrence, and practically non-existent, since most sinners do not elect Satanism in their sinning. Why then go to Confession? Only the devils should go; we are not devils! And since devils will certainly not call for Confession, then soon

¹⁵ Balsam, op. cit., p. 356.

the priests will get rid of that burden of hearing Confessions... Is not this actually what happens today?

2) This contemporary and "new moral theology" had made another "discovery" or "invention" with their "**triple**" classification of sin (**mortal**, **grave**, and **venial**) instead of the old (for them "obsolete") classification of **mortal** and **venial** sins.¹⁶

Unhappily now also, as in many other instance of "discoveries" or "inventions" of the "new theology" the inspired Book of God's word reminds us all: "Is there a thing of which it is said, '**See, this is new?**' **It has been already in the ages before us.**" (Eccles. 1, 10). Almost 3 centuries ago, at the end of 17th century, other theologians advanced already the theory that there are sins that are "grave" sins that are not "mortal", nor worthy of eternal punishment. They call these "grave sins", with the name "philosophical sin"; and the "mortal" sins, with the name "theological sin". You see? It is just a question of nomenclature. Nowadays, they put the difference in the presence or absence of a "fundamental option"; 3 centuries ago, the difference was in a philosophical or a theological option. But, at any rate, the patent of invention for this "triple" classification was already obtained by the theologians of the 17th century. Our 20th century "new theology" arrives too late!

And what is worse for that. Such classification thus proposed now, was openly and officially declared by the Church, an "error" that must be rejected. That was the pronouncement of a Decree of the Holy Office, dated August 24, 1690.¹⁷ So, the "new theology" is just reviving old, quite old **errors**, and selling them, with a new garment, as "inventions" and "discoveries"!

And this error, again, is far from being innocuous! One could quietly steal a big sum of money, or poison his enemy, or perform an abortion, or commit adultery, or defraud poor laborers by usury or by unjust wages... and console himself with the thought that in all these "grave" sins he surely **preserved radically and retained substantially intact the moral life-option for God**, he did **not abandon or refuse God's Love** He did not "**strike God's Love in the face**"! Hence, for sure, at least, he did not commit a **mortal sin**, but **only a grave sin**. He need not worry for confession; he may continue receiving Holy Communion as before! Is not this what our contemporary **new theology** is teaching with that mythical "fundamental option", and that arbitrary "triple" classification of sins?¹⁸

3) Finally, in the "new theology" of sin it is insisted with over-stressed emphasis, that in most cases mortal sin is "**more a process**

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 398-399.

¹⁷ Denzinger-Schönmetzer, op. cit., loc. cit.

¹⁸ cf. Balsam, op. cit., pp. 393-401.

in life than a single act".¹⁹ "Ordinarily, this will hardly take place without a **gradual reversal of one's life stance about God** and the central part He plays in one's whole moral life. One does not suddenly and as it were, by surprise, fall in or out of the infinite love of God... There is a question here of a **process' of moral deterioration**, tumorous rupturing which finally results in a bursting of the bonds of covenanted love between God and man".²⁰ Any one can see that, if all these lucubrations of the "new theology" were true and real, every seldom, if ever, would a person commit a mortal sin by a **particular act** of deliberate yielding to a temptation.

And yet the Church rejects unhesitatingly such false assumption. It is true that "sin **ordinarily** has roots in prior acts of unfaithfulness... But it would be presumptuous to claim that one's life has been so steadfastly turned toward God (by a "fundamental option") that it would not be possible for a single act of lust or abortion or blasphemy to change the direction of one's life".²¹ The Church indeed has always taught that **venial sins** lead and prepare the way to a fall into mortal sin: "He who despises small things will fail little by little" (Sir. 19, 1); "He who is faithful in a very little thing, is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in a very little thing, is unjust also in much" (Lk. 16, 10). But the Church also maintains unambiguously that "a person moral disposition can be **completely changed by particular acts**, especially when, as often happens, these have been prepared for by previous more superficial acts. Whatever the case, it is **wrong** to say that **particular acts** are not enough to constitute mortal sin".²²

Can children commit sin?

If, as we have already seen, the "new theology" with its "fundamental option" renders mortal sin so hypothetical or mythical for all persons of whatever age or condition, it seems ridiculous and superfluous to spend time and ink to discuss the possibility of sin among children who attained the use of reason. And yet "modern" theologians in their effort to eliminate sin from the actual lives of human beings, if not to dissuade penitent souls from the life-giving sacrament of Confession, have lengthily dwelt on the paradisiacal innocence of children and the absurdity of their reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

¹⁹ Rigali, op. cit., p. 51.

²⁰ Balsam, op. cit., p. 396.

²¹ *The Teaching of Christ*, op. cit., p. 306.

²² DECLARATION, op. cit., l.c.

Relying blindly on what some few "experts" in child psychology (contradicted by many other professionals in that field) assert, our erudite **new theology** asserts that "a person can hardly make a **life-choice** or commit a **mortal sin**, before the onset of adolescence, i.e., before the 12th to 14th year".²³ Why, I will say more! I wonder if, even during the well known **immaturity** of adolescence, any teenager may be really able to make a "**life-decision**", a **basic option** with "both conceptual and evaluative **knowledge about one's self and one's place and purpose in life**", nay, "a free **determination of what our present and the next world will be** for us and for others"; a "fully personal, all-out, complete, **basic self-disposing** of one's moral life and being, with full consent and clear evaluation of its necessary and **eternal consequences**".²⁴ As a matter of fact, the Church does not admit adolescents for making definitively the life-decision of the priestly ordination or the religious vows; and even the State demands some years after the onset of adolescence for the validity of marriage vows. Hence, if we were to admit the obviously exaggerated notions of "fundamental option" in the "new theology", as a requirement for committing a **mortal sin**, then, not only children, but even teen-agers and most of the supposed-to-be **mature** adults could not commit a mortal sin!

But, as we have seen, the Church rejects such notions of the "fundamental option" as a requirement for mortal sin, and maintains that "a person **sins mortally** whenever he **consciously** and **freely** chooses something which is **seriously** disordered". Hence, since the premise advanced by the "new theology" is false, the conclusion of the **inability** of children to commit mortal sin collapses. If the children are to be proved unable to commit mortal sin, modern theologians should look for some other premises.

However, from the teachings and practice of the Church I surmise they will not find any valid grounds to support their contention. This my surmise is based on what happened with the well known "experiment" introduced lately by "progressive" theologians and catechists in many places, and even **imported** from abroad into our regions of the Far East, I mean, the practice of **First Communion before First Confession**.

A noisy experiment that proved a clangorous fiasco.

This experiment boils down to blocking children from going to the sacrament of Penance before their First Communion. It seems that the promoters of such experiment forgot the Gospel passage where "Jesus was indignant when He saw His disciples

²³ Balsam, op. cit., p. 390.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 367; 390; 382; 388.

rebuking those who were bringing little children to Him that He might touch them; and said, "Let the children come to Me, and do not hinder them..." (Mk. 10, 14-15; Lk. 18, 16-17). Our contemporary learned "experts" of Catechetical Institutes would rather try with misguided zeal to prevent children, and the parents who would bring them, from approaching to Jesus "that He might touch them" in the Sacrament of reconciliation before He may enter in their hearts by Holy Communion.

The experiment was mainly based on the theory of the Swiss psychologist **Jean Piaget** about the 4 stages or levels of development in children's thinking process; and the 3 factors that produce developmental changes in moral judgment sc. adult constraint, peer-group cooperation and the changing character of the child's mind. "The Piaget school however, is only one school of thought on the subject. A number of other psychologists, after testing Piaget's theories, find them lacking in validity". Look at the conclusions arrived by the following psychologists who in their respective works of investigation contradict Piaget's assumptions: Jean M. Deutsche, **"The Development of Children's Concepts of Causal Relations"**, Univ. Minn. Child Welf. Monogr., 1937, No. 13; Robert I. Watson, **Psychology of the Child**, New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc., 1965; p. 455-56, 492-93; Robert R. Sears, Eleanor E. Maccoby, and Harry Levin, **Patterns of Child Rearing**, New York, 1957, pp. 377-380; p. 364-66; J. C. Finny, "Some Material Influences in Children's Personality and Character", Genet. Psychol. Monog. 1961, 63, 199-278; and R. E. Grinder, "Parental Childrearing Practices, Conscience, and Resistance to Temptation Of Sixth-Grade Children", **Child Development**, 1962, 33, 803-20. Still more, other psychologists maintain, against Piaget's theory, that children between the ages of one and five or six may develop a conscience, and its concomitants, guilt and anxiety: Boyd McCandles, **Child Behavior and Development**, 2nd ed., New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1967, p. 542; Justin Pikunas, **Fundamental Child Psychology**, 2nd, ed., Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1965, pp. 82-83; Sears, Maccoby, and Levin, op. cit., loc. cit.²⁵

Furthermore, Ronald C. Johnston, in his study of Piaget's theories (**"Children's Moral Judgments"**, **Child Development**, vol. 33, Purdue Univ. Press, Lafayette, Ind., 1962, p. 575) presents some facts which would cast doubt about using Piaget by Catholic theologians; and Leonore Boehm, (**"The Development of Conscience. A Comparison of American Children of Different Mental and Socio-economic**

²⁵ cf. Edith Myers, *"Early Confession, Not Bad Psychology"*, ap. THE WANDERER, 11-4-7; Sept. 6, 1975; cf. also, Eugene Lovisa, *"Why Confession First?"*, ap. HOMILETIC & PASTORAL REVIEW, June 1974, pp. 18-26.

Levels", Child Development, vol. 33, op. cit., p. 575) also questions Piaget's theory that a child cannot attain morality until he becomes independent of adults and achieves peer reciprocity.²⁶

"The psychologists who arrived at these conclusions had no 'axe to grind'; they were not concerned with the age for sacramental confession and had probably never thought of such a thing. Their concern was with determining, through objective studies, the facts about children's conscience formation. Their conclusions, however, are completely in accord with the belief that children by their seventh year, can distinguish right from wrong and have attained the use of reason".²⁷ After all, scholastic psychology was not far from the truth when it indicated the age of discretion at about 7, and that was the age determined by S. Pius X in his Decree *QUAM SINGULARI* of August 7, 1910.

As Eugene Lovisa wisely remarks: "The opinion that First Confession should be postponed because the child has not attained psychological maturity until he reaches the age of eleven or twelve cannot be accepted for the following reasons:

"1. Psychologists are not in agreement on the meaning of conscience and/or the exact nature of right and wrong, while Catholic theologians adhere to a precise meaning and definition. Even Piaget is not clear on the exact age when a child attains moral maturity, although he has proven that development takes place.

"2. Some of this maturity is attained by instruction. It has been shown that Catholic students receiving religious instruction attain this maturity much earlier than others.

"3. The most important reason for rejecting this opinion is that it results from a confusion between the natural and the supernatural orders. A child accepts the fact that sin offends God because he believes what the Church teaches. A child of seven has **supernatural faith** and has had it since the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism, though he is not capable of eliciting an act until he becomes older. He accepts on **faith** that **sins offends God**. If he can accept this, then he can elicit an **act of sorrow for having offended God**. This act of supernatural faith is preceded by a **natural** knowledge of what it means to offend someone. Even at the early age of five, a child can know from personal experience that he can hurt someone, by having had the experience of someone hurting him. With this experience he can know that he can hurt his parents. It is easy then to teach a child that some regulations are given by God, and by disregarding them, **God is offended**. He

²⁶ cf. Eugene Lovisa, op. cit., l.c.

²⁷ cf. Edith Myers, op. cit., l.c.

expresses his sorrow from motives of faith, and therefore can elicit such an act at an early age, even at six and seven. Therefore we cannot hold that a child's confession should be postponed because of alleged incomplete psychological development. If he has the faith necessary to receive the Eucharist, he has the faith to receive the Sacrament of Penance.

"Very young children do not commit mortal sins but they are capable of committing lesser sins and the Sacrament of Penance will make them more pleasing to God.

"Cardinal John Wright adds: 'One can scarcely have regard for **the right that baptized children have of confessing their sins** (*italics added*), if at the beginning of the age of discretion they are not prepared and gently led to the Sacrament of Penance'.²⁸

At any rate, the fact is that the long standing usage of the Church and the wise norms of St. Pius X's Decree QUAM SINGULARI of 1910, have always demanded **First Confession before First Communion**. This Decree explicitly **condemned** "the custom, which exists in many places, whereby children are not allowed to receive the Sacrament of Penance, before they are admitted to Communion, or else absolution is not given to them. And thus they may long remain burdened with sins, perhaps **mortal**, with great danger (for their souls)".²⁹

From these words fully **approved** by St. Pius X almost 80 years ago, we see **once more** that this latest fad offered by our "modern" Catechetical Institutes as a "discovery" achieved by the findings of contemporary psychology, is just a revived "old error": the same dog with a different collar! Is it possible that the "progressive" theology today that scorns so much the ignorance of past ages cannot **invent** anything better than the mistakes and errors long ago discredited in those "dark times"? Or does it believe that by dressing an error with technical words borrowed from human sciences the error can be metamorphosed into a dazzling truth? Or is it simply that it is not known what happened in the past, that past which is despised without taking the trouble to study it? Anyhow, the fact is that the "new experiment" was already **experimented long long ago**; and, against what is maintained, the Church has declared long ago that **children are capable of committing sins, "perhaps even mortal sins"**.

²⁸ cf. Lovisa, op. cit., l.c.

²⁹ Decree QUAM SINGULARI, August 8th 1910 (AAS, 1910, pp. 577-583) relied on the prescription of the 4th Lateran Council, Canon 21, of the year 1215: "Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis, postquam ad annos discretionis pervenerit, omnia sua solus peccata confiteatur fideliter, saltem semel in anno..." According to QUAM SINGULARI the age of discretion, *when the child begins to reason*, "is about the 7th year, more or less."

Yet, in spite of all this, the "experiments" of **First Communion before First Confession** were started in some regions of Northern and Central Europe, soon spread to North America and other remote regions of Christendom, since the early 1960's. For some ten years these "experiments" were tolerated by the Holy See which took its time to examine thoroughly the reasons behind them and their results. But in 1971 when the **GENERAL CATECHETICAL DIRECTORY** was published by the S. Congr. for the Clergy with the approval and confirmation of Pope Paul VI, the Church demanded that "the practice of putting **Confession ahead of First Communion** should be retained".³⁰

Still the Holy See allowed that in regions where the new practices ("experiments") have already been introduced, these might be continued for a time, provided the Conferences of Bishops have first communicated with the Holy See and they are at one mind with the Holy See. But, at last, the final conclusion to all such experiments was effected by a **Joint Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy and the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments** issued on May 24, 1973 with the personal approval of Pope Paul VI. There it was declared that "these experiments should be brought to an end with the conclusion of the school year 1972-73, and that, therefore, the **Decree QUAM SINGULARI** is to be obeyed by all everywhere".³¹

With this it should seem that the question was finally closed and settled for good. The values that the **Joint Declaration** of 1973 seem to defend are not merely those found in the norms given by the holy Vicar of Christ, St. Pius X, or in a long standing usage and tradition of the Church, that "has produced and continues to produce very many fruits of Christian life and spiritual perfection", but also these three values:

1) the right of a child as a human being to privacy of conscience, and his right as a Christian to participate in the sacrament of Penance;

2) the spiritual benefits accruing from the Sacrament of Penance even for those who have no mortal sin as Pope Pius XII enumerates in his Encyclical **MYSTICI CORPORIS** (June 29, 1945) where he condemns those "who made light of, or weaken esteem of frequent Confession of venial sins"; a condemnation he reiterates in the Encyclical **MEDIATOR DEI** (November 20, 1947), saying that the **opinions** of 'those who assert that little importance should be

³⁰ Sacred Congregation For The Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, April 11, 1971, approved and confirmed by Pope Paul VI on March 18, 1971, **ADDENDUM**, n. 5. (cf. AAS., 1972, pp. 97-176).

³¹ cf. *L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO*, Engl. ed., November 1, 1973, p. 12.

given to the frequent confession of venial sins" are "**completely foreign to the Spirit of Christ, and disastrous for the Mystical Body of Our Saviour, and also most dangerous to the spiritual life**";

3) the linking of Penance with the Eucharist³² from an early age, lest the Eucharist be approached too lightly, as apparently it seems to happen today.

In other times, after a Declaration such as that of 1973, we could have said, **Roma locuta, causa finita**. Unfortunately now things are not, in many quarters, like that. "In spite of this Declaration (of May 1973), the experimentation was, in some places, either totally or partially continued. Thus, to correct such abuses, Cardinal Villot, the Vatican Secretary of State, wrote on August 28, 1975:

'Finally, the Holy Father places special stress on children's confession, and especially first Confession, which must always precede first Communion, even if, appropriately, there is an interval between them.'

"It is unfortunate enough that children are still denied access, either explicitly or subtly, to the Sacrament of Penance before their First Communion now that the Church has declared that all experiments cease; how much worse it is that many have been, and still are not receiving the Sacrament at the age of 12 or even above! Is it then a wonder that firm attachment to the teachings of the Church is often lost, that reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation is sometimes refused, and that choice between life without the Church is considered to be of equal value?

"So much of the emphasis on delaying First Confession was and is based on **poor theology** — either a denial of sin or a denial of the importance and efficacy of the Sacrament as regards venial sin — that the Church has seen the serious need to restore the **traditional order of reception of the Sacraments**. It is truly unfortunate that **confusion about this** still exists in spite of the Church's clear and authoritative teaching.

"Let us reflect again: '**...The Holy Father places special stress on children's Confession, and especially First Confession which must always precede First Communion**' "³³

According to a **Circular** from the **Arzobispado de Manila** dated 9 June 1977, lately, in reply to queries from different sources — bishops, priests and parents — the Sacred Congregation for the

³² cf. Paulino Gonzalez, O.P., "La Eucaristia y la Remisión de los pecados (II)", ap. PHILIPPINIANA SACRA, May-August 1977, pp. 278-291.

³³ Most Rev. Thomas J. Walsh, Bishop of Arlington, *Pastoral Letter*, ap. L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Engl. ed., January 22, 1976.

Sacraments and Divine Worship, and the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, with the approval of the Holy Father, in a **Joint Communication** (Prot.N.2/76 of March 31, 1977) reiterated the obligation of the First Communicants of making their Confession before receiving Holy Communion.

The **age of discretion** (use of reason to discern what is good or wrong) according to the QUAM SINGULARI (of 1910) is about the **7th year**. Hence, at that age normally children should go to Confession before receiving their First Communion. Since it is a Church doctrine that Confession is **not necessary** when there is **no mortal sin**, we may well conclude that this injunction to go to Confession at that early age, implies the **possibility** of **mortal sin** among such children; a **possibility** that, as we have seen above, is actually and explicitly affirmed in that same Decree approved in full by St. Pius X in 1910, and repeatedly and openly admitted by all the Canadian Bishops in 1947,³⁴ notwithstanding the contumacious lucubrations of the "new theology" propagated in our days.

Answering a "sentimental" objection

Sometimes it is alleged against this **possibility** among children (which indeed everybody agrees it is **not a probability**) the lack of proportion between a **mortal sin** as understood in the traditional way (a **fully deliberate transgression in grievous matter** of some of God's commandments, even without formal rejection or contempt of God and His Love) and the eternal consequences of an **everlast-in punishment**.³⁵

However, this is a **futile** objection, **because**:

1). Can any one boast to explain with the poor lights of our limited human understanding the unfathomable abyses of God's Infinite Holiness, Justice, and Mercy? "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counsellor?" (Rom. 11, 33-34).

2) One thing is to **deserve** an **eternal punishment**, or to be **guilty** of it, as it is the case with any one committing a mortal sin; and another is to **incur** actually the everlasting fire of hell. This last will not actually happen in many, if not perhaps in most cases, because of God's Infinite Mercy; the first is true for all those

³⁴ cf. Most Rev. James F. Carney, Archbishop of Vancouver, *Pastoral Letter "On Children's First Confession"*, ap. L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Engl. ed., July 25, 1974, pp. 3-5.

³⁵ cf. Bernard Haring, *Sin in the Secular Age*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1974), p. 189; cit. by Balsam, op. cit., p. 392.

who sin mortally, because of God's Infinite Holiness and Justice. No sinner will fall into hell unless he becomes obstinate and confirmed in his malice unto the end of his life, after all divine means to save him have been exhausted. The fact, however, is that mortal sin "separates from God", and that separation is indeed worse than all the other punishments of hell, although now we cannot understand it.

3) The **immediate and actual consequence of mortal sin** is the **loss of sanctifying grace** (the loss of the soul's sharing in God's own life, the **separation from God**); and that **separation from God** is quite what needs to happen to a soul that voluntarily, with full deliberation turns its back to God, to cling to a created good; though it may not "strike God's Love in the face"!

Sin and sanctifying grace

And here we touch a point that is often forgotten by the proponents to the "fundamental option" in the "new theology". Sin should be understood not only as an **act** (an offense against God), but also as a **state**, a situation or condition of the soul (the **loss of charity**, or **love of God**, and consequently the loss of the **soul's union with God by sanctifying grace**, which is a **sharing in God's own life**).

Sanctifying grace is gratuitously given to us Christians, through the merits of Christ ordinarily long before we can make any "fundamental option", at the time of our Baptism. Original sin, erased in Baptism, is a **true sin**, although it is not a **personal act** of "offense against God", because it is precisely a **state of personal lacking** of sanctifying grace or union with God by sharing His own life. Thus, **original sin is a true imitatione transfusum**) as a sad inheritance from our first parents. That sin is erased in Baptism by the **infusion of sanctifying grace** in our souls, through the merit of Christ's Redemption.

Unfortunately, that gratuitous gift of God's Infinite Love for us, may be lost **much before** a person is **mature** enough to make a **life-decision** rejecting or refusing God and His covenant of Love, **striking God's Love in the face**, with full consent and knowledge of its eternal consequences. The Church teaches that sanctifying grace may be lost by any "deliberate transgression in serious matter of any of God's commandments", even if in that transgression there may be **no formal and direct resistance to God** much less, any **devilish hatred of God**. The **deliberate transgression** itself in **serious matter** includes already an "opposition to true love". "A person, of whatever age, who **consciously and freely chooses**, for whatever reason at all, something which is **seriously disordered** against any

of the moral laws, by his very contempt for the divine commandment, he **turns himself away from God**, and by this very **separation from God**, which is **mortal sin**, **loses his union with God through love**, i.e., **loses charity**, and thus miserably lies in the state of **mortal sin**". This is the authentic doctrine of the Church Magisterium.

Summing Up

It is false then, and erroneous to say that a **mortal sin** is committed **only** when "a person, knowing what he does, openly and wilfully **rejects God from his life**, and **experience** this as a **breach with God**" as a local ecclesiastical review puts it.³⁶ A husband certainly **offends grievously** his wife, not only when he **hates her**, or openly and wilfully and **rejects her from his life**, but also when he is **unfaithful to his marriage vows** and **entertains marital relations with another woman**. Such infidelity to what is essential to spousal love, **turns him away from his wife**, **separates him from her**; and even if he would profess **not to reject her from his life**, nor to intend any **serious breach with her**, still, any one will admit it, he is "striking their wedded love in the face", since his acts **include** obviously an **opposition to authentic love**, whether he realizes it or not. In the same way, "if one is prepared to do, and does an action that is gravely evil and known to be opposed to the demanding will of God, and does this with sufficient awareness and freedom, one expresses the spirit of **one who does not love Him** (cf. Jn. 14, 15)".³⁷

"Those who with full deliberation and consent commit adultery, murder, perjury, and similar crimes estrange themselves from God. He sets down the conditions for their estrangement, not they. It is not up to man to decide subjectively whether a deliberate serious sin, like direct abortion, is also a mortal sin which deprives him of God's friendship. The sinner cannot excuse himself of mortal sin by the clever distinction that psychologically '**I do not really want to reject God**' I only intend to do what I know God forbids as a serious violation of His law'. God alone has the right to determine what separates a sinner from his Creator; a creature does not have the right to stand in judgment on God and tell Him what constitutes a mortal sin.

"The **Church's basic position on mortal sin**, therefore, **has not changed**. Subjectively a person is guilty of mortal sin when he **fully consents** with his will to do what he **realizes is a serious offense** against God. Otherwise although the matter is grave if only

³⁶ cf. THE LITURGICAL INFORMATION BULLETIN, Manila, Sept.-Oct., 1972, p. 123.

³⁷ *The Teaching of Christ*, op. cit., p. 306.

partial consent was given then only venial sin is committed. But the object of this consent is **what God, and not man**, determines is **graved wrong**".³⁸

The true Catholic doctrine has always taught that "when the sinner deliberately chooses the thing which he recognizes as morally evil, he need not have the rejection of God uppermost in his mind. In fact, in most instances, the sinner would like to be able to commit sin and still remain a friend of God. But such is impossible, both psychologically and on the authority of Revelation. Did not Our Lord say that **'no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will stand by the one and despise the other'**? (Mt. 6, 24). God does not merely wish to be loved. He desires to be loved **above all things**. We either love God and turn away from grievous sin, or we prefer such sin and thereby demonstrate that we do not really love Him".³⁹

Oftentimes we wonder at the notable and alarming decrease in the practice of Confession among the faithful crowding our churches for Holy Communion, as compared to some two or three decades ago. But we need not wonder. If the faithful have been taught in the religion class of Catholic schools, and in lectures and talks of retreats, seminars and workings, and in articles of Catholic magazines and ecclesiastical reviews, and even in the confessional, that no one sins mortally unless he "rejects God from his life" and "strikes God's Love in the face" . . . , what Christian would do that which takes almost a devil to do? Indeed, **most of those** who practise premarital sex relations, homosexual acts, masturbation, adultery, robbery, murder, abortion, drunkenness; those who hate and refuse to forgive their enemies, entertain lustful thoughts and in the least **to reject God from their lives, or to strike God's Love** desires, lascivious looks at pornographic pictures, etc. do **not intend in the face**, but just to satisfy their evil passions. And yet, even if the "new theology" would absolve them from mortal sin, the inspired word of God tells us: **"Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, . . . nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers, will inherit the kingdom of God"** (cf. I Cor. 6, 9-10; also, Gal. 5, 19-21; Eph. 5, 5; I Tim. 1, 9-11; Rev. 21, 8; 22, 15). Pope Pius XII and Pope Paul VI have repeatedly warned us that the **worst evil** of our age is the **less of the sense of sin**, "the current tendency to minimize as far as possible, when not denying outright, the reality of grave sin, at least in people's actual lives".⁴⁰

³⁸ John A. Hardon, S.J., *The Catholic Catechism*, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1975, pp. 293-294.

³⁹ Richard Klaver, O.S.C., *Towards the Heights*, St. Paul's Publ., Philippines, 1968, p. 18.

⁴⁰ DECLARATION, op. cit., 1c

COMMUNICATION

To The Editor:

I am grateful both to the editor of Boletín Eclesiástico and to the author, Fr. Benito Sandalio, C.M., for the appearance of the article, "Whatever Became Of Sin In The "New Theology"? in the current issue. Fr. Sandalio's observations, though at times somewhat aggressive and polemical, show that he has done his home work. I welcome his article for the very simple reason that I think the reading public of the Boletín should see that there are other facets to the very complex reality of that which is "the badge of all our tribe," sin. Once again, I sincerely thank both editor and author for such editorial honesty and sincere searching for the truth, which for us weak and ignorant mortals proves often so tantalizingly evasive notwithstanding our sincerest efforts and intentions.

Sincerely and gratefully,

(Sgd.) John B. Balsam, O.P.

HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR JUNE

NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(June 4, 1978)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Second Reading: Romans 3:21-25a.28

Gospel Reading: Matthew 7:21-27

First Reading: The book of Deuteronomy treats of the covenant of Yahweh with Israel from the angle of God's love for Israel and her expected response to that love. Three exhortations are placed on the lips of Moses before he takes leave of this life. In the second exhortation, the basic principles of the Law are set forth. They are to be deeply imprinted on the heart. As reminders, scripture passages were to be placed in small containers (called phylacteries) and worn on the left arm and forehead.

There follows an introduction to the theme: "blessing-curse" which is further developed in chapters 27-28. God promises abundant blessings if his words are kept, but on the contrary, chastisements will follow those who forsake them.

Gospel Reading: Not merely speaking about God but doing his will wins entrance into heaven. On judgment day, all external even charismatic, deeds will mean nothing if not performed with proper motivation, especially love (see 1 Cor. 13:1-3). It is imperative not only to know about Christ's gospel-message but **to live it**. The one who does, has a rock foundation which withstands any storm. (Note the similiar contrast as in the first reading).

Second Reading: In this concentrated theological passage, Paul is bent on showing that man's salvation is not at all the result of man's doings, but is accomplished by God through Christ's Paschal

Mystery. Since all men have sinned, all are re-instated into God's friendship only by Christ's offering himself for all men. Man's part is to accept Christ in faith that is alive (by living his gospel-message). "Glory" in v. 22 is God's presence manifesting itself in close friendship.

TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(June 11, 1978)

First Reading: Hosea 6:3b-6
Second Reading: Romans 4:18-25
Gospel Reading: Matthew 9:9-13

First Reading: Israel's endeavor to make up for the past and come to a better knowledge of God is praiseworthy, but her motivation is faulty. She seeks God only to obtain material benefits from him. That is why the Lord is exasperated. Her covenantal love is so fickle, and the threats of the prophets have had little effect. She thinks that her many animal-sacrifices will satisfy the Lord, but no! It is genuine covenant-love that the Lord wants of her, as well as knowledge of his ways. (Note: it is completely out of context and simply false to refer "sacrifice" in this passage to the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which some sectarians do.)

Gospel Reading: The call of Matthew. He belonged to the despised group of Jews in service of the Romans who were in power. Tax-collectors obtained the required tax from their fellow-Jews often by extortion, but there were also noble ones like Zachaeus (Lk. 19:9). When called by Jesus, Matthew left everything and followed at once. In gratitude, he threw a banquet for Jesus, and invited all of his ilk. ("Sinners" refers to those who cared little about the many injunctions of the Law).

Jesus does not disdain the invitation. To the Pharisees, who considered such contact with that class of people as blameworthy, Christ quoted the words of Hosea in today's first lesson. God seeks sincere hearts, and if they have sinned, then a return to covenantal love. Mere external and legal observances without the inner spirit are meaningless. All men have sinned and need a Savior. He will be a loving Healer to all who acknowledge their need of him.

Second Reading: Abraham's age and that of his wife were beyond begetting progeny. But he staunchly believed in God's promise, and clung to it without wavering. This so pleased God that he made him upright on the spot (justified him) without regard to any previous works, (though that faith was sorely tested and proved

subsequently by his offering of Isaac). The Christian likewise is made upright (justified) not by any previous works that could merit justification, but by firmly believing and relying on the death and resurrection of Christ, and then carrying out what that belief implies. (Note how Paul always brings the death and resurrection together as two sides of the same coin.)

ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (June 18, 1978)

First Reading: Exodus 19:2-6a

Second Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Gospel Reading: Matthew 9:36 to 10:8

First Reading: After reminding the sons of Israel of his loving care for them (symbolized by the eagle's wings), Yahweh solemnly pronounces his intention of making them his special people from all the nations of the earth. It is the mystery of the divine election, which is God's free gift. This intimacy of Israel with Yahweh is described as a covenant, a sacred institution of ancient times with privileges as well as obligations on both sides. God freely obligates himself to consecrate Israel as his own people, and make her a priestly people to give him the worship he would prescribe, and to mediate salvation to all the world (cf. Jn. 4:22). Israel on her part was obligated to become holy by carrying out the will of Yahweh as given in the decalogue and the Covenant Law.

Gospel Reading: The call and mission of the Twelve, the foundation stones of the New Israel. At first, the missionary activity of Jesus is given in its threefold form: teaching, preaching, healing. His experiences fill him with deep compassion for the anawim, the poor of Israel, in extreme need of a shepherd and guide. Thereupon he enjoins his followers to pray the Father for co-workers, missionaries like himself, to garner in the harvest of souls.

There follows the special choice of the Twelve, to whom Jesus imparts his powers. His instructions concern: 1) their sphere of activity: only Israel for the present; 2) the message: proclaiming God's reign among men; 3) the means to be employed: his own authority and powers; 4) an admonition: for complete detachment from material things, and a caution against material gain (though in v. 10 the laborer deserves to be cared for).

Some observations on the names of the Twelve: Peter holds the place of pre-eminence. Bartholomew is most likely Nathanael, who was among those first to be called (Jn. 1:45-50) but mentioned no-

where else. James, son of Alphaeus, and Jude need not be the same who wrote two "catholic" epistles. These latter are "brothers" of the Lord, but it is not stated that they were apostles. Simon belonged at one time to the revolutionary party of Zealots. Thaddeus goes by the name of Judas of James in Lk. 6:16. The traitor Judas ends the list with his degrading deed attached to his name.

Second Reading: The extreme love of God for us is shown by the fact that he gave his Son to death for our sakes while we were his very enemies (being in sin), something which was unknown until Christ. In that sinful state, man was utterly unable to acquire God's friendship (justification) on his own, but God's love brought it about. All the more now that man is reconciled to God through his Son's death, will God continue to grant him the fullness of salvation by the life of the Risen Lord, for he is the Life of the whole Body. So not only do we boast of the hope of glory (v. 2) and in our afflictions (v. 3), but even in God himself who accomplished his great work of reconciliation in us through his Son.

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (June 25, 1978)

First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10-13

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-15

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:26-33

First Reading: Jeremiah recounts the mocking threats of those who plot his death, among whom are even former friends. But in Yahweh he has placed his whole trust, and Yahweh will eventually vindicate him, for he knows the real intentions of a man's heart. Leaving vengeance to the Lord, the prophet sounds a hymn of praise that Yahweh always cares for the poor and the helpless who trust in him the anawim). Here again Jeremiah is a remarkable type of Christ who was also betrayed by his friend and apostle, who turned against him and sought his death.

Gospel Reading: A series of sayings on witnessing to Christ. Let the disciples be fearless in proclaiming the Good News. Truth will eventually prevail. What was confided in the intimacy of the apostolic circle will be spread abroad everywhere.

Furthermore, there is more to a man than his visible self. No one can harm the inner man except the One who judges a man worthy of perdition. Those who rely on their heavenly Father and do his will have nothing to fear. They are very precious in his

sight. Confessing Christ boldly before men merits to be openly acknowledge in the heavenly court. Denying him before men merits rejection in that august court-room.

Second Reading: Paul shows Adam as a type of Christ in anti-thesis. Sin and Death entered mankind through one man at the outset. Grace and the Favor of God were poured out solely through Christ. Not only is Death linked with man's sin at the outset but also with each individual personal sins. Yet Grace is God's sheer gift and in no way the merit of any individual but Christ. Sin, and Death its consequence, stalked the earth even before the coming of the Law, so these are not merely the consequence of Law-transgressions. Sin is deep within man. Paul almost seems to be describing actors on a stage by personifying these realities. He wants to show the abundance of God's gift in Christ's salvific action.

BIBLICAL NOTES FOR JULY

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(July 2, 1978)

First Reading: Second Kings 4:8:11.14-16a

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-4.8-11

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:37-42

First Reading: Shunem was on the northern border of the plain of Esdraelon. Elisha's host recognized in him a man consecrated to God (holy), speaking in his name. She offered him every service she could think of, as if he were her own son. In return, God rewarded her through the mouth of the prophet by promising her a son of her own.

Gospel Reading: Seven sayings are strung together and placed at the end of the instruction for the disciples. All except the last one are twin sayings or "doublets", reminding us of Hebrew parallelism or balance of thought.

Nothing can stand in the way of one's relation to the Savior, not even the closest blood relationship (37). Christ claims the whole heart and affection. This loyalty must persist even though it means death: the cross figuratively (38). To deny it in self-seeking brings total death, while self-denial brings total fulfillment (39). The disciples are other Christs and represent him. What is done to one of them is done to Christ and likewise to the Father, for Christ

and the Father are one (40). Every least thing done for the sake of the Kingdom will be amply rewarded. Prophet: the Gospel messenger. Holy one: Those leading the Christ-life. Little ones: the chosen disciples, who follow him in simplicity of heart (41f).

Second Reading: Paul's deeply mystical explanation of Christian baptism depicts the Christian's renewal in the Risen Christ. In baptism, the Christian enters into closest union with Christ in person, in his redemptive acts of death, burial and resurrection. With Christ he dies to sin and sinful habits his old self is buried with Christ, and he rises in Christ to a new life for God. This spiritual renewal in the Risen Christ in an anticipation and prelude of his bodily resurrection and enjoyment of eternal life in God. If the early Christians received baptism through total immersion, the lesson becomes all the more striking through the symbolism of immersion and rising from the grave "of death" unto new life. Now identified with Christ, the Christian must put off sin for good, identify himself with the Christ-life manifested by Jesus in his life, and endeavor to please God in all things as Jesus did (Jn. 8:29)

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(July 9, 1978)**

First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10

Second Reading: Romans 8:9.11-13

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11:25-30

First Reading: In the Hebrew text, Zion herself is the favored daughter ("daughter Zion" not "daughter of Zion"). The prophet urges her (Jerusalem, Zion) to break out in exuberant joy because her King will conquer all opposing forces and come to her in triumph. He does not arrogantly ride the horse, symbol of war, (Zech. 1:7), but meekly the ass, symbol of peace and dignity (1 Kgs. 1:33). All the instruments of war which the ancient kings of Israel relied on for victory will be left untouched. Peace is his program, universal peace for all nations in all four directions. Though most likely occasioned by contemporary events, the passage is clearly messianic, and exemplified by Christ in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:4).

Gospel Reading: There "logia" or sayings of Jesus: 1) An outburst of praise of the Father that the mysteries of the Kingdom are revealed to disciples who are childlike in mind and heart (with receptive faith), and not to Israel's learned and sophisticated ones. 2) A sublime echo of the style of the Fourth Gospel, yet found

also in Luke and hence in the synoptic tradition. Jesus has a unique relation to the Father not shared by other men. He alone possesses the fullness of truth. He alone reveals God to us. 3) An invitation to all classes of men to find in him a warm welcome. Because he is meek, the approach will be easy. His yoke is not the burdensome Law but submission to the will of a loving Father in heaven. From Jesus they will learn the message of love, the Father's will.

Second Reading: Everyone regenerated in Christ possesses the personal Spirit of Christ, who takes up his dwelling in him as he did in Christ, inspiring him and motivating his life to spiritual goals. Such a person lives "in the Spirit" and his interests are spiritual. Belonging to Christ, therefore, is not merely an external affair, but has its deepest reason in being incorporated into his Body-Person and possessing his own divine Spirit.

Since the Christian is one with Christ, the Father will raise him up even though he dies, just as he raised up Christ, because of his Spirit living in him, who is the pledge of the life to come. (Note that the Spirit is designated both as the Spirit of Christ and as the Spirit of the Father the One who raised Christ). This brief passage has deep trinitarian overtones.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (July 16, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11

Second Reading: Romans 8:18-23

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1-23 (or 1-9)

First Reading: The word of God is all-powerful and will accomplish whatever God wills. But it is fruitful in the heart of man only if it be received interiorly as the earth soaks up the rain which enables it to yield the grain. (This aspect of the word is reflected in today's gospel). Yet, there is an evident personification of the Word of God here, which may well have been the starting point of John's theology of the Word (Jn. 1), and that of the Bread of Life come down from heaven (Jn. 6). For the divine Word always does the will of the Father, and accomplishes all that he was sent to do.

Gospel Reading: Today's gospel consists of three parts:

A. The parable of the sower: vv. 1-9

1. **The image:** An agricultural scene. Seed is scattered by hand. It meets various obstacles: a hard path trodden down by the feet of men; shallow soil barely covering shale-rock underneath; soil with injurious other growths; but in spite of all this, there is a good harvest.

2. **The lesson** in the situation of the life of Jesus: The reign which Jesus is inaugurating will meet with many obstacles and difficulties (opposition from various sides), but its power is dynamic and it will eventually have a grand success. Let none of the disciple be disheartened by such opposition and apparent failures. God's reign will flourish.

B. Christ's pedagogical instruction to the Twelve: vv. 10:17

1. The disciples are the "little ones" (11:25) to whom are revealed the realities of the Reign of God, for they are receptive and well-disposed. But not all in the crowd are well-disposed. Many are hostile or apathetic. Jesus cannot give them the naked truth about the Reign of God, lest they reject it openly, for their ideas and expectations are political, national and carnal.

2. In order to correct these ideas tactfully, Jesus veils the true nature of the Reign of God under the images given in the parables. Seeing the plausibility of the images will help them to accept the intended lesson. Isaiah 6:6ff is quoted to show that their failure to accept the lesson is on account of their own lack of proper dispositions. The Hebrew phrase expresses consequence rather than purpose.

3. The cryptic saying in v. 12 takes the word "has" in the meaning of "accepts". If one accepts Christ's message, he will be given much more, but those who refuse to accept lose even the opportunity and grace granted at the outset.

C. The allegorical explanation of the parable (1-9) in the situation of the Evangelist. In the course of decades of oral preaching, the shift of the lesson went from that of the parable to the individual parts of it as an allegory. The four kinds of soil now represent four hearts: the hardened heart (by sin), the shallow heart without depth and persistence, the heart that does not "weed out" its evil inclinations, and the good, receptive heart without these obstacles. This explanation is adapted to Christian hearers, and notes the effectiveness of the word of God in each case.

Second Reading: Our present life is one of hope, like a period of gestation with its birthpangs. These sufferings guarantee immense glory, of which the indwelling Spirit is the pledge. Our divine sonship clamors for final fulfillment, in which the entire cosmos will share. At present it groans under the curse it shares with man because of his sin. Final redemption will bring total liberation. For that, all God's creation patiently waits in hope.

In this passage, man's relation to the entire cosmos is strikingly brought out. Just as man awaits fulfillment, so does the whole of creation. The Spirit of God will accomplish it.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(July 23, 1978)**

First Reading: Wisdom 12:13.16-19

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-27

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:24-43 (or:24-30)

First Reading: Chapters 10 to 19 of the book of Wisdom are a midrashic meditation or reflection on the events of history. God's forbearance is evildent in all these events. He need prove it to no one. Infinitely powerful, he is fully master of his power, and uses it with great leniency in judging his creatures. To those who do not acknowledge his power (pagans), as well as to those who insolently refuse to acknowledge it (Jews), he can exercise his chastising might whenever he wills. Yet he always does so with clemency.

Gospel Reading: Today's gospel consists of several parts:

A. The wheat and the darnel (weeds): vv. 24-30.

1. **The image:** Good grain is sown by the master, but darnel which is an injurious weed is sown uncover by the enemy, whose only purpose is to ruin and frustrate the good work of the master. Both plants look alike in their earlier stage of growth. It is not advisable to remove the darnel until harvest time. Then it can be easily garnered first and thrown into the fire, while the good grain can be gathered safely into the barn.

2. **The lesson:** Emphasis is on the mystery of evil that is at work to frustrate and ruin the work of Jesus. This is the real explanation behind all the opposition he is meeting with. Let not the disciples be disheartened. There will be justice and victory in the end.

B. The allegorical explanation of details in the situation of the evangelist: (vv. 36-43). The Early Church often gave a deeper inter-

pretation of the words of Jesus, applying them to her current situation. Well aware of evil within the community, she imitated the long-suffering in the Master. She hoped that this forbearance would offer the good members opportunity to help others to be saved, and be an occasion of repentance to those who were evil. Above all, she looked forward to the eschatological event of the Day of Judgment.

C. The parable of the mustard seed: vv. 31f

1. **The image:** A tiny insignificant seed, proverbially referred to as something very minute (see Mt. 17:20). Yet that tiny seed contained with itself great potentialities. It shoots up annually a large bushy shrub 4 meters in height. Swarms of birds gather on its strong branches, which provide abundance of food and shelter for them.

2. **The lesson:** No one need take offense at the humble beginnings of the Reign of God which Jesus was proclaiming. Not many wise, not many noble, but unlettered fishermen, public officials such as tax-collectors, the poor, the common folk. Yet, these are God's chosen ones (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26). But how rapid the growth and widespread is influence! It amazed even the Roman officials. In the span of a lifetime, St. Paul claims to have brought the Good news to all parts of the Roman Empire. Men of all nations and color and rank find shelter and abundant food in the Kingdom which had such humble beginnings.

D. The parable of the leaven (yeast): v. 33.

1. **The image:** a scene from the home. Baking bread was a daily affair. Leaven is a piece of dough with yeast in it, left over from previous baking. It is put into the fresh dough and it penetrates the whole mass. Three measures (a great quantity) brings out the contrast: an insignificant piece of leaven is powerful enough to transform a large quantity. It works secretly and unseen by the eye, but the effects are visible. It transforms, and lends savor to the whole mass.

2. One could easily allegorize the parable, but the **chief lesson** is that the Reign of God has the vital power of transforming the whole world, not by external force of arms, nor by money, but by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. One does not see what goes on inside a person, but the effects are visible. The Spirit of Christ transforms even the savage and the illiterate into noble children of God. Everywhere it spreads the sweet fragrance and savior of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15).

Second Reading: A magnificent picture of the dynamic role of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian. The Christian often realizes he is utterly inadequate in his endeavors, especially that of praying properly. But the indwelling Spirit comes constantly to his assistance, for he is given to each as a Helper. The docile Christian becomes aware that what he cannot accomplish by himself is accomplished by the Spirit within him. God himself arranged this marvelous co-operation, and gladly hears the prayers of those who pray in the Spirit, for he understands their pleadings.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (July 30, 1978)

First Reading: First Kings 3:5.7-12

Second Reading: Romans 8:28-30

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:44-52 (or:44-46).

First Reading: In the earlier years of Solomon's reign, he was very pleasing to the Lord, as is recounted here. Dreams connoting the presence of God were one of the means of divine communications in Israel. Solomon petitions the Lord for wisdom to govern his people (the Lord's People), instead of petitioning anything worldly such as riches, power, possessions. God is so pleased with this request that by his favor, Solomon became proverbially the wisest of all the kings of Israel.

Gospel Reading: The Gospel today presents three parables:

A. The treasure hidden in the field: v. 44.

1. Rich Orientals kept their wealth divided: ready money for immediate use; jewels to be taken along in case of flight; a treasure-casket which they hid away for emergence is. The owner of such a treasure-casket could be killed without having informed anyone of its whereabouts. Someone else stumbled upon it in a field. According to custom then prevalent, he could keep the treasure if he owned the field. Realizing its great value, he determined to sell all he had in order to own the field. This he did joyfully, counting his possessions as nothing in comparison to the treasure. He sacrifices them and bought the field, thus obtaining the treasure.

2. The lesson: The kingdom that Jesus offers is of priceless worth. No cost is too great to obtain it. When anyone realize the riches

and blessings that Christ brings, he gladly sacrifices all else in view of obtaining them. The greatest treasure of all is Christ in person, and the vision of God.

B. The parable of the pearl: v. 45.

This is a "sister parable" to the foregoing. Merchants travelled far and wide to obtain pearls of special lustre. They willingly sold all they had to obtain a precious one, for they knew its value. The lesson of the parable is similar to the foregoing, though it adds the aspect of attractiveness of the Kingdom.

C. The fish-net: vv. 47-53

1. Everyone knew the familiar picture of fishermen throwing a long drag-net into Lake Gennesareth for a fish-catch. In such a catch there were all kinds of fish, edible and worthless. The edible ones were placed in baskets, the others were cast aside or thrown back into the lake.

2. This lesson is similar to that of the darnel. On earth, the kingdom of God will be made up of both good and evil men, but at the consummation, there will be a final and definite separation. The lot of both is graphically suggested.

Second Reading: God is in complete control of all things, and he directs everything to the final end of those who have responded to his call in love. The final goal is to become like his beloved Son and share his glory. Paul's expressions are not those of scholastics of much later date. He merely shows that all steps of man's sanctification are in the hands of God. All lead toward the goal: to be an image of the Firstborn.

II. HOMILIES FOR JUNE

I NEVER KNEW YOU

June 4, 1978: Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: The picture in the newspaper of the hotel fire was appalling. Men, women and children cowering on the ledges, covered with smoke, shrinking from the flames. Sixty-one people died in the fire, though they thought the hotel was fire-proof. Twenty-one stories of steel and re-inforced concrete seemed fire-resistant but in reality the architects had built a potential

funeral pyre inside. As architects of our own destiny, have we built an external structure that seems able to resist any harm, but neglected the inner one?

The Good News: It is seldom that our blessed Savior speaks in such sharp tones as in today's gospel: "Away from me, out of my sight, you evildoers"! He utters the same words in the parable of the sheep and the goats, to those who are on his left side on judgment day: "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41). It is clear that there is such a thing as being rejected by Christ even for those who had come to believe in him, and that although Christ died for all men, salvation is not automatic, but needs definite cooperation on our part. Nor is it enough to give lip service to the Lord in some external acts while the heart remains far from him. He welcomes the sinner who approaches him with a sincere heart, he rejects the self-righteous who think they need no repentance.

Nothing is easier than to keep saying: "Lord! Lord!". But to do the will of God in favorable and adverse situations is another thing. It is quite easy to pray verbally even in groups, to make frequent novenas, and to give a show of external attendance at divine services, but to conform one's stubborn will to that of the heavenly Father according to the demands of Christ is another thing. It is even possible to possess the charisms of prophecy, healing and casting out demons, and yet not be pleasing to the Lord in one's heart. Jesus says of such persons who claim to have done such things in his name but have not conformed to his Father's will: "Away from me. I never knew you". He never recognized them as his sheep all along. Externally they seemed to be instruments of his Spirit, and to be doing great things, and yet our Lord never counted them as his genuine followers. He rejects them on judgment day. He never knew them as his own.

How important it is then to take to heart the Good News preached by Christ through his ministers and not merely listen to it Sunday after Sunday and let it go at that. Jesus expects those who claim to be his disciples to carry out his gospel-message, to act on it and to live it. Such a man builds his house on bed-rock, and when the storms of doubt and temptation in adverse situations in adverse situations come, his edifice of faith does not collapse, for the message of the Lord which he has imbibed gives him strength and insight into God's ways. The man who merely listens but does not carry out the Lord's words and act on them, builds on sand. His edifice collapses when engulfed in storms, for his faith is weak and love has no depth.

It is remarkable that the words of today's gospel and those in the parable of the sheep and the goats both refer to one and the same object, that is, the commandment of love. For today's gospel is the conclusion of the sermon on the mount which is entirely an elaboration on the commandment of love. In the parable of the sheep and the goats, it is the judgment on those who have not carried out this same commandment: "I was thirsty and you never gave me to drink; sick, naked and in prison, and you did not, care for me. Insofar as you neglected to do these things to one of my least brethren, you neglected to do it to me. Away from me" (Mt. 25:45). It is the message of love that is the quintessence of the gospel message. This is the will of God, that Christians show their love of God by loving their fellowmen. This is the inner spirit that the Father expects of each one of his children, not mere words and external deeds, be they ever so sensational. This is the house built on bed-rock which will stand up when beset with trial, for it is upheld by love. To these Jesus will not say: "Away from me" but "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Our Response: There are millions of people who go by the name of Christians. God sees the heart. It is he who judges who are the ones who really follow Christ his Son and do the will of his Father. We do not want to be among those to whom the Lord will say on the last day: "I never knew you. Away from me." Then let us carry out the gospel of love in our daily lives.

"WHAT I WANT IS MERCY, NOT SACRIFICE"

June 11th, 1978: Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: In a funeral parlor a man was gazing at the casket where his best friend lay cold in death. He told the man next to him: "I could shoot myself! It was worry that brought José's heart attack; financial worry killed him. I had a dozen hints but I never bothered going into them. How easily I could have helped him over his crisis and saved his life. But I was too wrapped up in myself to see it".

The Good News: What can Jesus mean in today's gospel when he says: "What I want is mercy and not sacrifice"? Are we supposed to forget about the sacrifices we have been so often asked to make for the good of others? Are we to neglect the worship of God in the sacrifice of the Mass, and go solely into social works of mercy? That kind of subjective interpretation one can hear from those

sectarians who interpret a passage out of context. They are not aware that the Lord is quoting the book of the prophet Hosea (Osee), and this very passage was read in the first reading today.

Hosea sets the backdrop for the correct understanding of these words. In his day, Israel offered up many animal-sacrifices day after day, but her heart was far from God, for her covenant-love had grown cold. God complained that he had no need of her sacrifices; what he wanted was a sincere return to him in genuine compunction and renewal in faithful covenant-love. That love would not selfishly look for material gain, but would manifest itself in merciful treatment toward their poor and defenceless brothers, thus reflecting the mercy and loving-kindness which Yahweh had poured out on Israel.

Jesus faces a similar situation. The Pharisees were sticklers for observance of the Law with its many prescriptions for offering of animal-sacrifices in the Temple. At the same time they despised the common people as being ignorant of the Law, and therefore sinners in their eyes. Being self-righteous they had no need of the call of Jesus to repentance. On the other hand, the tax-collectors and those reputed as sinners, heeded his call, showed sincerely signs of repentance and found in Jesus the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus did not turn them away. He did not disdain to eat with them and mingle with them. He had come to save men from their sins, and if man is repentant, he finds a ready welcome in the Savior. That is what Jesus is referring to by his words: I want mercy and not sacrifice. All our external works without love of neighbor and understanding of his needs are of no avail before God.

This understanding of the deep needs of our fellowmen and of their common human frailties is the true following of the Master. We have pledged ourselves in covenant-love to One who is all-merciful and compassionate. He does not despise the sinner. He does not shun the lower classes of men when his presence can be of help to them. Not shun the lower classes of men when his presence can be of help to them. Not only did he transform a Matthew from a tax-collector to an apostle and evangelist, but undoubtedly many of those invited to Matthew's banquet found new hope and courage to live a decent life again. Would they, if Jesus had politely refused to be present with them when invited?

Our external practices of religion will be like those of the Pharisees, unless we also reflect the mercy and compassion of the Lord in our relation to others, especially the poor, the neglected,

those living in subnormal conditions, those whom they who are better off usually avoid. But this is the real sacrifice the Master asks of us. No one is greater than his Master.

Our Response: Self-righteousness and selfishness are among the many evils that plague even people who seem to be blameless in their lives. It takes courage and humility to follow the example of the Master in mingling with the impoverished and those of ill-reputation, for the sake of their coming to know God's love and mercy yet, there are many hidden gems who quietly go about their work of mercy and bring hope again into tired human hearts. These are the real heroes of mankind.

THE TRAGEDY OF JUDAS

June 18, 1978: Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time.

(For another homily on this Gospel see Bol. Ecl., June-July 1977, 430)

The Human Situation. Edmund Campion, the renowned English martyr-priest, managed to bring the sacraments to his persecuted fellow-Catholics for a long while by going about in disguise and disappearing in hide-outs when the officers suddenly approached the house he was in. But finally he was betrayed by a fallen-away Catholic, captured, tried for treason and cruelly martyred. In modern Communist China, an ex-seminarian turned traitor and let himself be made Bishop by Communist authorities. He drove truck after truck to the seminary and stripped it of all its furnishings, accusing the Fathers of various "offenses" and caused no end of harm. He needed the money, he said.

The Good News: When Jesus chose Judas to be one of the Twelve, he was surely a man of promise. To him Jesus revealed his personality, imparted special powers, and even entrusted the office of burser to him, a mark of confidence. He planned the role of shepherd of his people for him, with apostolic and prophetic charisms. This is the man who turned against his Master and best Friend, betraying him for the despicable sum of thirty pieces of silver. And he betrayed him with the noblest and most sacred symbol of love: the kiss!

There is something very tragic in the downward course of one who has received the gift of faith to follow Christ, and does follow him for a while, but on account of some hidden unguarded evil lurking within him, suffers shipwreck. It would seem that Judas never comprehended the spiritual thrust of Jesus' message. Jesus was not out for spectacular success. He did not intend to deliver Israel

from their Roman conquerors. He did not speak of changing violently the existing political set-up, nor did he start a revolution against the thoroughly corrupt and money-minded priesthood of his day. He did not put an end overnight to the existing social conditions, bad though they were, yet he laid down the principles for his followers to carry out, which would accomplish peace and justice for all.

From the long contact with Jesus, Judas did not profit. He could not have given much attention to the words and deeds of Jesus. He could not have undertaken a thorough metanoia or change of heart, nor made an authentic decision for Christ. When he saw more and more that the whole thrust of Jesus was spiritual, he lost interest, and became **bankrupt in faith**. This is the real beginning of his downward trend: his lack of faith. A full year before the betrayal, right after Jesus revealed the Eucharist to the disciples, He marks him out as possessed by a devil (Jn. 6:70). Thus for a full year he acted the hypocrite, staying in the apostolic band with his thoughts and plans in a far different direction. The tolic band with his thoughts and plans in a far different direction. The very presence of Jesus, instead of transforming him, deformed him. Now he plans to escape, but first he will fill his own pockets and feather his bed.

All the warnings of Christ to him went unheeded. At Bethany, when he complains of money being wasted (n. 12-4), Jesus ignores the remark, and the Evangelist unveils his real motive (v. 6). At the last supper, Jesus clearly stated that one of them was unclean (13:10); he foretold the betrayal (v. 12); and as a last appeal, gave the choice morsel to him which was reserved for the favorite friend (v. 26). In the garden, he pleads with him by calling him by his first name (Lk. 22:48) and bosom-friend (Mt. 26:50). All to no avail. There was still time to repent, but Judas was not listening. He lived and died the traitor of his Master.

Our response: It is of paramount importance that everyone continue to foster deep faith and love toward Christ the Savior. If Satan could succeed in getting an apostle to betray his Master (Jn. 13:2), he will certainly endeavor to get every believing Christian to weaken in faith and love and eventually give up entirely.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS

June 25, 1978: Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: Many years ago, a young Huk, living in the mountains of Luzon once said something that every Catholic

will might blush at: "The day you Catholics put into practice the social teachings contained in the papal encyclicals, Communism will die a quiet death." "But" he added truefully, "that day will never come."

For ten years Fr. Walter Hogan had labored at the Manila waterfront for the betterment of social justice among the poor. He ate, worked and slept on the dock for months, to make sure that no further atrocities would be perpetrated. At first the business men welcomed him. They thought he would teach the workers respect for the bosses. But when he started to teach the workers the way how to organize unions for justice, the bosses came alive like wounded bulls. He was threatened with deportation. But he succeeded in building up an honest union of thousands of workers.

The Good News: There are over half a billion Catholics in the world today. How many give a positive witness to Christ and his gospel-message by their words and actions? It is like lighting a candle. One little candle might not give much light, but from that one little candle many others can be lit. The light that shines forth from the one who really bears witness to Christ is the Light that is Christ himself. Let that half a billion Catholics light their candle today, and it would soon light up the whole world.

During his lifetime, Jesus often had to reveal the stark truth of Christian realities behind closed doors to an intimate circle of disciples, because the majority of the people was not prepared to accept it. But once the fact of his resurrection became known and accepted because borne witness to by many honest people, and Christ was accepted as Messiah and Lord, the Christian message began to spread like wildfire and to enlighten the whole then-known world. That Good News gave meaning to the Jew burdened hopelessly under the Law and Pharisaic additions. It gave courage to the pagan, deep in the labyrinths of superstition and sin. It gave hope to young and old alike for it opened up entirely new horizons for mankind with a glorious destiny for each individual who accepted it.

Courageously the Apostles faced the leaders in Israel and bore witness to the person and message of Christ, though it meant putting those very leaders on the spot. They had the Apostles scourged (Acts 5:40), and forbade them to speak again about the name of Jesus. Undaunted, the apostles never stopped preaching the Good News, full of joy that they had been judged worthy of ill-treatment for the sake of Jesus (v. 41). Paul the apostle at first had persecuted the young Christian community, but once converted, his zeal knew no bounds. His missionary journeys took him to the

four corners of the Roman Empire, and everywhere he bore witness to "the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him" (Gal. 2:20).

Thus down the centuries the messengers of Christ have preached the Good News in season and out of season, under threat and persecution, so that the Light that is Christ began to light up the enire globe. Over four hundred years ago hese missionaries landed on this our soil, and made of it a fragrant offering to Christ the Savior, giving it also a special love for Marry, his Mother. Today, Filipino priests, Brothers and sisters are being sent to many foreign lands to be witnesses to Christ like the missionaries before them, bringing the Christian message to those who as yet have not heard of it, or revitalizing those who have grown lukewarm in the practice of it.

But today, a great cloud of darkness threatens to snuff out the Light. Everywhere there are forces at work to undertime the Christian faith and morals. It is necessary that everyone bear witness to Christ with renewed zeal. The Church is missionary in her very essence, and each member of the Church has the potential to make Christ the Light shine around him. Parents by professing openly their staunch Christian faith and bringing up their children in solid Catholic teaching. Educators, especially of the youth, have a tremendous responsibility to keep continuity with those who have taught the genuine message of Chrisian faith and morals before them, while clothing the old with the new in language and form. Employers bear witness to Christ by honest concern for those in their employ, seeing to it that the principles laid down i nthe papal encyclicals for decent wages and working conditions are really carried out. Workers bear witness by honest labor and faithful service. Above all the youth, who are the Church of tomorrow, can carry the flame by loyally living up to their Catholic faith anda truly Catholic moral life. We are not to be guided by the principles of darkness lest theysnuff out the Light in us that is Christ.

Our Response: The early Christians preferred martyrdom to giving up the faith. Our martyrdom today may consist rather in living up to our Catholic ideals, and deviating neither to the right nor to the left, living the Catholic life to which we committed ourselves in baptism, and which we proudly profess as adults.

HOMILIES FOR JULY

NO COMPROMISE

July 2, 1978: Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: Francis Possenti was a young man living a frivolous, carefree life, when he received a special call to the religious life. But life was too attractive to young Possenti, and he continued on in his frivolous ways. Then he became deathly sick, and in that condition was carried out to where a procession was going on. As the image of the Sorrowful Mother was being carried past him, Francis received a deep spiritual grace, an invitation for the second time to leave all things and follow Christ. He entered the Passionist Order and became Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother. From that time on there was no more compromise. Today he is honored on our altars as St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother.

The Good News: Our Lord does not mince his words when he says: "Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me". He demands from every one total allegiance. No one can come between Christ and ourselves, not even mother or father, son or daughter. No one can stand in the way of our allegiance to him. But who can demand our love and loyalty in preference to that of the closest family ties? Only the Lord himself could demand such loyalty. He alone is the Son of God who became our Savior and Redeemer. If we prefer anyone to him, we are not worthy of him. There can be no compromise. "No man can serve two masters", he said. "He will either hate the one and love the other, or be attentive to one and despise the other" (Mt. 6:24).

This loyalty must persist even though it spells suffering and hardship. Such is the "cross" Jesus speaks of in today's gospel: "He who will not take up his cross and follow in my footsteps, is not worthy of me". It is a cross in the figurative sense, but it congers up before our minds the cross of Jesus. His footsteps led to death out of love for us on Golgotha's heights. The path that Jesus has forged for us to follow is not a bed of roses. Anyone who goes by the name of Christian must share his cross if he wishes to share his glory (Rom. 8:17). There can be no compromise. Suffering is part and parcel of the Christian calling. To be unwilling to carry our share of crosses and sufferings allotted to us, makes us unworthy of our crucified Savior.

Furthermore, if we prefer to seek ourselves instead of Christ in this life, if we continually give ourselves up to the pleasures and worldly aims of this mortal life, we end in utter frustration, because nothing in this world can give the human heart real fulfillment and lasting happiness. This is the experience of those who have everything that money can buy. They are often bored to death, finding no meaning in their lives, and are overcome by deep depression in the end. Sometimes we read of some such persons who found light in a simple reading of the Good News, and begin really to live for the first time a fully Christian life by devotedness to the needs of others in works of charity.

Neither can our own self-seeking give the heart what it is looking for, because the heart was made for God and everlasting happiness. That is why Jesus tells us: Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and he who seeks only himself brings himself to ruin, whereas he who loses his life for love of me really finds life. It is self-denial that brings total fulfillment, because we belong to Christ. He has bought us at a great price, the price of his blood (1 Cor. 6:20), and there can be no compromise in our return of love. To be fully Christ's involves a daily giving up of all selfish whims and inordinate aims of the heart. St. Paul offers us splendid motivation: "Continually we carry about in our bodies the dying of Jesus, so that in our bodies the life of Jesus may also be revealed" (2 Cor. 4:10). Those who compromise are like the people of Laodicea in the book of Revelation, to whom Jesus says: "I know you are neither hot nor cold. How I wish you were one or the other: hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15f). The Lord cannot stand half-measures. He wants our whole heart, our total allegiance.

Our response: When present at the baptism of an infant, it is a good opportunity to renew at least mentally our own baptismal commitment. That commitment was made to Christ totally and irrevocably. It involved our whole being. If we endeavor to live that commitment, he will not complain that we are lukewarm, or giving him half-measures or are a man of compromise. We will be totally committed.

COME TO ME... LEARN OF ME

July 9, 1978: Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: Many today pray or sing the excellent prayer of St. Francis Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace...". One Christmas, this prayer was printed in the secular

newspapers of a certain country and brought a great response. One person wrote thus: "Last Christmas you printed a prayer by St. Francis Assisi. At that time, life looked glum for me. That prayer hit me between the eyes. I cut it out of the magazine and thumb-nailed it to the wall of our living room I read it over and over and finally put it to a test. **I lived by those words for one brief week** and found already the most tremendous joy and peace. I am still living gloriously by them."

The Good News: It is the great Heart of the Savior that is making this grand appeal: an appeal to all who are weary from labor and are over-burdened: "Come to me, and I will refresh you". He meant first of all his contemporaries who were pre-occupied and weighed down with the Law and all its prescriptions, which was an impossible burden even to the best of them (Acts 15:10). But he meant also all who are weary in the constant struggles of life, parents with their children, youth with the battles and disappointments of life, husbands and wives in their daily striving to make ends meet, professionals in the competition with their peers, the working-man with his constant worry how to maintain his family, the oppressed, the discouraged. To one and all the loving Heart of Jesus offers his invitation: Come to me and I will give you rest.

He will give rest, for he is the source of all strength and refreshment. He imparts the refreshing Living Water which is his Spirit, to enable the faltering steps of man to plod courageously on toward the higher goal. He is the source of that inner peace which the world cannot give, for he can impart peace that becalms the troubled soul, and serenity which gives renewed vigor to man on his journey towards the Father's house. He asks us to shoulder his yoke. It is his yoke, and it is not a heavy one, for he has made it light by the indwelling Spirit that he has given us. His yoke does not consist of a thousand and one prescriptions like the Law of old, but of one law, that of love, love of God and love of our fellow-men for the sake of God. With the strength imparted by the Spirit of Christ, we will be able to shoulder the yoke of Jesus, which becomes easier and lighter the more it is carried out gladly and willingly.

And learn of me... we are invited by the Heart of Christ to learn from him how to live that commandment of love. We can approach him without fear, for he is gentle and will never repel anyone, no matter how lowly, no matter how sinful. We can gaze into the mirror of his sacred Heart and learn to become more like him in his love for all mankind. He is humble and no one need be ashamed of his condition in life. When the Pharisees criticized him for eating with tax-collectors and sinners he simply

said: The sick need a physician (Mk. 2:15). When the disciples started driving away the mothers with their little ones, he became indignant and remonstrated saying: Do not hinder them. Let them come to me. To just such as these the kingdom of God belongs (Mk. 10:15). When the people told the blind man to keep quiet and stop clamoring for him, Jesus had him brought to him and cured him on the spot (Mk. 10:47-52). When the leper approached and cried out: If you want to, you can make me clean, Jesus replied: I want to. Be clean! And he touched him, curing him then and there. What meeker than the Savior's Heart in manifesting his love to one and all? What more humble than his washing the very feet of his disciples the night before he died? (Jn. 13). In this Heart there is a ready welcome for all, young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, but above all the tired, the weary, the oppressed. To all he sends his appeal to take upon themselves his yoke of loving one another and helping one another, in order that the new world be built not on power or money or suppression, but on love, goodness and understanding.

Our response: The prayer of St. Francis is worth knowing by heart: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon. Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, light. Where there is sadness, joy. O Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

FOUR HEARTS

July 16, 1978: Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The biblical notes for this Sunday offer ample material. Give the image in detail and show the progression intended: soil impervious to seed, shallow soil with hard rock beneath, deep soil but unweeded, good soil with various results. Use the allegorical explanation of details. For examples: the hardened sinner as the Pharisee; the fickle crowd who left Christ when he revealed to them the requisites of following him; Judas, who did not weed out obnoxious tendencies; the apostles and above all Mary in whom the Word blossomed fully.

THE ENEMY FROM WITHIN

July 23, 1978: Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: Everyone has heard of the Trojan horse. For ten years the Greeks in ancient times besieged Troy, but were unable to conquer it and rescue Helen who had been kidnapped from Sparta. Then they hit upon an ingenious plan. They built a large wooden horse, hid Greek soldiers inside it, and placed it at the gates of Troy as a votive offering to the gods. Then they sailed away. Unsuspecting, the Trojans took the wooden horse into their city amid great rejoicing. But that night the soldiers hidden within crept out and unlocked the gates of Troy. Meantime the Greek fleet returned, conquered the city and destroyed it. In the course of centuries "fifth columnists" have often undermined and brought a country to ruin.

The Good News: Why does the Lord allow so much evil in his Church on earth? In the course of centuries there has been total stagnation in places, cupidity for high honors, neglect of duty, bad example, misuse of property and funds, lack of concern for the poor and the needy, and many other evils. Are not the People of God, leaders as well as the faithful, called to be holy as Christ their Head is holy? Are they not expected to live up to their baptismal commitment to Christ, and put away the things of darkness? Did not Christ make his Church responsible for the conversion and sanctification of mankind? Yet to this day, conditions in the People of God leave much to be desired.

The parable of the darnel shows us why. It is the mystery of evil at work in the world at large and in the Church in particular. It is the enemy within, who endeavors above all to infiltrate the People of God. Christ has sown the good seed, and fitted out his flock with well-tested shepherds. But there is another force at work whose sole purpose is to ruin the work of Christ and oppose the undertakings of those who try to spread the kingdom of God. It is he who has scattered injurious seed, to choke and uproot the good, to tear away the wheat from the Field of Christ. The Lord is aware, of it, for he is Lord of the universe, and all things are in his hand. If he tolerates evil, there must be a good purpose he has in mind.

Evil in the Church ought not surprise us, for every man remains human and prone to evil even after he committed himself to Christ. But what is needed is to be on guard against the destructive influence of the Evil One. This influence is multiple today and often

it is not recognized as such. Not only does it show itself in the utterly unchristian tenets and judgments of a modern neo-pagan world, but even in some of the proposals of leaders of God's People. It shows itself in utter disregard for any authority, even that granted by Christ to his Church. It shows itself in a watering down of the apostolic faith and a completely relaxed interpretation of Christian morals. Are we to form our value-judgments today by the pagan tenets of the world in which we live, or by those gleaned from the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the teachings of those who represent him? How the Evil One strives to mislead God's People in these matters!

Why does not the Lord root out evil at once so that the good seed might thrive without dangerous admixture of harm? It is because he is patient and long-suffering. He is master of all history, and his plan for judgment will come about in its own good time. Meantime the presence of evil can also be an occasion for the good members to show what they are made of, and remain staunch in their convictions. The very presence of kindness and patient understanding may be the means God has designed for the conversion of others, so that they too become the wheat of the elect. It is not for man to anticipate the wise judgments of the Lord.

Our Response: An examination of conscience is in order: Am I wheat or am I darnel? Is my influence good or bad? Do I realize that the triumph of evil is ephemeral and short-lived, like a comet; but that of the just is like the brightness of a fixed star. The end of the wicked is not to be envied, but the lot of the just is happiness forever.

THE PRICELESS TREASURE

July 30, 1978: Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: Buried treasure has always stirred the imagination of many. With the hope of finding a large amount of cash, they were willing to spend much time, energy and money in the search. This was especially the case after the war when returning Japanese tipped off certain men of means to locate treasures supposedly hidden by the Japanese on leaving the country.

The Good News: Develop the image in detail as given in the biblical notes for this Sunday. Apply two points especially: 1) willingness to give up **all one's possessions** to obtain the treasure, once its value is realized. 2) doing so even **with great joy**. Expatriate on the immense value of the divine Treasure.