

FUNDAMENTAL MORAL THEOLOGY

PART I

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *Nature and characteristics of Moral Theology.* Object and methodology of Moral Theology. Sources of Moral Theology: Sacred Scriptures, Tradition, and Magisterium of the Church. Unity with the other areas of Theology, especially with Biblical Theology, Dogmatic Theology and Spiritual Theology. Relationship with Philosophical Ethics. Moral Theology and the human sciences. Division of Moral Theology: Fundamental Moral Theology and Special Moral Theology.

2. *Christian Moral Doctrine and Sacred Scriptures.* Morals in the Old Testament: the Decalogue. Moral message of Jesus Christ. Moral Teachings in the Apostolic Letters, especially in those of St. John and St. Paul.

3. *Tradition and Magisterium of the Church in the study of Moral Theology.* Christian community and its approach to the knowledge of Christ. Teaching and application of the law of God, entrusted to the Church. Magisterium of the Church and the growing understanding of the Christian moral demands. Magisterium of the Church in moral matters: competence, task, subject and modes. Value and authority of the ordinary Magisterium. Function and mission of Tradition.

4. *History of Moral Theology (I).* Patristic periods (I-VII c.): Apostolic Fathers and apologists; Oriental Fathers; Latin Fathers, especially St. Augustine. From the Patristic period until the beginning of the Scholastic period (VIII-XII c.): penitential books; first Scholastic expositions. Scholastic morals (XIII-XIV c.): Franciscan School; Dominican School; St. Thomas Aquinas; the Nominalist revolution.

5. *History of Moral Theology (II):* Moral Theology before and after the Council of Trent (XIV-XVII c.): the “*summas*” for confessors; scientific ordering of morals and “moral institutions”. Final period of Scholasticism (XVII-XVIII c.): Theological controversies; St. Alphonsus Maria Liguori. Moral Theology around Vatican II (XIX & XX c.): the manuals on Moral Theology; the attempts for the renewal and foundation of moral theology; Vatican II. Moral Theology after Vatican II: principal trends and questions in debate.

II. THE VOCATION OF MAN TO LIVE IN CHRIST.

6. *Theological analysis of the essence and foundation of morality.* The spontaneous personal experience of the morality of action. Concept of morality. Question on the foundation of natural morality. Creative and redemptive plan of God about man and the vocation of the human being to communion with the divinity, as foundations of the morality of human acts: theological

grounding of morality. “Rationality” of revealed morals: continuity between Christian morals and the dynamism of practical reason.

7. *Life in Christ*. Christian moral life as a response to the love of God revealed to man. Response to the divine call, following Christ and adhesion to His message and to His person. Christian moral life, path to eternal happiness.

8. *Christian life as new life in Christ*. Participation of the Christian in the divine nature. Christian life as a personal communion (inchoated vision and the way) with the Father, in the Son, through the Holy Spirit. The Christian *alter Christus, ipse Christus*: living as children of God. Grace and Sacraments as origin and nourishment of this new life. Ecclesial dimension of the Christian life.

9. *Christian life as a response to the divine call*. Union with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, ultimate end of man: notion and content. “Universal call to sanctity”. Freedom and responsibility in the response. The Christian *fundamental option*.

10. *Eschatological fullness of Christian life*. Eschatological fullness and desire for happiness. Happiness as a promise and as a reality. Happiness as moral motivation.

11. *Specification of Moral Theology*. “Ethics of reason” and “ethics of faith”. Analysis of the different stands on the specification of Christian morality.

III. MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINE CALLING AND OF THE DIVINE WILL.

12. *The law as manifestation of the divine Will*. Moral law and freedom. Deontological morality and Teleological ethics. Autonomy and Theonomy.

13. *Nature of the moral law*. Morality and Law. Divisions of the law. Universality and immutability of moral norms. Historical elements of moral norms.

14. *Nature of the eternal law*. The Eternal law, foundation of all laws. Eternal law in God and in creatures. Properties of the eternal law. The law of God in the Old Testament. The law of God in the New Testament. Attitude of Jesus Christ toward the law. The law in Pauline teachings. The norm and norms in Christian morals.

15. *The New or evangelical law, law of grace and of the Spirit*. Nature and necessity. Contents of the new law. Evangelical law, law of love, law of grace and law of freedom.

16. *Natural moral law (I)*. Natural law as participation of the eternal law in the rational creature. Concept of nature and of the natural moral law. Doctrine of the Church on the natural law. Theological debates about the natural law.

17. *Natural moral law (II)*. Properties: unity, universality, immutability, indispensability. Contents of the natural law. Possibility of knowing the natural law. Natural law and revelation. Competence of the Magisterium in the scope of the natural law. Natural law and human laws.

18. *Law and the unique existence of the Christian.* Christ, model of Christian life. Following Christ and the imitation of Christ. Other signs of the Will of God. Divine Will and the unique vocation of the Christian. Analysis of situation ethics.

IV. PERCEPTION OF THE DIVINE WILL.

19. *Moral conscience, path towards the knowledge of the will of God.* Teachings of Sacred Scriptures on the moral conscience. Doctrine of Vatican II. Moral conscience in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and in the Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*. Theological debate on the moral conscience.

20. *Psychological conscience and moral conscience.* Genesis of conscience: various modern theories. Conscience as a judgment of practical reason. Creativity of the conscience. Intellect, will and affectivity in the judgment of conscience. Relationship of conscience with *synderesis*, moral law, moral science and prudence.

21. *Different types of conscience.* Possibility of error in the judgment of conscience. True conscience and erroneous conscience. Moral principles about the erroneous conscience. Conscience and law. Relationship between conscience and the Magisterium of the Church. Certain conscience and doubtful conscience. Doubts of conscience and ways of resolving them. Analysis of the so-called *moral systems*.

22. *Deformation of the moral conscience.* Process of deformation of conscience. Lax conscience: moral maximalism and minimalism. Pharisaical conscience. Perplexed conscience and conflicting duties. Scrupulous conscience: its genesis and how to deal with scruples.

23. *Decisions of conscience.* Obligatory force of conscience. Conscience and person: conscience as a subjective norm of morality. Freedom of conscience and the “freedom of consciences”. Obligation to seek the practical truth. Rights of conscience; teachings of Vatican II.

24. *Formation of conscience.* Aspects of and means for the formation of a right and true conscience. The action of the Holy Spirit in the formation of conscience. Importance of education and of the cultural traditions in the formation or deformation of conscience.

PART II

I. THE RESPONSE TO THE CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST.

A. Human Acts: psychological dimensions.

1. *Notion of the human act or the free act.* Essential principles of the human act. The genesis and structure of the human act. Unity of the human act: act of the person. Kinds of human acts. Voluntary and free act.

2. *Human acts and freedom.* Freedom and responsibility. Freedom and truth. Freedom and love. Christian meaning of freedom: teachings of Sacred Scriptures. Freedom, sin and grace. Freedom in and through the Holy Spirit.

3. *Moral acts and affections.* Study of the passions: notion and kinds. Morality of the passions. Importance of passions in the Christian life.

4. *Influences on the Moral Act (I).* On the cognitive dimension: ignorance, error and lack of attention. On the voluntary dimension: violence, fear and anguish, concupiscence.

5. *Influences on the Moral Act (II).* Physical and psychical conditioning. Health and sickness. Psychosomatic constitution, temperament and character. Sex, genes and customs. Neurological illnesses and psychosis. Neurosis. Psychopathy.

6. *Influences on the Moral Act (III).* External factors. Socio-cultural factors. Sociological normativism. Social pressures.

B. Human Acts: moral dimension.

7. *Moral dimension of the action.* Determinant factors of morality: object, end and circumstances of the moral act. Intrinsically evil acts. Consequentialism and proportionalism.

8. *Morality of the internal and external human acts.* Particular intention and fundamental intention. Analysis of the theory of the fundamental option. Teachings of the Magisterium about the fundamental option.

9. *Effects of the human act.* Imputability of the effects of the human act. Actions with double effects. Some specific applications.

10. *The human act in its being supernaturally meritorious.* Human acts in man's progress towards the full encounter with God. Need for grace for an upright moral action. Biblical and traditional teachings on merit. Growth in supernatural life. Morals and ascetical struggle. Interplay of the human and the divine in the human action.

II. VIRTUE: MORAL PERFECTION OF MAN.

11. *Christian morals and the virtues.* Teachings of Sacred Scriptures on virtues. Virtues in the Patristic period. Theological reflection about virtue in Medieval Theology. Re-evaluation of virtue in the present period.

12. *Human acts and virtues.* Nature of virtue: virtue as good operative habit. Kinds of habits. Subject of habits; distinction among habits. Growth and decrease of habits. Effects of habits on actions. Life of virtue: virtue and happiness; virtue and wisdom.

13. *Kinds of virtues.* Intellectual and moral virtues. Acquired virtue. Duration of virtues. Cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; their complementarity and connection.

14. *Supernatural virtues.* Grace and the divinization of a Christian. Nature, reality and importance of the supernatural virtues; difference between natural virtues and supernatural virtues; analysis of their respective properties. Faith, hope and charity, hinges of the Christian moral life. Moral life and spiritual life.

15. *Development of a virtuous life.* Attainment of virtues. Growth in virtue and man's being rooted in the good. Gradual divinization in Christ by the Holy Spirit (*Christification*) of the Christian. Central role of prudence. Primacy of charity.

16. *Gifts of the Holy Spirit.* Nature and number of the gifts. Relation between the virtues and the gifts. Fruits of the Holy Spirit. The Beatitudes, nucleus of Christian morals; its relation with the virtues and the gifts.

III. SIN: MAN'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE TO THE WILL OF GOD.

17. *Concept and nature of sin.* Guilt and sin. Teachings of Sacred Scripture on the reality of sin and on divine mercy. Doctrine on sin in the Patristic period and in the Magisterium of the Church. Nature of sin: disorder, disobedience and offense to God. Constitutive elements of sin. Original sin and personal sins. Sense of sin and its importance in the moral life.

18. *Sin as a personal act and its gravity.* Sin as an act of the person: sin and freedom. Mortal sin and venial sin; teachings of Sacred Scriptures, Tradition and the Magisterium. Recent theological debates on grave sins, mortal sins and venial sins. Conditions for mortal sin and venial sin. Particular malice of some sins. Analogical character of venial sin.

19. *Groups of sins.* Internal sins: enjoyment, joy and desire. Sins of omission. Capital sins. Sins against the Holy Spirit.

20. *Numerical and specific distinction of sins.* Determination of the moral species. Criteria for the numerical distinction of sins. Pastoral advertence on these matters.

21. *Causes of sin.* Internal causes: ignorance and passion; sins of weakness. External causes: temptation, the world distorted by sin. Occasions of sin. Responsibility in the sins of others: scandal and cooperation in evil.

22. *Personal and social effects of sin.* Loss of friendship with God and the interior disorder as effects of sin. Slavery of the sinner. Guilt and punishment of sins: the punishment of sin and its reason in the salvific plan of God. Cosmic and social dimension of sin; social sin and the structures of sin.

23. *Conversion of the sinner.* Call to conversion in Sacred Scriptures. Mercy of God and the attitude of the sinner. Nature of and the need for conversion. Conditions for conversion,. Ecclesial and sacramental dimensions of the conversion. Implications of conversion to correct the personal and social effects of sin. Panorama of the Christian moral life: personal sanctification, service to others, building up of the Church and the salvation of the world.

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2. Recommended Readings.

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CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, nos. 1691-1775; 1776-1876; 1949-2051.

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