

Spirit-Illumined Conscience

Third of five articles on the Humanae Vitae

Letter of Pope Paul VI

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

If there is any group of theologians who have buried their talents in a napkin, it is the moral theologians of the Church. This applied both to the "old" and to the "new." The "old" were absolutists, deducing moral principles with insufficient concern for particular circumstances. The "new" reject absolutes and are concerned only with "situations" and particular cases.

The ethics of the latter group, whose leader is Joseph Fletcher, has been rightly called by Paul Ramsey, a "reversed Puritanism." Fletcher's campaign against anything being good in itself is carried to such an extreme, writes Ramsey, "that relationship becomes good only for 'doing some good'."

No wonder the faithful are confused when, on the one hand, there is a rigorism, and on the other, exception-making to every rule or principle. The "situationists" are fumbling for something, but because they mix up a hatred of the Church with their professed "love" as the basis of everything, they miss the boat. The antiquated classical moralists began with Human Acts and freedom, but without taking sufficient account of the necessity of grace, or man's elevation to the Divine Life.

Is conscience all that a Christian has to guide him? Is the candlelight of his own conscience such a guide that he need not look for the beams of Pentecostal fires? Has conscience exhausted all sources of illumination when it concludes: "Contraception does not seem wrong to me; and I shall practice it, regardless of what Christ says?"

Much debate about Humanae Vitae has been carried on, as if we lived in the days of Aristotle, and as if there had never been a Bethlehem, or an empty tomb. Pages upon pages have been written to prove contraception is right, because it is a reaction against the Stoics, the moralism of Augustine, the extremism of the Cathars and antiquated mating habits.

Has anyone ever written against the Humanae Vitae saying: "I have mortified myself so as not to allow selfish passion to influence my judgment; and I have prayed to the Holy Spirit to make up for the deficiencies of my own knowledge. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that the Pope does not know what he is talking about."

No one ever says that, in fact, moral theologians rightly should say with the Ephesians: "We were never even told there was such a thing as the Holy Spirit" (Act 19:2).

"Situationist" Theology Neglects the Spirit

The Holy Spirit is ignored because the new moral theology emphasizes the "now" moment against ultimate concern; it recommends withholding judgment of right and wrong until all the "facts" are in, and they are never all in. It stresses the relativity of moral decision with these three basic principles: "Wait and see," "But what if" and "But take the case of."

When Joseph Fletcher, who did a service by reacting against excessive formalism in moral theology, was asked what role the Holy Spirit played in morals, he answered: "I really do not think you have said anything when you say the Holy Spirit is at work in human decision. On this I am an agnostic." Rather odd for a writer who is so full of "love" that he doubts the role of the Spirit of Love in making man moral!

The Spirit Who Was Sent

Our Blessed Lord did set us free from the Law, but He fettered us with a new commandment: the love of God and the love of neighbor. He added something new, namely, that He would send His Spirit into our hearts. Then He would not be just an example to be copied, but a life to be lived; then He would not be outside us, as Someone departed-like Socrates, but Someone inside us, abiding within us as in His Temple. Our personality under the Spirit would become almost lost in Him, as a lover becomes lost in the will of the beloved. There is no "I" apart from the Spirit of Christ, for the "I" is in His Spirit. "I am dead to the Law... I have been crucified with Christ Who lives in me. The life I live now in this body I live in faith; faith in the Son of God Who loved me and sacrificed Himself for me" (Gal. 2/20).

The interaction of all who live by the Spirit of Christ is the Church. As the spokes get closer the nearer they are to the hub, so the members of the Church become more united, the greater their intimacy with Christ. Thanks to the Spirit, the new Covenantal Community, the People of God, or the Body of Christ is formed.

Mugwumps Never Make Decisions

When the Spirit of Christ is the basis of moral theology, we no longer can be "mugwump situationists," everlastingly with our "mug" on one side of the fence, and our "rump" on the other, never making a decision. That much abused word "commitment" under the Spirit takes on a new meaning. It is hard to be a Christian. The attempt to make it easy by "Iuv" makes for crazed clergy, empty churches and confusion worse confounded. The result is that those above the 30th Parallel are dying of spiritual hunger, and those below it are dying of physical hunger. The Prodigal was right in being hungry; he was wrong in feeding on husks.

The world is right in being hungry, but our so-called "moral" theologians with their endless sociological disputes about "different situations," are leaving unassaged that spiritual hunger of both the Church and the un-Church.

Impression Made by the Dis-Spirit

Is it any wonder that Malcolm Muggeridge, the former editor of the humorous magazine "Punch," writes about our failure: "I can remember clergy well: men in black suits, pipe smokers for the most part, a bit restless in their places, fidgety and somehow — how shall I put it? — coarse and physical; their breathing heavy, their tongues very red and their lips very full, their laughter and their talk over-eager. They represent the powerful tide which sweeps through the churches, transforming exhortation into demagoguery, creeds into poli-

tical programs, and transcendentalism into utopianism."

Turning to the new ethics which specializes in sex, he continues: "Sex has become the mysticism of a materialist society — in the beginning was the Flesh, and the Flesh became Word; with its own mysteries — This is my birth pill. Swallow it in remembrance of me! — and its own sacred texts and scriptures; the erotica which falls like black atomic rain on the just and unjust alike, drenching us, blinding us, stupefying us. To be carnal minded is life! So we have ventures on Little Flowers of D. H. Lawrence; our Aphrodite rising bikini'd and oiled from Cote d'Azur beaches; drive-in Lotharios; Romeos of the motorways, glowing and burning like electric log fires until — cut! — the switch is turned off, leaving the desolate, impenetrable night. . . . The result is that the aspiring Christian today is left in a kind of a catacomb of his own making, utterly remote from the debates and discussions going on around him about 'permissive' morality (divorce, contraception and abortion — those three panaceas for all matrimonial ills)."

This is the way a former agnostic sees the moral situation without the Spirit. Man's moral life, the "situationists" say, is like a chameleon changing to meet each new situation. But is not each individual chameleon distinct from every other? It is the fixities which make the difference:

"It is the promises we make that keep us awake,

It is the promises we keep that help us sleep."

The Absence of the Spirit

Only the Theology of the Spirit will enable the faithful to avoid the abyss of formal legalism on the one hand, and the un-committed commitment to "Iuv" without self-denial on the other. With Wilder in his play, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, Christians cry out: "It's not comfort we want! We can suffer whatever's necessary; only give us back the promise!"

Ever since the Vatican Council, the television tube, the newspaper column and the pulp weeklies have had a monopoly on taking Christ from the Cross, giving us a plastic cross to wear on our turtlenecks, dishing up a feeble moral made up of a pinch of Freud, a dab of Pavlov and a glob of Fletcher. All of which makes us wonder if Dostoevski was not right: "Nothing is more seductive for man than his freedom of conscience, but nothing is a greater cause of suffering."

Conscience Illumined by the Spirit

The Humanae Vitae was not based on the natural law, or conscience alone, but on Revelation: "The love of God poured into our hearts by the Spirit," and the constant teaching of the Church. But even the loyal members of the Church interpreted the Letter to the faithful as if they were still as pagans, battling with their own reason, unaided by the Holy Spirit. Where in any commentary, or in any manual of Moral Theology, does one find a treatise on what the revealed Word of God calls "the conscience illumined by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9/1)? The casuistry of classical moral theologians, and the libertinism of paperbackers are both alien to "the conscience with a faith unfeigned" (1 Tim. 3/9).

How differently the Vatican Council speaks of Christian moral life: "Christ has shared with us the Spirit. Who, existing as the one and the same being in the Head and in the members, vivifies, unifies and moves the whole body" (Decree on the Church #7). What the soul is to the human body, it continues, that the Holy Spirit is to the soul; it creates the new conscience, the renovated heart (Jere. 24/6, 7; 1 Cor. 12/11).

The Moral Theology of the Church is not concerned with human acts alone (though natural ethics may be), but with sanctity: "Everyone in the Church, or those being cared for by it, is called to holiness," according to the words of the Apostle: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thes. 4/3) (Decree on the Church #39). As Thomas Aquinas put it: "What is essential in the Law of the New Testament is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to Christians. (1-2 q. 106. Art. 1)"

Until someone writes a moral theology which is more Biblical than Fletcheral, less concerned with human acts of Hottentots than the Spirit-induced acts of Christians, it is useful to indicate briefly the role of the Holy Spirit in the development of conscience.

Flesh and Spirit

The Humanae Vitae is a treatise on sex, which is one of the functions of the body, just as seeing. But is the body of a Christian under the same law as the body of a pagan? Is the natural conscience operating out of the same motivations as the Spirit-mind? Scripture pictures flesh and Spirit as two rival forces combating for the possession of man: "Let me put it like this, if you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit. The Spirit is totally against such a thing, and it is precisely because the two are opposed that you do not always carry out good intentions. When self-indulgence is at work, the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual-irresponsibility" (Gal. 5/16-19).

What is at stake is "freedom", but which kind of freedom? Freedom from something, or freedom for something? Freedom from the Spirit which is in enmity with Eros, or freedom for the inner peace which Christ gives?

Paul wrote these lines about freedom while he was in prison with his feet in chains: "You were called to freedom, but be careful, or this freedom will provide an opening for self-indulgence" (Gal. 5/13). Old vices are today appearing in the garments of new liberties, as ancient heresies are appearing in the robes of new dogmas. The only reason any of us has freedom of choice, is to give it away; a groom gives up his freedom to become the slave of his bride. The slavery of love is perfect freedom. Love is changed from a burden into a privilege. A world of difference exists between the natural conscience which is so compelled by the flesh, and the Spirit Conscience which is driven by the Spirit of Christ. Those who live by a carnal conscience "set their minds on the things of

(Continued on Page 8)

Help the Hurricane Poor

Jackson, Miss. — The magnitude of the disaster left in the wake of Hurricane Camille on Aug. 17 is only now becoming fully apparent; 200,000 people are without homes, food and clothing. Six cities of the populous Gulf Coast were all but completely destroyed.

Bishop Joseph E. Brunini of the Catholic Diocese of Natchez-Jackson said, "The Catholic Church in Mississippi has suffered a nearly irreversible loss."

Approximately half of the state's Catholic population lived in the disaster area. The majority of these are homeless and jobless.

Of the 107 Catholic buildings in the area, only 31 weren't damaged. Damage is estimated at over \$12 million. Destroyed were seven churches, five rectories, three convents, three schools and three parish halls. Major damage was sustained by ten churches, six rectories, four convents and two schools.

A national appeal is being made by the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson for money, food, clothing and medicine. Headquarters for the Catholic Disaster Relief Fund is at P.O. Box 2248, Jackson, Miss. 39205.



Father Francis O'Malley hears an outdoor confession amid the ruins of St. Thomas church at Long Beach, Miss. The church was torn apart and very heavily damaged by the destructive fury of Hurricane Camille. Outdoor Masses and confessions were held for the parishioners able to attend. (RNC)

Letters

On Celibacy

I was pleased to read the discussion of the meaning of priesthood in Father Cuddy's columns (Courier-Journal, 7/15 and 22). However some distinctions might be offered.

The title "priest" was never accorded ministers (ordained) of the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament Levitical traditions where the priest acted as mediator between God and His people. Christ's unique and perfect priesthood continues in His Church in the form of the royal and prophetic priesthood of Christians baptized in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we should speak of the priesthood of all the baptized in communion with Christ the Priest, in the world and for the world, and a ministry to this priesthood by persons ordained for that specific function.

Father Cuddy calls ordination a sacrament. True, God's call is ratified by the bishop. But the priest is in the first place a member of the priesthood of all believers. The ordination ceremony stresses the role and the consent of the people in the ordination of their ministers.

If we begin qualifying Holy Orders as an extra special sacrament which puts a person on a step above the common layman we run into trouble. What makes Orders better than Matrimony which is also a God-given sacrament?

Why do men leave the ordained ministry? A personal and complex problem, the roots of which are not merely desires to escape hardship or embrace marriage, but also in the dissatisfaction with the official Church's response to the present situation of a needy world.

One wonders at the logic that sees married men ordained to the diaconate while those who are already ordained are forced to leave if they attempt marriage.

—Mrs. Raymond McCormick, Rochester, 14624

Word for Sunday

Why Slovenliness Is Wrong

By Father Albert Shamon

"Do not worry . . . how you are to clothe yourselves." Our Lord was condemning unreasonable anxiety about clothing. But, I think a little worry about this matter of dress is in order today.

Protection against the elements was perhaps the first function of clothes. The Genesis story adds another — to protect man against the lusts of the flesh.

As man advanced in civilization, he began to indulge his natural desire to surround himself with beauty. Dress being something most personal to him became decorative as well as protective. And decoration, as in the case of animals, serves to attract the opposite sex to perpetuate the species.

St. Thomas states that the regulation of what we wear is not to be made in the name of shame alone; but also in the name of dignity and beauty. On this latter point, Thomas said that one offends in dress either by excessive fastidiousness, like that of the vain women condemned by Isia prancing with "ankle ornaments, tiaras, pendants, bracelets. . ." (3/18); or by unreasonable slovenliness and raggedness.

Today, slovenliness is often a symbol of rebellion. I wish all teenagers would cut out this quote of John Howard Lawson. Lawson was one of a group known as the Hollywood Ten who, as jailed Communist scriptwriters and actors were banned from the movie industry by the Waldorf Declaration of 1947. Since the movie "Spartacus" based on a book and a script written by Communists, the Waldorf Code was broken in 1960. Since then, the Hollywood Ten are back in business in one of the most powerful media moulding the minds of the young. Here is Lawson's advice to actors:

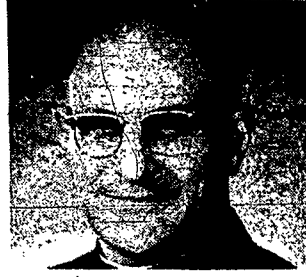
"It is your duty to further the life you are nothing more than an class struggle by your performance. extra wearing white flannels on a country club veranda, do your best

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to appear decadent, do your best to be a snob, do your best to create class antagonism. If you are an extra on a tenement set, do your best to look downtrodden, do your best to look a victim of existing society."

There you have the rationale for slovenliness: Sad to say, so many of our young, unconsciously, are furthering the party line, as Lenin said they would. Consider the matter of hair. Not only are some teen boys wearing it uncut, uncombed, unkempt, like seaweeds on a clam, but in such a way that one finds it hard to know if these "tiny tims" are male or female.

Once some teenagers asked me what was wrong with long hair since Christ had long hair. Whether or not Christ did, I do not know. Christ rode a donkey too, so what? He asked us to imitate His life, not His dress.

More seriously, however, I explained why I felt coiffures for boys were wrong. This hair had sins against sexuality. A man is a man, not a woman. A woman's glory is her hair. In the ancient world, prostitutes paraded with uncovered heads. Their beautiful tresses were traps to catch the hearts of men. Mary Magdalen, you will remember, wiped our Lord's feet with her hair. She had to, for unlike the holy Veronica, she wore no veil. In fact that is why women were bidden to cover their heads in Church. A woman's hair is her glory, and no flesh should glory in the sight of the Lord.

But a man's glory should never be his hair. A man's glory ought to be his virility, his manliness. The astronauts don't have long hair. Nor do the soldiers fighting to keep South Vietnam free. The classic Romans had a word for people who never shaved: they called them "barbarians" (bearded ones). Christian Romans of the fifth century called them "Lombards" (long-beards).

God arrayed the lilies of the field in raiment far more glorious than Solomon's that man might adorn himself decently and fittingly.

Clothes do not make the man, but they can betray him. That is why I think we can afford to worry a little about masculine slovenliness: it is just one more phase in this subtle, conspiratorial attack being waged against our Judaeo-Christian culture.

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Fun Kill

Mass for repose Rochester-born Sister Irma Lynn Kieran Byrne, 43 Sunday evening, car collision in land was held morning in Our erhouse Chapel.

Bishop Lawrence Paterson Diocese Bishop of Roch celebrant of the

Both Sisters Hornell and part of their liv area.

Two 21-year-old car also lost the dent, which occ 9:30 p.m. on Ro Steuben County insville. They w Springwater and land.

According to Wayland, Mr. S Mr. Hill's 1969 Route 21. It app ways and crash bound station w Kieran.

A third car, station wagon, wreckage.



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Cardinal Preache in Pitts

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The Cardinal of the structur reflected on th prayer within

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