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DOCTRINE AND WORSHIP AS THE FORMATIVE GROUND OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

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Ethical inquiry has long been centered on the analysis of principles and norms. Often the focus of attention is given to the question: what ought I to do? This focus necessarily places the stress on the skills and processes needed for making particular moral judgments of acts. Approaches to moral education have in the recent years been dominated by this concern.[1] A prime example of this approach is the theory of Kohlberg, which holds that moral life is primarily a matter of making choices on the basis of reason.

While making a reasoned choice is an important and necessary dimension to moral life, it is not the whole of it. Morality includes not only making moral decisions but also forming moral character. The person that we are, what we do and how we act are involved in any moral endeavor. Any approach that dichotomizes these two dimensions of being and doing, self and action distorts the reality of both. The sort of person one is depends to a great extent on free moral decisions and actions one has taken. There is no 'being" except through "doing." Conversely, the sort of decision and action one takes

depends on the kind of person one has become. But again, doing does not only spring from being, it also changes, modifies, and creates being. The interplay of person and acts brings a definite moral shape and consistency to the character of an individual.[2]

Moral judgment arises out of moral vision. We judge as we see. However, we see as we are. Our moral vision is intertwined with the kind of person that we are. We see the world in a particular way, because we are a particular sort of person.[3] "It is nearer to the truth to think of moral life not as a multitude of acts but as a project—that of becoming a person."[4] The moral process is such that "we do not come afresh to each and every decision."[5] Thus we are already inclined to decide in one way or the other because of who we are and what we have made of ourselves, This is not just a matter of *what* we have done, but also *why* and *how* we have done it. Our moral vision is far reaching as it touches a depth-level, where persons take hold of who they are, where they have set their energies and how deeply they have been moved and influenced by their beliefs and convictions. How a person sees and just how he or she will possibly respond springs from this depth-level.[6]

The moral vision we gradually acquire is the lived expression of the beliefs, values, and loyalties of the communities to which we belong; the collection of stories and images of what makes life worth living. It is born of all the relationships of which we are a part, and of the commitments to which we have bound ourselves.[7]

For Christians, the beliefs and rituals, the language, images, and symbols of the Christian faith constitute the vision that has a great part in shaping what they see and who they are. Undoubtedly, the Christian vision which provides a particular way of seeing the world is at times at variance with the values, images, and symbols arising from the secular world in which Christians live. But the more Christian men and women enter into the meaning of the faith images and symbols and immerse themselves in the work of discipleship, the more they take on the Christian way of seeing and envisioning the world. Moral vision provides the perspective which influences

the disposition, the intention, and the affectivity that move us to act in a certain way.

The Christian moral vision is developed in terms of the close integration of the truths of the faith and morality and of the influential role of prayer and worship in moral transformation. When moral life comes in contact with the truths of the Christian faith, it acquires a depth-meaning which grounds it. When moral life draws from the wellspring of worship, it draws from its roots, the very source of its life.

Doctrine and Moral Life

An authentic understanding of doctrine is the basis in interpreting and illuminating basic human values. The truths of the Christian faith give a particular view of what it means to be human and of the basic attitudes and dispositions a Christian ought to have toward the world. According to Charles Curran, the five Christian mysteries of creation, sin, incarnation-redemption, grace, and eternal destiny are the constitutive elements of a Christian perspective, horizon, and stance. They articulate the fundamental truths underlying human meaning, dignity, and destiny.[8] In the same vein of thought, Richard McCormick writes that the full Christian experience provides the refinement of sensitivity to human values.[9] The Christian perspective opens the broader and deeper horizons of meaning to moral reasoning. A value judgment distanced from the faith horizon of meaning might otherwise be determined solely by sheer empiricism.[10] It is turned into a merely rationalistic and sterile ethics. He writes:

> The Christian story tells us the ultimate meaning of ourselves and the world. In doing so, it tells us the kind of people we ought to be, the goods we ought to pursue, the dangers we ought to avoid, the kind of world we ought to seek. It provides the backdrop or framework that ought to shape our individual decisions. When decision-making is separated from this

> framework, it loses its perspective. It becomes a merely rationalistic and sterile ethics subject to distortions of self-interested perspectives and cultural fads. A kind of contracted etiquette with no relation to the ultimate meaning of persons.[11]

To elucidate these assertions of Curran and McCormick, I present the doctrines of the faith from a specifically moral perspective, showing how they are so linked with morality, as they ground the orientation, intentionalities, and dispositions for moral life.

Creation

The adherence to Almighty God forms the rock bottom basis for Christian moral life. Although this firm belief in God the Creator and the Divine Planner of all history may open itself to a certain fatalism, it remains the foundation for relating Christian faith to moral life. The basic experience of God's beneficent love calls forth gratitude. Nurtured by the belief that everything has God as its source and that everything is held in existence by God's continuing and sustaining action, one approaches life with a basic stance of gratitude. The recognition of gratitude before God can ground a genuine Christian justice and compassion for the suffering and marginalized. Because one has received freely from a love that is magnanimous and beneficent, one is moved to love others especially those who are deprived of their most basic human needs.[12]

The mystery of creation provides the theological framework for the supreme place of the human person as God's image and likeness. That human persons are created in the image and likeness of God means that, given their gifts of intellect and free will, and their capacity for creative freedom and love, they reflect in their nature the very nature of the Godself as the supreme, free, and intelligent principle of all being, and the ultimate love. Their being God's image and likeness constitutes their inherent inalienable dignity, the ground of their human rights.[13] Only in seeing every person in relation to God who is the author and goal of all, is true human dignity preserved.

Our true dignity is founded on the fact that we are called to communion with God. As Vatican II states:

> If we exist, it is because God has created us through love, and through love continues to hold us in existence. We cannot live fully according to truth unless we freely acknowledge that love and entrust ourselves to our Creator.[14]

This fundamental relatedness of human beings to God as his image and likeness is the foundation of morality. This basic truth poses a challenge to a mindset which identifies a person's dignity with his/her social and economic status; a mindset that opens the door to the abuse of the poor and the marginalized by the powerful and the rich. The person's basic rootedness in God is the ultimate basis of human dignity. All morality is founded on the value of persons as persons; their sacredness, their worth, and what befits their well-being. This foundational value lays at the core of the moral obligation to be just, to be truthful, to be chaste, and loving.

The doctrine of creation grounds a moral vision which recognizes the sacramental presence of God in the world, mediated through signs and symbols, calling forth the openness of the human spirit in discerning God's presence. Opposite to this vision is a form of scientism which reduces all truth to what can be proven scientifically, and thus negates the depths of truth that go far beyond mere sensible evidence or rational proofs.[15]

The sacramental presence of God in the world is the basis of the moral obligation to respect nature, against the secularistic attitude of "using" nature, which places it at the absolute disposal of the person, as if the person, not God, is its very source and origin. The moral responsibility to use nature according to the purpose and design of its Creator is for human persons to subdue the earth, bring creation to perfection and place themselves at the service of humankind.[16]

Sin

When men and women fail their fundamental calling in creation as God's image and likeness, they sin. There seem to be two extreme tendencies in the way Christians regard the reality of sin. We can name one as sinflation and the other as sin-obliteration. Sinflation is an excessive focusing on sin, constantly asking: Is it a sin? How do we know if it is a sin? When is it a sin? How far can one go before the act becomes a sin? There are oft-repeated questions which betray a rather minimalist and casuistic notion of sin. The other extreme tendency is what is called sin-obliteration, or the loss of the sense of sin. Perhaps the greatest sin in the world today is that men and women have begun to lose their sense of sin. The loss of the sense of sin springs from the loss of the sense of transcendence, from the "eclipse of a religious world view through the rise of the secular spirit."[17]

When spiritual sensitivity diminishes, the sense of sin also diminishes. Consumerism, which seems to increasingly dominate contemporary lifestyle, turns values upside down, as it tends to give more and more primacy to the things of the flesh rather than to the values of the spirit. Consumerism plagues the human spirit and tyrannizes it with the ever growing felt needs for the sensual and material. These feverish needs diminish the sensitivity to the spiritual, to what is transcendent, to what is beyond surface desires. Consumerism as it tends to relativize everything and subordinate everything to its end, arrogates to itself a certain form of divinity. As John Kavanaugh, S. J. develops in his book *Following Christ in a Consumer Society,* consumerism replaces a life-giving God and a humane community with inanimate commodities which are worshipped and craved with a sterile passion.[18]

One of the challenging tasks of moral formation concerns this lack of an authentic sense of sin. Sin can only be properly understood when contrasted with the positive values of love,

friendship, and unity. Sin at its roots is not merely something we do, an act performed, a crime committed. We turn in on ourselves against others, orienting ourselves toward disintegration and death rather than growth, wholeness, and life. Sin as basically a turning in on oneself and closing others out of one's world, says James Keenan, S.J., in his article, "The Sin of Not Bothering to Love."[19] He states that not bothering to love is precisely the gospel concept of sin. Throughout the gospel, we see that the sinners are not the obvious wrongdoers but those who don't bother to love. Sin as not bothering to love is, however, not what most people relate to in their understanding and experience of sin. This is so, as Keenan points out, because for centuries we have held a simplistic view of sin: anything wrong we did we called sin.[20]

Sin is a kind of sickness, an addiction which is beyond one's capacity to heal. Like addiction, it tends to take an increasing grip on persons, enslaving them more and more. It leads to the loss of self-possession, as sinners experience an inability to center and direct their energies. They experience within themselves contradictions. Sin alienates the true self. Locked in guilt, fear, shame, and suspicion, sinners end up undermining their significant relationships. They are alienated from themselves, from others, and from God. Finally the process of sin, paralleling the pathology of addiction, sets a person on some kind of spiral of disintegration, ending in spiritual death.[21]

This understanding of sin as sickness and addiction, offers a deep insight into the reality of original sin. Human sinfulness does not start or stop in the individual. The tragedy and horror of human sinfulness is that it is contagious. The destructive and debilitating power of sin attacks not only individuals but their whole network of relationship. The sin of one becomes the occasion of the sin for others; the burden of one becomes the weakness of another. "Our lived human experiences tell us that none of us are 'original' sinners, but that, as Scripture teaches, we all have been conceived in sin, born of sin, and live in a world infested by sin."[22]

> For all of our freedom and independence, for all of our precious individuality, we live in a world in which sin is a deadly and contagious virus which threatens, saps, and debilitates our moral and spiritual health and lives. Parents pass sin onto their children, teachers instruct people into it, governments lead their peoples into it. From generation to generation, in all sorts it is passed from one heart to another like a deadly and insidious contagion.[23]

To speak of sin as addiction corrects an excessively juridical and individualistic notion of sin. It offers a key insight into how sin operates on various levels and dimensions beyond the individual.[24] It not only threatens individuals; it threatens the life of the entire community in its cultural patterns, its institutional structures, its political and economic systems.[25]

The treatment of sin as sickness and addiction goes far in explaining the repetition and persistence of sin, despite prayer, reception of the sacrament of penance, and sincere efforts at renewal. Recovery from sin is a process—a lifelong, sometimes painful and agonizing process. Conversion is ultimately sheer grace, because the personal brokenness due to sin is beyond one's own healing.[26]

Sin is the "moral evil that human beings originate: cruel, unjust, vicious, and perverse thoughts and deeds."[27] It is, however, only a part of the total human reality. Deeper and even more powerful is the reality of grace. In fact an authentic sense of sin is grace itself, experienced within God's mercy, as we realize the true evil of sin only in his forgiveness. Richard Gula writes: "Above all sin is fundamentally a religious reality. This means that sin makes no sense apart from the presence of God in Christ, through the Spirit, and our awareness of being in relationship to God."[28]

The mystery of human sinfulness, at least for the Christian, must be understood in this context. But sin is not the last word in human history. Jesus Christ is.

Incarnation-Redemption

Christian faith proclaims that Jesus Christ is the presence of the liberating, reconciling, and loving God reaching out to men and women. In Jesus, God's love, as a historical and personal reality, reached its fullest and irreversible disclosure. In his living and dying, a radically new liberating power invaded the world, a power stronger than hatred, and deeper than sin. The power and love and forgiveness of Jesus on the cross was bound to a concrete historical situation. But when he rose from the dead, the power of the Risen Christ's love and forgiveness broke through the confines of this historical situation, permeating all spheres of human existence.[29] Creation and grace have come to a radical unity in Jesus Christ, in whom one encounters the saving God.

To be redeemed means to be healed, to be made whole, to become more truly human in one's fuller communion with God and with others. Jesus the redeemer is the paradigm of the humanity that one ought to become, the life one ought to live. Of whatever age and situation, we are called into an ever deeper, more vibrant and living faith-relationship with Jesus Christ. Only in the context of a living relationship with and vibrant commitment to him, can our perspective, disposition, intention, and affection be formed from a truly Christian moral vision. Vincent MacNamara has written eloquently of the particular moral stance that Jesus embodies and which every Christian is called to follow:

> Our Christian story is of one who proclaimed God's love and forgiveness for the least and the most forgotten and whose life was the incarnation of that of one who received his life as a gift and who was prepared to lose it in the cause of goodness and truth. It is of one whose life broke through the barriers of prejudice and privilege and through limited views of goodness; one whose view of success and failure was

> rooted in his union with his Father and who was faithful to this vision in what was humanly a failure.[30]

One of the most important assertions of the historical research on the Bible, particularly that of social history, is that the center of Jesus' ministry was the imminent reign of "kingdom of God."[31] Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of Mark is heralded by the proclamation of the reign of God being at hand. Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel!" (Mk. 1:14). Through his teachings, preachings, his miracles, and his associations with "sinners" and other social outcasts, Jesus made present the dynamic reign of God in the heart of life, in its ordinary turns or its sudden breakthroughs.

At the heart of life, with Jesus at the most personal center, the reign of God entailed a reversal of worldly values, turning upside down the common standards of worthiness and acceptability. In the parables of the kingdom (the parables of the prodigal son, the great supper, the two debtors, the rich man and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Publican, the unmerciful servant, the lost coin, the lost sheep), Jesus shows a love that bursts all expectations and conditions; a prodigal love which reaches to all in disproportionate ways, especially those who are in need, whether they are deserving or virtuous. Such a love, which discipleship must imitate, reaches its edge in its forgiveness of enemies and in its utter self-abandonment, as seen in the story of the Good Samaritan and as instituted in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

Jesus shared meals with the social marginals, the social underclass, the "sinners" and the tax collectors, who particularly were reviled because they were perceived as opportunists and grafters.[32] Defying norms and laws of social relationships, Jesus' table fellowship was iconoclastic. It destroyed the boundaries that separated the pure and the unpure, and it instituted a whole new inclusive communal ethos rather than that which was exclusive, discriminatory,

and hierarchical. The spirit of Jesus' table fellowship permeated his whole stance to the world of relations: he approached women directly without the usual practice of male intermediary; he touched the sick, the lepers, those who are untouchables; he, by forbidding divorce, protected women from the practice of divorce governed by patriarchal domination and caprice.[33] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza interprets Jesus as wisdom prophet who established a "discipleship of equals" which broke down all barriers determined by class, gender, family status, or religious standing.[34]

Biblical portrayals of Jesus show that the Jesus ministry subverted institutionalized power relationships. However, although he represented a radical alternative social vision, he did not create a new social entity.[35] The reign of God was immediate in the very presence, teaching, and miracles of Jesus, but it too had an eschatological nostalgia. This nostalgia for the final consummation of the reign of God sustains one's faith in its irrepressible power, in the face of suffering, conflict, and failure.[36]

Christian morality presupposes that commitment to Christ shapes our total stance to the fundamental meaning and direction that human life ought to take. Living in Christ, and for him, sets life in one particular direction, in one singular vision. At the heart of Christian moral life, rooted in the mystery of Jesus Christ, is a call to the paschal way of believing, living, loving, and forgiving—the way of life through death, of fullness in self-emptying, and of glory in suffering. There is mystery here, deep and unfathomable. Only in the context of faith can we make a sense out of the paradox of the Christian moral vision.

Jesus is not just an idea, principle, norm to follow. He is not only an external goal, a vague dimension, a universal rule of conduct, a timeless ideal to approximate. As Hans Küng puts it:

Ideals, principles, or norms have neither words nor voice. They

> cannot call, cannot appeal. They can neither address us nor make demands on us. In themselves they have no authority. A concrete historical person can address us and make demands on us. And the following of Christ means being required by his person and his fate to commit ourselves to a specific way.[37]

Grace

God continues to give Godself to us in and through the indwelling Spirit, who is the bond of the love of the Father and the Son. "Anyone who loves me will be true to my word and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him." (Jn. 14: 23) The Holy Spirit is not only the symbol of the love of the Father and Son, but is the very love of the Father and Son. A person who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit is not indwelt by a *thing*, but the divine love of the Father and the Son. Grace which is the Holy Spirit is at the same time the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity or the very presence of the Holy Spirit is the presence of the Father and the Son, as the very bond of their love.[38]

This awareness of grace as the indwelling and the interdwelling presence of the Trinity is not common. For many, grace is understood as a thing, an impersonal force or power, separate from God which God bestows upon humankind. Any effort to purify this common understanding of grace must be able to relate the reality of grace with concrete living. "Grace should be understood as the presence of the Trinity in daily lives—not just in receiving the sacraments, or in formal prayer, but in the interpersonal relationship of family, school, work, recreation—carried on in a truly Christian way."[38]

We are, thus, called to be more attentive to the "inside' of our ordinary lives and to discover and experience the tripersonal God with us—Emmanuel: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13).[40] The reality of grace is present in people's devotions, rites, pilgrimages, fiestas

which gather families, relatives and other groups of people in the spirit of a shared communal life. It is experienced in their joyful togetherness, in their unity and solidarity in the face of deprivation and suffering. It is present as they go out of themselves to reach out to others and be a compassionate presence to the poor and needy. Grace is the dynamic power that invigorates their efforts to attain a level of living beyond debilitating subsistence, in their aspiring to fuller and more free participation in the political processes and in their fight for justice and equal rights before the law.

Grace is not something but someone—the very self-giving of God; God communicating Godself. Grace also refers to men and women achieving new being as they are penetrated in a sanctifying way by God. Thus, grace is not an object received but is a person transformed by God's gift of Godself.[41]

Grace is the radical opening of the total consciousness of persons and the directing of their whole existence to the very being of God in the beatific vision. God is the ground and goal of human existence in as much as God has put this basic movement towards God in the innermost center of creation. But no created reality holds any claim to this self-giving of God as something due. Grace is God's most free act, absolute and gratuitous. The gift is the giver.[42] God as Giver gives of self to creatures as their own fulfillment.

Grace is not to be considered as something superfluous and extrinsic to the essence and structure of human beings. It is intrinsic, with fundamental effects on the interior subjectivity of human persons. God, in gracing created beings, does not violate their nature, rather fulfills it. The coming of person, thus, to their fullness is proportionate to the greater and fuller presence of grace.[43]

Grace, which permeates the whole world, is made visible and communicated through the Church. The Church, in its essential nature, is the presence of Christ in history, in and through the Spirit.[44] As an institution, the Church is the means and mediations of grace

in the many spheres of human existence. There are seven "peak" actions of the Church through which in a special way, grace is made visible and communicated. These actions are called the seven sacraments which celebrate major moments of the life cycle, and allow these moments to open persons to an explicit and efficacious experience of the mystery of grace present at the heart of all created existence.[45]

> As the means of salvation by which God offers salvation to an individual in a tangible way and in the historical and social dimension, the Church is the basic sacrament. . . . [T]he Church is the sign, but it is the sign of an efficacious and successful grace for the world, and it is the basic sacrament in this radical sense.[46]

The Church, as the basic sacrament of God's victorious offer of Godself in the world, in and through the seven sacraments, addresses itself to and involves itself in the decisive moments in Christian life-initiation to new life in Christ, growth and maturity in the Spirit, belonging to the Eucharistic community, experience of God's mercy and forgiveness for one's sins and failures, the donation of self in a fundamental commitment, and the gift of God's comfort and healing in the face of sickness and death.[47]

The experience of grace in moral life underscores very clearly the relational dimension of being human. At the heart of a graced existence is a grateful response to the self-giving of God by giving oneself in turn to others. We are communal at our core and thus, to be human, to be moral is to be essentially directed towards others.

Eternal Destiny

The belief that all are destined for an eternal destiny grounds the ultimate meaningfulness and purposefulness of human existence and activity. The life of everlasting communion with God, through

Jesus Christ, in the indwelling and interdwelling Spirit, moves towards a greater, more complete, more perfect fulfillment in the final future. Men and women are destined for everlasting life with God which is already partially experienced in the human joys, loves, and fulfillment in the present now, until all becomes all in the plenitude of God's love, in the fullness of time.

The "already" or incarnational and the "not yet" or eschatological are operative now. Concretely this means that heaven, hell, purgatory are not realities only of the final future, but are already realities here and now in the joys, pains and tribulations of daily life.[48]

The biblical images of heaven and hell are no longer fully credible to contemporary believing Christians.[49] What is proposed are more personal and existential images of heaven and hell as the continuation, confirmation, and intensification of our interpersonal relationships on earth.[50] Heaven is the fullness of life. It is important to focus its meaning in the reality of Christ. For in Him, who is life (Jn.14:6) and who has come that we "might have life and have it to the full" (Jn.10:10), all of human reality comes to final coherence and wholeness.[51] The belief in heaven embraces particular aspects of eschatology: the gift of the beatific vision, the intimate face to face vision of God, the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the material being of the person brought into a whole new realm of life, completely vivified by the Holy Spirit, the teaching on the new heaven and the new earth, the cosmic renewal of all material creation in Christ.[52]

With the vision of eternal life, a Christian is encouraged to see the transcendent reality shining through the ordinary everyday events. There is in the human heart a cry for what is deep and lasting, for the ultimate and eternal amidst the regular rhythm of living, loving, and dying. In his encyclical, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope,* John Paul II declares that "our faith is profoundly anthropological."[53] Our conviction of God arises from multitudes of human events and

situations in which we search for the ultimate significance and meaning of our existence.[54]

The firm belief in the just God who rewards the good and evil is deeply rooted in the Christian faith. It is a faith orientation that qualifies one's moral living. The belief in individual judgement after death, the purifying passage through purgatory, and the dreadful possibility of eternal death which is hell opens one to the eschatological dimension of moral life.[55] This means that individual choices and actions have permanent deep lasting effects, and for better or worse, they enter into the shaping of one's moral destiny. Either one is directed to a fuller communion with God or to a growing alienation from God.

That persons are created in God's image and likeness, redeemed by Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and destined for eternal life with God, are the basic truths which ground the Christian moral life. Our image of who we are and what we are destined to become, brings a perspective, a depth, and intensity to our daily moral living.

Worship and Moral Transformation

The life of worship is central to the life of the Church.[56] "The Church not only acts but also expresses herself in the liturgy, lives by the liturgy and draws from the liturgy the strength for her life."[57] Worship is a fundamental human act rooted in the relatedness of persons to God which constitutes their basic nature and existence as human beings. Men and women, in coming to a consciousness of their fundamental relatedness to God, come to a sense of their own basic goodness as well as their sinfulness which lie at the core of their moral being.

There are various aspects of the place of worship in Christian moral formation. Three are taken up here: firstly, worship as a ground of imagination, affections, and dispositions which govern Christian

moral life; secondly, worship as constituting the depth-dimension of Christian moral living; and thirdly, worship as the matrix of the communal Christian moral life.

Worship as a ground of Christian imagination and affectivity

In stressing the rational component of moral choice and behavior, Christian morality in the past tended to neglect the place of imagination and affectivity in the total moral process. The attention to the role of imagination in shaping moral life is an important advance in the area of morality.[58]

Imagination is our most powerful moral resource. But too often imagination is identified with fantasy, illusion, or make-believe.[59] It is associated with emotion and intuition that are considered subjective, unscientific, and therefore without foundations. But imagination properly understood brings one in touch with the deepest level of truth within oneself where one's fundamental meaning resides. It can stir response from the depths, decisively influencing one's vision and interpretation of reality.[60] We are speaking here of a dimension of human knowledge, different from the abstract and conceptual, which releases creative and emotional energy. The special power of imagination is its ability to bring to synthesis all the powers of the human person: the intelligence, senses, emotions, and will.[61]

Contemporary writers, like Craig Dykstra, have been drawing attention to the place of imagination and affectivity. A very striking part of Dykstra's writings involve the place of imagination in moral life. He sees moral growth as intimately related with human imagination. For him, imagination is the foundation for perception, understanding, and intepretation of the mystery of life, of all reality, and of God. Images bring us in touch with the deepest levels of truth, where our fundamental meaning resides. It can stir response from the depths, decisively influencing our vision and interpretation of reality.[62]

The person's imaginative-affective energy evokes, nurtures, and sustains moral decisions and commitments. The direction of the moral choices which persons take is often determined by the interplay of imaginations and emotions which move and persuade them. Christian moral formation, therefore, must reach down to the emotional affective roots of moral choices and decisions. The capacity to love, that is the ability to respond to the call of love in all its forms, is necessary for one to be moral. Studies in moral development have shown that authentic moral living is not possible until a person is capable of empathy. Where there is empathy, there is care, there is love, there is morality.[63]

To be moral, one must reach down to the heart where the deep springs of affections and emotions lie. The sensitivity required to be moral is a sensitivity of the heart, which is attuned to the presence of God. "Such sensitivity requires prayer. A heart sensitive to God is born of prayer, and is nurtured in prayerful attention to the presence of God in the diverse experiences of living."[64] The human spirit has an innate nostalgia for God.

Worship is one major formative ground of the Christian imagination, affections and emotions, all of which enter into the total moral process. The symbolic pattern of words and actions in worship touches the depths from which Christians respond. The power of worship in forming individuals and communities comes from the stirrings of emotions and feelings alone and from certain qualities of the spirit nurtured by these feelings and emotions which dispose persons to God and to others both in intention and action. The senses of finitude, gratitude, obligation, sin, and repentance are basic qualities of the spirit of worship which inspire and influence Christian moral living.[65]

Worship as Constituting the Depth-Dimensions of Moral Life

Christian moral life is fundamentally a response to grace, a reaching out in love rather than simply avoiding sin. At the heart of

Christian moral life is a constant renewal and conversion unto Christ. This Christian conversion is greatly fostered and strengthened by prayer and liturgical sacramental celebrations. Celebrations are privileged moments when the heart is most open and susceptible to the attraction of the power and presence of Christ in whose love one draws meaning and motivation for moral living.

There is a level of our subjectivity that goes far deeper than our conscious actions, roles, and experiences. It is where God meets us in our most sacred depths, calls us by our names, and utters the word addressed to us alone. The deepest level of ourselves, which the Scripture designates as the "heart" where God's Spirit communes with our spirit (Rom. 8: 16).[66] The deepest level of our persons escapes clear conceptual knowledge. And yet we can have a sense of ourselves, a felt awareness of who we are. It is an awareness that takes hold of the whole of our person. Worship takes us to this level and summons us to an attentive and loving listening to the stirrings of our heart of hearts. When we come in touch with our truest selves, there in our wordless depths, we come in touch with God. Worship attunes our interiority with the Word of God calling and beckoning, that God's voice may resound ever more clearly and surely in our hearts. There is a rabbinical teaching which says: "There are depths in the human soul which ritual alone can reach."[67]

God's spirit joins with our human spirit to form and transform us more and more into men and women of God, children of the Father, and disciples of Christ the Son. In the purity of God's holiness, we see the puniness of our hearts but also the grandeur of divine love. Our darkest and most wounded selves are revealed by God's light but only that we may be healed. As God bends over us with the most gentle of mercy, we are once more renewed in our struggle to be good, true, and loving.

Moral life comes in touch with its depth-dimension in worship. Authentic worship brings moral life to its inner springs, where it draws

its deepest meaning from the treasures of the faith. The stories that constitute us as people of God provide the depth-dimension of our moral living. The remembrance of the Christian stories, and especially their communal recital in the liturgy, can influence and shape the vision of moral life.[68] In the context of worship, we are able to come in touch, beyond our surface desires, with the true and real good that we seek at a very deep level. Worship provides a climate, in which our moral sensitivity is evoked, making us desire and appreciate all that is "honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous, or worthy of praise. . . ." (Phil. 4:8)[69]

As worship brings moral life to its depth-meaning, it enables and empowers worshippers in their living and loving and in their pursuing relentlessly the will of God amidst the complexities, bewilderment, and brokenness of human situations and relationships.[70]

Much should be done in our life of worship to harness the force and power of the liturgical celebrations for the nurturing of moral virtues and values. But to do so requires serious preparation, with a sense not only of what is proper for divine worship, but of what best expresses the faith-response of the people in a most inculturated and indigenized way. Noteworthy is the place of the feasts and seasons of the liturgical year in engaging the power of symbolic acts and sensible signs which evoke profound meaning.[79]

Worship as the Matrix of Communal Christian Moral Life

Moral life calls men and women to enter more fully in human relationships against the pull of selfish isolation. Since all morality is essentially social and communal, its ethos is shaped by the shared vision and tradition of communities.[72] We are called to resist and break the force of individualism, of selfishness, the kind especially that makes others suffer. We are communal at our core for we are persons-in-community, beings made for others. The moral person

labors far and long to seek God in others. One's heart must expand beyond one's inner circle of family and of friends, and embrace the humanity of all others which one shares.

Christian moral life is anchored in the life, history and tradition of the Christian faith community. Worship, as one matrix of the living faith traditions, helps shape the individual Christian's moral attitudes, sensitivities, and dispositions.[73] By word and sacrament, the faith images and symbols of the Christian community are mediated and brought to life within the individuals and the entire assembled community.[74]

To be a Christian is to be a member of a body, a *communio*, a people with reflection and memory.[75] Thus the resources and perspectives of the Christian formation go beyond the individual's capacities. They are drawn from the collective wisdom embodied in the laws and rules that have guided people of the past in their personal and communal living. The encounter with the community's shared faith vision and tradition, as mediated through the images and symbols is essential for Christian moral formation.[76]

The formation of character and vision is within the context of a storied society, of a collective redemptive memory. For the Christian, the Church is the locus of Scripture's account of God's story in Jesus Christ. What is demanded of Christians is to be faithful to their identity as a people whose true destiny is found in God's story. Thought, character and vision are formed within the normative influence of Christian narrative which plays a central role in self-understanding. "Stories are indispensable if we are to know ourselves; they are irreplaceable by some other kind of account."[77]

Craig Dykstra sees the important role of community in the entire process of forming Christian character. The community, he says, shapes our perceptions, values, and identities by the many subtle ways it uses language, sets norms, makes decisions, and carries our action. In the depth of its engagement with life, it sets the criteria in the discipline of morality.[78] Persons mature and grow within a moral

tradition. Apart from the moral tradition in a community, one is left with a sense of bewilderment and vulnerability in the face of moral dilemmas. A person becomes an operative moral person only in the context of community.

Worship as the matrix of communal Christian moral life is experienced in the base-level ecclesial communities. As members of these communities, people are much more alert to the communal dimension of Christian moral living as they are called to be one people in responding to the living Word of God, and in their common struggle for the promotion of peace and justice.[79] It is the Christian worship of the Father, Son, and Spirit in the Christian community that pulls us away from our selfish illusions and individualism, and effects a shifting of centers in us from ourselves to others. Being rooted in this worship, we are motivated to the greatest social responsibility, inspired by the Trinity's infinite interpersonal, creative, and redeeming love.[80]

Concluding Statement

When Christian morality is grounded in doctrine and worship, it is seen within a larger faith framework. Doctrines are not ends in themselves; rather they articulate the fundamental truths underlying human meaning and destiny as illumined by God's revelation and perceived in faith. Christian truths are salvific truths—truths that save, uplift, guide, illuminate, inspire. They are truths that make a real difference in people's lives since they are not abstract generalities or "indifferent bits of information." They are sources of understanding our human meaning, dignity, and destiny as illumined by God's revelation. They are not about things, but persons: the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Living God who loves and saves us—and ourselves as persons created, redeemed, and sanctified.

The mysteries of creation and sin, together with the mysteries of Incarnation, Redemption, the Indwelling Spirit, Church, and Eternal Destiny ground the Christian personal and social morality. Persons as they are created in the image and likeness of God see

their fullest and deepest meaning in Jesus, who has liberated and empowered them from the tensions and contradictions of sin and has given them the power through the Indwelling Spirit to work towards their wholeness and dignity as images of God.

By interrelating moral life with worship, the depth-dimensions of Christian moral life are drawn out, and its inner springs unravelled. The interplay of emotions, imaginations, and affectivity nurture the qualities of the spirit and the dispositions of the heart for moral life. Christian morality is not just a list of do's and don'ts, but the moral vision and principles grounded on the truths of the faith, with their depth-meaning evoked and nurtured in worship. Worship is not some spiritualist, out-of-this-world ritualism, but rather the celebration of the fundamental convictions of the Christian faith, which grounds, inspires, and empowers moral witness and action.[81]

There have been profound changes in Moral Theology since Vatican II called for its renewal. The call was for Moral Theology, which was separated for a long time from the entire theological enterprise, to be grounded in the sources of the faith, founded on the great mysteries of the faith, and rooted in worship and spirituality. The call has been heeded, but the work has not yet come to its full fruition. Referring to this unfinished work, Richard McCormick says, "the problem of elaborating a satisfying value system within the totality of Christian realities remains one of the most important unfinished task in the field of Christian morality."[82] This article is a modest contribution to the realization of this task.

NOTES

[1]Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 136-37.

[2]Ibid., 37.

[3]Vincent MacNamara, *Love, Law, and Christian Life* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 68.

[4]Ibid., 125.

[5]Ibid., 117. "It is not precisely the moment of choice that is the decisive one but all the moments that have gone into the making it likely that this is how we would see and choose." One may take a different perspective and hold that even while it is indeed true that the person in the process of moral life is of primary importance, it is ultimately the moment of choice that is decisive, for the precise choice may represent what the person is in the here and now, whatever he/she must have been in the past. A person seeks to be free from the determinisms of the past, in whatever form they take, by a radical openness to the surprises of the Spirit at the turn of every moment.

[6]Ibid., 126.

[7]Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith,* 142.

[8]Charles E. Curran, "The Stance of Moral Theology," in *Directions in Fundamental Moral Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 1985), 29-62.

[9]Richard McCormick, S.J., *Notes on Moral Theology 1965 through 1980* (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1981), 82.

[10]Ibid., 63.

[11]Richard McCormick, S.J., *Health and Medicine on the Catholic Tradition* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 50.

[12]ECERI, *Maturing in the Christian Faith: National Catholic Directory of the Philippines* (Manila: St. Paul Publications. 1985), no. 32. (thereafter cited as *NCDP*)

[13]Karl Rahner speaks of the basic orientation of persons to God as their only ultimate fulfillment and as constituting their fundamental dignity. For a more extensive treatment of the person's basic orientation to God, see Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith,* trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 116-32; Michael Buckley, S.J. "Within the Holy Spirit," in *A World of Grace,* Leo J. Donovan (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 31-49; Kenneth D. Eberhard, "Karl Rahner and the Supernatural Existential," *Thought* 46, no. 183 (Winter 1971): 537-61; Michael Cleary, "The Openness of the Human Person: The Anthropological Foundations of Graced Existence," *Louvain Studies* 10 (Fall 1984): 97-105; Karl Rahner, "Grace" in *Sacramentum Mundi* 2:515-22.

[14] "Gaudium et Spes," no.19, in *Documents of Vatican II,* ed. Walter Abbott, S.J. (New York: America Press, 1966).

[15]*NCDP,* nos. 146, 148.

[16]"Gaudium et Spes," no. 57, in *Documents of Vatican II.*

[17]John Paul II lists trends that have contributed to the loss of a sense of sin: the movement from seeing sin everywhere to not recognizing it anywhere; the emphasis on fear of eternal punishment to preaching a love of God that excludes punishment; from correcting erroneous consciences to respecting consciences but excluding the duty to tell the truth. To restore a healthy sense of sin, the pope advocated "a sound catechesis, illumined by the biblical theology of the covenant, by an attentive listening and trustful openness to the Magisterium of the church, which never ceases to enlighten consciences, and by an ever more careful practice of the sacrament of penance." See *Origins* 14 (December 20,1984), 443-44. Quotation on p. 444.

[18]John Kavanaugh, S.J., *Following Christ in a Consumer Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1981), 21-26.

[19]James F. Keenan, S.J., "The Sin of Not Bothering To Love," *Church* (Winter 1995): 40-41.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Patrick McCormick, C.M., *Sin as Addiction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 146-63.

[21]Ibid., 113.

[22]Rahner stresses the unique beginning of sin in the world. The first sin, no matter who committed it, has a special status, since it is the absolute beginning of sin in the world. Cf. The treatment of Karl Rahner's notion of original sin in Brian O. McDermott, S.J., "The Theology of Original Sin: Recent Developments," *Theological Studies* 38 (September 1987): 484-85. What is transmitted is not the actual sin of the first human person since the personal responsibility of sin is inalienable; rather it is the condition of sin into which every person is born. Ibid., 476-82. To stress the fact that original sin is not only "sin of the world," the Council of Trent defined original sin as "in all men, proper to each." (ND 510).

[23]The *NCDP* integrates the basic emphases of original sin: the exterior dimension of original sin as "sin of the world," its interior dimension which is concupiscence and its relation to personal sin. Personal sin constitutes part of the sin of the world since a person's individual sins further worsen the sinful situation in which every one is born, grows and dies. *NCDP*, no. 221. The Council of Trent, however, "professes and thinks that concupiscence or the inclination to sin remains in the baptized. Since it is left for us to wrestle with, it cannot harm those who do not consent by manfully resisting it by the grace of Jesus Christ. . . . The Catholic church has never understood that it is called sin because it would be sin in the true and proper sense in those who have been reborn, but because it comes from sin and inclines to sin (ND 512). For a theological treatment of concupiscence, Cf. Karl Rahner, "Theological Concept of Concupiscentia," in *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1961) 1:347-82.

[24]McCormick, *Sin as Addiction*, 88.

[25]Conversion will probably include a number of recovery processes. Conversion is not usually a linear, but and integrative process in which a person progressively is helped to put himself/herself back together. Ibid., 174.

[26]John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Lowe and Brydone, 1966), 18.

[27]Richard M. Gula, S.S., *Reason Informed by Faith*, 100.

[28]Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 176-264; David Coffey, "The Incarnation of the Holy Spirit in Christ," *Theological Studies* 45 (September 1984): 466-80.

[29]Vincent MacNamara, *Faith and Ethics* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), 111.

[30]Kingdom is better translated as the kingship of God powerfully ruling over creation, the people of God, and history. Cf. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), Vol. 2, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles.*

[31]Meier wrote that they were "minor functionaries who collected the payment of toll of customs (indirect taxes) on goods being transposed across borders."

[32]See Lisa Sowle Cahill's *Sex, Gender and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 121-165, for a fuller treatment of the iconoclastic effects of Jesus' teachings on the social and sexual ethos of his age and of early Christianity.

[33]See Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).

[34]E.P. Sanders maintained that Jesus did not "urge the creation of a new social entity," *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 179.

[35]See Roy A. Harrisville, "In Search of the Meaning of the 'Reign of God,'" *Interpretation 47,* no.2 (1993): 149.

[36]Hans Küng, "The Criterion for Deciding What is Christian," in *Introduction to Christian Ethics: A Reader,* ed. by Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 126.

[37]Cf. The article of David Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 38 (July 1971): 202-23, and his book, *The Gift of the Holy Spirit* (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1979), 223-32.

[38]*NCDP,* no. 205.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Otto Semmelroth, S.J., "The Christ Event and Our Salvation," in *Man Before God* (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1966), 89. Grace as the gift of the Holy Spirit does not refer only to a gift that the Holy Spirit bestows, but

rather to the gift which is the Holy Spirit. The Father gives the Holy Spirit to us through the Risen Christ. Coffey, "The Gift of the Holy Spirit," 54.

[41]Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 116-24.

[42]John Coventry, S.J., *The Theology of the Faith* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1968), 63-64.

[43]Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 116-24.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., 410.

[46] Ibid., 412.

[47]*NCDP*, no. 248.

[48]Joseph Bracken, S.J., "Salvation: A Matter of Personal Choice," *Theological Studies* 37 (September 1976): 416-18.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Tony Kelly, C.S.S.R., "A Hope for Heaven," *The Australian Catholic Record* 61/4 (October 1984): 348-51.

[51]John H. Wright, S.J., "The Hermeneutics of Eschatology,"*Chicago Studies* 24 (August 1985): 217-18. Focusing on the promise of the resurrection of the body, biblical scholars suggest that the idea that the body is the whole person. They interpret the moral task as treating our bodies as fully integrated with our being in unity and relationship with others. The consideration of the body as subject is opposed to the objectification or materialization of the body. S. Kay Thomas describes the objectifications as a "dualistic notion that separates mind and body and which conceptualizes the physical body in purely mechanistic terms. The physical machine-like body is assumed to be extrinsic to the essential self." "Illness and the Paradigm of Lived Body," *Theoretical Medicine* 9 (1988): 201.

[52]John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Allied A. Knopf, 1994), 36.

[53]Ibid., 31.

[54]*NCDP,* no.246.

[55]Ibid., no. 319.

[56]John Paul II, "Letter on the Eucharist" 1980, no. 13. The *NCDP* does not use prayer, worship, and liturgy interchangeably. Though they belong to the same genre, the *NCDP* uses them with certain distinctions. Christian prayer means the consciousness of a personal communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. *(NCDP,* no. 325). Worship adds to this general notion of prayer, two dimensions: the communal dimension and the celebrative, ceremonial dimension *(NCDP,* no. 326); Liturgy is Christian worship expressed in specific ritual acts, e.g. Eucharist. *(NCDP,* no. 331*).*

[57]This advance is reflected in the *NCDP* in its shift of stress from rules to values, from prescription to vision, from individual free choice to fundamental commitment. Cf *NCDP,* nos. 264-71.

[58]Image research has demonstrated a multiplicity of connections between images and emotions. "Image can be formed in direct response to emotions, and images can evoke emotions. The image system of the person is directly linked to the individual's emotional structure." Matthias Newman, "Towards an Integrated Theory of Imagination," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (September 1978): 256-57. Imagination is seen as a most powerful resource as it touches the affective roots of a person. Imagination can also be the spring of the person's most objective insight. Cf. Kathleen Fischer, *The Inner Rainbow: The Imagination in Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 13. Also Frederick G. McLeod, "Imagination within the Act of Faith," *Review for Religious 46* (March/April 1986): 243. There are more studies now on the place of emotions in moral life. One *illuminating* article is that of Bill Cosgrave, "Our Emotional Life," *Furrow 49* (1998): 270-281.

[59]Frederick G. McLeod, S.J., "Imagination Within the Act of Faith," *Review for Religious 46* (March/April 1986): 243.

[60]See Philip S. Keane, S.S., *Christian Ethics and Imagination* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 87-90.

[61]Craig Dykstra, *Vision and Character* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 28.

[62]Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith,* 15.

[63]D. E. Saliers, "Liturgy and Ethics: Some New Beginnings," *Journal of Religious Ethics 7* (Fall 1979): 174-75. The *NCDP* calls for a deeper, more personal, and more affective prayer (no. 323), and for a more active and affective worship (no. 370). Margaret Farley in her critical response to Ramsey and Saliers, grants that both have explored important points in the relation of worship and morality. But she claims that both authors do not raise the most critical issues confronting the worshipping life of the Church. Many Christians experience liturgy as deadening, impoverishing, and burdensome. In her article, Farley identifies three causes for this phenomenon. See Margaret Farley, "Beyond the Formal Principle: Reply to Ramsey and Saliers," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (Fall 1979): 191-202.

[64]Cf. James Gustafson, "Spiritual Life and Moral Life," *Theology Digest* 19 (Winter 1971): 290-307.

[65]John Carroll Futrell, S.J., *Ignatian Discernment* (St. Louis: School of Divinity, St. Louis University), 321.

[66]Marcel Bastin, Gbislain Pinckers, Michel Teheux, *Day by Day,* vol. 2, trans. by Matthew O'Connell from *Dieu pour Chaque Jour* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 172.

[67]McNamara, *Love, Law, and Christian Life,* 128.

[68]Ibid., 74-75.

[69]See Don E. Saliers, *The Soul in Paraphrase* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 97, 101-2.

[70]*NCDP,* nos. 334, 335, 338.

[71]Lucien Richard, O.M.I., *Is There a Christian Ethics?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 75-76.

[72]William Everett claims that Saliers and Ramsey have not dealt with the realities of social pluralism. Social pluralism holds that persons are members of associations, institutions, and communities whose perspectives, interests, and visions may compete with, complement, or ignore one another. He sees

Saliers' accomodation to social pluralism as excessively individualistic, verging on a form of escapism but he finds more readiness in Ramsey to challenge social pluralism. He holds that liturgy should lead one to a critical engagement of social and cultural pluralism. William Everett, "Liturgy and Ethics: A Response to Saliers and Ramsey," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (Fall 1979): 203-14.

[73]Richard, *Is there a Christian Ethics?*, 79-82. While the identity of individuals is shaped by the traditions of their faith-community, they at the same time engage these traditions in a creative dialogue, developing a hermeneutic of the traditions based on their own critical self-understanding and appropriation.

[74]McCormick, S.J., *Notes on Moral Theology 1981 through 1984* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1984), 70. As human beings, we live always in relation to others, and as Christians, in a believing community, an *ecclesia*. "Our being Christ is a shared being. We are vines of the same branch, sheep of the shepherd." This fact with deep biblical roots, brings to focus the person's essential equality (regardless of functional importance) and his radical sociality, his interdependence with others. McCormick, *Health and Medicine on the Catholic Tradition*, 50.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Stanley Hauerwas, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigation in Character Ethics* (Notre Dame Univeristy of Notre Dame Press, 1970), 8.

[77]Dykstra, *Vision and Character*, 124.

[78]*NCDP*, no. 343.

[79]CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 1977), no. 197.

[80]Joseph Roche, S.J., "The *NCDP*'s Multiple Integrations," *Docete* (April-June 1987): 4.

[81]McCormick, S.J., *Notes: 1965-80*, 295.