historical context. But the most obvious absentee is Henri de Lubac, at least as remarkable as any of these 'giants', wider in his perspectives, deeper in his scholarship, widely read, before and after Vatican II.

However comprehensive a survey, gaps are of course inevitable. The strangest omission, in the new chapter on Postmodernism, is that, while Graham Ward's essay in the symposium *Radical Orthodoxy* is discussed, John Milbank's name never appears. Subplot as it may be, anyway, this is a fairly reliable account of Catholic theology in the book which will continue for years yet to guide readers into the tangle of twentieth-century religious thought in the West.

F.K.

A Mystical Moral Theology

ames Keating

he discipline of moral theology is undergoing noticeable self-evaluation.[1] loral theologians are exploring the connections between moral theology nd Scripture, moral theology and virtue ethics, moral theology and hristology, moral theology and Patristics, moral theology and liturgy, and ioral theology and spirituality.[2] Moralists are looking for new onversation partners in order to stretch the discipline beyond the now amiliar relations that once bore fruit between moral theology and hilosophy, and natural law in particular. There are some stirrings to onverse again with philosophy,[3] but the noted activity most relevant to the ntent of this essay encompasses the explicitly theological.

My own "Moral Theology and" discourse has centred on the theme of rayer.[4] In so doing I am looking to reinvigorate a discipline that seems to e dying pastorally.[5] I have come to the conclusion that the best way to orm the conscience is not through formal moral theology courses and all he inner disputations that moralists have with one another. The best way to orm the conscience is to teach parishioners to pray, to love God in prayer, o come to know God in prayer and worship. In this I would dispute the hematic ordering of the *Catechism*: the section on ethics should appear ast, after a theology of prayer. In saying this, I am not arguing that moral lilemmas are immediately apprehended and solved in prayer. I am not aying that spirituality delineates specific steps to moral decision-*making*

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or that it clarifies a method to be used in such decision-making. All these issues and more need to be attended to properly as such. What I am saying is this: Discovering and living a moral life rooted in spirituality is the prime motivation for people to become deeply involved in the Catholic community.[6] It has also been reported that many people convert to the Catholic Church today because of its firm stand on moral issues that are currently in flux culturally. People are looking for stability, objective truth in a mystico-moral context.

Of course we have to think hard about issues and think through new circumstances that present themselves by way of scientific, political, and cultural change. Keeping the political mind distinct from any needed spiritual-moral conversion is a perennial pastoral task. There is a need to transcend the political world of factions, compromises, and power moves and so settle in to a life of discerning the true meaning of virtue. The political alone is wearying. We look for more lasting ground upon which to build a meaningful life than the political or even the simply ethical. To think clearly, however, one has to be attached to a worthy object of love — one has to acknowledge the effect that love has on thinking and behaviour.[7] What attracts the parishioners commitment is not talk about being good, or even virtuous; they instead are drawn to listen to words about holiness. I have found that when a path to holiness is pointed to, it is at least attended to with quickened hearts even as people fear the hardship of the journey. Generally speaking, then, the call to holiness is the pastoral matrix within which people long to exist.

Pastoral ministry will invite parishioners to not be interested in their own holiness, as an achievement, but in God's holiness as he comes to share it in the mystery of Christ. Here we fasten upon a key to mystical moral theology. Dennis Billy has described mystical moral theology as a reciprocal relationship between mysticism and morality. A mystical moral theology founds the capacity of a person to "see the church's moral teaching in an entirely new light. His or her moral action will take on a deeper significance, precisely because of [its] vocational nature".[8] Any mystical moral theology will adhere closely to the meaning of vocation. That is what mystical living is really all about, the rapt listening for truth found within the depths of our vocation as disciples. Here is the mystical root of moral truth—obedience to truth. For where truth is, there is Christ (John 14:6).

What a mystical moral theology endeavours to construct is a body of thought based upon the essential relationship the community has with Christ as reflected in explicit devotional, spiritual, and sacramental sources. In these sources one searches for the truth about what it means to love Christ as one who is discerning, and living moral virtue.

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In this essay I will explore the idea of a mystical moral theology from within the context of a pastoral theology in order to locate the gift of holiness within the ordinary features of parish life. In so doing, I will focus my ideas upon the reality of moral conversion, conscience formation and spiritual communion.

Mystical Experience

Of late there has been a universalization of mysticism. It is argued that we are all mystics.[9] Mystics are not an elite corps of persons descended upon by the Holy Spirit yielding rapturous outbursts. Rather, mysticism is living the Christian mystery and being transformed by it.[10] To democratize mysticism does risk reducing the concept to simply the life of faith, hope, and love. Thus, we can say that simply to be a Christian is to be mystical. Practically, then, there is not a mystical life apart from the ordinary life of a believer. We recognize then that mystical experience is not to be equated with sanctity. Such a universalizing of our idea of mysticism can sadden our romantic notions and aspirations, for when we think of the life of the believer, we tend to think of the Christians we know—our neighbours and the like. We would prefer to hold on to the idea of an elite corps of mystics who levitate or see visions, for example. Life without elite mystics is like reading Scripture after it is has been de-mythologized. The Gospels become simple collections of wise sayings by a good man, and all miracles therein are naturalized and explained away. I have never been privileged to have a full-blown rapturous mystical experience, *à la* Teresa, but I have had what I call "low-level mystical" experiences, as have my friends. These experiences involve what the secular mind would call "coincidences" or "curious simultaneous alignments of events." I, however, like to think that God sent me the unexpected check in the mail when I needed to pay bills and had no money, or God really did speak through my wife when she plainly and boldly spoke the truth about my character flaw, thus aiding my growth in virtue. These are true encounters with God, not yielding rapture, but very definitely yielding to silence, meditation, wonder, and most importantly, changed behaviour. Like the miracles of Scripture, no one can prove these ordinary coincidences were not real encounters with God, but some will simply opine natural causes for all events. Without negating rapturous mystical living, I would agree with Billy and others that mystical living is for us all. Of course rapturous experiences continue to happen and will continue to do so. No doubt however, they will not happen to us all. In this way, yet again, they are like the miracles of Scripture, wherein some people were healed by Christ but not all, and yet despite this selective healing, many still believed and followed in faith. Many will never know ecstasy, but they will still know a level of divine presence as the fruit of faith, hope and love.

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Living the Christian Mystery

The real question is not about mystic enthusiasm or experience but whether we live the Christian mystery so as to be transformed by it. The obvious answer is that some believers participate in this mystery at a deeper level than others. In saying this we recognize the existence of those Catholics who are commonly called "nominal," or more disparagingly, "weekend" or "seasonal." Few will dispute that some believers do not drink deeply from the wells of Christian mystery. If there are levels of participation in the mystery of Christ, then there can be conversations about needed moral and spiritual conversions among believers. Those who participate at minimal levels of spiritual living find it risky to take the journey toward moral conversion, to leave behind behaviour and character dispositions that have hitherto defined them. Only after being affected by and living in the paschal mystery can one find the needed sustenance to move from the ethos of the current culture to the ethos of the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16).

Due to dualistic thinking in our history over monastic and lay vocations, spirituality and minimalist moral legalism, the laity began to think that their participation in the mystery of Christ was simply passive and tangential.[11] The laity had the Ten Commandments; the religious had the sources of mystical communion with God. The "real" believers were those who lived under the evangelical counsels in vowed life; lay people simply lived vicariously off of the spiritual riches of these mystical dynamos. This whole reality has been well documented.[12] We are still trying to understand the reality of holiness in the lay life. Only 2001 years after Christ did any pope beatify together a married couple (Mr.and Mrs. Luigi Beltrame Quattrocchi of Rome, Italy). This delay may be due to logistical, biographical, and economic evidentiary problems, but it may also indicate the lack of any real pastoral tools to discern what holiness looks like in lay households. Developing a vision of holiness at the level of parish life, truly a vision of mystical moral living, will go a long way in articulating what characteristics are present there. The goal of developing this vision is to articulate and promote a formation of conscience that is based upon communion with God. This communion can be known in attending to the self-offering of Christ at the core of the Paschal mystery. This mystery is primarily approached through sacramental living but is also glimpsed in obedience to conscience and service to the poor.

I do not want to collapse the human into the divine when raising the question of mystical moral living, but I do want to introduce parishioners to the fire at the core of all that can sustain the transformation of a popular cultural conscience into a Catholic one. "Moral theology, faithful to the supernatural sense of the faith, takes into account first and foremost the spiritual dimension of the human heart and its vocation to divine love."[13] It

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is, of course, necessarily true that there is and remains a distinction between the natural law and communion with God. This distinction ought not become, however, a chasm wherein we continue to, unconsciously perhaps, promote dualism in an effort to prevent sloppy thinking. It has been argued that mystical living is one of profound appropriation of Christ's own consciousness.[14] Billy argues that the "revitalization" of parish life depends upon the explicit forming of the mystical moral parishioner.[15] By this I can imagine ministries that expose the parishioner to *the mind of Christ,* the heart of who he is in his own loving self-offering to the Father. The only way we can form persons so affected by Christ is to facilitate their participation in the virtues of Christ, thus securing a life of encounter with the Divine. These virtues are transformational in their giftedness, and from this change a person acts in accord with the mystery that has grasped him or her.

Livio Melina accurately describes the mystical core of moral living. "The Christian must, before all else, abide in the love of God precisely because, in Christianity, 'to receive' [the love of God] is the absolutely original event.... It is only by starting from the fullness of love manifested on the cross of Christ that the Christian receives the power to act in love."[16] Melina further describes the heart of Christian moral living as being a life inhabited by God and dwelling in God. The foundation of moral living is mystical. Catholic morality is, in other words, not about knowing the self but knowing and being known by God. In that knowing we do, of course, come to know what is true about the self, and out of that truth we make moral decisions commensurate with our dignity. It is in this core knowledge of God's love for us that we find foundational direction for being and doing what is Good. In living our lives within the love of God, we come to know our worth, a worth that directs us to retain within our consciousness a key question: "How ought one behave who is so loved?"

This is the mystical moral question of all parish formation initiatives. It is a question that begins within the decisive openness of *a person* to God, but it is already formulated in *a community* which has come to answer this question historically, seeking to retain its freshness and invitatory truth by way of memory, ritual, service to the poor, and tradition. The question "How ought one (and the community) behave who is so loved by God?" not only defines the core of a mystical moral theology but gives direction to ministry goals as well. This question carries within it the intersecting of two foundational pastoral questions: "Do you believe God loves you?" If so, "Have you allowed such a love to affect your transformation (in other words, do you love God in return)?" No matter how one structures the parish and its administration of programs, nothing will be accomplished spiritually if the interpenetration of the mystical and moral as related in

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these questions is not the focus of ministerial objectives. This is so because these questions constitute the heart of Christian discipleship itself. In these questions is an expression of the very mystery of Christ's coming. He comes to us as God's love, announcing the news that we are the object of God's good will. We, in turn, are challenged to respond in freedom, to raptly listen and to allow this truth to affect our thinking and choosing. In this response we become his disciples. We become people who seek after holiness.

Holiness and Moral Living

We can turn to the theme of holiness, because underlying it is the meaning of all mystical moral living: Will we or will we not achieve our destiny in God? This question underscores the drama of our lives. The parish community and its varied ministries is the location of precise reflection upon this drama and also the place wherein one lives out the drama with support from others and liturgy. Any mystical moral theology must begin with the question of holiness. To be holy is to share in the reality of Christ's mystery and mission. We each approach this participation in a uniquely personal way, and so each receives a "call" from God, a route to walk in the working out of our holiness. Knowledge of this call comes through prayer, and fidelity to it is known through moral conversion.[17] Saints make the shift from what they are in their own mind to what they are in God's idea or mind. We are holy when our truth is the same as God's truth. In becoming holy we at times have to suffer the truth; resisting it is our penchant toward sin.

The resources needed at the parish level for such growth in holiness are: **instruction** *in prayer and actual praying,* **skills of listening** *for moral truth,* and **communal support in receiving a moral truth** *that might call us to suffer its transforming power.* What is common to these three movements of parish-personal life is that they aim the participant toward *communion*: Communion with God in prayer, Communion with virtue in the discovery of truth, Communion with other disciples in a fellowship of conversion. A few assumptions ground these movements of communion. Parishioners need to personally appropriate these realities if a life of moral-mysticism is to be lived: "I want to know and be known by God; I want to be affected by the moral truth; I want these two goals so badly that I am willing to share life with others who are so inclined as well." These assumptions bring us back to the reality of nominal Christianity. The three assumptions imply a deep participatory commitment, not a tangential association. The parish community is to be established upon an ever-deepening call from Christ to come into union with his paschal mystery. Since the call from Christ is universal and ongoing, there is no warrant to

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build up an elite community. The very definition of evangelization is found in its gracious hospitality to all who desire salvation. This vision of parish might help to soften the defensiveness and political ideology that accompanies popular conversations about moral living. The mystical moral life is not about factions, camps and power; it is about *being overpowered* by truth, the truth of our identities as being founded upon communion with God, the good, and service to those in need. At the centre of such a vision is awe. We are in awe over our call to be with God and participate in the virtues of Christ even as we reverence the dignity of others in our outward behaviour. The condescension of God to think of us and love us and save us in Christ constitutes the very core of our awe. This awe is not a stammering emotional paralysis but a loving-knowledge that fuels contemplation and gives birth to moral action. This vision of parish moral living is an ideal, of course, but it is an ideal that can be lived. As Dennis Billy once wrote, "Ideals are meant to inspire not depress."[18]

Such a life of awe, of loving knowledge, is lived out in the context of a fellowship of conversion as previously noted. It is this identity that binds the parish to the mystery of Christ as *He who calls followers to himself.* This calling is an essential mark of the ministry of Christ and continues in and through the church. It is Christ who still calls, gathers, and sustains his disciples by feeding them His word. From within this kind of fellowship we can faithfully approach the meaning of Catholic moral living, and only in this kind of fellowship will its mystical depths be known and differentiated from "professional ethics" or an ethic of law. In a secular ethic of law, one simply asks about the location of boundaries beyond which "one can get caught and punished." For the parish, for those who have died to sin and are alive to Christ (Rom 6:11), a richer and more interesting life of the mind is in store as we think about right and wrong.

To be called by Christ to the fellowship of conversion is to be one who is open to change by such a call's very definition. The scriptural template for discipleship takes a person from a certain place and leads them to another. It takes them from death and sin and "the world" to a new and abundant life (John 10:10). One is responsive to the call of Christ because one sees that sufficiency does not lie in one's own theories or ideas, especially ideas that are defensively protected. Responsiveness is born of knowing one's lack, one's neediness and limit before divinity. Faith teaches that the guiding Spirit of Christ *inheres* in the Word, doctrine, and worship of the Catholic Church; no such promise is made of any secular institution. When one comes to the community of faith, *one comes to be changed.* By cooperating with that call to conversion, *one may also change the institution* in some of its structures and configurations, but the call is primarily to "come and follow me" (Luke 5:27), not come and re-organize

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the church. In fact, it is by abiding in the sacramental structures of the church that one facilitates conversion, personal or institutional (which simply means personal conversions *en masse*). It is from within this culture of conversion that the Catholic is given the sustenance and wisdom to initiate social, political and ecclesial reform where needed.[19]

A Life of Communion

How are we to understand moral-mystical living in the context of a fellowship of conversion? To answer this let me first return to the theme of communion as stated above. We are called to have communion with God, with the truth, and with one another. How are we to pastorally understand what *communion means* in these three areas?

Communion with God

To be in communion with God is to live united to God in the fullness of human existing. A person is united to God in thought, word, affect, and deed. One is known to God and knows the self as a result of being so known. This communion is ultimately the origin of human freedom and happiness. A person can only come into the fullness of his or her powers as he or she returns their life to God. Communion with God is reached through prayer, worship, and virtue. God reaches us, as well, when we search for God with all our heart, mind, and soul. To be a believer is by its very nature to be someone who seeks union with God.

Communion with Moral Truth

It might seem odd to speak of communion with moral truth, but this is so only if one imagines the meaning of moral truth to be exhausted in intellectual propositions. For the Catholic the moral truth is ultimately a person, Jesus Christ. Thus, when we seek communion with the moral truth we are seeking such truth in and through a relationship with Christ. What distinguishes this kind of communion from communion with God is that both one's love of God and love for moral truth are specified in a love for Christ. This is what constitutes both the love of God and the love of virtue as Christian. Such loves have to be directed to and through Him who is the way, the truth, and life (John 14:6). Christ reveals himself *to be virtue*.[20] To contemplate him in love is to put on his mind and to have this new mind affect the proceedings within our conscience. To love moral truth in and through Christ is to be claimed by the judgment of truth known in the conscience and to welcome that judgment as "holy." By this I mean welcoming the judgment as practically ultimate, as guidance from the indwelling Spirit of Christ received within the operations of reason.

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Communion with One Another

This component of the moral mystical life is one that appears most self-evident, and yet entering into communion with other human persons is notoriously difficult even as it remains the pen-ultimate purpose of our existence. To have communion with another is, for the purposes of articulating a mystical moral theology, to offer spiritual friendship. In spiritual friendship one wills the moral and spiritual good of the other. This is expressed in acts of virtue and in cultivating dispositions of petitionary prayer for another.

It is vital for moral theology to identify and support its roots in mysticism so that the burdens of moral conversion that the love of truth places upon the believer will be graciously carried out of love for God. It appears to me that many reject or resist moral truth because they do not see their moral behaviour as being immediately connected to their relationship with God. They do not fully know God in love and so connect being good only to abstract rules and distant authority figures who appear irrelevant and intrusive upon our individualistic lives. Once someone knows God in love, however, this love becomes clearly associated with being good. Dennis Billy notes this:

> Catholic Moral theology must continue to broaden the rational basis of its discourse to include the legitimate insights of mystical experience. It otherwise runs the risk of losing touch with an ever increasing number of believers whose primary motivation for leading the moral life comes from their intense and deeply personal experience of God in their lives.[21]

Beyond this, it is also vital to develop a language of mystical moral theology so that those persons with a more discursive bent will be able to recognize and analyze an intellectual content as being part of the fruit of mystical living.

The mystical element appears as vital to the Christian vocation and so demands to be looked at intellectually and fostered experientially, even in the context of moral deliberation. I say "even" because it was precisely in this context that mysticism became suspect and conjured up warnings about "enthusiasm" and the denigration of reason. To speak of a mystical element in morals, one does not have to lose reason as guide and norm. In fact it is reason that is affected by what a person loves in the spiritual life. In moral living, reason is directed toward truth and the will toward the good, but for the believer, Truth is a divinely good person to be loved: the Christ. In Christian moral discernment, reason converses with the object of choice to see if its worth is fit for one destined to share in the Paschal mystery.

In a mystical moral theology there can be no dichotomy between what

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is only an emphasis encompassing a whole: contemplation and action, being and choosing. The Augustinian and Thomistic emphases are not opposed but are simply two approaches to a whole mystery. Anselm Stolz comments on this tension. In the Augustinian idea on man,

> we are sanctified by grace, in this we know a penetration in the order of being, effected by the divine nature, which raises man above his nature into a higher, divine order. The difference between this and the basis of the scholastic idea is clear: in the former view, the accent falls upon the new godlike *being*; in the latter, on the capability of godlike *activity*.[22] (emphasis added)

Ultimately a mystical moral theology will focus its deliberation upon virtue and conscience formation from within a context of communion (being) and conversion (activity). In the context of communion one approaches the personal relationship dimension of Catholic living. In this formation one is immersed in the signs, symbols, and activities of adhering to Christ. This is a formation in the love of the person of Christ as centre and definer of virtue. In the context of conversion of conscience, one develops the capacity to judge action with a mind of one who loves this Christ. The approach, therefore, to a mystical moral life is one of prayerful reasonableness. St. Bonaventure taught that: "Christ our Lord, the Principle of our restoration, necessarily possessed the fullness of grace and wisdom which are for us the source of upright and holy living."[23] Bonaventure expressly teaches that God enlivens our acts and gifts us with virtue. God not only creates and sustains our lives but directs and enlivens our actions as well, actions which "set the soul aright."[24] The more our moral lives are sourced in fellowship with Christ, the more they will share in his wellspring of "upright and holy living." This quality of life is the goal of all who seek to know the good by knowing Christ. In turning our moral lives over to mystical sources, we anticipate what eternity unfolds, the complete definition of our lives as either for or against God. In life we are "free to turn toward either good or evil,"[25] and so we are bid to adhere to Christ while living in order to be so defined after death. A mystical moral life anticipates this eschatological reality and earnestly desires to begin heaven here, while doing the works in grace that will purify one of sin.

Therefore, the defining principle to a mystical moral life is the development of a prayerful obedience; a life of abiding in the conviction that Christ lives within us to teach us what is morally true. Mystics act in accord with the reality of Christ living within them even if they do not experience this presence emotionally. Karl Rahner called this "everyday mysticism." In everyday mysticism one performs his or her duty to moral truth out of love for the truth, out of love for God.[26] This obedience out of

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love alone points to the presence of the Holy Spirit, in the one who acts on truths despite accompanying pain or displeasure. This kind of living out of the love of Christ in the absence of personal pleasure is also seen to be at the core of St. Therese of Lisieux's ethic, for example. James Wisemen notes this about the Little Flower: "Even while experiencing nothing of the joy of faith, she continued 'trying to carry out its works at least' as by treating with special love a particular nun who was 'very disagreeable' to Therese on a purely human level but who became attractive to her because of 'Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul."[27]

St. Therese reflects what has also been noted of St. Augustine, his contribution to mystical theology is not in describing his own mystical experiences but in transforming those experiences into a universal description of the Christian life.[28] In a mystical moral theology one is bid to reflect upon moral acts which have their origin in personal mystic moments. Virtue has a public life only because of some interior dialogue between the self and the voice of God in conscience. Fastening upon moral truth is the fruit of a dialogue and not a monologue. Conscience is not exhausted in a self-to-self monologue wherein self-generated ideas are simply clarified. No, deep within a Christian, as evidenced by our teaching on the indwelling Spirit, we are connecting to Someone, obedient to Someone else. A "yes" to the truth of conscience as borne by the indwelling Spirit becomes public when virtue is acted out. Thus, Augustine had "private" experiences of God's love but knew that they were not for him alone; they were given so that in his living out of these experiences and articulating them he could become a witness for others to the power of the interior life. Mystical moral theology, however, is not simply about interiority, for we are judged on our discipleship not by the integrity of our union with God *in prayer* but by the *fruits of such prayer* in acts of love and virtue. In this way mysticism and morality are of a piece.[29]

Christ Empowers Us From Within

The Church Fathers saw the virtues as the fruits of the Spirit highlighting the reality of Christ's indwelling in the soul.[30] In order to even begin the moral life specifically as Christian, one must have entry into the mystery of Christ. Romanus Cessario has noted that participation in the Paschal Mystery is the condition for the possibility of listening to conscience as one would the voice of God.

> On the cross at Calvary, Christ embodies the supremely religious man. His death and all the mysteries of Christ's life *make it possible* for the human to practice that obedience to the divine will that restores and perfects the whole of creation.... Nothing is more real for the human creature than to seek conformity with the truth that exists in God.[31]

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Living out of the mystery engenders the capacity to do the moral good brought to the conscience. In articulating a mystical moral theology I am trying to re-establish broader parameters of **reason** that narrowed to logic or scientific method primarily[32] and broader parameters of **love** which go beyond the *simple willing of the good*, or being agreeable to what is good by possessing *pleasant feelings*, to a graced transformation of *loving what is good*. It is in this transformation wrought by the grace of Christ upon the cross and through the resurrection that one discovers the power and capacity to choose good, but more importantly, the desire and capacity to love the good now becomes possible. Life outside of this mystery becomes an invitation to rely on our own power to withstand the temptation to sin. Cessario teaches that ultimately the moral life is more about "completion" than "choice."[33] Here we come to understand the core of moral living as interiority, change of heart, development of virtue, cooperation with the gifts. This understanding is in contrast to a secular notion of "ethics" wherein one chooses according to a law or a code, a cultural fashion, or opinions of "experts."

This is not to say that mysticism or interiority ought to rule the day without some external guidance. Left to itself, morality can become an legalism and mysticism can become narrow autonomy. Both the legislator and the mystic can confuse their goals for God's. Only in the context of a faith community; its history, worship, and doctrine can we gain some moral certainty that a mystical morality will fruitfully bear the tension of its reality, veering not toward moral legalism or interior subjectivism but in fact, in this context, discovering truth more readily and abiding by its demands more eagerly. Mystical moral living then is "normal rounding off of Christian perfection.[34] In fact it is the mystic and prayer element of Christian morality that has always distinguished it from secular and or philosophical ethics.[35]

Summary

What clear contents can we now articulate about a mystical moral theology? In summary fashion one can state that a mystical moral theology will include:

1. A Christological focus in the contexts of the lives of the saints and sacramental living. This will secure or anchor moral theology in discipleship. Excellence in virtue will be seen as a fruit of discipleship. The reality of vocation will be central to the formation of the mystical moral believer.
2. Parishes will be centres of formation in living the mystery of Christ. The sacramental and service core of the parish will help people realize entry into the reality of God's love in Christ upon the cross.

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3. A complete formation in the mystical moral life will include instruction in prayer, the imparting of skills of listening, and the communal support necessary to receive the moral truth when it entails suffering.

4. Growth in our consciousness that the parish constitutes a fellowship of conversion will bind us to Christ as He who calls us away from sin and toward virtue.

5. In this fellowship we will learn to welcome a reason that is affected by mystical love. Decisions will be the fruit of person's mind appropriating truth in a context of devotion to God.

6. A goal for all conscience formation will be the taking on of a disposition of prayerful obedience, a disposition of eager longing to do what is true and good and beautiful in Christ.

1 Peter Black and James Keenan, "The Evolving Self-Understanding of the Moral Theologian: 1900-2000," *Studia Moralia* 39 (2001): 291-327.

2 See William Spohn, *What Are They Saying About Scripture and Ethics*, (NY: Paulist Press 1995 revised edition), 'The Recovery of Virtue Ethics', *Theological Studies* 53 (1992); Livio Melina, *Sharing in Christ's Virtues* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995); Harmon Smith, *Where Two or Three are Gathered: Liturgy and the Moral Life* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1995); and E.Byron Anderson and Bruce Morrill, ed., *Liturgy and the Moral Self* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1998); Mark O'Keefe, OSB, *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy: On the Relationship of Christian Ethics and Spirituality* (New York: Paulist 1995).

3 Romanus Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, (Washington D.C.:Catholic University of America Press, 2001) e.g. 73. Throughout the text Cessario dialogues with philosophy as he develops his own Thomistic realist ethic. See also,Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason, 1998).

4 Dennis Billy and James Keating, *Conscience and Prayer: The Spirit of Catholic Moral Theology* (Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 2001); James Keating and David McCarthy, "The Habit of Holiness: The Ordering of the Moral Mystical Life," *Communio* (Winter 2002); James Keating, "Religious Piety and Public Catholicism," *Logos* (2002); Keating, "The Conscience Imperative as Prayer," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 63:1 (1998); Keating, "Prayer and Ethics in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 62 (1996-1997); Keating, "Prayer and Ethics in the Thought of Karl Rahner," *Studies in Spirituality* 7 (October 1997); and Keating, "Listening to Christ's Heart: Moral Theology and Spirituality in Dialogue," *Milltown Studies* 39 (Summer 1997).

5 See Anthony Ciorra's and my effort to reinvigorate reflection on pastoral moral formation, *Moral Formation in the Parish* (New York: Alba House, 1998).

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6 Mark Peyrot and Francis Sweeney, "Determinants of Parishioner Satisfaction Among Practicing Catholics" *Sociology of Religion* (61:2, 2000) 218.

7 Few Catholics are going to change objectively immoral behaviour because the authority of the Church says to, and since blind obedience is beneath our dignity (Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* [The Splendor of Truth, 1993], no. 42), that is not an incorrect stance. Negative reactions against church teaching authority may be present for many subjective, political, or philosophical reasons. Some of these objections may be better grounded than others.

8 Dennis Billy, "Mysticism and Moral Theology" *Studia Moralia* (Vol 34 n.2 December 1996) 410.

9 Anthony Ciorra, *Everyday Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1995),see also, Michael Stoeber, "Mysticism and the The Spiritual Life: Reflections on Karl Rahner's View of Mysticism" *Toronto Journal of Theology* 17/2.2001 263-275

10 Dennis Billy, "Moral Mysticism in the Parish setting" in James Keating, ed. *Spirituality and Moral Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000) 11.

11 Ibid. 13-17.

12 Dennis Billy, "The Unfolding of a Tradition" in Dennis Billy and Donna Orsuto, eds. *Spirituality and Morality: Integrating Prayer and Action* (New York: Paulist 1996) 9-31.

13 Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 112.

14 Edward Howells, "Mysticism and The Mystical" in *The Way Supplement* ("Christianity and the Mystical, 2001) 25.

15 Dennis Billy, "Moral Mysticism in the Parish Setting" 20.

16 Melina, *Sharing in Christ's Virtues*, 145-46.

17 Victorian Harrison, "Personal Identity and Integration:Von Balthasar's Phenomenology and Human Holiness," *Heythrop Journal* 40, n.4 (1999), 426.

18 Dennis Billy, "Moral Mysticism in the Parish Setting" 30.

19 James Keating, "Religious Piety and Public Catholicism," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture,* (vol.5:2 Spring, 2002)

20 Zachary Hayes, "Bonaventure: Mystery of the Triune God" in Kenan Osborne, OFM, ed. *The History of Franciscan Theology* (St. Bonaventure N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1994) 84.

21 Dennis Billy, "Mysticism and Moral Theology" 414.

22 Anselm Stolz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 171.

23 St. Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* II, Part IV, Chap. 7, p. 165.

24 Ibid .,194.

25 Ibid., 258.

26 Karl Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 20.

27 *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1993) s.v. "Mysticism," 688-9.

28 Frederick Van Fleteren, et.al. eds. *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994) 143.

29 Ibid., 274.

30 Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*: *From Plato to Denys* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981)197-8.

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31 Romanus Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology* xviii, xxi.
32 Billy, "Mysticism and Moral Theology", 407.
33 Cessario, xx.
34 Stolz, *The Doctrine of Spiritual Perfection*, 180.
35 Enda McDonagh, *Doing The Truth* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 60.

Casting the Nets of Symbolism

Christopher Dyczek

A bridging-passage in a piece of music can have several roles. One of them is to make us wish that we might fully appreciate the effect of the music's ending when it comes. Able to hear the separate musical messages converge. In her great work *The Dialogue*, a complex meditation, Catherine of Siena speaks of 'the lovely and glorious bridge' of Jesus' presence as having a similar role. Although 'he was no longer with you'—and here, adding her own reflection to scripture, she adopts a voice as God's own—'his teaching remained.' The reader is addressed as one of the disciples who, on the day of the Ascension, were 'as good as dead, because their hearts had been lifted up to heaven.' The bridge himself has ascended, and we, the reader-followers, must ask, 'Where can I find the way?'[1] As we shall see, Catherine expects her metaphor of a bridge to play many parts in the dramatic speech patterns of conversion. It can stand for the reliable relationship we have with Christ through all our own difficulties. But it stands also for our vantage point of calmly casting nets to help others in trouble. Theological discourse has not often called on one symbol to be so versatile, although the image of each stone which contributes to a tower in *The Shepherd of Hermas* is similarly polyvalent. A recent translator of *The Dialogue*, Suzanne Noffke, suggests that Catherine may have had in mind the kind of walled bridge which was built over the Arno, containing shops. This was a route allowing concealment but could also mean sudden surprise for the traveller herself. It might indicate a suitable direction to evade severe pressures.

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