Comment: *The Catholic Subplot*

John Macquarrie's *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought* came out in 1963. The fifth edition, with the cover photograph of Archbishop Oscar Romero, is not only an updating of the most widely read one-volume survey in the English language but also an invitation to reflect on how dangerous it has sometimes been for Christians in the past half century (London: SCM Press, 2001, 495 pages, £19.95 paperback).

Much less traumatically, it is instructive to trace a subplot, the developing interest in Roman Catholic theology from the first to the fifth edition. Professor Macquarrie has always been hospitable to viewpoints other than his own. As it turned out, the first edition coincided with unexpected events in the history of Catholic life and thought. Macquarrie was able to refer readers to his chapter on 'Neo-Thomism and Roman Catholic Theology', but, whatever the 'preparations', he allowed from the second edition onwards that the *aggiornamento* at the Second Vatican Council went 'far beyond what anyone had expected'. Indeed, according to Macquarrie, the Catholic theologians who emerged 'became the theological giants of the last part of the century, in no way inferior to those Protestant giants who had dominated the earlier decades' — as significant, then, as Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and suchlike. You don't have to be a Protestant to regard that as a pretty large claim. If Roman Catholic theology had once been noted, Macquarrie says, 'for its extreme conservatism or even immobility, it now showed itself to be the most exciting and significant theology going on anywhere in the world'.

The pre-Vatican II world that Macquarrie sketches is now quite remote. It is not, however, particularly marked by 'immobility'. Macquarrie has already informed us about Maurice Blondel, Friedrich von Hügel, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Louis Lavelle, variously disruptive, all of course maverick figures. Within mainstream Neo-Thomism he discusses the 'pioneers', specifically at Louvain, D.J. Mercier (better known in England as the Cardinal Archbishop sponsor of the Malines Conversations) and Maurice de Wulf ('the historical scholar of the movement'): their readings of Thomas Aquinas were always intended to engage with 'modern thought'.

Macquarrie's reading is omnivorous. Few can have expected him to mention Peter Coffey, professor at Maynooth, 1902-43, whose work he treats with respect. As Macquarrie no doubt knows, this is the very same Coffey whose book, *The Science of Logic*, was comprehensively rubbished by the young Wittgenstein in *The Cambridge Review* in 1913.

In the second generation — 'the flowering of Neo-Thomism' —

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Macquarrie discusses the work of Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, and F.C. Copleston, as well as that of Austin Farrer, one of the 'notable thinkers ... in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England'.

Much later in the book, in his survey of the post Vatican II Catholic theologians, Macquarrie includes Eric Mascall, 'one Anglican who is philosophically close to them'. Mascall is immediately preceded by Hans Küng, never any kind of Thomist and a theologian (one imagines) to whom Mascall could never have felt 'close'. Perhaps misled by Mascall's restrained critique in his Edinburgh Gifford Lectures (1970-71), Macquarrie places Mascall's work on Aquinas as anticipating Transcendental Thomism. *He Who Is*, however, owes more to the tradition of Gilsonian Existential Thomism, totally incompatible with the Maréchalians.

The pre-Vatican II theologians next on Macquarrie's list are Karl Adam (1876-1966), whose book *The Spirit of Catholicism* is certainly 'something of a classic'; Erich Pryzwara (1889-1972), a highly exotic and idiosyncratic thinker, remembered best in British theology for his essay *Polarity: A German Catholic's Interpretation of Religion* (Oxford 1935); Jean Daniélou (1905-1974), whose role in biblical and patristic ressourcement undoubtedly helped to prepare the way for Vatican II; and, fourthly and finally, Fulton J. Sheen (1895--1979), 'a popularizer of the same type as Joad [C.E.M. Joad], and perhaps with rather similar merits and defects' (page 298).

It is hard to believe that Bishop Sheen would figure in any Roman Catholic survey of twentieth-century religious thought. This is an example of Macquarrie's generosity of spirit. After all, Sheen's 'numerous writings put across theological and philosophical ideas to vast numbers of people who would never read the more demanding literature on these subjects'. In what ways these theologians significantly affected the 'renewal of Catholic theology' would certainly be worth exploring.

Macquarrie (as noted) includes Mascall as a Catholic theologian. His work, sadly, is almost completely neglected. Currently, the only secondary literature is an unpublished Oxford doctorate dissertation comparing his doctrine of the church with that of Lionel Thornton, equally neglected.

Macquarrie's Catholic giants are Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Edward Schillebeeckx, Louis Bouyer and Hans Küng. No surprise there. Nor, given that 'religious thought' is slanted towards philosophy, is it a surprise that Yves Congar is never mentioned: his influence, at Vatican II, as regards doctrine of the church and ecumenism, was profound; but (arguably at least) only indirectly connects with Macquarrie's main concerns in this book. On the other hand, if it was worth discussing de Wulf (let alone Coffey), it was surely much more important to mention M.-D. Chenu's contribution to reading Aquinas in

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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 ıoral 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 ıtent 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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