

MORAL NOTES

CRISES AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J.

A bibliographical review of themes in fundamental moral theology over the past four years evidences an astonishingly frequent reference to crises—in identity and in the Church. Reviewing the literature also yields other more promising developments wherein ethicists are becoming more theological and historical in their work.

IN A BRILLIANT ESSAY IN *Theological Studies*, Stephen Schloesser argues that Vatican II was not merely possible; it was morally necessary. Considering World War II, the Holocaust, atheistic communism, the atomic age, and the cold war, Schloesser reminds us that the council opened just days before the Cuban Missile Crisis, “a time when the world had to endure its deepest anxieties.”¹ He argues that the world crises that lasted into the early 1960s inevitably prompted the church to rethink its role both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. If the crises of 1962 brought us Vatican II, can we, with the same expectancy, face the crises constantly emerging today?

In a fascinating study of the history of moral theology, Karl-Heinz Kleber reflects on the phenomenon of crises: “crises run throughout the history of theology” and, citing an article by Gustav Ermecke, adds that crises are not simply possible; they are necessary.² Reading Kleber and Schloesser we might feel more confident with the benefits of the hindsight

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¹ Stephen Schloesser, “Against Forgetting: Memory, History, Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 275–314, at 276. On anxiety in the council, see Philippe Bordeyne, *L’Homme et son angoisse: La Théologie Morale de “Gaudium et Spes”* (Paris: Cerf, 2004).

² Karl-Heinz Kleber, *Historia docet: Zur Geschichte der Moralthologie*, *Studien der Moralthologie* 15 (Münster: LIT, 2005) 25; Gustav Ermecke, “Die katholische Theologie in der Krise,” *Münchener theologische Zeitschrift* 32 (1972) 194–205.

of history, but then again when we look at the present situation, we might ask, do we really need *all* these crises?

Consider, for instance, the words of Antonio Papisca, UNESCO Chair of Human Rights at the First International Cross-Cultural Conference of Theological Ethicists in Padua, Italy, in 2006:

The grave dangers of the present hour include infinite war, permanent political destabilization in many regions of the world, the praxis of falsehood and cynicism, the insolent violation of the rule of law, homicidal and suicidal terrorism, the impudent practice of torture, indifference and even contempt vis-à-vis the poor, the destruction of the natural environment, and the deployment of dehumanizing biotechnologies.³

Papisca's words identified no less than nine deeply embedded, yet ever unraveling crises.⁴ This review of the literature in fundamental moral theology illustrates that indeed many theologians perceive the present time as one of crisis. In the first two parts of this note, I examine two crises, those pertaining to identity and to the church. Certainly there are other crises surrounding health care and the environment, issues addressed in these moral notes by Maura Ryan and Daniel Cowdin. There are also the gross crises regarding the rule of law and the war in Iraq, a topic that will be addressed in next year's moral notes.⁵ But for now, I look only at the crises dealing with identity and the church. As I do, I believe it becomes evident that theologians and ethicists not only name the crises, but they also offer indications of how nations and the churches ought to proceed in resolving them.

³ Antonio Papisca, "The Needs of the World and the Signs of the Times," in *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church*, ed. James Keenan (New York: Continuum, 2007) 11–19, at 11 (hereafter, *CTEWC*).

⁴ Many of these topics are addressed in the forthcoming second volume of papers from the Padua conference: Linda Hogan, ed., *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

⁵ Jean Porter says these crises are due to "an emerging pattern of disregard, or worse, outright rejection of a fundamental ideal of the rule of law" ("Due Process and the Rule of Law," *CTEWC* 147–51, at 147). Many works highlight the crisis regarding law. See John Perry, *Torture: Religious Ethics and National Security* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2005); Bruce Ackerman, *Before the Next Attack: Preserving Civil Liberties in an Age of Terrorism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University, 2006); Tobias Wainwright, "Just Cause and Preemptive Strikes in the War on Terrorism: Insights from a Just-Policing Perspective," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26 (2006) 157–82; Jonathan Rothchild, "Moral Consensus, the Rule of Law, and the Practice of Torture," *ibid.* 125–56. See also John Langan's perceptive essay, "Hope in and for the United States of America," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25 (2005) 3–16 and Stanley Hauerwas, Linda Hogan, and Enda McDonagh, "The Case for the Abolition of War in the Twenty-First Century," *ibid.* 17–36.

In the third part, I examine two trends in theological ethics that strengthen our ability to respond to these crises: that ethicists are becoming more theological and more historical. Throughout, however, I ask the reader to notice how frequently the word *crisis* is invoked. Undoubtedly, it captures our time.

IDENTITY CRISES IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Mawuto Roger Afan, from the Ivory Coast, names “the crisis of identity” as Africa’s most substantive challenge. The creation of African nation-states left a distinctive incoherency in African countries. “When we speak of the specific culture of a country in the context of the African countries—where the borders do not follow any logical or obvious criterion (whether geographical, sociological, linguistic, or cultural)—we must note that this factor (culture) can divide the population of a country, instead of functioning as an element that binds it together.” He gave two specific instances of what divides culture. Language, “considered as the central element of a culture, is a striking example. The constitution of the African states presupposed linguistic divisions which have never been overcome.” Second, “a number of people are excluded from political life in the country in which they live because they were not born in the national territory. In view of the fact that the creation of our territories is later than the date of the *birth* of the persons in question, we must acknowledge that the criterion of *birth* does not suffice to provide a positive definition of national identity in Africa.”⁶ One’s place of birth and one’s language usually constitute one’s identification within a native or national culture. Not so in Africa. To respond to these challenges, Afan raised the task of awakening in every African a “concern for a rational coherence in the organization of life in common.”⁷

Like Afan, Tanzania’s Laurenti Magesa also claims identity as Africa’s most critical challenge. “A significant part of the history of Africa and its people is slavery and colonialism. There has never been a tragedy in human history to rival these experiences in cruelty and destructiveness of human dignity and identity.” This destructiveness led to a perception of African life and civilization as “not of much significance, if indeed any at all, for humanity.”⁸ Later Magesa names “African self-doubt” as “perhaps the most embracing factor in African ‘anthropological poverty.’” He explains:

⁶ Mawuto Roger Afan, “The Main ‘Building Sites’ of Ethics in West Africa,” *CTEWC* 39–48, at 40.

⁷ *Ibid.* 41.

⁸ Laurenti Magesa, “Locating the Church among the Wretched of the Earth,” *CTEWC* 49–56, at 50.

It occurs as a result of the fact that African self-appreciation as fully human, with as many God-given intellectual and spiritual gifts as those of any other people, has been severely diminished, or in some cases almost destroyed. For this reason, these gifts are rarely put to use by Africans for the benefit of the continent as a whole. In the cases when they are used by some, they are resented and blocked by others. All this contributes to the challenge of African identity.⁹

Though he does not name it as such, Magesa believes that the crisis in identity is deeply connected to a critical inability to form community. That insight is also deeply present in Afan's essay. The two crises reinforce each other.¹⁰

From Chile, Tony Mifsud named the phenomenon of a growing asocial, individualistic mentality as his country's most formidable challenge to identity. "The problem is not so much the loss of old social models, but rather the weakness of the new imaginary collectives which fail to shape a shared *we*. Modernization is not only changing countries externally, but also the physiognomy of society." Globalization, the reshaping of the *nation*-state through the logic of neoliberalism, consumerism wherein "social recognition is related to purchasing power," and the modernization of communications "are all radically changing the context in which the society develops."¹¹

Mifsud turned to another significant component: "the process of individualization. Today's individuals distance themselves from inherited traditions and affirm their right to define for themselves what they want to do with their lives. This process can lead to a reformulation of social relationships, but it may also result in an asocial mentality."¹² Shaping one's identity without social institutions's claims becomes then a Catch-22: "this need to build one's own identity is not based on support from the society, because individuals do not consider themselves interpreted or represented by social systems." As a result "their process of individualization tends to move toward ethical individualism."¹³

Mifsud notes that the institutions from which Chileans increasingly dissociate themselves includes the church. In fact, the church's "incipient loss of social credibility from the onslaught of reports about cases of pedophilia

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ On a similar note, see the Nigerian, Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, "The Challenge of Africa to the Western Conscience: US Bishops and Solidarity with Africa," *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 17 (2005) 3–28.

¹¹ Tony Mifsud, "Moral Reflection in Latin America: Challenges and Proposals within the Chilean Reality," *CTEWC* 131–37, at 131.

¹² Ronaldo Zacharias raises this difficulty as a cause in the growing lack of sensitivity to the phenomenon of social exclusion: "Dreaming of a New Moral Theology for Brazil," *CTEWC* 116–23.

¹³ Mifsud, "Moral Reflection in Latin America" 132.

at both the national and international level” only supported the move away from all institutions.¹⁴

The question of identity and the experience of willingly or unwillingly being disassociated from existing groups of people (let us not even call them communities) is faced not only by the refugee or the immigrant;¹⁵ while evidently local, it seems universally pervasive.

Identity is intimately linked to the formation of community. In the philosophical and subsequent theological shift to the subject, we find the post-modern person wondering about not only how to form a community but also whether one *can* be formed, whether it will ever really be inclusive, and whether one cares to shape it in the first place.¹⁶

All these issues confront contemporary Europeans as they form their Union against the background of globalization. Marianne Heimbach-Steins names two major trends: “a deeply rooted insecurity on the individual and the collective level caused by *political change, growing economic pressure, and social disparities*; and an *increasing cultural and religious plurality* which forces different identities to meet and interact within one and the same society.”¹⁷ Heimbach-Steins sees hope in the promise of greater dialogue in the church, among churches, and with other religions. She writes, “To make Catholic ethics an influential factor within the process of turning Europe into a political union and a space of peaceful cultural exchange we need to improve our communication in a way which allows a fruitful discourse with other worldviews.” She sees this possibility as “a question of both the identity and the relevance of Catholic faith and its ethical impacts.”¹⁸

While Spain’s Marciano Vidal also sees hope that the church will provide such guidance for Europe,¹⁹ Poland’s Piotr Mazurkiewicz argues that most of Europe is not only uninterested, but would be hostile to any such guidance. Looking at recent European Parliamentary Resolutions on homopho-

¹⁴ Ibid. 154.

¹⁵ See William O’Neill, “Rights of Passage: The Ethics of Forced Displacement,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 113–37.

¹⁶ Lucas Chan Yiu Sing looks precisely to postexilic literature to find a similar situation: returning home, Israel is anxious about how to form a community and whether it should and can include the alien. Chan turns to the figure of Boaz as a paradigm of hospitality then and now. “A Model of Hospitality for Our Times,” *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 10.3 (2006).

¹⁷ Marianne Heimbach-Steins, “Political-Ethical Challenges in Europe: A Christian Socio-Ethical Perspective” *CTWEC* 101–7, at 101. See, Paolo Giusta, “Fondamenti etici dell’Unione Europea,” *Rivista di teologia morale* 39 (2007) 417–30.

¹⁸ Heimbach-Steins “Political-Ethical Challenges in Europe” 107.

¹⁹ Marciano Vidal, “Theological Ethics in Europe, Especially Southern Europe,” *CTEWC* 93–100.

bia and stem-cell research, he sees such positions as an attempt to “turn around the paradigm of the vision of man and culture. The phenomenon is rightly encapsulated by what Nietzsche called: ‘the revaluation of all values.’” Mazurkiewicz sees these trends, which progressively counter church teachings, as “a manifestation of a deeper cultural crisis which plagues Europe, the crisis defined by Cardinal Ratzinger as ‘the West’s almost pathological hatred of itself.’”²⁰

Though with a very different read on it, Mazurkiewicz sees the European position as arising from the same source as Mifsud does: “The endeavour to reevaluate everything around us relies to a great extent on the individualist concept of a person which is gaining ground in the public awareness.”²¹

Globalization causes crises beyond the borders of Europe as well. In a riveting essay, Clement Campos refers to several challenges facing India, among them globalization and environmental damage. Globalization, he writes, “has been enthusiastically received by the elite and the media with a flood of goods, increased connectivity, and the tantalizing prospect of a better lifestyle. The reality is that these benefits have reached only a small minority.” Moreover, “poverty has increased and life has become far more insecure.”²² Considering astonishing downturns in the economy, Campos describes “the crisis” of more than 25,000 Indian farmers committing suicide over the past ten years.²³ He concludes that a “major ecological crisis [is] brewing in India” resulting from corporate globalization and unjust free trade policies implemented by the World Trade Organization.²⁴

In an essay on the challenge of pluralism, Brazil’s Marcio Fabri dos Anjos brings the crises of identity and globalization together:

The concept of subject enters a crisis with the depersonalizing process of the global economy and its methods of production; global pluralism weakens the conscious-

²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Europa, jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro (Europe: Its Spiritual Foundations of Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow)* (Kielce: Jednosc, 2005) 31.

²¹ Piotr Mazurkiewicz, “On Stem Cells and Homophobia,” *CTEWC* 108–13, at 112.

²² Clement Campos, “Doing Christian Ethics in India’s World of Cultural Complexity and Social Inequality,” *CTEWC* 82–90, at 83. See also George Therukattil, “Moral Theologizing in the Liberative and Pluralistic Context of India,” *Journal of Dharma* 27 (2002) 33–51.

²³ Kenneth Melchin speaks similarly “of the crisis in Canadian agriculture that has arisen due to the forces of globalization” (“The Challenge of World Poverty: Continuity and Change in Theological Ethics from a Canadian Perspective,” *CTEWC* 152–58, at 157).

²⁴ Indian Theological Association, “Ecological Crisis: An Indian Christian Response,” in *Theologizing In Context: Statements of the Indian Theological Association*, ed. Jacob Parapally (Bangalore: Dharmaram, 2002) 252–64.

ness of the people, annulling the participatory power of the subject.²⁵ This deepens the crisis, and challenges moral theology to express itself in a way that empowers persons and groups as subjects of their history, in contrast to this global process that fragments the participation of the subjects. And in a way that favors the consciousness and practices of the subject, that contributes to the consciousness and practices of the people and of the community.²⁶

Finally, the interdependent issues of identity and communicating so as to form community occurs in another location, cyberspace. In a fascinating issue of *Concilium*, John Ottmar raises the question of cyberethics, and again names identity as the critical challenge today. Indeed, on the internet we have the power “to construct identities,” even multiple ones. This power is radically problematic. “Such a diffusion of identities is a threat particularly to those who are fascinated with the internet and enter into playing with their own identity.” He proposes that certain players “have a chance to become champions of the stabilization of a human identity and subjectivity which is able to take control of the escaping simulation of their identities. They enhance a self which is aware that identities themselves cannot be constructed, but only their appearances.”²⁷ If the internet globalizes our capacity to communicate and form communities, is it all a façade if the identities are not true ones? Of course, postmoderns like Veronika Schlör reminds us that in postmodernity, identity “is no longer fixed, clearly definable.”²⁸ Fine, but what if the identity is a lie?²⁹

CRISES WITHIN THE CHURCH

Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred edited a collection of essays entitled *Christianity in Crisis?* They noted that, “in a world which is becoming a

²⁵ See Hans Hinkelammert, *El grito del sujeto* (San José, Costa Rica: DEI, 1998).

²⁶ Márcio Fabri dos Anjos, “Community and Pluralism: Challenges to Moral Theology,” *CTEW*, 228–36, at 232. See also, from India, Felix Wilfred, ed., *Minority Rights in the Age of Globalization*, a splendid collection of essays published in, *Jeevadhara* 34.199 (2004); and the essays on “Globalization and Justice” by Italy’s Enrico Chiavacci, Sri Lanka’s Vimal Tirimanna, and Uganda’s John Mary Waliggo in *CTEW* 237–62.

²⁷ John Ottmar, “Cyberethics: New Challenges or Old Problems,” *Concilium* 2005/1 15–26; Eric Borgman, Stephan van Erp, and Hille Haker, “Introduction: Cyberspace–Cyberethics–Cybertheology,” *ibid.* 7–11.

²⁸ Veronika Schlör, “Cyborgs: Feminist Approaches to the Cyberworld,” *ibid.* 60–67. On a related topic, see Courtney Campbell, Lauren Clark, James Keenan, David Loy, Kathleen Matthews, Terry Winograd, and Laurie Zoloth, “Bodily Incorporation of Mechanical Devices: Ethical and Religious Issues,” *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 16 (2007) 227–37; 16 (2007) 268–80.

²⁹ For a fine article about issues of ethics and women in the digital age, especially as servicing U.S. call centers in India, see Pushpa Joseph, “Gender and Digital Development,” *Jeevadhara* 36.211 (2006) 49–64.

‘different’ world, ‘another world,’ crisis is inevitable.” They acknowledge that “crisis is a sign of vitality for any person, institution, or group in the process of becoming new and different.” But they also add, worse than crisis, “is the failure to acknowledge the existence of crisis.”³⁰ For them the identity crisis concerns Christianity itself, and most especially when leadership fails to realize that there is a crisis in the first place.

From Africa, Peter Kanyandago confirms the editors’ general assessment:

The churches [in Africa] seem to be living as if there is no crisis. The biggest challenge facing the African churches seems to be the failure to create an interface between what people are living and experiencing, and the Christian message as conveyed mainly through the western historical and cultural influence that has strongly marked African Christianity. This separation between reality and what Christianity stands for is a form of schizophrenia.³¹

This problem of the church’s ability to live the gospel in all its specificity without the trappings of Western philosophy or methodology, which so often translate local experience and need into a foreign idiom, is not only part of the problem of the church throughout Africa; it is also found in Latin America and throughout Asia.³²

From the Philippines, Dionisio M. Miranda writes: “Since fundamental ethics, the prism through which Western morality analyzes issues and responds to them, is itself in crisis due to hermeneutical challenges to the tradition, Asian theological ethicists are hesitant to acculturate to an obsolescent heritage or to import it into one’s idiom; one might just as well justify pouring old wine into fragile wineskins.”³³

From Japan, Adolfo Nicolas comments that the theological subtleties that Europeans and Americans employ to explain away contradictions between practices and preaching are not credible for the minority church of Christianity in Asia. As Nicolas writes, “In Asia we are in crisis because our message is not made visible in our life.” Thus, “in this kind of crisis, we are transformed from judging others to being judged ourselves.”³⁴

³⁰ Jon Sobrino and Felix Wilfred, ed., *Christianity in Crisis?* Concilium 3 (London: SCM, 2005) 7.

³¹ Peter Kanyandago, “African Churches and the Crisis of Christianity,” *ibid.* 71–75, at 71–72.

³² See Edouardo de la Serna, “The Crisis of Christianity in Latin America,” *ibid.* 84–88.

³³ Dionisio M. Miranda, “What Will You Have Me Do for You? The Theological Ethics Agenda from an Asian Perspective,” *CTEWC* 176–84, at 179.

³⁴ Adolfo Nicolas, “Christianity in Crisis: Asia. Which Asia? Which Christianity? Which Crisis?” *Christianity in Crisis?* 64–70, at 66–67. See also the volumes “Asian Hermeneutics: New Horizons,” *Journal of Dharma* 30 (2005) 281–91; and “Asian Hermeneutics,” *Asian Horizons* 1.1 (2007), esp. A. Mathias Mundadan, “Asian Hermeneutics from a Historical Perspective” 37–66.

But throughout the church we are in a crisis of credibility about whether we really are who we say we are and whether leadership in the church, whether in Africa, Europe, or Asia creates the place for us to work out these issues.

The Neapolitan ethicist in Münster, Antonio Autiero, in the keynote address of the Palermo Conference, "Liturgy and the Public Square," reflected on the search for this space in the church. He contended that the problem "is above all the knowledge that normative and strictly deductive superstructures expressed in authoritarian control suffocate the space of authentic liberty of adult subjects mature enough to make autonomous and responsible moral choices. Now it is time to ask whether and how far the Church presents itself to postmoderns as an inhabitable home from this point of view also." He then reflected on "the most recent developments":

One cannot deny that there is a movement away from the Church, quite explicitly or sometimes even simply pragmatically, precisely on account of the Church's insistence on moral themes public or private, marked by normative solutions that make little sense to the critical consciousness of contemporary men and women.³⁵

In many ways, the fundamental problem facing the church is the gulf between the teachings the leadership expresses and the needs and faith that the people of God hold.³⁶ Two major European ethicists recently debated this topic under the heading of *sensus fidelium*.³⁷ This exchange between France's Paul Valadier and Italy's Giuseppe Angelini reminds us that wherever we sit in this debate, our own preconceptions about this topic probably need to be challenged.

Valadier finds *sensus fidelium* rooted in the ancient tradition of the church. He writes, "It is one way of doing justice to the scriptural theme of the common priesthood of the faithful (according to 1 Pet 2:17 and numerous other passages in the New Testament, e.g., 1 Cor 12:4–11 and Eph 4:4–6), and it permits us to express the idea that through baptism, the Holy Spirit is poured out on all who believe in Christ, in fulfillment of the promise which God made to the prophets of the old covenant."³⁸

From the Scriptures, Augustine, and other patristic figures, to John

³⁵ Antonio Autiero, "L'uomo tra 'polis' ed 'ekklesia': La questione antropologica nell'orizzonte della teologia liturgica," *Annali di studi religiosi* 8 (2007) 237–49; "The Human Being between Polis and Ekklesia," *Studia Liturgica*, forthcoming.

³⁶ See David Hollenbach, "Catholic Ethics in a World Church: A U.S. View," *CTEWC* 140–46.

³⁷ See also John J. Burkhard, "Sensus Fidelium," in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*, ed. Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2007) 564–79.

³⁸ Paul Valadier, "Has the Concept of *Sensus Fidelium* Fallen into Desuetude?" *CTEWC* 187–92, at 187.

Henry Newman and *Lumen gentium* no. 12, Valadier invokes innumerable sources, “because I wish to note and deplore the fact that such a fundamental subject has very frequently been the object of suspicion, or at least that it has not enjoyed the place and the importance in the church’s life and thought which is in fact its due.” Valadier uses the Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian, promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1990, as an example of a Roman instruction that expresses “considerable reservations on this subject.”³⁹

For Valadier, *sensus fidelium* is not a polling of the faithful to know what they believe; rather it is the intelligibility of the faith as it arises from the faithful. In this way, the *magisterium* of the hierarchy is really only possible to the extent that it expresses the faith that has been received. Without it, the laity becomes passive and the hierarchy remote, leading to a gulf of suspicion on both sides of the divide. The hierarchy’s devaluation of the traditional notion of *sensus*, however, is:

the source of the widespread perception that the ecclesiastical magisterium does not know whether people are listening to it and that this is why it is forced to repeat the same ideas, which are put forward again and again, but never genuinely received. The magisterium feels compelled to raise its voice, thereby forgetting that a Truth which is not heard or received or recognized, but is merely repeated with stubborn obstinacy, becomes inaudible and loses its character of Truth. . . . An isolation of this kind promotes dissent, disregard of the church’s moral teaching, and an indifference vis-à-vis what the church says, because the pronouncements show no sign that the church cares about the effective reception of its message. This leads to serious and highly disturbing divisions within the church, or even to schism.

He concludes:

The only way out of this impasse is to accept debate and discussion more honestly than is common today. . . . The concept of *sensus fidelium* envisages a lively dialogue between those who take part in the life of the church, not only the descent from “on high” of imperative propositions that are to be received by an inert crowd. It is this lively dialogue, this “wonderful exchange,” that makes mutual understanding possible.⁴⁰

Monsignor Angelini has a different take on the subject. “In response to unsatisfactory aspects of the responses given by the magisterium to the new moral problems, especially those concerning the sphere of sexual behavior, modern theology makes a precise accusation: the magisterium ignores the *sensus fidelium*.” But, argues Angelini, inasmuch as moral theology began only after the Council of Trent, the concept was *not* a part of the history of

³⁹ Ibid. 188.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 190–91. See also Paul Valadier, *Détresse du politique: Force du religieux* (Paris: Seuil, 2007).

morals. Thus, “only in this very recent period has the category of *sensus fidelium* made a genuine appearance on the stage of moral theology.”⁴¹

Like Valadier, Angelini insists that the opinions of the faithful cannot be simply identified with the *sensus fidei*.⁴² But he adds: “The sense of the faith is a property of theological faith; and, as God’s gift which enables one to adhere personally to the Truth, it cannot err. This personal faith is also the faith of the Church since God has given guardianship of the Word to the Church. Consequently, what the believer believes is what the Church believes. The ‘*sensus fidei*’ implies then by its nature a profound agreement of spirit and heart with the Church, ‘*sentire cum Ecclesia*.’”⁴³ Angelini argues, “What we basically lack today is not in fact a reference to the *sensus fidelium* in the documents of the magisterium, but rather the elaboration of an effective *sensus fidelium*, a common *sentire* on the part of believers with regard to the new problems of choice with which they are confronted by the changed context of society.”⁴⁴

To dispel these confusions, Angelini insists, we must get to where the community of faith actually reflects the faith of the Church. Here he appeals to ministerial experience: “Every minister of the Church, who is called in virtue of his ministry to encounter the conscience of individuals, has innumerable opportunities to observe the gap between the language which the individual speaks and his true attitudes, or his *conscience*.”⁴⁵ He adds: “The idea of the *sensus fidelium* refers to the conscience of the faithful, and more precisely to the testimony which this conscience bears to the Christian truth. We certainly cannot assume that this attestation immediately takes on a verbal form, articulated in a series of propositions; rather, it is realized by means of ways of *sentire*.”⁴⁶

Angelini looks to the preaching of the apostles after Pentecost as the beginning of the *sentire* when the hearers of the word find their hearts penetrated, and this in turn leads to their conversion and lives of faithful belief. “These brief formulations indicate very well the original structure of faith in Christ: it is only by means of a real journey that we can reach the place where we dwell, or even learn where it is. Those who wish to become disciples must pass through this apprenticeship.”⁴⁷ Thus he concludes, “This believing and critical adoption of the tradition of the children of Adam finds its definition precisely by means of the forms of ecclesial

⁴¹ Giuseppe Angelini, “The *Sensus Fidelium* and Moral Discernment,” *CTEWC* 202–9, at 203.

⁴² He refers the reader to Dario Vitali, “*Sensus fidelium e opinione pubblica nella Chiesa*,” *Gregorianum* 82 (2001) 689–717.

⁴³ Angelini, “*Sensus Fidelium*” 297 n. 3.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 203.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 204–5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 206.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 207.

communion, which must give a form to that *sensus fidei* which determines the initial proclamation of the Gospel, thereby equipping it to serve as a criterion of moral discernment.”⁴⁸

Neither of these scholars then believes that there has been a satisfactory expression of *sensus fidelium*. Though Angelini pleads for a deeper, nonreductive understanding of the maturation that *sensus* must undergo, Valadier raises the question of the urgency that the magisterium must understand better the conscientious claims of the people of God who have not been able to say that they “felt that their hearts were pierced.” In both instances, the work of leadership is to gather the people together to reflect with realism on their faith and on their location in the world and in history. That coming together in faith and in hope so as to listen, understand, and guide might well mean a considerable shift in the self-understanding of the church’s leadership.

BECOMING MORE THEOLOGICAL AND MORE HISTORICAL

While all these crises are emerging, there are other developments of note: many theologians are becoming more interested in ethics, and many theological ethicists are becoming both more theological and more historically-minded.⁴⁹ As if directly responding to Autiero’s challenge, England’s ecclesialogist Gerard Mannion turns to ethics and virtue so as to bring the church’s moral vision into its own practices. In *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time*, Mannion reviews problematic ecclesiological responses to postmodernity, including the “neo-exclusivism” of *Dominus Iesus* and its hermeneutics of refusal. Looking for a new paradigm while heeding a postmodern regard of the other, he finds great promise in comparative ecclesiologies. He offers a virtue ecclesiology that “might enable Christians to explore in a comparative fashion what sort of communities their churches are in reality and what they aspire to be in accordance with the gospel and the rich traditions of Christianity.”⁵⁰ He builds on the priority of love in the Christian moral life, seeing particular promise in the virtue of humility.⁵¹

Mannion’s turn to virtue is paralleled by the recent work of Günther

⁴⁸ Ibid. 209.

⁴⁹ See Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, “Classical Catholic Moral Theology and the World Church: Some Suggestions on How to Move Forward,” *Louvain Studies* 30 (2005) 276–98.

⁵⁰ Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 2007) 227.

⁵¹ See, from the Philippines, an essay on teaching with authority: Francis Gevaert, “Theology and Listening: Some Phenomenological Musings,” *MST Review* 7.1 (2005) 86–108.

Virt, the senior theological ethicist of Austria. In writing about the possibility of the future of humanity, Virt also takes up the virtue of humility, as well as the forgotten virtues of *epikeia* and truthfulness. He does this to secure the specifically Christian formation of conscience.⁵²

In an engaging essay, Lisa Fullam sees humility as a “pilgrim’s virtue,”⁵³ while Christopher Vogt provides a groundbreaking essay on common good and virtue ethics, using the virtues of solidarity, compassion, and hospitality as foundational sources.⁵⁴ Through the virtues, Jennifer Herdt revisits Erasmus and Luther, and William McDonough reconsiders Etty Hillesum.⁵⁵ Elsewhere Dan Daly and Vincent Leclercq apply the virtues to the professional fields of medicine and ministry respectively.⁵⁶

Like Mannion, the Nigerian Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, another student of ecclesiology, turns to theological ethics in two recent books and provides a passage from crisis to hope. In *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refuges and Poverty*, Orobator demonstrates how the sociological category of crisis correlates with the theological conception of *kairos*. Wanting to demonstrate that the church “operates at a very concrete and experiential level,” he argues that, “when it comes to understanding the community called church in Africa, we derive considerable benefit by situating it in relation to the social contexts and conditions that shape its function, meaning and theology.”⁵⁷ To accompany this project more practically Orobator has co-authored with Elias Opongo a manual to help communities deal with local, contextual issues, bringing the issues of analysis, social teachings, and justice to instructive purpose. Using simple, sample cases—for example, the right to land and housing, standing up against corruption, encountering ethnic discrimination—the authors lead communities to understand how they can

⁵² Günther Virt, *Damit Menschsein Zukunft hat: Theologische Ethik im Einsatz für eine humane Gesellschaft* (Würzburg: Echter, 2007).

⁵³ Lisa Fullam, “Humility: A Pilgrim’s Virtue,” *New Theology Review* 19.2 (2006) 46–53.

⁵⁴ Christopher Vogt, “Fostering a Catholic Commitment to the Common Good: An Approach Rooted in Virtue Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 394–417.

⁵⁵ Jennifer Herdt, “Virtue’s Semblance: Erasmus and Luther on Pagan Virtue and Christian Life,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25 (2005) 137–62; William McDonough, “Etty Hillesum’s Learning to Live and Preparing to Die: *Complacentia Boni* as the Beginning of Acquired and Infused Virtue,” *ibid.* 179–202.

⁵⁶ Daniel Daly, “Prudence and the Debate on Dying,” *Health Progress* 88.5 (2007) 49–55; Vincent Leclercq, “La morale des vertus dans la formation des futures pretres,” *Seminarium* 46 (2006) 895–921.

⁵⁷ Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *From Crisis to Kairos: The Mission of the Church in the Time of HIV/AIDS, Refugees and Poverty* (Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 2005) 18.

consider their challenges, analyze them, and act to resolve them. It is a paradigm for moral formation.⁵⁸

As in Africa, so too in the United Kingdom, Philomena Cullen, Bernard Hoose, and Gerard Mannion have edited a collection of essays to make Catholic social teaching more accessible.⁵⁹ Similarly, in the United States, the Church 21 Project at Boston College has launched its own book series through Crossroads, publishing books on sexuality, the priesthood, inculturation, and the faith.⁶⁰ These are clear testimonies to the need in the church for deeply theological investigations that bear on our ordinary lives of faith and morals.

Clearly, theological ethicists are becoming more conversant with the whole of theology, a task that Jean Porter endorses wholeheartedly. "What I am suggesting, therefore, is that our discipline of Christian theological ethics should become even more robustly and resolutely theological than it already is. Indeed, I believe the field of theological ethics is best construed as one aspect of theology *simpliciter*."⁶¹ New theologians like William Mattison III,⁶² David Matzko McCarthy, and M. Therese Lysaught take up this challenge.⁶³ Two salutary instances of the type of work that Porter encourages are Lisa Sowle Cahill's consideration of the atonement paradigm in the light of the ethics of the kingdom of God and the option for the poor⁶⁴

⁵⁸ See Elias Opongo and Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *Faith Doing Justice: A Manual for Social Analysis, Catholic Social Teachings and Social Justice* (Nairobi: Paulines Africa, 2007).

⁵⁹ Philomena Cullen, Bernard Hoose, and Gerard Mannion, ed., *Catholic Social Justice: Theological and Practical Explorations* (New York: Continuum, 2007). See also, *Deus Caritas Est*, papers presented at the *Deus Caritas Est* Study Day, Institute Series 5 (London: The Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, 2007).

⁶⁰ See the following works published by Crossroad in 2006: Robert Imbelli, ed., *Handing on the Faith: The Church's Mission and Challenge*; T. Frank Kennedy, ed., *Inculturation and the Church in North America*; Donald Dietrich, ed., *Priests for the 21st Century*; Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, and T. Frank Kennedy, ed., *Sexuality and the U.S. Catholic Church: Crisis and Renewal*.

⁶¹ Jean Porter, "Christian Ethics and the Concept of Morality: A Historical Inquiry," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 26 (2006) 3–22, at 17.

⁶² William Mattison III, "The Changing Face of Natural Law: The Necessity of Belief for Natural Law Specification," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 (2007) 251–80.

⁶³ David Matzko McCarthy and M. Therese Lysaught, ed., *Gathered for the Journey: Moral Theology in Catholic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

⁶⁴ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "The Atonement Paradigm: Does It Still Have Explanatory Value," *Theological Studies* 68 (2007) 418–32.

and Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor's essay on liturgy and life.⁶⁵ A third instance comes from the memoir of Charles Curran, who has always defined the church itself as the starting point of moral theology, and reminds us that it is largely the work of systematic theologians that has brought theological ethics to where it is today.⁶⁶

Still, it would be good for us to remember that Europeans have been promoting the theological foundations of theological ethics since 1920. Leaders like Odon Lottin, Fritz Tillmann, and Gerard Gillemann argued in the first half of the last century that moral theology had to reconnect with its theological roots.⁶⁷ Vincent LeClercq reiterates this point in his essay on the works of Gerard Gillemann and Rene Carpentier in the 1950s.⁶⁸ Their work came to fruition in Bernhard Häring's *The Law of Christ*, now celebrating its 50th anniversary. In his superb lead essay in a volume celebrating the anniversary, Raphael Gallagher makes clear that ethics derives from the church's reflecting theologically on the Gospels through its traditions.⁶⁹ As Gallagher, Eberhard Schockenhoff, and Josef Römelt each show, Häring's point of departure was always theology, and from there he sought through ethics to engage culture and its sciences.⁷⁰

A superb example of a contemporary European theological ethics being robustly theological is Martin Lintner's study on an ethics of gift. Lintner seeks to take the radicality of Christ's incarnation and work of redemption as the only feasible expression of a genuine gift ethics, that is, a thoroughly unmerited and freely given gift. He turns specifically to 2 Corinthians to find the genuine embodiment of gift in him who became sin for us.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, "Liturgy and Life: A Discussion from an African Christian Perspective," *Worship* (forthcoming, 2008).

⁶⁶ Charles E. Curran, *Loyal Dissent: Memoir of a Catholic Theologian* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2006).

⁶⁷ See James F. Keenan, *Toward a Global Vision of Catholic Moral Theology: Reflections on the Twentieth Century* (Bangalore: Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, 2007).

⁶⁸ Vincent Leclercq, "Le Primat de la charité de Gillemann et la Conscience de Carpentier: Le Renouveau Théologique de la Vie Morale," *Studia Moralia* 44 (2006) 353–75.

⁶⁹ Raphael Gallagher, "Das Gesetz Christi: Seine Bedeutung für die Erneuerung der Moratheologie," in *50 Jahre "Das Gesetz Christi"*, ed. Augustin Schmied and Josef Römelt, *Studien der Moralthologie* 14 (Münster: LIT, 2005) 11–42.

⁷⁰ Eberhard Schockenhoff, "Pater Bernard Häring als Wegbereiter einer konziliaren Moralthologie," *ibid.* 69–92; Josef Römelt, "Fides quarens scientiam, Das Gespräch Bernhard Härings mit dem Humanwissenschaften am Beispiel der Ethik der Familie und der Bioethik," *ibid.* 93–114. See also, Giuseppe Quaranta, *La cultura pieno sviluppo dell'umano: Il concetto e la funzione della cultura nel pensiero di Bernhard Häring* (Rome: Alfonsianum, 2006).

⁷¹ Martin M. Lintner, *Eine Ethik des Schenkens*, *Studien der Moralthologie* 35 (Berlin: LIT, 2006) 424–25.

Lintner felicitously describes other models as inevitably economically contaminated (“eine ökonomische Kontamination”).⁷² If Christ is the model of gift, what are we to do? In reply, Lintner takes up Bonhoeffer’s ethic of being a disciple of Christ and there finds a theological immediacy and a theological realism. Wanting to bypass any ontological or metaphysical context that could possibly mediate and therefore compromise the true immediacy of the christological and soteriological claims of Paul, Lintner asks us to see that we are called to do as Christ has done, and therein discover precisely how we can be related to God and one another.⁷³

Another new European scholar, Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl studies the theology of happiness in the writings of Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas so as to develop an ethical framework relevant for ordinary life today.⁷⁴ Like Häring, she begins from the theological, providing an apt lens for viewing contemporary literary concepts of happiness so as to offer theologically ethical analysis.

While we can expect more ethical studies that emerge from deeply theological contexts,⁷⁵ another noteworthy development among theological ethicists is the turn to history. Kleber’s *Historia docet* is a brief but important overview of what we can learn from history, but other contemporary works by theological ethicists also convey that we need to know history if we want to face the future with open eyes.

One of the most significant contributions comes from Renzo Gerardi’s *Storia della Morale: Interpretazioni teologiche dell’esperienza cristiana: Periodi e correnti, autori, e opera*. First, a caveat: in terms of the historical research or even the actual contributors to the history of moral theology, Gerardi knows next to nothing outside of continental Europe. With this serious omission noted, his book is a brilliant work, a landmark.

Gerardi introduces us to an encyclopedic categorizing of all the major figures who affected the Christian moral life over the past 20 centuries, including not only ethicists (predominantly) and theologians, but also inspired figures like Hildegard, Theresa of Avila, and John of the Cross. There are eleven chapters, each covering a century or two, except the fourth chapter spanning the fifth to the ninth century. Each period begins with a comprehensive bibliography of the period and is followed by a narrative. Most centuries are broken into several movements, and each of

⁷² Ibid. 21.

⁷³ Ibid. 424–28.

⁷⁴ Kerstin Schlögl-Flierl, *Das Glück: Literarische Sensorien und theologisch-ethische Reaktionen*, Studien der Moraltheologie 36 (Berlin: LIT, 2007).

⁷⁵ Through the lens of theological-pastoral theology, Agnes Brazal and Andrea Lizares Si offer an edited collection of essays from Asia: *Body and Sexuality* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 2007).

these is given “characteristic” descriptions. For instance, the 16th century has eight sections, each accompanied by a general bibliography and descriptive “characteristics” and then followed by entries on specific theologians. The eight sections are: humanism, with three entries on Erasmus, More, and Vives; the conquest of the Americas, with an entry on John Mair; the Council of Trent and Adrian of Florence; Dominican theologians (nine entries, including Cano, de Medina, de Vitoria); Grand Masters of the Spiritual life (Teresa and John); the *Summae Confessorum* with five entries (e.g., Navarro, Toledo, Borromeo); the Jesuits (including, Sanchez, Vazquez, Suárez); and finally the birth of the *Institutiones Morales*, with an entry on Juan Azor. Each entry is usually marked by anywhere from a few sentences to several paragraphs and is accompanied by a considerable bibliography of the available primary sources and secondary literature.

The characteristics are often accompanied by comments on the method and contents of these writings. Throughout the text, Gerardi names with great specificity and correctness, how the person of a particular entry influenced the field of theological ethics. The book is as a tour-de-force; there is nothing like it anywhere. Even if one does not know Italian, the book is worth its price for the bibliographies.⁷⁶

Four historical works by young scholars investigating history suggest that what we thought might be true was not.⁷⁷ In *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition*,⁷⁸ India’s Shaji George argues that the trajectory of theological development of teachings on sexual pleasure would eventually arrive at a work like Christine Gudorf’s, *The Body, Sex, and Pleasure*. Whereas the patristic theologians developed a Christian apologetics on the body, importing from philosophy a more negative perspective than found in the Scriptures, later theologians, notably Thomas Aquinas, Martin LeMaistre, John Mair, Thomas Sanchez, and Alfonso Liguori provided enough theological innovation that when the church wanted to explore more fully and more openly the question of sexual pleasure as a good, the theological resources were there. For instance, Liguori and 19th-century figures like Jean Pierre Gury and Bishop Francis Kenrick write about a wife’s right to sexual satisfaction even if her husband climaxes and withdraws. This issue of mutuality in sexual relationships, George argues, is probably the factor that broke the negative view of sexuality expressed in earlier theologies.

⁷⁶ Renzo Gerardi, *Storia della morale: Interpretazioni teologiche dell’esperienza cristiana: Periodi e correnti, autori e opera* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 2003).

⁷⁷ Along these lines of mistaken assumptions, see Saju Chackalackal, “Rewriting History: A Critique,” editorial, *Journal of Dharma* 28 (2003) 145–49.

⁷⁸ Shaji George, *The Concept of Sexual Pleasure in the Catholic Moral Tradition* (Rome: Gregorian University, 2007).

From Germany, Alexander Flierl presents a fascinating book on the history of moral teaching on everyday lying.⁷⁹ He finds from the early life of the church that there have always been two schools of thought: one describing the lie as an absolutely wrong action, the other referring to scriptural cases⁸⁰ and validating as morally legitimate certain exceptions. With Augustine, Aquinas, and Kant contending that lying is always wrong, Flierl argues that their counterparts, John Chrysostom, Bonaventure, and Samuel Puffendorf, found moral exceptions.⁸¹ Even today, ethicists are found on either side of the divide: Germain Grisez's unconditional absolute repudiation of every lie contrasts with Eberhard Schockenhoff's differentiation between *blößen Falschaussage* (a simple falsehood) und *die Lüge* (a lie).⁸²

Like Lintner, Flierl turns to Dietrich Bonhoeffer to suggest that the less absolute position might actually be more objectively moral.⁸³ Bonhoeffer does not see truthfulness and lying as metaphysical, stand-alone categories that are contextually free, but rather as utterances about reality as it.⁸⁴ Bonhoeffer is not interested in relativizing truth, but from prison he sees truth and falsehood in a more immediate context.⁸⁵ Flierl argues that normative universals are inadequate for looking at the shape and purpose of daily human interaction, and so he turns to a variety of more contextually based moral methods to find the resources for judging about everyday lies.⁸⁶

From the United States, Julia Fleming studies the so-called "prince of laxists," the 17th-century Spanish Cistercian Juan Caramuel.⁸⁷ In a stun-

⁷⁹ Alexander Flierl, *Die (Un-)Moral der Alltagslüge?! Wahrheit und Lüge im Alltagsethos aus Sicht der katholischen Moralthologie*, Studien der Moralthologie 32 (Münster: LIT, 2005).

⁸⁰ See Genesis 27; 29:23; 31:35; 34:14–25; 38:13–26; Exodus 1:17–20.

⁸¹ See Flierl, *Die (Un-)Moral der Alltagslüge?!* 231. He compares the six authors from pages 78–231.

⁸² *Ibid.* 203–20, 232.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 289. For Bonhoeffer on lying, see his "Fragment eines Aufsatzes: Was heist die Wahrheit sagen?" in *Konspiration und Haft, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke*, vol. 16, ed. Eberhard Bethge (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1996) 619–29.

⁸⁴ Flierl, *Die (Un-)Moral der Alltagslüge?!* 289–90.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 291. Bonhoeffer writes: "niemals aber darf man um der Gefahren willen, die in dem Begriff der lebendigen Wahrheit liegen, diesen zugunsten des formalen, zynischen Wahreitsbegriffes aufgeben" ("Fragment eines Aufsatzes" 624).

⁸⁶ Flierl turns to Rahner's existential ethics, decisionist models, institutional ethics models, and virtue ethics. On the wider topic of conscience conflicts, of which lying is frequently cited, see Anjali Therese, "Conflict of Conscience: An Activist's Viewpoint," *Jeevadhara* 204 (2004) 507–17.

⁸⁷ Julia Fleming, *Defending Probabilism: The Moral Theology of Juan Caramuel* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2007). See also Martin Stone, "Adrian of

ning investigation into Caramuel's work as well as into his acquiring such a notorious title, Fleming suggests why history is so important for keeping the church and her theologians truthful.⁸⁸ From the Philippines, Eric Marcelo Genilo provides a sympathetic and comprehensive analysis of the complexity of the thought and person of John Ford, the man arguably most responsible for convincing Pope Paul VI that he could not change moral teaching on birth control.⁸⁹

While theological ethics is becoming more theological and more historical, let me close this review by recognizing that, as I tried to demonstrate throughout, it is also more global. With that insight, I end by mentioning two noteworthy books: a very sensitive "first book" on the writings of Josef Fuchs on conscience being brought into a Japanese context by Osamu Takeuchi,⁹⁰ and the mature, systematic thoughts on fundamental moral theology by the ever surprising Enrico Chiavacci, now in his 82nd year.⁹¹

Utrecht and the University of Louvain: Theology and the Discussion of Moral Problems in the Late Fifteenth Century," *Traditio* 61 (2006) 247–87.

⁸⁸ On this see, Francis Sullivan, "Do the Sins of Its Members Affect the Holiness of the Church?" in *In God's Hands: Essays on the Church and Ecumenism in Honour of Michael A. Fahey, S.J.*, ed. J. Z. Skira and M. S. Attridge. (Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2006) 247–68.

⁸⁹ Eric Marcelo Genilo, *John Cuthbert Ford, SJ: Moral Theologian at the End of the Manualist Era* (Washington: Georgetown University, 2007).

⁹⁰ Osamu Takeuchi, *Conscience and Personality: A New Understanding of Conscience and Its Inculturation in Japanese Moral Theology* (Chiba: Kyoyusha, 2003).

⁹¹ Enrico Chiavacci, *Theologia morale fondamentale* (Assisi: Cittadella, 2007).