

ORTHOPRAXIS AND MORAL THEOLOGY

At a certain level it might seem superfluous, even tautologous, to speak of moral theology and orthopraxis. What is moral theology about if not the conduct, the right conduct, the orthopraxis of Christians? The relatively late distinction between dogmatic or doctrinal theology and moral theology as it began to prevail from the seventeenth century was based on a distinction between the study of revelation as truth or truths to be believed by Christians and a study of the practical or moral demands which they had to fulfill. In that sense dogmatic theology took care of orthodoxy while moral theology might be said to have taken care of orthopraxis, if the expression had been around. Despite the apparently radical developments in moral theology, particularly in the last thirty years during which the manuals which dominated since 1600 suddenly disappeared, that general picture of the scope and relationship of dogmatic and moral theology still prevails. In an effort to do justice to the complexities of that persisting view of the relationship and to the challenge facing it from the current theological interest in praxis and orthopraxis, it will be necessary to rehearse, from the moral theologian's viewpoint, some fairly obvious features of the conventional distinction between doctrinal and moral theology in its theoretical conception and actual realization.

The actual development of moral theology as a distinct discipline with its own teachers and textbooks was largely due to the post-Tridentine emphasis on the training of confessors. Of course theological treatment of morality was as old as theology itself. Since the thirteenth century at least it had coexisted with summaries for confessors which derived from the Penitential books first introduced by the Irish monks. However, from the seventeenth century, moral theology in its predominant mode began to offer a comprehensive outline of Christian conduct and especially misconduct on the basis of moral law organized under the headings of the ten commandments. This outline was later elaborated in terms of natural law argument and increasingly supplemented, if not overshadowed, by the provision of canon law. The earlier relationship with an integral theology never entirely disappeared. In the Dominican and other traditions the virtues rather than the commandments provided the architectural structure of the discipline as well as a more obvious connection with basic doctrinal truths of creation, redemption and grace. Such speculative moral theology however made much less impact than the practical moral which these traditions had also to provide. Important individual attempts were made to broaden the scope of moral theology beyond the needs of confessors and to introduce a full-scale theology of Christian living directly related to the themes of doctrinal theology, as for example, in Tubingen in the early nineteenth century. It was not until these last decades and particularly in

the aftermath of Vatican II that the manuals, their scope and their approach were finally seen as inadequate. At the fundamental or introductory level moral theologians have been trying to integrate moral theology more fully into the total theological enterprise by relating it more closely and more directly to the work of biblical scholars and dogmatic or doctrinal theologians. (I continue for the moment to use these terms, despite their obvious limitations, because they have been the traditional correlatives to moral theology. Newer terms within the Catholic ambience such as systematic or critical theology do not convey this distinction and contrast.)

The current renewal marks an important break with and advance on the manual tradition. It is now possible to speak with much more conviction of moral theology as a theology of Christian living deriving from an analysis of the event of Jesus Christ as "the way and the life" correlative to the dogmatic analysis of that event as the truth. Doing the truth that is Jesus Christ becomes the starting point of moral theological analysis and the core of its conclusions. Orthodoxy and orthopraxis seem to fit together neatly as the concerns of dogmatic and moral theology respectively. In such a theological world the problems confronting this paper would reduce to some further elaboration of moral theology as analysis of Christian living and charter of orthopraxis, deriving from the truths of orthodoxy. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, that is not the theological world theologians really inhabit.

It is certainly not the world moral theologians inhabit. The return to Christian sources in Scripture and doctrine has had a significant impact, particularly on fundamental or general moral theology. Yet even here one sometimes get the impression that the overall vision and approach, the broad theological framework centered on the events and truths of salvation, do not affect so intimately the analysis of such general moral themes as human freedom and responsibility, moral norms, conscience and development as much as some traditional and contemporary philosophical, psychological and even sociological insights. It is difficult, for example, to find in such tracts a thorough discussion of the cross as central to Christian living or a corresponding analysis of the meaning of the cross in moral theology.

Moving from the more general discussions of fundamental moral theology into the more specialized areas of Christian life and practice, connection with specifically Christian events and truths tend to become more tenuous and vague. This is of course a generalization to which there may be many exceptions for particular authors discussing particular problems. And it is a generalization applicable primarily to the Western world. The special cases of Latin American and other third world theologians are not considered here because they do not operate primarily as moral theologians, although their work has moral implications, as we shall see. Some moral theologians with a narrative interest might also be excepted at times. Biblical sources may be invoked simply to provide directly moral teaching in the conventional mode rather than any broader and deeper access to the structure and mystery of Christian living. For all their polite deference to the great salvific events and

truths, moral theologians feel bound to get on with more exacting analysis of particular moral questions from homosexuality to political violence in ways basically akin to the ways of their manualist predecessors. Appeals to biblical theological insights appear as a kind of paraneitic overlay or the result of soft-headedness or muddle-headedness. Sometimes they are. What is at issue here, however, is not the adequacy of the strictly (i.e. non-theological) moral analysis or the soft-headedness of the theological, but the recognition that most moral analyses and moral theologians operate with categories and modes of argument that seem to owe nothing to Christian faith or theology. To see such analyses as comprising a theology of Christian living and so a charter of orthopraxis for Christians is not at first sight convincing and may presuppose certain relationships between faith and ethics, indeed grace and nature, which may be questionable but are seldom questioned by Roman Catholic moral theologians.

The un-questioning by moral theologians of certain theological presuppositions is due in part to their acceptance of dependent relationships on biblical scholars and dogmatic theologians. The accepted roles of biblical scholars as determining what exactly the Bible or founding tradition was saying and of dogmatic theologians of translating that into meaningful categories and language for contemporaries defined the role of the moral theologians as applying their findings to contemporary living. Their work was dependent on and derivative from the dogmatic theologian and biblical scholar. In so far as they were concerned with (Christian) praxis, their work was dependent on and derived from the (Christian) theory elaborated by the dogmatic and biblical scholars. The inevitable remoteness (as the moral theologian saw it) of doctrinal truths and debates from more pressing moral issues may have led moralists to ignore or detach themselves from scriptural and dogmatic studies, but it did not alter the priority given to these studies or the structural dependence of moral theology on them.

This relationship led to some curious consequences in Roman Catholic theology. The theology and the theologians enjoying the greatest academic prestige were dogmatic. (This has altered in the last couple of decades to include Scripture scholars.) As long as the student body was made up exclusively of ordinands to the priesthood, moral theology and moral theologians enjoyed a certain practical primacy. For the mixed student body of today moral theology is much less significant than theology. It is frequently treated as a supplementary or subsidiary study and described simply as ethics. Its derivative and dependent position has become, if anything, more marked.

The dependent and frequently detached position of moral theology has undoubtedly impoverished it. The impoverishment is not confined to moral theology. The primacy which dogmatic theology enjoyed as theory tended to isolate it in an enclosed academic or at any rate theoretical world. Some of the great dogmatic theologians of our own day, such as Rahner and Schillebeeckx, have echoed Aquinas and Augustine in tackling the practical and ethical dimensions of Christian

truth. Yet the predominant treatment of the great traditional dogmatic themes, unity and trinity of God, creation, incarnation, redemption and resurrection have been studied and developed in an ecclesial and intellectual atmosphere which effectively removed them from the living and doing and questioning of the body of Christians. The intellectual and theological attempts of moral theologians to analyze that living and doing did not for the most part enter into the questioning and analysis of dogmatic theologians. The faith which they were clarifying was primarily an intellectual or cognitive stance, a theoretical one. Practice would come later as application. This led, for example, to a Christology preoccupied with its intellectual formulations and its fidelity to traditional formulations and almost totally unaware of how acceptance of Jesus involved a total way of life. This could only be subsequently reflected on and analyzed as comprising intellectual and practical components in a way in which the intellectual, cognitive components were continuously influenced by the practical. The primacy of theory evident in the historical primacy of dogmatic theology succeeded to a large extent in sealing off theological understanding of Jesus Christ from the questions and the insights which following Jesus Christ as a way of life must inevitably produce. The current interest in a practical or political Christology, in understanding Jesus through living discipleship, reflects a broader preoccupation with praxis and the theory-praxis relationship. It also reflects a dissatisfaction with a kind of theologizing that gave the impression of being entirely removed from the realities of Church and world within which theologians and Christians must also live and act. The twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel (how we know Jesus Christ) may well combine with Marx's second thesis on Feuerbach (on truth as a practical question) in undermining some cherished theological structures. At least the primacy of a theoretical dogmatic theology uninfluenced by the practical needs of the time and from which a practical or moral theology derives, is no longer unquestionable or unquestioned.

THE PRAXIS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Praxis and orthopraxis are not traditional Christian terms but are and may be usefully employed today. The orthopraxis or right conduct of Christians is the conduct, way of life or praxis appropriate to disciples. Moral theologians of Christian background must seek to clarify the praxis of discipleship. Other modes of expression for the task of moral theologians have been and are used. I choose disciple and discipleship as suggesting a more dynamic reality than simply Christian or Christian believer while at the same time attending to the distinctively Christian character and biblical origin. Discipleship is also a traditional theme in Christian theology although it has in modern times been discussed more in spiritual and ascetical theology. Fritz Tillmann made a heroic effort to give it a central role in the renewal of moral theology with his massive pioneering moral work *Die Nachfolge Christi* in the 1930's. It has continued to exercise an influence in the work of Haring and others in contemporary moral theology. J. B. Metz has introduced it into considera-

tions of fundamental theology although his interesting and explicit application of it to Christology occurs in his brief work on the religious life which would be hitherto classified as spiritual theology. Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx attend to it in their fashion in a variety of ways and works, while Bernard Lonergan's key use of the notion of conversion in his *Method in Theology* bears effectively on the role of praxis in theology and so relates to discipleship. A consideration of discipleship does not provide the only way into Christian theology or necessarily the best way even for moral theologians. It does seem to me however a valid way and one which may throw helpful critical light on what Schillebeeckx, Metz and others have described as the critical problem in contemporary theological hermeneutics, the relationship of theory and praxis.

Discipleship is not a single and complete principle from which further principles and finally the detail of Christian behavior and living may be deduced. To treat it as such would be to revert to the old order of according primacy to the theory or meaning of discipleship as elaborated in biblical studies and systematic theology, which must then be translated into practice or applied in moral theology and moral living. Human and Christian moral living cannot, without enormous impoverishment, be interpreted as the translation or application of some a priori blueprint. The richness and creativity of moral living as recorded in human history and experienced in our own lives go far beyond the formulated or formulable accounts of morality known at the time. Indeed the formulations themselves, in affairs sexual or economic, must be continuously reformed and transcended in the light of human experience and the fresh insights it provides. The moral life has characteristics of the adventure or the journey which demand improvisation and innovation as challenges occur and responses are demanded and become possible which were not and could not have been predicted. Of course in discerning and responding to the challenges, the moral agent invokes and employs the resources acquired in the past, either by him personally or by the community to which he belongs. But they will not always be appropriate or adequate, except in so far as they stimulate him and give him sufficient hope to risk discovering and creating the new responses of the future. The future as the zone of human freedom may not be reduced to the officially prescribed and technologically planned. The integrity of the *humanum*, to borrow Schillebeeckx' phrase, requires the kind of openness and freedom which the bureaucrat and technocrat in government and corporation find so inconvenient but which the Christian feels obliged to protect and promote. Freedom in and of the future is essential to the free and creative discipleship undertaken.

The normative account of discipleship as praxis and of the freedom, creative discovery and innovation involved in it is found in the gospels and within the New Testament generally. It is a standing reproach to moral theologians that they have for so long neglected the New Testament or that when they turn to it, as they do more frequently nowadays, they tend to mine it for particular moral teachings and concepts without

first surrendering, for example, to the narrative character of the gospel stories themselves in their accounts of discipleship and the narrative character of much of Jesus' own moral teaching. The recovery of narrative as theological source which we are witnessing today has much to contribute to moral theology, provided we have the commitment and the skills necessary to enter into it in an appreciative, creative and yet critical way. Gutting *The Brothers Karamazov* to find some illustrations for students or, on the other hand, confusing the roles of genuine narrative and its analysis in literary criticism with conceptual moral analysis will not provide an illuminating narrative theology.

But to return to the praxis of discipleship in the New Testament! The original call to which the disciples responded in freedom did not reveal very much of what was involved. Indeed after several years they were still subject to crucial misunderstandings about Jesus and their own discipleship. The slow painful process of learning through living with Jesus which they experienced went through a critical stage at Easter and Pentecost. They did not, however, thereby escape the further conflicts and innovations which the break with Judaism and mission to the Gentiles involved. The Spirit who was to lead them into all truth did not demolish the human ways of difference, discussion and discovery as the disciples undertook their task of preaching Jesus as Lord in whom salvation is available to all.

The praxis of discipleship to which Jesus called and in which we are engaged, and were engaged long before we discovered many of its implications, is continuously nourished and illuminated by reflection and reappropriation of the New Testament documents. Nicholas Lash speaks helpfully here of "performing" the Scriptures. Subsequent narrative accounts of how discipleship has been lived and understood in the history of the Church offer similar nourishment and instruction. In this connection the Dutch theologian Frans Haarsma has recently drawn attention to changes in hagiography as indicative of "changes in the structure of religious experience of our time and culture." For our purposes the changes underline differences in paradigms of discipleship. Mother Teresa, for example, is for so many today a more readily recognizable type of disciple than Padre Pio was, John XXIII than Pius XII. And Dag Hammarskjöld, Martin Luther King and Dorothy Day reveal aspects of discipleship that were largely obscured in the past. It would be a mistake to push the change in religious consciousness and/or paradigms of discipleship simply in one direction. Haarsma like other Europeans has to be responsible to the impact of secularism on all religious thinking to an extent and in a manner only patchily known in other parts of the world, including North America. And in Europe there are many "modern" Catholics who would cherish Padre Pio above Mother Teresa. Although it is not possible or necessary to enter into all the complexities of religious consciousness with their implications for models of discipleship, it is necessary both to recognize certain trends or fresh discoveries and to advert to the continuing complexity and confusion. Biography as source of moral theology on the model of theology offered by James McClendon, for example, cannot offer any single clear

and definitive theory or model of the praxis of contemporary discipleship. To presume to do so would once again be attempting to subordinate praxis improperly and to close off freedom and openness to the future. That is not the way in which narrative is intended to work as theological inspiration and illumination.

Returning to the primordial narratives of discipleship in the New Testament it is important to recognize that Jesus came within a particular community and tradition, that of Judaism, that his first disciples belonged within the same community and that the ultimate break was gradual, painful and confused, if definitive and irrevocable. In discerning and following his own mission and in inaugurating his disciples into it, he developed a complex attitude to Jewish tradition and community which in retrospect at least can be seen to include acceptance and affirmation, criticism and negation, transcendence and transformation. Luke's account of the opening of his mission in Nazareth takes Jesus to the synagogue and to the reading of the Isaian text (Lk 4:18-19, Is 61:1). This acceptance and affirmation of the tradition and laws of the Old Testament characterized the accounts of his early life also and provided throughout his life the immediate context and basis for his way of life and that of his disciples. He had not come to destroy. Not one jot or tittle of the Law should pass until all be completed (Mt 5:17-19). As for the official teachers of the Law and their deficiencies, as he saw them, the disciples were to attend to what they said but not to what they did (Mt 23:2). The obedience even unto death which Jesus exemplified involved careful regard for the tradition into which he had been born, which had come from the Father through Abraham and Moses and the prophets. Only on the basis of this affirmation and acceptance could he discover and preserve his own identity as the one in whom all these things were fulfilled. Only his own self-interpretation within this tradition enabled the disciples on the way to Emmaus to understand him finally as the Messiah, the climax of the Law and the prophets, not the misunderstood and misguided victim (Lk 24:25-27, cf. 24:44-47).

The acceptance and affirmation led in the very appropriation and living of the tradition to conflict, criticism and negation. The refusal to accept the subordination of human beings to the Sabbath was a symbol of his growing distance from the official interpretation of the tradition and his growing distance from the official interpreters (Mk 2:23-28). His praxis and self-understanding, developed out of the tradition, ended in mortal conflict with the praxis and self-understanding of contemporary religious leaders and their Roman political masters. His negation of the tradition as understood by them, was supported in his life and teaching by the memories of David or Elijah or Abraham, the subversive memories, to use Metz's phrase, of the tradition which he cherished too much to submit to non-historical and non-living orthodoxy, binding insupportable burdens for the people. The people, whose burdens primarily concerned him, were the disreputable and excluded, the conventional sinners from harlots to tax-collectors (Lk 15:1-2). His friendship and fellowship with them, presented as symbol of the kingdom promised by the prophets and inaugurated, as he saw it, by himself,

created irreconcilable divisions and cost him, as he thought it should cost a friend, his life.

The criticism and negation of the tradition as received, of the community leaders as receiving it, were clearly not intended either as simple rejection of the tradition itself or as an archeological restoration of some previous historical expression and the living of it. The aim was at once more conservative and revolutionary, no less than transcendence through transformation, preserving the thirst of the tradition, indeed following it through to the point where it had to be transcended and therefore radically and totally transformed. Perhaps the *Aufhebung* of Hegel and later of Marx may be the most appropriate word in our time for the intention and impact of Jesus. In that kind of framework he may hope to do justice for contemporary Christians to the continuity and discontinuity of Old and New Testaments or Covenants.

Every generation of disciples is born or reborn into a tradition and a community through which they encounter the reality of discipleship both in living, authentic modes and in dead, inauthentic modes. Their praxis derives from and in this way affirms the tradition of discipleship inherited and encountered. That mixed inheritance already contains much that is inauthentic and distorting and, therefore, in need of criticism and reform. An of course even at its most authentic, it will be in itself inadequate to the new challenges of living history and new generations. The affirmation, criticism and transcendent transformation will still be called for from the disciples of Jesus, even if the eschatological fulfilment of his transcendent transformation lies beyond their history. The transformation and liberation in history achieved in Jesus Christ must be re-presented, realized anew in the historical conditions of each Christian, of each society and of each age. That is the thrust and the task of Christian discipleship. The cost of it is scarcely likely to be less than he paid, in Eliot's phrase, not less than everything.

The demands of discipleship to affirm and to appropriate the tradition, to criticize and to negate it and so to transcend and to transform it in creative fidelity to the life, death and teaching of Jesus Christ may be structured and analyzed in various ways. For the purposes of this paper and with the focus more precisely on the tradition of moral theology, I will suggest the need and possibly the way to affirm, criticize and transform that tradition first by considering two critical aspects of moral theology and then by invoking two evangelical themes, to a large extent neglected by that tradition but, in my view, of particular relevance to today's task.

THE "REASONABLENESS" OF MORAL THEOLOGY

Catholic moral theology continues to pride itself on its reasonableness. Its conclusions, it maintains, are arrived at or at any rate are defensible by reasonable analysis of human experience as moral, that is, as right or good and so to be done, or wrong and evil and so to be avoided. By a careful and consistent application of reason over the ages

and in diverse historical circumstances, a continuous but not unchanging set of principles and guidelines has been developed. A number of comments and qualifications are in order here. While Catholic moralists in the main adopt a teleological or consequential starting point for their moral reasoning, following in this, they believe, Aristotle and Aquinas, they are not in the main exclusively teleological in their overall understanding or in the analysis of particular areas of human behavior. And I do not myself think that their reasonableness is tied eventually to a teleological as opposed to a deontological analysis or to some combination of the two. I do think, however, that their reasonableness is more closely conditioned by some other general features of the system. The first of these is a sense of the reality and recognizability of the human, independently of sin and grace. The theological constructs of pure nature and pure reason have played and continue to play, however disguisedly, a powerful role in much of Catholic moral analysis. It is to a large extent from this base that one derives the universal principles of natural law morality, still so strong in the Catholic tradition. Even so acute a thinker as Karl Rahner, and one who has apparently distanced himself from the older distinction of nature and grace, had to invoke a formal existential ethic to account for the concrete particularly of Christian morality as against its universal and essentialist principles. In theological terms there is, of course, no pure nature to be observed and analyzed and no pure reason to do so. This translates psychologically, sociologically and historically into people conditioned and limited by all their circumstances, good and evil, seeking or not seeking the good and the right.

In such a search reason will play a decisive role, and the *humanum*—the realities and possibilities of human—will provide the basic material. But if either reason or human reality and possibility are abstracted from their ambiguous history with all the psychological and social conditions and limitations, the abstracted reason and humanity are bound to prove misleading.

In a manner akin to the hardening of Jewish tradition among some of Jesus' contemporaries, any moral tradition, including the Christian, can become enslaved, and this is part of human sinfulness, to the psychological, social, economic, political and broader cultural conditions of an epoch. No moral tradition can exist in isolation or abstraction from these but Christian morality, with its origins in the protest unto death of Jesus Christ, is obliged to retain its distinction and tension by a critical stance towards the cultural ambience in which it lives. It has not always done so, remaining either the uncritical captive of a past cultural and political achievement or equally uncritically surrendering to a new one. The affirmation to which Christians must certainly attend, and which the Catholic tradition of morality with its view of reason and the *humanum* at least in theory upholds, must be kept in tension with the critical and the negative—which has been more a feature of the Protestant theological tradition and some of its predecessors right back to Augustine—if a new and transformed praxis and understanding of discipleship are to be

attained. This will occur in action and at cost before it is recognized and promulgated in theory. It might be worth re-examining some of the shifts in Catholic moral teaching on peace and war or religious liberty or usury or slavery or contraception with a view to see how far the previous affirmation had become simply an accommodation to current social circumstances or to see whether the subsequent affirmation (in transformation) is no less an accommodation to new social circumstances without in either case any of the critical distance or pain of negation which is to be expected of a Christian in the world. I may remark in passing that much of the polarization we experience in the Church is in my opinion due to uncritical surrender on either side to past and present social visions or ideologies.

This reflection on the "reasonableness" of Catholic moral theology may be summarized as follows. Reason must be used critically not only in relation to the arguments proposed for and against a particular moral position or conclusion but also in relation to the overall social circumstances and vision within which the moral position is alleged to make sense or nonsense. The critical stance will usually be costly and painful, not least because it will arise out of an engagement or commitment and concomitant praxis by which a new position will be established, understood and witnessed to.

Elizabeth Anscombe's frequently quoted remark that "in modern philosophy we have an incorrigibly contemplative conception of knowledge" (judged as knowledge by being in accordance with prior facts) is very applicable to too much of Catholic moral theology, which needs to turn more self-consciously to knowledge through doing and to be willing to pay the price for that. In this context the cross as an epistemological tool may not be so far-fetched as appeared at first sight. Moral theology for all its need of reasonableness, has to transcend the mere reasonableness, has to transcend the mere reasonableness of *nous* to reach the more comprehensive understanding of faith and the cross which will continue to appear as foolishness to the non-transcending *nous*.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL

The second feature of traditional and renewed moral theology which merits comment here is its personal character. Like its reasonableness this feature of moral theology is valuable, indeed indispensable. Like reasonableness it also bears marks of particular historical epochs so that for the most part it has operated as an individualism rather than simply as a personalism. The combination of cultural, philosophical, political and economic factors which created an individualistic ideology to which moral theology also submitted is too complex to discuss here. Criticism of individualism within moral theology derives today from general moral sources and more specifically theological sources. There is increasing awareness of the more significant moral demands as deriving from large social groups in questions of peace and war, hunger and population, technology and ecology, economic and political oppression and liberation. These demands can be met in turn only by organized

group action with its suggestion of the group as moral subject recognizing and responding to group needs. This requires a closer look at how groups are already interacting and a bringing into consciousness how far all of us are, even if unaware of it, engaged in group praxis that is often destructive of other groups. Such moral activity, the awareness and critique of it and the call to transcend it have been stimulated and illuminated also by the work of European theologians attentive to the role of praxis and, in particular, political praxis in theological understanding and critique as well as by liberation theologians of the third world and by the first world feminist and black theologians. The effects of all this on Christian praxis and so on its theology as moral theology will undoubtedly be very profound, not only in rearranging the priorities between large-scale social problems but also in changing the very way we recognize and conceptualize moral problems *tout court*.

The praxis of disciples must always be personal but now within a community context and commitment that is not expressed in the coexistence of the individual worlds of the liberal society, with its protected rights, privileges and powers, but by a community more consciously seeking the emancipatory solidarity of the inbreaking kingdom, if I may adapt some ideas of J. B. Metz and Francis Fiorenza. How the morality of property, of communications, of punishment and prisons, to take a few random examples, will appear in that transformed praxis and moral theology cannot be simply predicted a priori. The current technology of moral analysis, overwhelmingly derived from individualist considerations, will certainly be put to the test and, one hopes, eventually and fruitfully transcended.

FRIENDSHIP AND KINGDOM

It may be opportune here to invoke my evangelical themes as throwing further light on the praxis of discipleship and its theology. The two themes of friendship and kingdom are intimately related to the discipleship in the gospels. The designation by Jesus of his disciples as friends in the final discourse in the Fourth Gospel and the self-conscious witness to the meaning of that friendship in the commitment to laying down his life (Is 15:9-16) connects with and transforms much that is evident in the master-disciple relationship as recounted in the Synoptics. His proclamation and inauguration of the kingdom provide the focal point of service for the disciples in their first mission and final commission. The personal and communitarian features of discipleship are evident in the combination of friendship and membership in the kingdom which Jesus offers.

More intimate links and further specification of friendship and kingdom as distinctive of discipleship may be derived from Jesus' befriending of the outcast and marginalized and his indicating that fellowship with them was both a symbol of and reality of the kingdom, the reality for which he gave his life. Indifference to the excluded, accommodation to the including and excluding power of historical society is clearly at variance with the example of Jesus and the role of disciple. The

myriad exclusions by power and money, race, sex, even geography and history with which historical society is riddled are clear countersigns of the kingdom. To endorse them, even silently or unconsciously to accommodate to them, is to signal one's rejection of the kingdom, one's breach of the friendship to which Jesus has invited his disciples. In a particularly moving way Metz extends the inclusivity of Christian discipleship and friendship to embrace the excluded of history, the victims of past oppression, and employs this as criterion and critique of our current pretensions to discipleship. Given such a praxis and criterion, theologians of discipleship will have to examine very closely their own way of life. There is a heavy price to be paid for a theology which presumes to discuss discipleship and recognizes the way to do so as giving at least equi-primacy to praxis.

Before every active moral theologian decides to abandon the discipline in face of such terrifying demands, I may add a few words of consolation. Apart from the fact that the first disciples were a pretty mixed lot, and if one is to judge by Peter's prevarication and Paul's temper, continued to be so, the friendship and the kingdom are of course always *in via*, and moral theologians cannot expect to escape the limitations of human sinfulness. But they may not use this as an excuse for self-indulgent accommodation, much less of course for self-righteous denunciation of others. And all Christian theologians and all Christians are committed to discipleship; so where shall the moralist go?

Yet Christian discipleship cannot involve or appear to involve fresh insupportable burdens. And it is not primarily a matter of human achievement. It is a response to the inbreaking kingdom realized in Jesus Christ, which itself is gift, empowering and transforming gift, the gift we call the Spirit. The new law, Aquinas reminds us, is internal to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit, uniting us with Christ. Under the influence of this gift, illuminating and transforming us, we become and behave as disciples. The surrender to the Spirit is no less demanding for us than it was for Jesus but is not something we achieve on our own or out of ourselves. The praxis of discipleship requires our creative and total response, but the gift is primary.

Finally as a theology of the praxis of discipleship, moral theology will be once again properly theology. In seeking to understand discipleship in and through praxis and reflection on it, the moral theologian is engaged in discerning and promoting the inbreaking kingdom, the coming of the God of Jesus Christ in power and glory. The goal of his endeavors is then the discernment and presentation of some grasp of God himself, the only properly and fully theological task.

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