

THOMAS JOSEPH BOUQUILLON: AMERICANIST, NEO-SCHOLASTIC, OR MANUALIST?

Thomas Joseph Bouquillon was born near Lille in Belgium in 1840 the second of five children of a family of small landowners.¹ He felt a call to the priesthood and had a brilliant record as a student at the minor seminary at Roulers and the major seminary at Bruges. In 1863 the Bishop of Bruges sent this young student to Rome to continue his studies and he obtained a doctorate in theology at the Gregorian University in Rome in 1867.

With his Roman doctorate Bouquillon began to teach fundamental moral theology at the major seminary in Bruges in 1867 but two years later moved to the class of special moral theology which deals with specific actions. In August 1877 his bishop authorized him to accept the chair of moral theology in the faculty of theology of the newly established Catholic University of Lille. However, in 1885 he left this chair at Lille for reasons that are not altogether clear and retired to the Benedictine monastery of Maredsous to work on a thorough revision of his book on fundamental moral theology which had first been published in 1873. He had found it difficult to do such work while teaching, preparing courses, and directing students at Lille.² The second edition, eventually published in 1890, added much to the original and included a long history of moral theology which showed both his knowledge of the sources and his ability to synthesize and analyze their contributions.³

Meanwhile the bishops of the United States announced their intention to open, with papal authorization, the Pontifical Catholic University of America in Washington, D. C. Bishop John J. Keane resigned from his diocese of Richmond, Virginia to accept the rectorship of the new university. His most important task was to assemble a respected faculty, and he looked to Europe. After consultation Keane offered the professorship of moral theology to Bouquillon. Bouquillon

¹The best source for Bouquillon's biography is H. Rommel, *Thomas Bouquillon . . . Notice bio-bibliographique* (Bruges: Louis de Plancke, 1903). Since this small booklet was written immediately after his death, it tends to be a eulogy for Bouquillon and is not that critical. For the best-available information on Bouquillon in English, see C. Joseph Nuesse, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon (1840-1902): Moral Theologian and Precursor of the Social Sciences in the Catholic University of America," *Catholic Historical Review* 72 (1986) 601-19.

²For further details of Bouquillon's life at Maredsous, see Laurent Janssens, "Maître Thomas Bouquillon," *Revue Bénédictine* 20 (1903) 2-6.

³Thomas Joseph Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 2nd ed. (Bruges: Beyaert-Storie, 1890).

received contradictory advice from the friends he consulted, but he found it hard to refuse so flattering an offer to be a part of the new enterprise of the Catholic Church in the United States.⁴

Bouquillon joined the first faculty of the Catholic University of America in 1889 and until his death in 1902 played a very significant role within the university and the Catholic Church in the United States. Bishop Keane, the rector, singled out the role of Bouquillon in the early development of the university.⁵ Thomas Shahan, one of his faculty colleagues and a later rector of Catholic University, maintained that as long as it endures Catholic University will owe his memory a debt of gratitude for it was he who really laid its academic foundation.⁶ Bouquillon was truly an intellectual with a love of books and wide ranging interests. His health had always been somewhat frail although he was a tireless worker. At the turn of the century the Belgian-born professor had been in poor health for a few years but managed to finish his courses in May 1902. He departed for Europe in late June hoping to recover his health, but it was not to be. He died in Brussels on November 5, 1902.

The Catholic University professor published many articles in those journals associated with the institutions in which he taught. In addition Bouquillon provided notes for his students in the seminary at Bruges on general moral theology, the sacrifice of the Mass, selected questions and penance, and justice and rights. His major published works included a treatise on the theological virtues which went through two editions and a treatise on the virtue of religion. However, his major work was his fundamental moral theology the third edition of which was published very shortly after his death in 1903.⁷ This essay will focus primarily on that work.⁸

BOUQUILLON AS AMERICAN CATHOLIC LIBERAL

American church history remembers Bouquillon but not primarily for his work in fundamental moral theology. Bouquillon is best known for his involvement in the famous school controversy case, which together with other somewhat

⁴Rommel, *Thomas Bouquillon*, 23-24.

⁵Patrick Henry Ahern, *The Catholic University of America 1887-1896: The Rectorship of John J. Keane* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948) 36.

⁶Thomas J. Shahan, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon," *Catholic University Bulletin* 9 (1903) 153.

⁷For the complete bibliography of Bouquillon, see Rommel, *Thomas Bouquillon*, 75-79.

⁸Thomas Joseph Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 3rd ed. (Bruges: Car. Beyaert, 1903). Subsequent references will be to this edition unless otherwise noted.

related incidents identified him with the cause of the Americanists or the liberals in the U.S. Catholic Church.⁹

The school controversy had both theoretical and practical aspects. Theoretically the question centered on the role of the state in education. Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, who together with Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York provided leadership for the conservative bishops, strongly insisted that the state had no direct role to play in education. McQuaid had urged government help for Catholic schools. He argued that it is wrong for Catholics, as well as for Jews and infidels, to pay taxes for schools, in which the Bible is read and religious exercises are held. In addition, the state has no right to educate, being an incompetent agent to fulfill parental responsibilities. The topic stirred up great debate among American Catholics. Catholic schools were beginning to be built at this time. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 discouraged Catholics from sending their children to public schools. The question of schooling and the proper role of the state in education became an important issue for the American Catholic Church in the latter part of the nineteenth century—and ever since.¹⁰

Archbishop John Ireland, the champion of the American Catholic liberals, in the early 1890s proposed a plan for schools in Faribault, Minnesota, which was later accepted in Stillwater, Minnesota. The schools would become public schools paid for by the local community but before school hours the children would go to Mass and then have catechism taught after the teaching of the secular subjects in the afternoon. Ambiguity surrounded the question of whether the boards of education would continue to hire the Catholic sisters as teachers, but the teachers had to be competent. Ireland pleaded that finances did not permit the establishment of Catholic schools for all and this was the best arrangement under the circumstances. Catholic opponents saw Ireland's plan as a sellout of Catholic education and a capitulation to the state.¹¹

The American Catholic archbishops were to meet in St. Louis on November 25, 1891, to discuss the issue. In this context Bouquillon's pamphlet, "Education: To Whom Does It Belong?" appeared.¹² Some accused Ireland of conspiring to have Bouquillon publish this pamphlet at this time since Bouquillon strongly defended some role for the state in education; but such a charge is not true.¹³

In Bouquillon's own words the pamphlet deals only with theoretical principles, makes no practical applications, does not pretend to originality but follows in the footsteps of the great theologians, especially Thomas Aquinas, and

⁹Daniel F. Reilly, *The School Controversy 1891-1893* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1943).

¹⁰Reilly, *School Controversy*, 26-38.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 67-105.

¹²Thomas Bouquillon, *Education: To Whom Does It Belong?* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1891).

¹³Reilly, *School Controversy*, 89, 90.

is guided by the teachings of the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII on civil power, the constitution of the state, liberty, and the condition of the laboring classes. The pamphlet expresses his position on certain delicate issues and gives his reasons for the positions he adopts in this disputed area.¹⁴ This pamphlet of less than thirty pages deals with four questions—the right to educate, mission to educate, authority over education, and liberty of education from the point of view of the individual, the family, the state, and the Church. The tone of the pamphlet is objective, scholarly, abstract, and rational. The presentation is eminently clear, logical, and nuanced. The state has the special and proper right to teach human knowledge (not religion), for the diffusion of human knowledge is necessary for the temporal common welfare. The right of the state is neither unlimited nor exclusive for it supplements the rights of individuals and families. The state has the mission to educate in human knowledge, but this is not an essential duty such as maintaining peace and order but an accidental function supplying the defects of individuals. Authority over education belongs to the family, the state, and the Church. The state with regard to education in the human sciences has the right to demand evidence of capability on the part of teachers, to insist on a minimum of education, and prescribe the teaching of this or that branch of human knowledge considered necessary for the majority of its citizens. But note that the state cannot compel parents to send the child to a particular school. Under the liberty of education Bouquillon points out that teaching is subject to the divine law so no one is free to teach error or evil. The state has the mission to hinder this evil, but it cannot prevent all evil and at times can tolerate a teaching that is erroneous or evil.¹⁵

This scholarly, abstract, and heavily nuanced pamphlet set off quite a storm because of the circumstances and timing of its appearance. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* includes all the practical aspects and discussion about the Faribault plan under the entry of "Bouquillon Controversy."¹⁶ Bouquillon develops a Thomistic theory of the state standing in the middle between two opposite errors of those who see the state as only a policeman or those who see it as a parent. He claims his teaching is in perfect accord with Thomas Aquinas and with Leo XIII. He appeals to Pope Leo XIII's recently published encyclical, *Rerum novarum*, on the role of the state. Those who accept the philosophically liberal notion of the state as policeman with no other function than to protect the material goods of the citizens readily disagree with his understanding of the role of the state in education. Today the importance of knowledge on the part of

¹⁴Bouquillon, *Education*, 3.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 5-31.

¹⁶E. G. Ryan, "Bouquillon Controversy," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967) 2:731-32.

citizens is greater than ever before. The state consequently has an even greater need to decree by law compulsory education insofar as it is necessary.¹⁷

On the other hand, the state is not the same as a parent. The state may tolerate evil and does not always have to oppose it. Teaching is subject to the divine law and no one is free to teach evil, error, or inopportune truth. The state must hinder as far as it prudently can an evil coming from mere physical liberty, but the state in education cannot prevent and hinder all evil. The law may tolerate evil in order that greater evils may be avoided or greater goods procured. The state here grants legal impunity to teach evil which in its own way constitutes a moral right not to be hindered in doing this. The right to be legally undisturbed in doing evil is by no means the same as a moral right to do evil. One must only apply to education those general principles which solve questions of religious liberty, liberty of association, and the larger questions of the toleration of social evil.¹⁸

In this context Bouquillon both praises and justifies religious freedom in the United States. In the United States, although freedom of worship is recognized by law, the Catholic Church is freer, more justly and fully protected in her rights and prerogatives; the pope is more pope, as Pius IX is reported to have said; and the papacy is less restrained in its inner and outward actions than in any land under the sun.¹⁹ However, in accord with Bouquillon's basic theory the American system itself is an evil that is tolerated. Bouquillon, like Leo XIII still accepted a paternalistic understanding of the state and could not justify democratic freedoms as good in themselves.

The other incidents of Bouquillon's life remembered in American Catholic history also firmly identify him with the so-called liberal wing of United States Catholicism at the end of the nineteenth century. Edward McGlynn, a well-known New York priest publicly supported the candidacy of Henry George, the advocate of the single tax theory, for mayor of New York in 1886. McGlynn was suspended by Archbishop Corrigan of New York and later (July 1887) excommunicated. Corrigan and McQuaid also tried to get George's book put on the Index. The American Catholic liberals opposed both actions. The excommunication of McGlynn seemed to imply there was no room for freedom on political and social questions within Catholicism. The Catholic liberals with the help of Archbishop Francesco Satolli, the papal ablegate in the United States, wanted to lift the excommunication. Satolli arranged this after receiving assurances from four professors at Catholic University that McGlynn's teachings

¹⁷Thomas Bouquillon, *Education: To Whom Does It Belong? A Rejoinder to Critics* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1892) 35-36.

¹⁸Bouquillon, *Education: To Whom Does It Belong?* 130-131; Bouquillon, *A Rejoinder to Critics*, 28-29.

¹⁹Thomas Bouquillon, *Education: To Whom Does It Belong? A Rejoinder to Civiltà Cattolica* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1892) 29.

were not in opposition to Catholic teaching.²⁰ Bouquillon was one of the four professors to make this judgment about McGlynn. In fact, he and his colleagues made their report about McGlynn on the letterhead of the "Academy of Moral Sciences" which was the seminar organized by Bouquillon.²¹

Catholic University in general, from the time of its conception and founding, had been identified with the liberal wing of American Catholicism. Again, Corrigan, McQuaid, and many Jesuits were opposed to it. John Keane, the first rector, was very much a part of the liberal camp.²² After the school controversy Bouquillon was firmly in the liberal camp. Within the faculty itself, however, there were divisions. Joseph Schroeder, Joseph Pohle, and Sebastian Messmer were identified with the more conservative wing of the American church (note their German origin), and were opposed to Bouquillon on the school controversy.²³ However, Bouquillon and his colleagues in the conservative camp did not engage in polemical and personal attacks.

The liberal wing of the faculty at Catholic University proposed and started the publication of the Catholic University Bulletin which was to be a bridge between the academy and the intellectually interested public. Thomas O'Gorman reported in a letter to Archbishop Ireland that Bouquillon, Shahan, Pace, and himself, had decided on their own to start this journal as a private venture. They feared that there might be some opposition from archbishops on the board if it were proposed as an official university publication. Likewise they did not want Archbishop Corrigan to get wind of it and try to persuade the Jesuits to start a review of their own. Cardinal Gibbons and Bishop Keane, according to O'Gorman, were in favor of the idea and they hoped to obtain funding from Father McMahan.²⁴ This letter underscores once again how Bouquillon is identified with the liberal wing in the American Catholic Church.

Students of American Catholic Church history also know Bouquillon as a strong advocate of the role and importance of the social sciences. He had a great impact on John A. Ryan, the leading figure in Catholic social thought in the first half of the twentieth century in the United States. Ryan in his memoirs describes Bouquillon as the most erudite man he has ever known and working with the Belgian-born professor was the most fortunate experience of his student life. Ryan praised his scrupulousness in the preparation of lectures and his passion for exactness, accuracy, and thoroughness. Bouquillon gave comprehensive attention to social problems with emphasis on sociological and economic factors as well

²⁰E. H. Smith, "McGlynn, Edward," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 9:18-19.

²¹Nuesse, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon," 604.

²²C. Joseph Nuesse, *The Catholic University of America: A Centennial History* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1990) 3-104.

²³Ahern, *The Catholic University of American 1887-1896*, 130.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 71.

as the ethical.²⁵ Ryan himself went on to wed economics and moral theology in being the leading exponent of liberal Catholic social thought in his day.²⁶

Father William J. Kerby, who later became the founding head of the department of sociology at Catholic University and the founder of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, was likewise a student who learned much from Bouquillon.²⁷ In his eulogy at the memorial service for Bouquillon in Washington in 1902 Kerby praised his critical historical mind. Like Ryan, Kerby pointed out that his teacher possessed a knowledge of the sciences closely related to moral theology which was almost extensive enough to give his opinion authority in those areas while his acquaintance with more remote fields was exceptionally wide.²⁸ Ryan's leading role in economics and Kerby's in professional Catholic social work owe much to the training and inspiration given by Bouquillon.

In the only contemporary scholarly article on Bouquillon, C. Joseph Nuesse takes off from this influence on Ryan and Kerby to develop the thesis that Thomas Bouquillon was the precursor of the social sciences at the Catholic University of America. The Belgian professor even before beginning his teaching at Catholic University expressed his disappointment with the state of Catholic moral theology and insisted that a highly scientific and living moral theology must be constantly in dialogue with the appropriate practical sciences.²⁹ Bouquillon's report in the *Catholic University Bulletin* shows his interest in many scientific congresses that were taking place in 1897. In addition to congresses dealing with more specifically theological matters he also mentioned various congresses under the category of congresses for public morality, social and economic congresses, and professional congresses.³⁰ Nuesse concludes that Bouquillon was a precursor of the social sciences at Catholic University because he insisted on the social facts bearing on moral issues and also because of his manifest interest in and awareness of disciplinary developments that were then in their early stages.³¹ Bouquillon's intense interest in the social sciences and his influence on Kerby and Ryan further underscore his sympathies for American Catholic liberalism.

Thomas Bouquillon is not an unknown figure in American Catholic history but ironically he is not remembered for his moral theology as such. His involvements in a number of areas somewhat related to his moral theology have stamped

²⁵John A. Ryan, *Social Doctrine in Action: A Personal History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941) 63.

²⁶For my assessment of Ryan's contribution, see my *American Catholic Social Ethics* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982) 26-91.

²⁷Nuesse, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon," 607.

²⁸"Discourse of Rev. Dr. Kerby," *Catholic University Bulletin* 9 (1903) 161.

²⁹Nuesse, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon," 609.

³⁰Thomas Bouquillon, "European Congresses of 1897," *Catholic University Bulletin* 4 (1898) 234-248.

³¹Nuesse, "Thomas Joseph Bouquillon," 619.

him as an advocate of the liberal Catholicism that was clearly evident in the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

BOUQUILLON AS A NEO-SCHOLASTIC

The Belgian born professor interprets moral theology as reaching its high point in the work of the earlier Scholastics especially Thomas Aquinas, going downhill under the influence of nominalism, returning to a better condition with the emphasis on Aquinas in the sixteenth century but then falling into ruin with the controversies over probabilism. However, once again with the rise of Neo-Scholasticism since 1830 moral theology has reached a better state.³² The first name mentioned by Bouquillon in describing this restoration since 1830 is Joseph Kleutgen, described as a theologian outstanding in merit.³³ Kleutgen was the primary leader of Neo-Scholasticism. Bouquillon accepts the importance of the faith-reason, grace-nature, supernatural-natural distinctions of Neo-Scholasticism to deal with both the theoretical and the practical problems of the times. Our author is opposed to the modern philosophical developments as well as the political and economic developments associated with the Enlightenment and liberalism.³⁴

Bouquillon insists on the need for moral theology to establish the immutable principles of the divine and natural law and to apply these principles to the grave economic, psychological, and sociological questions of our age. His deep interest in history does not mean that he also accepts historical consciousness. Neo-Scholasticism embraced a classicism which emphasizes the eternal, the unchangeable, and the immutable. Bouquillon sees Neo-Scholasticism as the perennial philosophy seemingly unaffected by historical development and change. The sciences do not contribute anything to the principles of moral theology, but they provide the knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which these principles are applied.³⁵

Thomas Bouquillon was a firm supporter and follower of Pope Leo's program of renewal with its emphasis on Neo-Scholasticism as the only true and adequate method for Catholic theology and philosophy and for addressing the problems of the modern world. In assessing the first ten years of the pontificate of Leo XIII, our author points out the major preoccupation of the pope is the salvation of modern society through religion. This preoccupation involves repairing the evils caused to the Church by secularism and impiety and showing how the influence of Catholicism can benefit society by reestablishing peace and concord in the intelligences and the hearts of people. Above all, the action of the Church must be at the level of the intellectual because it is here that the

³²Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 92-167.

³³Ibid., 156.

³⁴Thomas Bouquillon, "Le libéralisme d'après l'Encyclique *Libertas*," *Le Messager des fidèles de Maredsous* 5 (1888) 361-370.

³⁵Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 18.

problems lie.³⁶ In another article that same year Bouquillon interprets Pope Leo XIII as seeing the greatest problem of our age in naturalism which denies the sovereign reign of the creator over the creature and puts the authority of humans in place of that of God. The two principal forms of this naturalism are rationalism and liberalism.³⁷

Rationalism refers primarily to science and preaches the independence of human reason from the divine. Atheists and deists embrace complete rationalism. Protestantism is an incomplete rationalism which admits the divine but not the doctrinal authority given by God to the Church and submits all to private judgment. A mitigated rationalism in Catholicism does not deny but diminishes doctrinal authority by submitting only to ex cathedra statements and not taking account of the decisions of the Roman congregations. Pius IX opposed this mitigated rationalism in his famous letter to the Archbishop of Munich in 1864. Such mitigated rationalism was also disowned in the Syllabus of Errors and in the constitution *Dei Filius* of the First Vatican Council.³⁸ Notice the expansive understanding of rationalism.

Likewise liberalism has its degrees. Complete liberalism rejects the divine law both supernatural and natural such as the positivists and the Kantian partisans of the autonomous will. A less radical liberalism rejects the supernatural divine law while admitting the natural law and thus repudiates any role for the Church in civil society. There is also a mitigated liberalism which does not deny but restricts the authority of the Church either in terms of its instrumentality (only an ecumenical council and not the pope) or in terms of its object (only matters of faith and morals in the strict sense) or in terms of action (making the obligatory force of ecclesiastical prescriptions depend on the acceptance by the faithful or by governments).³⁹

Bouquillon sees the approach of the popes primarily on the intellectual level. Unfortunately some divisions exist here even among Catholics so that it makes it harder for the Church to speak and act against the evils of the day. Leo therefore recalls that according to its divine constitution the government of the Church belongs to the pastors and the clergy and laity ought to be united in following the direction of the pope.⁴⁰

The Belgian priest residing at Maredsous pointed out the need for the Church to condemn Catholic liberals such as Lamennais and the Catholic rationalists such as Hermes on the basis of the renewed Thomism or Neo-Scholasticism of the times.⁴¹ Some tried to defend Antonio Rosmini as being in accord

³⁶Thomas Bouquillon, "Dix années de pontificat," *Le Messager des fidèles de Maredsous* 5 (1888) 4.

³⁷Bouquillon, "Libéralisme," 362.

³⁸Ibid., 362-63.

³⁹Ibid., 363-65.

⁴⁰Bouquillon, "Dix années," 4.

⁴¹Bouquillon, "Libéralisme," 368-69.

with Thomas. But Bouquillon replies that Rosmini's concept of ideal being is not in accord with Aquinas' thought so that finally in 1887 forty propositions of Rosmini were rightly condemned by the Congregation of the Inquisition.⁴² Thus the Catholic Church needs both the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and authoritative papal teaching to achieve internal unity within the Church so that it can better deal with the problems of the modern world through that same Thomistic philosophy.

Some want to contrast the work and pontificate of Leo XIII to that of a conservative and reactionary Pius IX his predecessor; but not our Belgian theologian.⁴³ Yes, there are differences of character and circumstances, but we find the most complete harmony between the two popes. Leo has given to the study of Christian theology a powerful direction, but Pius IX encouraged the first restorers of Scholasticism and strongly criticized those who claimed that Thomas was not suited for our times. Leo XIII has given us the most complete and luminous explanation of the Christian teaching concerning the political and social orders, but Pius IX has condemned the errors that were opposed to it.⁴⁴ Bouquillon was a most exuberant, enthusiastic, and loyal supporter of Pope Leo XIII and his neo-scholastic approach.

BOUQUILLON AS CRITIC OF THE MANUALS OF MORAL THEOLOGY

The most systematic and sustained criticism of the manuals in his work is found in one of his last articles written in 1899 on "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century."⁴⁵ However, the careful reader will note the same criticism of the manuals in a somewhat muted form in the introduction to his moral theology.⁴⁶ At the very beginning of his teaching career at the seminary in Bruges he was so dissatisfied with the manuals of moral theology that he decided to write his own book.⁴⁷

His neo-scholastic adherence to Thomas Aquinas served as the ultimate basis for his criticism of the manuals. The genius of the theologian is to bring out the unity of theology to so analyze, subordinate, and coordinate religious truths that the parts and their relationship to one another and to the whole may be clearly seen. Such a genius was Aquinas whose *Summa* admirably accomplished this

⁴²Thomas Bouquillon, "Condamnation des doctrines Rosminiennes" *Le Messager des fidèles de Maredsous* 5 (1888) 205.

⁴³C. Joseph Nuisse, "Before *Rerum Novarum*: A Moral Theologian's View of Catholic Social Movements in 1891," *Social Thought* 17/2 (1991) 10.

⁴⁴Bouquillon, "Dix années," 8-9.

⁴⁵Thomas Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," *Catholic University Bulletin* 5 (1899) 244-268.

⁴⁶Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 12-22.

⁴⁷Rommel, *Thomas Bouquillon*, 18.

task. To separate the partial truths which are the subject of moral science from the theoretical, the theological, and the social is disastrous. Moral theology cannot be separated and isolated from dogmatic theology. Here the Belgian scholar quotes Kleutgen to reinforce his point.⁴⁸ Bouquillon's plea for a holistic moral theology thus calls for moral theology not to be separated from dogma.

Any study of moral theology must be complete and include all the pertinent perspectives. The positive aspect of moral theology studies the sources of religious truths. The strictly dogmatic perspective explains moral truths in relation to the definitions of the Church and their degree of certainty. The speculative side includes the systematic exposition and comparison of truths. The polemic or apologetic perspective defends truth and exposes error. A moral theology which is complete must include all these perspectives. The great Scholastics of the Middle Ages employed such an approach as is evident from the reading of the *Summa* of Aquinas or the *De legibus* and *De religione* of Suarez.⁴⁹

The Catholic University professor severely castigates the present state of Catholic moral theology in the light of the *Summa* of Aquinas. The treatise on the ultimate end and destiny of human beings, the very foundation of the science, is found only in exceptional cases. The study of human acts is much too jejune and usually deprived of its ontological, psychological, and supernatural aspects. The treatise on the passions to which Aquinas devotes twenty-seven questions never appears. Nothing is written about habits with the twofold aspects of vices and virtues. The essential theological aspect of the law of God is most often omitted. God's law is studied in a superficial way while canon law is most insisted upon. The treatise on conscience is reduced to a minimum and almost totally absorbed into the question of probabilism. The virtues, vices, and sin are incompletely treated.⁵⁰

The portion of the manuals relating to the *Secunda secundae* of Aquinas' *Summa* is not any more satisfactory. The theological virtues constitute the alpha and the omega of the Christian life and give to Christian ethics its distinctive character, yet the manuals devote no more than fifty pages to these virtues. Faith as the door to the whole theological enterprise and charity as the source and the queen of the virtues are not properly discussed. At first glance one might think that the cardinal virtues receive a better treatment in the manuals, but such is not the case. Thus the individual treatises in the manuals are quite deficient in the light of the *Summa*.⁵¹

What has happened to the manuals of moral theology? Moral theology as a subject became separated from dogmatic theology destroying the organic unity of theology and also separated from related disciplines. Ascetical theology dealt

⁴⁸Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," 250-51.

⁴⁹Ibid., 252-53.

⁵⁰Ibid., 260-61.

⁵¹Ibid., 262.

with the law of Christian perfection. Liturgical science treated the laws of religious life. Moral theology lost contact with its related sciences—ethics, sociology, politics, economics, and law. Laws governing the public life were given over to the science of law. Moral theology was forced to confine itself only to the laws of private life. But the primary interest was in conclusions and applications not in the principles of morality. As a result of the probabilism controversy great emphasis was placed on assessing whether or not an opinion was probable by citing the number of authors who supported it. Truth was no longer the driving force of moral theology. The test of scholarly moral theology today seems to be the ability to collect opinions of the theologians of the last three centuries. Casuistry has become a lifeless form intended primarily for teaching and not a living reality directing human life. Moral theology has been reduced to a mere compendium of 500 pages.⁵²

Instead of reigning among the sciences as a queen, moral theology is hardly recognized as an equal. Instead of being consulted by those who deal with human activity and its different spheres the very existence of moral theology is all but ignored. Modern civilization has raised important problems, but moral theology has not provided any guidance for these issues. Even the clergy do not seek solutions for the important questions of wages, property, and education in the principles of moral theology. Bouquillon cites many others who also lament this present condition of moral theology.⁵³

The Belgian-born professor, with his interest in and knowledge of history and in keeping with his approach of examining all aspects of the problem, also points out some of the historical factors that have influenced the decline of moral theology. With the movement toward secularization in the political realm came a parallel movement of secularization in the world of science. Theology was driven from the universities and relegated to the seminaries and sacristies. In a country as solidly Catholic as Belgium the principle of the separation of Church and state excludes theology from every one of the state universities. France, Italy, and Spain are in the same boat. The vicissitudes to which the Church has been subjected during the last few centuries such as restrictions, persecutions, confiscation of Church property, suppression and expulsion of religious orders, and the destruction and scattering of libraries have not been conducive to the doing of good theology. The weakening and decadence of some nations especially Spain which formerly stood at the forefront of Catholic science have negatively affected theology. The Reformation, Jansenism, and rationalism occasioned the need for polemical literature but as a result destroyed the synthesis of theology and the proportion, order, and balance of the parts of theology.⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid., 258-59; *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 20-21.

⁵³Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," 244-48.

⁵⁴Ibid., 256-64.

The Catholic University professor thus presents a devastating critique of the state of moral theology at the end of the nineteenth century. There is no doubt about his target—the manuals of moral theology of which Busembaum's *Medulla* is a type.⁵⁵

Two comments about this criticism are in order. First, Bouquillon recognizes that moral theology has been limited to training confessors for the sacrament of penance, but he does not explicitly make the narrow purpose of moral theology one of the reasons for the decline of the discipline.⁵⁶ Surely the purpose and scope of moral theology deserve more importance and discussion in his critique. Second, Bouquillon does not criticize the legal model of the manual which sees morality primarily in terms of obedience to the different types of law. Thomas Aquinas does not emphasize or employ such a method but Bouquillon readily accepts it as indicated by his frequent talk about laws even in this article condemning the present state of moral theology. These two comments have a common root. These problems come from the very discipline of moral theology itself and from the internal life of the Church. Bouquillon's criticisms of the manuals have often stressed the circumstances extrinsic to the discipline of moral theology and to the life of the Church, but he needs to focus more on the problems inherent in the development of Catholic moral theology itself.

Despite this severe criticism of the present state of moral theology, Bouquillon believes that moral theology can be renewed by reversing the causes that have led to its downfall. In summary form he mentions the following points—use of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, a more intimate union with the theoretical truths of revelation, critical study and research into the fundamental ideas and principles of the moral life; and the consistent application of these principles to the problems of modern individual, social, and religious life through contact with the other social sciences. There is reason to hope that the coming century will see such a resurgence, for the impetus has already been given in the admirable encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII.⁵⁷

BOUQUILLON'S FUNDAMENTAL MORAL THEOLOGY

An earlier section has demonstrated the Catholic University professor's support for Neo-Scholasticism. How has this affected his moral theology? Bouquillon shows the Thomistic influence in his fundamental moral theology by beginning with the consideration of the ultimate end of human beings. The Catholic University professor explicitly ties this move to Aquinas. In accord with the Thomistic understanding the internal ultimate end of human beings consists in happiness. The supreme good is that which fully perfects one's nature, and in attaining this supreme good one finds happiness which according to Aquinas is

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 265.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 246, 259.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 267-268.

the ultimate perfection of the rational or intellectual nature.⁵⁸ Bouquillon does not follow the treatment on the ultimate end and happiness exactly as it is found in the *Summa*. He brings into the discussion a distinction found elsewhere in Aquinas but explicitly developed at great length by Kleutgen between the external ultimate end of human beings and the internal ultimate end of human beings. The external ultimate end of human beings is the formal glory of God whereas the internal end is the happiness of human beings, but both ends consist in one and the same reality. In the discussion of the ultimate end Bouquillon also develops the distinction between the supernatural and the natural end of human beings, a typical emphasis of Neo-Scholasticism.⁵⁹ In the second treatise discussing means to the ultimate end, he considers both nature and grace, and reason and faith—two distinctive neo-scholastic approaches.⁶⁰ Thus in the discussion of the ultimate end one clearly sees the influence of Thomas Aquinas in its Neo-Scholastic interpretation.

The discussion of the ultimate end not only follows the teleological method of Aquinas but from the very beginning also points out the intrinsic nature of morality which is such a distinctive characteristic of the Thomistic approach. Bouquillon accepts Thomas Aquinas' understanding of happiness as the ultimate perfection of human beings as rational creatures.⁶¹ Bouquillon goes on to explain this by saying that the supreme good of any being is known from its nature, faculties, apprehensions, and ordered tendencies. The most wise Creator could not act properly without providing a proportionate object for this nature and its tendencies. Augustine has reminded us that God has made us for God's self but our hearts will not rest until they rest in God. But God the supreme good can only be attained by acts of the intellect and will—the highest two powers or faculties of human beings. In knowing and loving God we come to the fulfillment of our own nature and hence to our beatitude. For Bouquillon happiness is the ultimate internal end of human beings, while the glory of God is the ultimate external end of human beings but these two ends consist in one and the same reality.⁶² We see here an illustration of the Thomistic notions of participation and mediation.

No one can deny some influence of Neo-Scholasticism in Bouquillon's approach to moral theology but for some reason Bouquillon did not follow the Thomistic approach and outline to what we call fundamental moral theology. The Catholic University professor knowingly departed from Thomas' outline and schema, but gave no reason for so doing.⁶³

⁵⁸Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 172-173.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 173-84.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 185-91.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 173.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 178-181.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 170.

After discussing the ultimate end of human beings Thomas Aquinas considered human acts, first those that are proper to human beings and then those that are common to human beings and animals. The *Prima secundae* then discussed the intrinsic principles of human acts—the powers and the habits which are either good (virtues) or bad (vices) that modify the person and the external principles of human acts—the devil and God who instructs with the law and helps by grace.⁶⁴

Bouquillon discusses human acts only after considering law and conscience, but he leaves out the Thomistic emphasis on the intrinsic principle of human acts—the powers and the habits that modify them. One might maintain that the failure to consider these aspects is somewhat minimal but I think not.

Contemporary ethical theory sometimes contrasts the virtue approach to ethics with an obligational approach. In reality Aquinas proposed both aspects but did give primary emphasis in terms of prior treatment and length of treatment to the virtues in his discussion of what we call fundamental moral theology. So significant is the role of the virtues in Aquinas' fundamental moral theology that the virtues become the basis for his whole discussion of particular human acts in what we call special moral theology. Thomas develops his ethical discussion of particular acts around the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and charity) and the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.⁶⁵ Thus by leaving out the section on habits, virtues, and vices Bouquillon loses a very characteristic aspect of the Thomistic approach to moral theology. Also recall that Bouquillon had criticized the manuals of moral theology for not treating the habits and passions,⁶⁶ but his fundamental moral theology likewise does not treat the habits and the passions in any depth.

Not only does Bouquillon leave out the important section on habits but then he gives disproportionate place to the treatise on law and conscience which takes up about sixty percent of his entire fundamental moral theology. The third treatise of his *Theologia moralis fundamentalis* discusses the rules directing human beings to their end, which are law as the objective and remote rule and conscience as the subjective and proximate rule of human action. The discussion on law alone involves one-half of the entire fundamental moral theology.⁶⁷ The discussion of law becomes the most central, lengthy, and important consideration in Bouquillon's fundamental moral theology.

Ironically Bouquillon's negative criticism of the manuals has tended to accentuate the length and importance of his treatise on laws. The Catholic University professor criticized the manuals for not giving enough importance to establishing the principles and the basis of their moral theology. To rectify such

⁶⁴*Summa theologiae* 1-2, q. 6-114.

⁶⁵*Summa theologiae* 2-2, q. 1-170.

⁶⁶Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," 261.

⁶⁷Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 217-492.

an approach he had to devote much more space to such considerations. Aloysius Sabetti, Bouquillon's contemporary teaching at the Jesuit theologate at Woodstock, in his *Compendium*, for example, devoted one page to natural law.⁶⁸ Bouquillon devotes over twenty-five pages to natural law.⁶⁹

On the other hand, despite Bouquillon's strong negative criticism of the manuals, he accepts and agrees with one important characteristic of the manuals—the close relationship between moral theology and canon law. His 1899 article mentioned that the manuals insist upon the external canonical character of law while studying civil law only in a superficial manner.⁷⁰ In his own volume, Bouquillon does not object to the insistence on canon law, and in fact clearly endorses it. Our author spends over 150 pages of his fundamental moral theology discussing ecclesiastical laws.⁷¹ Such an approach is totally foreign to Aquinas.

Despite his strong Neo-Scholastic perspectives, Bouquillon in reality departs from the Thomistic approach to fundamental moral theology. For all practical purposes he accepts the legal model for the structuring of moral theology at least as far as fundamental moral theology is concerned. The discussions about the ultimate end are quite short and really do not seem to influence the heart of the material which deals with the objective and subjective norms of human action. The very short discussion of grace and the sacraments in the section on means to the end is illuminating. The obligations of the Christian life do not come from grace, Christ, and the sacraments as such but rather from the rules to be developed at great length in the following treatise.⁷² The implication remains that grace, Christ, and the sacraments are means to obey the laws by which we arrive at our end. The primary reality in this one volume remains the discussion of law and conscience as the objective and subjective rules of human action. The centrality, length, and the importance of this discussion on law and conscience is not Thomistic and seems to give a priority to the legal model even though the section on law exists within the parameters of a more teleological model.

Why does Bouquillon thus go against a Thomistic approach and give such an importance to the legal model? Three reasons suggest themselves. His explicit criticism of compendia and the manuals did not explicitly reject their emphasis on the close connection between canon law and morality. His fundamental moral theology strongly emphasizes such a relationship. Second, Bouquillon never abandoned the purpose of the manuals of preparing confessors as judges in the sacrament of penance. His *Theologia moralis fundamentalis* originally began in the context of teaching moral theology to seminarians. This location and purpose

⁶⁸Aloysius Sabetti, *Compendium theologiae moralis*, 7th ed. (New York: Pustet, 1892)

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⁶⁹Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 224-251.

⁷⁰Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," 261.

⁷¹Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 283-439.

⁷²*Ibid.*, 197-201.

of the course put heavy emphasis on the training of confessors. The subsequent editions, especially the second, made substantial additions such as the long historical section, but the last two editions still show the book's original purpose and context.

Third is the influence of Francisco Suarez (d. 1617). Suarez is known for his treatise on laws and for having introduced a heavy emphasis on law in general and canon law into moral theology.⁷³ In the preface to his fundamental moral theology, Bouquillon mentions that he has three principal masters and teachers—Thomas Aquinas from whom he has received the firm principles of moral science, Suarez from whom he has received the learned exposition and vindication of principles, and finally St. Alphonsus from whom he has received the prudent application of the same principles.⁷⁴

Bouquillon recognizes his dependence on Suarez precisely with regard to those principles which deal with the area of law. In his criticism of the manuals of moral theology he cites some of the older approaches to moral theology and includes not only Aquinas but also the *De legibus* and the *De religione* of Suarez. With regard to the speculative side of moral theology, Bouquillon mentions just two authors—Aquinas, whose chef d'oeuvre is the *Secunda* of the *Summa* and Suarez who is at his best in his *De legibus*.⁷⁵ His appreciation for Suarez also comes through in his earlier work on religion, another area in which Suarez made a significant contribution.⁷⁶ The Suarezian influence definitely shows itself in the length and importance given to the role of law in Bouquillon's fundamental moral theology.

Thus despite his strong Neo-Scholastic approach and his stinging criticism of the manuals, the basic structure of Bouquillon's fundamental moral theology does not follow the Thomistic approach or schema and like the manuals makes law and conscience the primary and most important considerations.

Since Bouquillon lived in the United States for almost fifteen years, greatly contributed to the life of Catholic University, and actively engaged in the issues of American Catholicism, one would expect his moral theology to reflect his experience of the United States. In the light of Bouquillon's emphasis on the importance of the other sciences such as economics, law, anthropology, and sociology one would expect a thorough discussion of their role in moral theology. However, his fundamental moral theology has practically no references whatsoever to the United States and does not develop at all the role of the other sciences. Why not? Perhaps the very nature of fundamental moral theology as a general and universal discipline explains why the American scene and the other sciences are not mentioned. In his brief discussion of the nature of moral science

⁷³John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) 226-42.

⁷⁴Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, viii.

⁷⁵Bouquillon, "Moral Theology at the End of the Nineteenth Century," 252-53.

⁷⁶Thomas Bouquillon, *Institutiones theologiae moralis specialis: Tractatus de virtute religionis* 1 (Bruges: Beyaert-Storie, 1880).

in the introduction, our author recognizes a greater role for these sciences in the various divisions or parts of moral theology as distinguished from universal or general moral theology. The further divisions of moral science include the ethicoreligious, the ethicosocial, the ethicopolitical, the ethicojuridical, and the ethicoeconomic. Religion, sociology, politics, jurisprudence, and economics pertain to moral science, for they have the same object—free human activity. But these sciences study free human activity from the viewpoint of utility and a proximate end, whereas moral science considers such an activity from the perspective of rightness and the ultimate end. These sciences are not complete without moral science and depend on moral science as the more superior science.⁷⁷ But also Bouquillon's own understanding and development of fundamental moral theology explains why the American scene and the sciences have little or no place in his book. Moral principles and rules are derived deductively in a classicist manner. Human experience and the other human sciences do not enter directly into the establishment of these principles. In a more inductive approach the American experience and the sciences would play a much more significant role in moral theology. Bouquillon attaches great importance to the other sciences but sees their role as necessary for a proper application of the principles of moral theology to the different areas of moral concern.

Bouquillon's *Theologia moralis fundamentalis* basically remains within the model of the manuals of moral theology—a conclusion that is somewhat surprising in the light of his other writings. In comparison with the other manuals of his day he includes a longer discussion of the ultimate end of human beings and of human acts and discusses the theoretical aspects in greater depth. However, the Catholic University professor basically follows the legal model of the manuals with the emphasis on law as the objective and remote rule of human action and conscience as the subjective and proximate rule. In developing these aspects Bouquillon goes into greater depth and detail than found in most manuals of moral theology. In the end it seems that the tradition of the manuals going back to the seventeenth century and the purpose for which he first wrote his fundamental moral theology had a greater influence on Bouquillon than he acknowledged.

CHARLES E. CURRAN

Elizabeth Scurlock University Professor of Human Values
Southern Methodist University
Dallas, Texas

⁷⁷Bouquillon, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 7.