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Renewal of Christian Morality

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RENEWAL OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY

HUMAN VALUES AND CHRISTIAN MORALITY. By Josef Fuchs, S.J. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd., 1970. viii, 203 pp.

One of the on-going renewals in the Church after Vatican II is that of moral theology which seeks the reappraisal of Christian morality. No doubt this scholarly book is a distinctive contribution to the vast and still growing literature on the subject. Yet, despite its solidly theological and scholarly treatment, this surprisingly quite readable book will be most welcome to the post conciliar Christian who is seriously interested in the so-called "new Christian morality."

The author is an internationally famous moral theologian who teaches at the Gregorian University in Rome. (Incidentally, Fr. Fuchs visited the Philippines in 1967 and lectured on the natural law). Between 1964 and 1969 the author has written articles and given public lectures in both Europe and America on the development of moral theology. Now he has made available in a single volume the fruit of his many years of study and research. If there is a single unifying theme of this collection of essays, it is the evolution of the new Christian morality. Since the articles were independently developed, it is understandable that certain repetitions about the same basic questions are unavoidable.

The title of the book is an apt summary of the author's anthropological approach and for this reason the reader will find the book refreshingly human. The basic problem which the author confronts throughout the whole work is the dichotomy between the "human" and the "Christian," a tension which arises from two different standpoints of Vatican II—the first, that of Christianizing human morality; the second, that of humanizing without secularizing morality. "Thus the problem of the 'humanity' (natural moral law) of Christian morality presents itself in a new form and likewise the question of the specific 'Christianity' of the 'human morality of the Christian.'" (Preface, p. vii). In other words, if what is authentically human is already Christian, what is specifically Christian about the morality of the Christian? The value of the book lies in the author's renewed reflections on the basic relationship between human values and Christian morality. The author's approach from the standpoint of human values enables him to present a balanced presentation of the new Christian morality which avoids the rigid strictures of traditional Christian morality and the excesses of contemporary situation ethics.

In the first two chapters, the author presents the new moral theology as envisioned by Vatican II and the spirit and characteristics of the new Christian morality. The Christian morality of the Council is a Christ-centered morality that is biblical, positive, dynamic, communal

and personal to man. In the succeeding chapters, the author gives new meaning and new relevance in the spirit of Vatican II to the law of Christ; to the relation between basic human freedom and morality, between human and Christian morality, between moral and dogmatic theology. The last chapter "On the Theology of Human Progress" is doubly significant in view of the current concern with the "Theology of Development or Liberation" and the present interest in a more dynamic approach to the natural law. First, Fr. Fuchs makes a distinctive contribution to the moral aspects of human development (cf. *Theology Meets Progress* edited by Philip Land, S.J. [Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1971], where the author's mind can be best appreciated in the context of an inter-disciplinary effort to delve into the human implications of development). Second, the author takes a few traditional moral principles and shows how a more dynamic interpretation of natural law theory can offer new avenues of solution to the moral problems of development. The whole book succeeds in conveying to the reader that post-Vatican II Christian morality must be rooted in the gospel of Christ and on the full meaning of the human person and contemporary human experience.

This book should be of special interest to the Church in the Philippines. The national "crisis of morality" points to the need of moral regeneration. It is the task of Philippine moral theologians to "incarnate" within a Philippine context the new Christian morality of Vatican II. Filipino Christian morals must shift from the legalistic, individualistic, and static to a personalistic and responsive morality animated primarily by Christian love centered on the person of Christ. Moral education in the Philippines must be renewed from a purely private to a social or community-centered morality; from an individual to a nation-oriented morality, which stresses social involvement, responsibility and service of the Filipino people. This book is recommended not only to bishops, priests, seminarians, clergy and religious, but also to the mature and educated laity.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE, S.J.

SOUTHEAST ASIAN BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDE

A GUIDE TO REFERENCE MATERIALS ON SOUTHEAST ASIA. Compiled by Donald Clay Johnson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970. xi, 160 pp.

The growing volume of literature covering the field of Southeast Asian studies has made the task of bibliographic control a pressing necessity. In recent years, the response to this need has included Lian