

BIOETHICS MATTERS ENJEUX BIOÉTHIQUES

May 2023

SPECIAL EDITION

Volume 19, Number 1

A 50-Year Legacy in Moral Theology: Nuggets of Wisdom for All, Especially Nascent Seminary Professors

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PROLOGUE

Imagine receiving an e-mail from out of the blue one day. On November 20, 2021 Dr. Peter Sedgwick, professor of moral theology and Anglican pastor in Cardiff, Wales, sent me a message that he had discovered the title of my doctoral thesis. This message blew me out of my pandemic retirement mist. He tells me he is on the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC III). He informs me that the Anglicans are presently engaged in preparing a paper on “Moral Discernment.” In his own research, he uncovered the title of my thesis, successfully defended in June, 1969, namely, *The Use of Consensus Fidelium as a Source of Moral Judgment in Anglican Moral Theology with Special Reference to Kenneth E. Kirk, 1886-1954*. He actually wanted to read the whole thesis, which has been sleeping for over fifty years. For me, it was like the shepherds who discovered the Qumran scrolls in those caves near the Dead Sea.

When I sent him the full *Table of Contents*, Dr. Sedgwick shared some of his thoughts about it with me. He said that I was one of the possibly few Roman Catholic professors of moral theology who had taught this field for a very long time, and who had been influenced by both *Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican Council II and Anglicanism. He put me in the same company as Fr. Kevin Kelly from Ireland. (I had read his work on the Caroline Anglican theologians,¹

about whom I wrote a chapter in my thesis, as influences on the thinking of Bishop Kirk.)

Dr. Sedgwick went on to add that Bishop Robert McAdoo of Dublin, Ireland, had discovered that Fr. Bernard Häring, C.S.S.R., was influenced in his writings by the Caroline theologian, Robert Sanderson.² He was one of the Carolines I used in my own chapter about Kirk’s antecedents. I must add that Fr. Häring was one of my professors in Rome at the Academia Alphonsiana for the scholarship for my doctorate in 1968. He too profoundly influenced my subsequent teaching.

I am elated back here in Canada in my somewhat somnolent retirement mode at the young age of 81. Dr. Sedgwick sets out to read my whole thesis, which I sent to him on a PDF file. He reports back that he wished I had published the whole of it, as it has some good insights. In those days, we had to publish about 100 pages of the “meat” or our thesis, send 50 copies to Rome, and they in turn would distribute them to various libraries in Europe. In 1970, all this is pre-computer days, of course.

By now, I seem to have a “promoter” in my new colleague in Cardiff. He invites me to send my thesis to Bishop Christopher Hill, a 30-year member of ARCIC III, as well as Dr. Wilfrid Adam, who works in Lambeth Palace. Dr. Sedgwick wants my thesis to reside there, along with the rest of Kirk’s *oeuvres*. I had never dreamt that my humble thesis would eventually reside there. In fact, when I was writing my thesis in the old British Museum on Kensington Avenue in London, England in 1968-69, I would walk home to my residence in English Martyrs

Parish in Walworth, often going right by Lambeth Palace on the banks of the mighty Thames River. Prescient?

Where is all this going? Dr. Sedgwick has inspired me to write this article on how I have been influenced by *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) and Anglicanism in my teaching career of over 50 years. In so doing, I have three goals in mind:

1. the specific influences of GS and Anglicanism in my teaching of *moral theology*;
2. the specific influences of GS and Anglicanism in my teaching of *sacramental theology*, specifically the Sacrament of Matrimony and the Sacrament of Reconciliation;
3. some *pastoral* “nuggets of wisdom” which could be useful for a professor starting out on his or her career in teaching in a seminary or theologate.

I do enjoy writing, having published a number of books, which have been well received on this side of the pond. My style tends to be rather informal and even somewhat breezy, punctuated with some humour, which my readers tell me is the way I teach and preach. I will insert an opening section regarding my teaching of moral theology in the seminary, which gives a personal context for my specific goals. It may be of interest to my Anglican readers as they compare how they were taught theology during my teaching era of 1969-2016.

So, writing on the opening day of the Olympic Games in China, February 5, 2022, “Let the theological games begin!”

SEMINARIAN, PRIEST, STUDENT

I was privileged to teach moral and sacramental theology at St. Peter’s Seminary in London, Ontario, Canada, for over fifty years. Many wondered how I ever survived this “mine-field” in theology for so long. When I did retire in

2016, one student brashly told me, “Congratulations! You finally figured out *how* to get out!” We both laughed. The truth of the matter is that I had more than five or six successors lined up to replace me, but each time, events overtook these individuals. This included episcopal elevations, leaving the priesthood, or personal issues of health. My position was indeed “high risk”! I just soldiered on.

The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2019 gave me the opportunity to write my memoirs, now slumbering in the “Fr. Michael R. Prieur Archives,” located in the bowels of the Seminary library. Chapter 2 offers insights into how I was taught theology, especially moral theology, from 1961-1965, my short year in a parish, my post-graduate studies in Rome and London, England from 1966-1969, and then my return to Canada to teach in the seminary.

Any ecumenical spirit was non-existent at home. We Catholics did *not* have non-Catholic friends, we did *not* go to non-Catholic churches for anything, and we quietly boasted to ourselves when we got a holiday from school on some feast days, like November 1, All Saints Day, and the “Protestants” *had* to go to school. “Eat your heart out!” we thought. Except for our neighbors and a few relatives who married into our family, I don’t think I knew the names of more than a handful of non-Catholic individuals. We were ecumenically, hermetically sealed.

I first experienced an “ecumenical event” when our seminary, in about 1963, began an annual visit in the fall to the Anglican seminary in London, Ontario, namely, Huron College, for *Evening Prayer* together in their beautiful chapel. This was followed by a scrumptious dinner (preceded by ample sherry, of course!), and concluded by a formal talk. These were the first shoots of a budding ecumenical spirit. Vatican Council II (1962-65), which we hardly understood at the time, became real in this one new venture in our personal seminary life.

What I have to say here is based on my more than half-century of experience in the seminary. I would like to think that most of it is somewhat universal, based on what is surely tried and true in human nature, Church teaching and universal wisdom. I will use more extensive endnotes because I want to lead my nascent Moral Theology professors to some of my primary sources. It may excite them to peruse some of them in the course of their careers. My main focus here is to track, in my “library of life”, how I was influenced in my long career in teaching Moral Theology.

TRAINING IN MORAL THEOLOGY

My seminary training began with the usual three years majoring in philosophy, 1958-1961. Fr. Durand was my most outstanding professor. He taught us Natural Philosophy and Metaphysics, using examples from nature that none of us had ever heard before, like the upside-down bell spider with its own protective coating under water. He introduced me to a deeper appreciation of nature and beauty. He taught us to marvel at something, just because “it is”. It was our theology of creation at its best. Philosophy is truly the “handmaid of theology”. Grace builds on nature. The value of our created environment grounds everything in our human existence. Faith and reason go hand in hand. It was a profound preparation for my teaching moral theology with its true basis in our human existence.

My theology training spanned the period of 1961-1965. My professors in moral theology included Fr. Frank Loebach, who taught ethics to us in Philosophy, and first-year Moral, a kind of re-hash of his earlier course, but repeated for the sake of those who did not take their philosophy at St. Peter’s, like the Resurrectionists (the “CRs” as we called them) who lived next door. His training included canon law and a good smattering of liturgy. For the latter, he was reading solid liturgical authors like Odo Cassel, Gregory Dix, and Joseph Jungmann, resulting in

his being prepared for the changes coming with the Second Vatican Council. He was not threatened by legitimate change, a good disposition for any professor. He was one of the few professors at St. Peter’s who *were* prepared for Vatican II.

We also had Fr. T.L. (Larry) McManus for moral in our final three years of theology. When I arrived at the seminary in 1958, the older students would rave about having “T.L.” He also was trained in canon law and taught moral vigorously from that optic. Our textbook was in Latin, with a good set of “Trots” (colloquialism for *Cole’s Notes*), an English translation of his now dog-eared class notes which made the rounds in the seminary “underground”, to help out everyone who struggled with Latin. He would introduce each class with a sentence or two of content in what we called “Church Latin”, and then switch into English. Most of us could barely understand the Latin. Mercifully, he realized that teaching the content well was more important than adhering to using Latin.³

Moral Theology was taught using what were known then as “The Manuals.” Our text book used by Fr. McManus, was three hefty volumes by H. Noldin and A. Schmitt, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, 1933.⁴ I had purchased them, but I don’t remember reading the actual texts very much. I was pretty much a “memorize-what-they-say-in-class” student, without doing much outside reading. One other small book was invaluable, however, namely Gerald Kelly, *The Good Confessor* (N.Y., The Sentinal Press, 1951). I still referred to it in my course on hearing confessions until I retired. In all of this, unfortunately we were not encouraged to read much, just learn what was taught in class, and give it back to them on our exams. Rote learning was the rule of the day.

FR. BERNHARD HÄRING, CSSR

The famous Moral Theologian, Fr. Bernhard Häring, CSSR, was just cutting his teeth with his

seminal, three-volume work, *The Law of Christ* (1966). He was carving out the renewal of how to teach Moral Theology, led by the new directions indicated in the Second Vatican Council, 1962-1965. Many theologians had come to realize that moral theology, as taught through the lens of the Manualists, was too legalistic, casuistic, and not influenced enough by Scripture and the Fathers of the Church. A more historical approach, one more based on scripture and the virtues, as done by St. Thomas Aquinas, was being promoted.⁵ Unfortunately, Fr. McManus could not engage in this huge shift in his own field, often referring to Fr. Häring as “the red herring.”

It was sad to see this, until now, powerful professor, being openly challenged in class, and written off by some of my classmates, who *were* reading and discerning the new winds of Vatican II. Personally however, I am deeply indebted to Fr. McManus for staying the course for four more years after I was ordained in 1965, so that I could complete my doctorate in Rome and return to the seminary in 1969 to succeed him.

FR/BISHOP MARCEL GERVAIS

Another teacher who had a profound influence on my learning, was (then) Fr. Marcel Gervais. He returned to the seminary from his post-graduate studies in Rome and Jerusalem in 1963. He was an absolute breath of fresh air for all of us students. Some of our previous scripture teachers had done little post-graduate training in Scripture. One of them simply read the Bible to us and commented on it, which is not too bad when you think of it. It is very patristic. But his sources, while some of them being current, were on the thin side. Since few of us had ever read the whole Bible, this was fresh ground for us. In fact, when I once asked my mother why we did not read the Bible, her curt response was, “The Protestants read the Bible; we Catholics go to church on Sunday.” No comment!

What Fr. Gervais did for all of us was to help us to dig much more deeply into both what the Bible

was saying and the new ways of understanding the different genres in the Bible. We marveled at his insights and left our classes out of breath from his teaching. His influence helped me immensely in teaching Moral theology by infusing tons of scripture into my materials whenever I could. I would strongly urge anyone teaching Moral theology to go deep into scripture studies. I will say more about this as I continue my own post-graduate studies.

Overall, I do not want to disparage the training I received at St. Peter’s Seminary. Our professors were good, faithful priests, very involved in parish life, and very pastoral in guiding our priests with the best input which they could find, given their individual talents. Some would say that their tenure at the seminary was just too long (look who is talking!), and some of them did not keep up to date. For most of us grads of the seminary, we had what we needed to minister to our people. We all had to face the steep learning curve after Vatican II. I personally thank all of them for being so faithful to their seminary calling to prepare us for the diocesan priesthood.

HOW ABOUT TEACHING MORAL?

I had a marvelous one-year stint at Ste Rose of Lima parish in Riverside, under the wise tutelage of my former pastor of my earlier days, Fr. Charlie McNabb. This was Prieur at his youthful best! Newly ordained, loving to celebrate Mass, to preach, to visit the schools and the hospitals, to hear confessions. I was a young priest on a mission. To my delight, Fr. McNabb was open to implementing the reforms that came with the Council, especially in the liturgy. We were averaging a change a week, a “change,” for example, being putting the hosts in the ciborium with a pair of tweezers at the entrance of the church, or celebrating confession face to face. Also, I had the opportunity to organize some parish discussion groups to talk about some of these fresh directions. One thing I excelled in was organizing.

In May, 1966, after my first year in a parish, Bishop Gerald Emmett Carter, eventually becoming Cardinal Archbishop Carter of Toronto, Ontario, called me in to his office on Victoria Street in Windsor. The conversation went like this:

Bishop: "How would you like to go away for post-graduate studies in Rome?"

Me: "I would."

Bishop: "What would you like to study?"

Me: "How about scripture?"

Bishop: "How about moral?"

Me: "How about moral."

End of meeting. Bishop Carter never wasted any time. It's a good thing he never sent me for scripture. All the languages would have killed me. I put my affairs in order in the parish. One thing I did was to prepare a dossier of all that I was doing for my successor and good friend, Fr. Frank O'Connor. He found this invaluable. I highly recommend that we all do this for any successor when we hand over our post.

THE "PRIEUR PORTRAIT" 1966

PORTRAIT OF THIS NASCENT PROFESSOR OF MORAL THEOLOGY

Someone once told me, "Self-knowledge is the best knowledge." Why might my superiors have chosen me to teach in the seminary? No one told me specifically, but many of my classmates saw this coming, even in the seminary. My nick-name was "Doc"! All I can do here is to present some kind of a self-knowledge portrait of me in 1966, with the help of some later tools helping to describe my personality to a "T".

I was an "A" student all my life. Studies came fairly easy for me, as I was organized, self-disciplined, and had some facility for languages. I am very goal-oriented. In fact my marvelous spiritual director in the seminary, Fr. Anthony Durand, whom we reverentially called "The Master," labeled me, correctly, as having a "Scout Badge Mentality". As a Boy Scout, I

proudly had almost more badges than my uniform could hold. Later, I would learn that I am a "6" on the Enneagram, meaning loyal, obedient, persistent, dependable, and usually careful to act on the safe side of things. Later, I learned that I am an "ESFJ" on the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. My personality is a cheerful, optimistic, hopeful, and adventuresome kind of individual. I am a "morning person", to the chagrin of some of my seminary classmates, and later seminary faculty members. One of my rectors, Fr. Jim Carrigan, once called me "insufferable". Blindly so for me, it was true.

I am compassionate, well demonstrated in being in high demand as a confessor at Ste Rose Parish, in Windsor, Ontario. I had a faithful prayer life, did my daily meditation, did 15 minutes of spiritual reading every day, and went to confession every month. I am a happy person and enjoyed being a priest. I did experience a few failures, even in the seminary. Just before my ordination, I developed a fear of fainting, and a phobia for open spaces, something for which I got help through some counseling. Fr. Durand was non-plussed by this, wisely declaring to me that, "Finally, this 'Scout badge mentality' has something over which he has no control!" It was a big lesson in humility for me.

I loved the outdoors, cycling, hiking, camping, and walking in the woods or by the Detroit River where I lived. I loved doing the gardening and cutting the grass at home. I enjoyed my part-time job in a grocery store, even as a seminarian, allowing me time to burn off some steam from studying all week. This accompanied my solid friendships, as I loved to do things together in the outdoors.

This was the "Prieur Portrait" as Bishop Carter sent me packing for Rome in 1966. My nugget of wisdom for my novice professor, the more ways you can use to get to know yourself, the better. And don't be afraid to tell your students *who* you are. This is not pride, but true humility. Jesus did

just this when he said, “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have learned from my Father.” (Jn. 15:15) In my seminary days, our professors rarely let us into their personal lives. Their families rarely came to visit us in the seminary. They all seemed like “Melchizedeks”!

A SIDE-TRIP TO BRAZIL

My good friend, Tim Ryan, had received, what we call “a call within a call”, when he left St. Peter’s Seminary in theology to join the Scarboro Foreign Mission Society in Toronto. After his ordination, he was assigned to work in Itacoatiara on the Amazon River in Brazil, where the Scarboro priests (now called Scarboro Missions) had a mission. Providentially, in 1966, he too, was asked to do post-graduate studies in Europe at the same time as I was. However, he needed to return to Brazil en route to Rome, to put the books in order for his successor. He invited me to go with him for this “slight detour.” I gladly accepted. It was one of my most profound experiences of my whole three years away from Canada.

It was my first experience of the hot, steamy jungles of the tropics. It was the first time I had ever slept in a “hengy,” a hammock covered with mosquito netting, strung up in my small room. The missionaries were full of hospitality as well as a deep love and respect for the people. For three weeks, all I could do was say “Amazing!”, my standard expletive for wonder and awe. Our “tidying-up mission” concluded with a trip across Brazil to Bella Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro, from where we flew to Rome. Tim was a superb guide, full of great, insightful details about mission work in Latin America. I was a sponge to learn about it.

My lesson from this excursion for my novice professor is quite simple: if you get the chance to spend some time in another culture, whether brief

or lengthy, take it. It will enrich your concept of culture and Catholicity incredibly. Also, I used to recommend the same thing to my seminarians.

ROMA AETERNA

I arrived in Rome not knowing a single word of Italian. I thought “ciao” was some kind of dog food! I did not have any time to do a preparatory course in Italian because I had spent the previous summer at Harvard studying Greek, and a smattering of Hebrew with a tutor along with Tim Ryan. Fr. Richard Charrette was also with us studying Hebrew, in advance of his heading to Europe the next year to study Scripture. He *does* have the gift for languages. I reckon that this summer experience shaved a whole year off my studies, clearing the decks from having to take these language courses in Rome. Thank God for seminary professors who have already been to Europe to study, and who know the ropes of what is demanded. The European academic world is totally different compared to North America.

Life in Rome is hectic, noisy, full of wonderful smells of cappuccino in the morning in the streets, sirens in the daytime, and pickpockets everywhere. It has more artistic marvels in building facades, archeological remains, and the inside of churches and museums than in all of Canada. The city is layer on layer of civilizations. One can see the true universality of the Catholic Church simply by attending any Wednesday Angelus with the Holy Father in the piazza in front of St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican.

Bishop Carter had tasked me to get my Doctorate in Theology in three years. At the seminary, Fr. McManus was hanging on by his fingernails. In those days, it was possible. I studied at Sant’ Anselmo on the Aventine Hill in Rome with the Benedictines. It was possible to do the Licentiate in Theology in one year by studying the *Notulae* of the other two years of the program, and then doing a comprehensive exam at the end of year one. I spent my evenings ploughing through this stack of notes, all in Latin, making my own

summaries in my typical, Prieur, short-form codes. I predated the computer chip by decades! My classes were mostly in Latin. I polished up my French at table with my French-Canadian colleagues. I tried to learn a bit of Italian each day on my own, and I devoured my *notulae* each evening. Small wonder I had headaches some days! My daily jogging saved my mental health, along with my fellow English-speaking Canadian friends, all of us living at the old *Collegio Canadese* on the Quattro Fontane.

One monumental grace I received happened during my first two weeks on arriving in Rome. At Sant'Anselmo, a crusty Benedictine registrar, called Fr. Nicholas, curtly informed me that, since I did not have a degree in theology, I would have to do a comprehensive entrance exam to see if I could enter their one-year licentiate program. I blanched. I had none of my own notes in theology from home. I had been in a parish for a year. My study habits were dormant. I would surely fail this test and have to spend more than three years to get my doctorate. *Que faire?*

Providentially, Bishop Carter happened to be in Rome for one of his meetings for the Liturgical Commission in Rome. I will never forget speaking to him of my distress, fear of failure, and wondering if I was the right person to be studying in Rome. His words are indelibly engraved in my memory, "The only thing you have to fear, is fear itself. No matter what happens, I will stand behind you." A wave of new courage flooded into my soul. My own bishop had supported me in my fears.

Almost within days, I received an answer in the mail from Fr. Gervais, the then seminary registrar, with my certificate for my Bachelor of Theology, which we had obtained at the Seminary. Immediately, I made an appointment to see Fr. Augustus Meyer, OSB, the *Rector Magnificus* of Sant'Anselmo. This tall and imposing figure, a future Cardinal, strode into the room, listened to my plight, took one look at my

degree, and simply wrote "*dispensatur*" on my brand-new, academic passport book. I immediately went down to the registrar's office to show him the results. Fr. Nicholas gruffly accepted it, admitting some kind of defeat, and enrolled me in the one-year program.

In my life, I have learned that whenever the chips are down, or you need some real help in teaching, either personally or academically, trust the grace of office in the bishop, humbly go and see him, be 100% open, and obediently do what he tells you. This has never failed me in all of my career. I obtained my Licentiate in one year.

A DOCTORAL DISAPPOINTMENT: HOW GOD CAN RESCUE US.

I had decided to remain in Europe for the whole three years of my studies. Traveling back home was much too expensive in those days. I wrote letters to my mother weekly. There were no computers, Internet or I-Phones then. I even bought an *Olivetti* typewriter when I arrived in Rome. I also remember buying the newly published, English version of *The Jerusalem Bible*. Up until then, it had been published in French in fascicules for each book of the bible over a period of years. I eagerly purchased my hard-covered copy, and inscribed it thus:

*Bought on beginning my studies in Rome,
the holy city of the Apostles.
I pray that the Spirit of these sacred Writings
may permeate me
in everything I do, and renew me
according to the heart of the Master.*

Rome: October 26, 1966.

(Rebound: Sept. 23, 1993;

rebound again: Aug. 16, 2011)

I have always thought it a good idea to have a "working bible" in which to insert all kinds of comments. I treasure this copy of mine. I have ploughed through such high-quality books as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's, *The Cost of Discipleship* (1949/1970), Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (1973, 9th ed.), and Bishop Marcel Gervais' wonderful,

40-fascicule, scripture commentary series, *Journey* (1979). With my daily 10-minutes' readings, I would annotate my bible in minuscule red or green ink notations from these masterpieces of biblical insight. To this day, I re-read these inscriptions, and get ideas for my teaching and preaching. What was true for these true biblical experts then, remains true today. I do recommend to anyone beginning their theological studies, to buy a good "working bible," and be willing to spend time annotating it. It will be a wonderful reference work for the rest of your life. I have said, that if my apartment were on fire, I hope I would have the time to rescue this annotated bible. I could probably replace just about anything else that I presently own.

Having finished my Licentiate in 1967, I continued in the doctorate program at Sant' Anselmo, completing my scholarship program in the first term. For this, I was able to enroll at the Academia Alfonsiana for these courses, since both Sant' Anselmo and the Alfonsiana were "Athenaeums" under their "parent" Lateran University. One big blessing was that I had Fr. Häring for one course. He indelibly marked my approach to moral theology. His holiness came out to me in his course. He had suffered during the second World War. However, it was especially his theology of conversion, prominent in many of his writings, which deeply influenced me. Subsequently, I spent almost a month on this theme in first year moral at the seminary. The faculty rejoiced when students couldn't wait to go to confession, based on what they were learning in my class. I taught most of this directly using scripture.

This leads me to another piece of advice. When you discover a teacher or author of real substance, go deep in their writings. You will often discover all the basics that you need. On the other hand, do not become a teacher of one author, either. Solid variety gives even more depth. I never did this in the seminary, being a simple adherent to what my teachers told me in

class. When Fr. Marcel Gervais was a theology student in the seminary, he took it upon himself to read some of the Fathers of the Church. Wise move. It is small wonder that he had such a broad scope and true depth to his teachings.

I had enlisted Fr. Anselmus Guenthoer, OSB, to direct me in my doctoral thesis. I had never taken a course from him, but he was the professor of moral theology at Sant' Anselmo. I wanted to study a theme in Anglicanism in order to learn more about what Pope Paul VI had called a "Sister Church" to us Roman Catholics. I also had a pragmatic reason. I knew that most of my readings would necessarily be in English, thereby relieving me of having to try to plough through numerous authors, say in German. (However, I did take two *Goethe Institut* courses in German, enabling me to source them for the theme of *Consensus Fidelium*.) I think that anyone doing a doctorate needs to discover any possible, practical short cuts possible, since there is only so much time to do the work.

I had settled on this topic: "Why the Anglican Church changed its teaching on Contraception between the Lambeth Conferences of 1920 and 1930." This was historic, and anyone reading the encyclical of Pius XI, *Casti Connubii* (December, 1930), will realize that he had an axe to grind. His language is very polemical, not irenic, as in Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968), dealing with the same subject. (This is a good assignment for students taking the marriage course, namely to compare the two encyclicals.) Anglicanism had taken a phenomenal shift in its official teaching, which had been almost identical to Roman Catholic teaching until 1930.

I had been working on this theme for about five months. One day, I was doing some research at the North American College (NAC) library on the Janiculum hill near the Vatican. Suddenly a footnote appeared in my reading with the exact title of my thesis. It is what every doctoral student dreads. I slammed down all the tomes on my desk and literally stalked out of the library

reading room. You would think I was going to kill someone! I almost ran over to the library of the *Gregorianum*, where they gave me exactly, and only, three hours to look at the thesis. It was well done. There was no way I could continue. My next stop was to see my thesis director, Fr. Guenthoer. He was crestfallen. “Done under Fr. Fuchs, my colleague! I should have known. I feel so bad for you.” His German pride was hurt. This will pay off for me, as you will see.

I needed to assuage my wounds, so I headed to Rocca di Papa just outside Rome for a retreat. We did a lot of sharing. When I disclosed my situation to the group with a downcast face, one of the retreat assistants, a lady from Sri Lanka called Teresa Pereira, immediately latched on to me for spiritual solace. She was balm to my soul at that time. I continued to visit her on my many subsequent visits to Rome. This illustrated to me once again that in our darkest hours, God always sends someone, or does something, to restore our hope.

THE BRITISH MUSEUM IN LONDON

The whole “disaster” turned out to be a “bad for a good.” I told my director that I wanted to continue to do a theme in Anglicanism, and that I was heading for London, England to find it. I had decided to live in a parish in Southwark to continue to write my thesis, whatever the subject. Parish life would preserve my pastoral sanity, and I could shave off a year of trying to find materials by working in the, then, old British Museum. With British efficiency, and for the paltry sum of £1 for a library card, I would have anything I might need, on my desk every morning within 15 minutes, with no dust on some of the 17th century ancient tomes I would read, and *in English!* Prieur efficiency kicking in again!

Kirk’s most outstanding work is *The Vision of God – The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum* (London, Longmans, 1932), which is the published version of the 1928 Bampton lectures

which he gave. This *tour de force* traces the swing of the pendulum between emphasizing the divinity or the humanity of Christ in the Church since its inception. This pendulum between rigorism and laxism keeps swinging to this day, and is a key theme in understanding how to teach moral theology. Reading heavy tomes like this once in a while is good grist for the everyday mill of moral theology in a seminary.

I was discovering a persistent theme in Kirk, “*consensus fidelium*.” We don’t usually associate these two categories, *Consensus fidelium* and *moral judgments*, thinking more of doctrinal teachings like the Assumption of Mary, where Pope Pius XII did use *consensus fidelium* as a primary source to declare this teaching as infallible in 1954. The rest is history. I visited one of the only two others who had done a doctorate on Kirk, namely Fr. Francis Frost, in the close of Salisbury Cathedral. While he agreed that my theme was present in Kirk’s writings, he did not think my theme was enough for a whole thesis. So, I decided to “fluff it up” a bit, by doing a whole chapter on Kirk’s antecedents, the Caroline theologians on whom Kirk leaned. Few Roman Catholics of my readers would know much about either Kirk or these theologians. Fr. Guenthoer, through my letters to him (no e-mail!), agreed. Go for it. It took me about a year and a half to complete my doctorate.⁷

Here are two interesting details in doing my doctorate. I had written some 70 pages on one example of *consensus fidelium* being implemented in Church practice, namely the ultimate rejection of the use of solemn reconciliation by the 10th century in the historical practice of the sacrament of reconciliation. For most of the faithful, especially the laity, it was just too rigid. I received the corrections of Fr. Guenthoer in the mail: he red-marked the whole 70 pages on this example, “You don’t need this!” However, I had tons of material in my thesis. Lesson for doctoral students: Write more than what you need. It is easier to subtract than to add.

I had to resort to every trick in the book to get my thesis typed and bound in order to defend it in Rome. The university had given me a two-month extension, setting the date for June, 1969, instead of the regular April deadline. In a rush, the newly-ordained associate priest at the parish offered to bind my five, required copies of the thesis at his seminary, where he had done book-binding as a seminarian. Off we went. He lined up the pages of the first copy to trim the pages. Slamming down the huge paper-slicer, he took one loud swipe of the bottom pages, *and chopped off part of my footnotes*. I literally bent over the middle parts of my body as if he had done it to me, while yelling out “Stop!” Fortunately, this was the one extra copy I had, which I really did not need. Always look twice before you trim.

From all of this, I do have a few valuable learning aspects for anyone teaching in a seminary.

1. It is invaluable to study other religious traditions. The whole ecumenical and inter-faith movements, spawned by the Second Vatican Council, stress this.
2. Sometimes, these traditions are parallel to what our own Roman Catholic teachings can learn from. Especially in moral theology, Kirk foresaw what it took us Roman Catholics another 30 years or so to realize. Truth is truth, wherever it is found.
3. We can learn a lot from the *fidelium*, which includes *both* the hierarchy and the laity. Cardinal Newman knew this all too well, and I used him in my thesis.⁸
4. Living in a parish while doing post-graduate studies is invaluable in helping us to stay human, balanced and pastorally satisfied. I was ordained to be a parish priest, not a seminary professor.

However, it is possible to be a seminary professor and still a good pastor, in outlook at least. This is a primary requirement for teaching in a diocesan seminary.

5. Priests need solid friends. All through my graduate studies overseas, I was blessed with deep, priest friends with whom I prayed, suffered, holidayed, and laughed. Sometimes, some of these friends had profound problems. But at the time, the Holy Spirit used our friendship to sustain me in what I was enduring. This has been true for me right through my whole 50-year seminary career.

1966-1969 A SUMMARY

I finished my doctorate, returned to Rome and defended my thesis. It was in my defence that Fr. Guenther came to my rescue a number of times. In this way, he paid me back for his oversight a year and a half earlier when he did not realize my first thesis subject had already been done. I will be indebted to him for the rest of my life. I then headed back to Canada after being away for three whole years. I had met the deadline of three years to complete my doctorate. I had achieved another “Scout Badge”. When I disembarked from the jumbo jet at Mirabel Airport in Montreal in June, 1969, I knelt down on the tarmac, and kissed the pavement. I was so happy to be back on Canadian soil. I preceded this practice of St. John Paul II by at least a decade!

Part 2

50 YEARS OF MORAL THEOLOGY

It is time to leave my *Memoirs*. I was powerfully influenced by Vatican Council II in all of my teaching. With the nudge of Dr. Sedgwick, I also now realize that Anglicanism was also a *leitmotif* in my teaching. Let me now give some general brush strokes to these influences using some of

my courses, and my extra-seminary involvements as my headings.

FIRST YEAR MORAL THEOLOGY

I loved the enthusiasm and hunger for theology that students had when they began this part of their training. Three years of dusty, dry philosophy (for many of them) are often simply “endured” in order to arrive at the Halcyon fields of theology. My eager audience was my course in first year Moral Theology. Influenced by my former scripture professor, Fr. Marcel Gervais (later Archbishop Gervais of Ottawa, Ontario), I spent *one whole month* mining Fr. Häring’s rich veins of “conversion”, using *only* the Bible as my course material. I loved to dramatize David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba, in which he breaks at least five of the Ten Commandments. At the end of this terrible fall, Scripture simply says, “And what David had done, displeased the Lord”. (2 *Samuel*, 11:27) I don’t think there is a better, more personal, way of describing sin in the whole bible.

Then, I loved to point out that the very next line, without any chapter-break in the Hebrew original, Scripture simply says, “And God sent Nathan, the prophet” (12:1). Bang! We have a mighty point about conversion: “God always takes the initiative.” The dramatic highlight in this class took place when Nathan confronts David with his fictitious legal case. I would dramatize how, in the now ancient black and white film *David*, Nathan confronted David, aiming his staff at his eyeballs, and shouting, “You are that man!” Nathan then gives a torrent of remarkable blessings God had given to David in his lifetime, culminating with his conclusion amounting to, “Look what you have done, you ingrate!” (Priour translation). David blanches (in the black-and-white movie), and humbly says, “I have sinned against the Lord.” (12:12) David is truly humble when finally perceiving the truth. His total conversion is immediately underway.

This is only one example of how I tried to make Scripture come alive in teaching first year Moral, as well as my other courses. We had never had this happen when I was in theology in the seminary. Vatican II, Kenneth Kirk, and Fr. Marcel Gervais, had totally opened me up to the vast layers of riches in scripture, and it helped me to infuse this in my own teaching. The students loved it, and the other seminary spiritual directors always reported a fresh run of individual confessions when I taught about conversion. Of course, this theme has been well mined by other great theologians like the Jesuit Fr. Bernard Lonergan. Vatican II, and Anglicanism, saw the necessity of bringing Moral Theology back to its biblical and patristic roots. Farewell to a legalistic teaching of Moral Theology.

THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

I was fascinated by the history of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We had learned little about this in the seminary. However, Kirk was full of fresh material about this in his writings. Indeed, his magisterial work, *The Vision of God* (1932), was a *tour de force* for me about how this sacrament had evolved in the first thousand years of the Church from the rigorous, public penance of the early Church, to the monastic tariff penances beginning in the sixth century, and becoming the normal way of celebrating reconciliation by the tenth century for monks, clergy and laity alike. Fr. Karl Rahner called this the “great divide” in the history of this sacrament.

Kirk loved the “historical approach” in presenting Moral and Sacramental theology. Trolling through the history of all the sacraments, the “constants and variables” appear without having to perform any kind of “good cop/bad cop” approach, which the Manuals seemed to do. Aquinas was always the “good cop”, and all the others seemed to me to be the “bad cops”. (Please forgive my simplification. It is that of a “green, green seminarian”.) However this historical approach, deep in Anglicanism, and indeed in the convert from Anglicanism, St. John Henry

Cardinal Newman and the whole Oxford Movement in his day, profoundly influenced me.

I also want to flag the fresh methodology inherent in the historical approach, namely an approach rooted in beginning any moral question with our own lived experience. It was popularized by Cardinal Cardijn of Belgium in Catholic Action groups, encouraged to use a “see/judge/act” approach. Moral theology should always begin with the actual experiences of human beings, their struggles, their confusion, their desperate search for the truth in circumstances which are rarely black and white. One of Kirk’s “mantras” was, “Circumstances alter cases”. Now, indeed this is embedded in the Moral Theology of Aquinas as well, under the category of “circumstances”, but Kirk elevated this to a deep sensitivity to where people were at in their actual lives.

Kirk breathed a compassionate understanding of human beings. He refused to use the approach of the Manuals which was, begin with a moral principle, then go on to prove it using scripture, reason, and “weighty” authors, and then make a deductive conclusion to hand on to a penitent. It was a kind of “top-down” approach, rather than a “bottom-up” one. However, I would say that Our Lord was close to the people, experienced their sorrows and joys, their failures and hopes, (*Gaudium et Spes* in spades!), and healed them with an approach of “mercy in truth.” This was my own personal motto for all of my teaching career.

CONSCIENCE

Vatican II and Kirk also championed the importance of respecting everyone’s conscience, which, if fully informed, is to be followed, no matter what. This flew in the face of my younger years, where the priest/confessor possibly taking the place of a penitent’s conscience in his advice. “Father, tell me what to do,” pervaded the confessional. In some ways, our whole training at

the seminary was a version of this, when we were told, “You keep the Rule and the Rule will keep you”. It was almost blind obedience.

Of course, the whole question of birth control in the 1960s pushed this stress on conscience to its limits. I think the valid distinction between objective moral norms and our subjective response in our own personal lives is the way through this monumental dilemma for many penitents struggling with birth control. Fr. Karl Rahner once remarked that, without this distinction, one cannot “do Moral theology.” Both Vatican II, Anglicanism, and particularly Kirk, provided us with a rich vein of legitimate moral theological outlook on conscience in the midst of vexing moral difficulties. They were stunning examples of what Aquinas had said centuries earlier, “The closer you get to the particular moral action of anyone, often the harder it is to know its moral rightness” (my translation).

I conclude this section on teaching the Sacrament of Reconciliation by noting that I have written a number of books on this subject, both from a sacramental perspective, and from a strictly pastoral one. My first book had a chapter on, “Conversion: The Biblical Breath of Reconciliation,” which is still used to this day (2022) by a professor in California who annually seeks my permission to reprint it.⁹ My most popular book on how to go to confession remains ever in demand although now out of print.¹⁰ In it, I used three categories to examine *anyone’s* confession: friends, family and faith. They popularly work!

THE ART OF THE CONFESSOR

The Art of the Confessor – A Vademecum for Seminarians and Priests is my most recent pastoral work. It is the fruit of my teaching how to hear confessions.¹¹ I brag that I do not think there is anything like it on the market today. It is filled with full-colour prints of both famous and little-known works of art dealing especially with

the Prodigal Son theme. It has a section on “Bioethical Issues” and “Dealing with the Problems of Evil.” Few manuals on how to hear confessions deal specifically with evil, and yet it is as pandemic in humans today as is the COVID-19 virus. The devil is truly alive and well in the 21st century, not least in the dark regions of pornography and racism. *Gaudium et Spes* was not unaware of this mighty Personal Power of Evil in our lives. Anglicanism and Kirk also were well aware of it.

THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

When I began to teach at the seminary in 1969, I was full of the wonderful new insights about Matrimony proclaimed in *Gaudium et Spes*. Marriage was a union of love in the service of life. It was a covenant, not just a contract. It was a true vocation. The ends of marriage, love and procreation, were now seen “in tandem”, and no longer in terms of “primary” and “secondary”. The history of the sacrament was full of discovering how it was recognized over the centuries, including civil marriage, clandestine marriage and sacramental marriage, all of which were accepted as valid by the Church for over a thousand years.

As I continued to deepen my understanding of marriage, my reading helped me to realize that *Gaudium et Spes* had unlocked many deep insights that needed to be presented to married couples. Marriage had a deep ecclesial dimension as a partnership in grace of Christ and the Church. The family was a “domestic Church” (I love the Italian for this, an *ecclesiola*). The Sacrament of Marriage is a baptismal convocation, finding its meaning and fulfillment in the Eucharist. It is “the epiphany and historical realization of the love of God for humankind.” Indeed, marriage is a kind of “consecrating sacrament,” as well as being “communion” with its source in the communion of the Trinity. Finally, theologians were unpacking the huge role that the Holy Spirit plays in every marriage, especially in the newly revised *Rite of Marriage*

published in 1990.¹² I loved discovering how the “Development of Doctrine” so infused each of the sacraments, which is a wonderful theme in Vatican II, Newman, Kirk, and Anglicanism in general. I do think my courses overflowed with rushes of this manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

I twinned the course in Matrimony with Human Sexuality, one term for each. I managed to teach both courses with one eye on the theological/sacramental aspect, and my other eye on parishioners struggling with living out our Christian/Catholic teachings in their ordinary lives. My personal mantra of “mercy-in-truth” pervaded my animated classes. I even invited retired married couples to audit the course for free, just to inject lived wisdom from their own “Doctorates in Life”. The students loved them.

In 1969, I cut my teeth in the marriage course with the newly published book on marriage by Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P.¹³ This was an excellent example of teaching using an historical/biblical approach. As I rumbled along in my long teaching career, I used other texts.¹⁴

In my course on sexuality, I especially appreciated the writings of Gerald Coleman.¹⁵ All of my materials stressed developing the historical development of each theme, sensitive also to what other parts of the Church taught as well. I loved some Eastern Orthodox theologians such as John Meyendorff, Paul Evdokimov and Alexander Schmemmann.

On a very pastoral level, my career involved 25 years of involvement in *Marriage Encounter* and *Engaged Encounter* weekends. The couples sometimes gasped when I invited seminarians to make the weekend, but soon realized that such an experience would be pure gold in their own pastoral ministry. Everyone left the weekend with their individual commitments much strengthened. Married couples have so much to teach us clergy, especially how to live the gift of

celibacy in a balanced and mature manner. I often told the seminarians that as the degree of communication diminishes a marriage, so too does our own lack of prayer diminish our own priestly commitment to God and our people. We are so interconnected.

Another pastoral application for the sacrament of marriage in my career was the publication of several works on marriage. In 1976, I published a book for those preparing to get married.¹⁶ Somehow, I managed to stick-handle many of the controversial questions, especially those of birth control and mixed marriages, and still land on my feet! My greatest supporter was my own bishop, Gerald Emmett Carter, who also gave me his own *Imprimatur*. It was only years later that his secretary revealed to me the flak he received for some parts of the book. But, giant that he was, he personally responded to each objection without telling me of any of them. Now that's greatness, in my books!

I also ventured forth with another very pastoral publication for a Lenten program in our parishes.¹⁷ These seven fascicules, illustrated with very modern, artistic sketches, was a big hit in our diocese. In fact, it even enjoyed several reprints in the United States. The six fascicules had the six fundamental aspects of our Christian Catholic faith for their titles:

1. God the Father: Marriage as Covenant
2. God the Son: Marriage as Communication
3. God the Holy Spirit: Marriage as Creativity
4. Church: Marriage as Communion
5. Forgiveness: Marriage as Healing
6. Eucharist: Marriage as Food for the Journey

There also was a seventh fascicule with complete instructions on how to use the program for a series of either six weeks, twelve weeks, or eighteen weeks.

The outline in each booklet was unique: section one was a brief instruction on practical helps for prayer, section two then gave a kind *sitz im leben* of our current times regarding marriage and family life (the "See" in the Cardign model), section three introduced the readers to Vatican II on marriage, namely *Gaudium et Spes*, nos.49-55 (= "judge"), section four applied it to our times (= "Act"), and finally section five presented some official teachings of the Church current to what had been discussed. I have never seen any other series on marriage with all these components in it. I think it is a pastoral epitome of applying our sacramental theology for the benefit of ordinary folks in the pews. Somehow, I think Kirk would be proud of me!

BIOETHICS

The word "Bioethics" was coined in 1972 by Cardinal Van Rensselaer Potter to describe the survival of the planet. I had never heard it when I began to teach in 1969. I soon discovered a valuable textbook by Ashley and O'Rourke.¹⁸ I watched their textbook morph over a period of almost 30 years, as various bioethical questions continued to become more nuanced, (e.g., ectopic pregnancies) or vexing (e.g., formal and material cooperation). I got to meet them over the years, which was a treat for me.

I think some of my success in teaching bioethics was due to my "boots on the ground" experience at St. Joseph's Health Care London. It had a tertiary care neo-natal intensive care unit, meaning that all the "hard perinatal cases" in Southwestern Ontario ended up in London. For over 45 years, we wrestled with hot-button moral issues such as sterilization, ectopic pregnancies, early induction for lethal, fetal anomalies, transplanting organs from dead anencephalic infants, embryonic stem cell research, and withholding/withdrawing treatment in end-of-life situations. I was always writing up "position papers" and often publishing them. We were often on the "cutting edge" of bioethics.

In keeping with my post-Vatican II training, and my Anglican influence, I always did my homework in researching these delicate questions. I loved giving very extensive bibliographies in my seminary course and in my research papers. I often brought in guest speakers from the hospital to give the students what I called “Oxford quality”. Indeed, one of my speakers did have Oxford qualifications! Clearly, I took my obligation to teach from my lived experiences at the hospital and my pastoral experience in doing parish ministry very regularly. I knew where “people were at”!

CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE GUIDE

Probably the best example of my doing bioethics with a Vatican II optic, flavoured by an “Anglican sauce,” was my almost fifteen-year experience in crafting three editions of the *Guide* for health care ethics for Catholic health care institutions in Canada.¹⁹ These guides rapidly became the *vademecum*, like a catechism, in all of our Catholic health care institutions. We insisted that they be extremely “user-friendly”, both in content and lay-out. We stressed that the guidelines be pastoral in orientation. We wanted them to be clearly Roman Catholic, but with an eye to our audience. More than seventy percent of our health care staff would not be Catholic, and definitely the majority of our patients would not be Catholic.

To meet this culture, we used the Parable of the Good Samaritan as an overture for the tone of the guide. We are called to bring healing and comfort to anyone who lands in our emergency entrance. We treat all sick people. Judgment of their personal status is in God’s hands. The guidelines use both faith and reason to present an accurate but pithy rationale for our directives. We provided appendices on conscience, a discernment model for our decision-making consults, a detailed description of formal and material cooperation (“complicity” in legal terms), and a detailed bibliography.

The Guide details a summary of our **Moral Values**, and our Catholic **Interpretative Principles** in an Appendix.

Fundamental Moral Values

(three “Calls”)

The Call to Respect Dignity

1. Respect for the dignity of every human person
2. Respect for human life

The Call to Foster Trust

3. The interconnectedness of every human being
4. Stewardship and creativity

The Call to Promote Justice

5. Justice
6. The common good
7. Subsidiarity

Interpretative Principles

1. Burden and benefit
2. Double effect reasoning
3. Totality and integrity
4. Subsidiarity
5. Principle of Cooperation

Even the physical size of the *Guide* was practical, 5" x 8" (12.5 mm x 18 mm). It was not unusual to see a team manager trot out a well-thumbed *Guide* at a meeting. The front cover of the 2000 *Guide* had a full-colour montage of multi-racial, young and old patients. But, we realized that a whole class of patients was missing, namely, children. In the 2012 edition, a proud dad, holding his new-born child, graced the upper corner of the cover. Again, we were learning.

Even more important perhaps, was the whole *process* used in publishing each edition of the *Guide*. By the third edition in 2012, the list of consultants had grown to two whole pages. These

consultants, both lay and clerical, Catholic and non-Catholic, came from all across Canada. (We had no such list in our first Guide of 1991!) It is an excellent example of doing what Vatican II had recommended, namely, listen to anyone who may have a needed expertise, especially lay people, and give them credit.

To the amazement of our American counterparts, who were following the development of our *Guide*, we always managed to keep the *Guide* under the aegis of the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, with a *Nihil obstat* from the Permanent Council of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. In the United States, their directives have always been under the aegis of the USCCB. For us, it is an interesting example of the principle of subsidiarity. For a number of reasons, it took us five years and two months to obtain the *Nihil obstat*. Perseverance pays off.²⁰

I was involved as a moral theology consultant at SJHC and for the CHAC for over 50 years. This was invaluable in keeping me in touch with bioethical issues both locally and nationally. I was always learning on the job, and I needed to be constantly updating and revising my views as both theological views and new medical research and practice evolved. Newman called doing theology a “noisy process,” and my ears certainly suffered from the noise!

BACK TO MY NASCENT SEMINARY PROFESSOR

I think it is time to come in for a landing. I think I can now see how influential Vatican Council II and, to a lesser degree, Anglicanism, has influenced my long teaching career. I have given a number of “nuggets of wisdom” in this article. As I reflect on all of it, I think there are some key *conseilleos* I would hand down to “Fr. Novus Magister,” whom I addressed in my Memoirs.

1. **Pray, pray, pray.** At root, it all depends on God. Nothing is impossible for God. We are not the saviours of the world. Jesus has already done that.

2. **Mercy-in-Truth.** Always begin with the human experiences, the sufferings and joys, of the people themselves. But keep this within the ambit of God’s truth, and the help that the Church, and human reason, give us to interpret this truth.
3. **Be humble.** Humility is being close to the earth, accepting creaturehood, not setting up false realities about ourselves and creation. Stay real.
4. **Let joy resonate in your life and teaching.** One of my old professors told us, “If your religion makes you sad, or mad, and not glad, then it is bad!” St. Teresa of Avila said, “A sad saint is a sad saint!” Gospel means “Good News”. Surely, we can make our presentations full of fresh hope, joy and peace.

So, to our nascent professor of theology, go for the gold! ■

Fr Michael R. Prieur, STD, aka Fr. Mickey, began his earthly pilgrimage at about 8:00 am in his parents’ house in Paquette Corners, Ontario, just south of Windsor. He grew up here, attended St. Peter’s Seminary in London, and was ordained in 1965. After one year in a parish, he studied in Rome and London, England for three years to obtain his Doctorate in Theology. Fr Mickey was on St. Peter’s Seminary Faculty for over 50 years; he has written nine books and many articles, and founded the Permanent Deacon program for the London Diocese in 2000. He loves the outdoors, hiked the entire Bruce Trail (in 14 years!), and enjoys writing books, especially on stained glass windows. Retired for seven years, he has learned how to cook and do housework. His retired life has not been boring!

¹¹ Kevin Kelly, *Conscience: Dictator or Guide – A Study in Seventeenth Century Protestant Moral Theology*, London, Chapman, 1967.

²² See H. R. McAdoo, *Rome and the Anglicans: historical and doctrinal aspects of Anglican-Roman Catholic relations*, Berlin New York: W. de Gruyter, 1982. He mentions that the Caroline theologians along with writers such as Häring, Fuchs, Curran and McDonagh, "tried to bring Roman Catholic moral theology close to classical Anglican moral theology, which never allowed the subject to fall into the hands of the canonists and which kept insisting that moral-ascetical theology was one science, not two subjects." (p. 23)

³³ St. Pope John XXIII issued an Apostolic Exhortation, *Veterum Sapientiae* in 1962, in which he insisted that all theology courses in a seminary be taught in Latin. In my time at St. Peter's, one of our professors adhered to this for one class. Half-way through his second class teaching in Latin, he paused, and in English, simply asked us how many of us understood what he was saying. No hands went up. He continued the class in English. He immediately went to the Rector with his frustration, and that was the end of *Veterum sapientiae*. The other professors followed suit.

⁴⁴ A good bibliography of all these sources is the monumental work of Rev. Andrew Cuschieri, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation – A Theological and Canonical Treatise*, Lanham, MD., University Press of America, 1992, pp. 343-350. The Latin manualists I remember being referenced in class include Benedictus Henricus Merkelbach, H. Noldin and H. Schmidt, Dominicus M. Prummer, and A. Vermeersch and A. Creusen. The authors of manuals in English, which I did consult occasionally, included Henry Davis, Heribert Jone and Urban Adelman, and John A. McHugh and Charles Callan. Of note, is that in our course on marriage, Davis switched to Latin from English when dealing with *De Sexto*.

⁵⁵ As I continued to teach in the seminary, I was indebted to the following text book for moral theology, C. Henry Peschke, S.V.D., *Christian Ethics, Volume I – A Presentation of General Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Alcester and Dublin, C. Goodliffe Neale, 1979, especially, "Ch. III: The Evolution of Moral Theology in the Course of History", pp. 43-64. I used his second volume extensively in some sections for my course in the Art of the Confessor: *Christian Ethics – A Presentation of Special Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, Vol. II, Alcester and Dublin, C. Goodliffe Neale, 1981.

⁷⁷ Pontificium Athenaeum Anselmianum, *The Use of Consensus Fidelium as a Source of Moral Judgment – A Study in Anglican Moral Theology with Special Reference to Kenneth E. Kirk, 1886-1954*, by Michael R. Prieur. The required published summary of the essence of the thesis, required by Sant' Anselmo, was done in London, Ontario, in 1970. A copy of this, and the original thesis is in the library at St. Peter's Seminary.

⁸⁸ "On consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine", originally published in *The Rambler*, and available in J. Coulson, ed., London, Chapman, 1961. An astute reader of my thesis queried me in my defense, wondering why I referenced Newman's work on one page as "faithful" and some 200 pages later as "laity". I waffled the query, but my first response was that there were "two versions" of Newman's essay, but then stated "But I am not sure". Actually, my first instinct was correct. Even in doctoral defenses, trust your first instinct!

⁹⁹ Michael Prieur, *The Sacrament of Reconciliation Today*, Bethlehem, Pa., Catechetical Communications, 1972, pp. 42-49.

⁰¹⁰ Michael Prieur, *Reconciliation – A User's Manual*, Ottawa, Novalis, 2002.

¹¹¹ Michael Prieur, *The Art of the Confessor – A Vademecum for Seminarians and Priests*, Aylmer, ON, Aylmer Express, 2017.

²¹² See Carlo Rochetta, "Marriage as a Sacrament – Towards a New Theological Conceptualization", in Klaus Demmer and Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer, eds., *Christian Marriage Today*, Washington, D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1997, 55-88.

³¹³ *Marriage: Secular Reality and Saving Mystery*, N.Y., Sheed and Ward, 1965, 2 vols.

⁴¹⁴ Peter J. Elliott, *What God Has Joined – The Sacrament of Marriage*, N.Y., Alba House, 1992.

⁵¹⁵ Gerald Coleman, *Human Sexuality – An All-Embracing Gift*, N.Y., Alba House, 1992.

⁶¹⁶ *Married in the Lord*, Bethlehem, Pa., Catechetical Communications. 1976; revised in 1978, 186 pp.

⁷¹⁷ *I Give You Me – Good News for Married Love*, London, ON, Pear Printing, 1979.

⁸¹⁸ Benedict Ashley, O.P., and Kevin O'Rourke, O.P., *Healthcare Ethics – A Theological Analysis*, 5th edition revised, Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2006.

⁹¹⁹ See Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, *Health Ethics Guide, Third Edition*, Ottawa, Novalis, 2012. The previous guides were published in 1991 and 2000.

⁰²⁰ See Michael Cox, MAHCM, "Vatican II's Language Marks Pivotal Shift", *Health Progress*, Nov./Dec., 2015, pp. 58-62. The author is an American, non-Catholic writer who compared the methodology of the *Guide* to the *Directives* of the USCCB. He highly commended the *Guide* for adopting a pastoral approach rather than a simply prescriptive one, arguing that this is the way Vatican II wanted us "to do" moral theology in practice.