Consecrated by God... ...to be Revered by All - A thesis on Catholic Christian Morality and the Ethics of the Human Being

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Consecrated by God...
...to be Revered by All


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"For you Mom"

For Dad, Angie, Sara, Brianne, Grandma, Grandpa, Nanny, Papa and all who believed in me.
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“I have the strength for everything through He who empowers me” (Phil. 4:13). It has been only by the Grace of God that I have been able to see this thesis to its completion. I have tasted defeat, I have persevered; I have frowned, I have smiled; I have struggled, I have learned. Through it all, I have felt the helping hand of encouragement and the warm embrace of success – I have felt Christ. It is for the gift of faith that I first express my gratitude to our heavenly father.

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Thank You and God Bless
January 22, 1999 marked the 26th anniversary of what many Americans consider to be the darkest day in US constitutional history – the day that saw the abortion laws of all 50 states invalidated and the creation of a virtually unlimited right to abortion throughout the nine months of a woman’s pregnancy. On that day in 1993, the US Supreme Court handed down its decision in Roe vs. Wade. In July of 1992, Jack Kevorkian a Michigan physician, achieved his first of many acquittals after being charged with murder in the form of assisted suicide. It seems as long as humanity has had the technology to sustain life artificially, we have struggled with the issue of ending it artificially. Finally, in July of 1996, Dr. Ian Wilmut and his team of Scottish researchers introduced the world to Dolly – a sheep and the first ever cloned mammal.

The fields of clinical and bioethics are no longer in their infancy. Hallmark stories such as these have headlined our newspapers since the mid 1970’s and have drawn the attention of many government officials, legal professionals, philosophers, theologians, and various religious and special interest groups. Many foreign countries that look to the United States to set a precedent now hang their heads in sorrow and disgust. In a 1996 Chicago awards banquet interview, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was quoted as saying, “In the Untied States of America there is great spiritual poverty which is of the worst kind and the most difficult to cure.” It seems as though the foundation and very nature of humanity is being called on the carpet. We are being challenged to examine our conscience, evaluate the essence of our humanity, and make a decision – a decision of morality.
The challenge has been accepted and the argument ensues. Tempers rage, rivers of emotions well up, opinions clash with beliefs, and the questionable definitions of "when does human life begin and end," and "what is the true definition of human life" seem to remain at the core of the debate. In the pages that follow, one will find a common ground established between philosophy and theology and a number of avenues to a resolution shall be established. Perhaps by the Grace of God and the will of humanity, people will one day overcome their moral indifference and persevere with a well-formed conscience and sense of morality.
1: The Philosophical Aspect of Human Ethics

Material for this chapter has been referenced from Dr. Mark Smilie's Ethics and Bioethics courses - lecture material, handouts, and text references. The purpose of chapter one is to outline the philosophical perspective of human ethics and lay a foundation for subsequent chapters. Special thanks to Dr. Smilie for his help.

The one aspect that sets all of humanity apart from the rest of creation is the human mind - our ability to think, reason, deliberate, inquire, and criticize. Our human mind becomes the arena for human thought and thus the game of philosophy begins. A study that seeks to understand the mysteries of existence and reality, philosophy tries to discover the nature of truth and knowledge and to find what is of basic value and importance in life. Thinking and reasoning are inescapable parts of human existence; they arise out of wonder, curiosity, and the desire to know and understand.

The father of ancient philosophy - Socrates - felt so adamantly about life and the human mind, he once claimed, "the unexamined life is not worth living." As we continue to delve deep into the human mind and examine human life the focus of our inquiry begins to sharpen. In order to determine what we ought to do or how we ought to live, we begin our study of ethics - our study of right and wrong and how to tell the difference. From the Greek "ethica," ethics is the study of the ethos. As opposed to pathos - something one is born with that cannot be changed - one's ethos is up to them. It is one's disposition in life; it is the description of who one is. In our struggle to define the ethos, we also define human morality - the nature of what a human being ought to do by reason of what a human being is. Morality may be individual or social, it is founded in a system
of moral principles that give way to moral rules, and each discussion is hallmarked by a number of individual characteristics.

Our social interaction brings about our need for social morality. "[Issues such as] rape and armed robbery are obviously immoral, and even rational rapists and armed robbers, we can safely suppose, understand why we require laws forbidding such behavior and why we are perfectly justified in locking up people who disobey them. But no rational person believes that every immoral act should be punishable by imprisonment or even made illegal."¹ Obviously, society is in need of a number of general moral principles to guide us when we are faced with general questions of moral significance. In the same way, we need a number of individual moral rules to guide us when we ask ourselves how one ought to act in a particular situation. As a result, each rational person must take morality one step further – from the spectrum of society to that of the individual – in order to accurately determine how one ought to live their individual, personal life.

Many will contend that all of humanity is bound by a single moral code which affects all people at all times, and that code seems to set the standard for general social morality drawing all people into communion with each other. However, in order for any continuity to remain from person to person and issue to issue even individual morality must be founded in a general yet distinct set of moral principles. It is very easy to view morality as a system of rules – some dictate what to do in certain situations and some dictate what not to do in others.²

What seems more appropriate, however, is to describe morality as founded in principles that are essential guides for living the ethical life. Each principle becomes a distinct criterion by which we examine our lives, and rationalize and criticize our actions.

The first of these principles of individual morality we shall consider is perhaps the most popular – the Principle of Utility. "It tells us to produce the greatest balance of happiness over unhappiness, making sure that we give equal consideration to the happiness and unhappiness of everyone who stands to be affected by our actions."\(^3\) John Stuart Mill believed this to be the only principle and the only one anyone could justify using. Simply put, utility makes for a happy society, it helps to perform actions that will affect people in a positive way, and it makes society a happy society. "The Principle of Utility is certainly a reasonable moral principle, whether applied to acts or rules. How our behavior affects others should be of moral concern to us. Moreover, we want our moral rules to make our society a good society, and it's hard to argue against the claim that a happy society is better than an unhappy society."\(^4\) Although this may seem as though utility is a principle applicable to social action, one must realize that all of society is comprised of individuals and it is utility on the plane of the individual that results in a collective moral standard. In our individual lives, we are

\(^3\) Barry/Olen. Pp.7.
obligated to consider the whole of humanity; “we are obliged to act on behalf of
the greatest happiness for the greatest number.”5

In considering the impact of personal actions on the whole of society, one
must also be conscious of their personal relationships and the principles that
govern them as well. Human beings as social animals pursue relationships with
other people and, it is in this pursuit that one must give equal consideration of
need to each other. In the field of philosophy one way this consideration becomes
known is as Kantian Respect after the early German philosopher Immanuel Kant;
in our own everyday lives it becomes known as fairness. An anonymous author
once contended, “if you wish to test a [person’s] character, take note of how
[he/she] treats those who are of least importance to them.” This contention
supports the equal consideration of those around us and is rooted in the Principle
of Fairness. We ought “never use other people merely as a means to [our] own
ends. Because the people involved are not merely serving our ends. They are
serving their own ends as well.”6 This human fairness is to treat another with
respect; the main idea implied here is individual autonomy. We are to see each
other person we come in contact and with whom we engage in a relationship
(regardless of degree or nature) with as an autonomous individual. This human
autonomy sets each person apart from the collective whole as a separate and
unique entity. Each entity is in itself a human being complete with every distinct
characteristic the nature of humanity carries with it. The simple fact that we each

consider ourselves human beings implies that we too are autonomous entities. Our autonomy obligates others to treat us in a certain fashion. In the same way the individual autonomy of every other human being in this world obliges us to treat them in a distinct fashion as well. Personal autonomy and the principle of Fairness imply not only the idea of Kantian Respect, but the Golden Rule as well. Because of this principle of individual morality, we must indeed “do unto others as we would have them do to us.”

The two principles we have discussed thus far assume the existence of a human relationship or, at the very least, simple interaction between persons. What if we were to speak of simply being a good person without the obligation set forth by our social nature? Obligations aside, one would begin to examine character and the person of each human individual. “According to this approach to ethics, there are certain excellences uniquely proper to human life, and the full moral life involves the development of those excellences.” The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle illustrated the foundation for the Principle of Proper Human Excellences rather well. Recognizing that there are proper tools and characteristics for every task from writing to cutting, Aristotle explained human action in the same manner. Although several different human activities – such as performing a medical procedure or executing an athletic play – exist in which values applying to one may not apply to another, the common denominator of each situation is the human

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7 This is a reference to the basic “Golden Rule” with which most people are familiar. It mimics the second greatest commandment that Jesus Christ gives us in the New Testament and is stated here without distinct reference to a text.
8 Barry/Olen. Pp.11.
being. That common denominator in turn carries with it certain general human excellences that are essential for defining that human being regardless of circumstance. Again, the excellences proper to individual roles in society are of no concern at this point, as all human beings cannot be discussed collectively as a part of each different role. There are certain excellences that are proper to all human beings regardless of time, place, situation, or parties involved. "We are [all] sons or daughters, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and citizens, and we are – or are likely to be – lovers, spouses, parents, and grandparents. And the excellences proper to these roles – loyalty, generosity, honesty, kindness, and the like – are proper to us all. They are, that is, proper human excellences, what are often called virtues." And it is this subject of virtues that is necessary for doing what is defined as being good, and it is that which is good that every human being strives for. Later we shall discuss this desire for the good in more depth under the topic of the "ethics of the good." As for now, one final principle of individual morality remains that demands our attention.

More times than not religious opinion seems to find its way into ethical discussion. Since it shall surface in later chapters, the principle Will of God will not receive its due attention at this point. It should be stated thus, however, that because religion and hence the Will of God is many times a defining characteristic of the human being, and at many times helps shape the person, then it too must be noted in our discussion of philosophical human ethics. Thomas Aquinas, theologian and follower of Aristotelian philosophy, referred to the Will of God

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9 Barry/Olen. Pp.11.
and Divine Law as ‘Natural Law.’ Unlike those laws authored by people and enacted by legislatures, natural laws are just that — natural, embedded in nature. Because we as human beings are ourselves part in nature, we are bound by our own nature to the laws of nature. “Reliance on God does raise some problems [for philosophers], though. Can we really be certain what God wants us to do? Different religious traditions do give conflicting answers to various moral questions.”

10 In our next chapter, however, we shall explore the issue of faith as well as the Catholic Christian view of human morality.

As we evaluate human life and strive to put these moral principles into action questions inevitably arise and we find ourselves engaged in ethical discussion. Choices, evaluation of situations, certain normative criteria, as well as accurate reasoning hallmark the nature of such discussion. The choices that present themselves in every human situation begin with the will and eventually give way to an action. Both desire and knowledge influence that will. Desire is known as the ‘weakness of the will’ and knowledge as the key element in the decision making process. Without knowledge we cannot hold one morally accountable; knowledge does not evaluate the action but rather one’s role in the action. From a theological point of view, this will — the foundation of the choice — is free. This does not imply one has to do everything, rather one does not have to do one thing; there is certain latitude or freedom associated with the human will in every situation. It also goes without saying that each situation — if a matter of choice — comes complete with at least two options. Some of these options are ...

obviously good and others are obviously bad. The issue of choice becomes complex when the two options within a situation are both good and bad or when a good situation appears bad and vice versa. This is when our ethical discussion becomes concerned with evaluation or simply one’s interpretation of their situation. Hopefully a complex situation can be simplified before a choice has to be made. This cannot happen, however, if one is not well educated about the situation.

In any ethical decision normative criteria must be met. As opposed to descriptive criteria that only discuss what one thinks to be true, normative criteria disclose what is actually true. That which is true is both critically established and defensible.\(^\text{11}\) Important to remember in any ethical discussion is one’s objectivity. If the situation seems to be clouded by individual thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and the like, the most efficient conclusion may not be drawn. The result of these simple variables is dynamics as opposed to the desired uniformity in any ethical dialogue. Finally, it is the task of one engaged in ethical discussion to reason accurately after all has been considered. Simple philosophic reasoning is applicable to everyone in a similar situation. After all, it is indeed this reasoning that brings everyone to the arena of the human mind and engages him or her in the game of philosophy. It may seem as though this is the final step in the process of making an ethical choice, but Pope John Paul II seems to think it is actually the beginning. “Morality begins in the mind,” he said. Insinuating morality is not of

\(^{11}\) This is a reference to actual class lecture in Bioethics (Phil201) with Dr. Mark Smilie. Although a direct reference can be quoted from the text, this is a paraphrase from a topic of class discussion.
the tangible sort but rather has a start in the mind, the pope seems to support the idea of rational thought and active reasoning.

It is easy to see how the philosophical nature of human ethics becomes a continuous circle in which the beginning actually appears to be the end and vice versa. We see a trend suggested by Aristotle—"All people seek the good, not the way of their ancestors." In seeking this good, our decisions and actions will eventually reimpact our system of values and each will continue to shape the other. And so goes the circle of philosophical human ethics.
2: The Theological Aspect of Human Morality

The groundwork for this second chapter was laid in Fr. J. Eugene Peoples’ Moral Theology class. The purpose of this chapter is to build upon the aspects offered by the philosophical perspective noted in the previous chapter and make the transition from philosophical ethics to Moral Theology and ethics of Christianity.

Pope John Paul has stated that, "Morality begins in the mind." For students of philosophy this statement locates morality in the human being, the intellect, and the will. For the student of Catholic Christian theology, the subject is still centered in the human being, the intellect, and the will, but it is first founded in the mystery of Divine Revelation. In the eyes of the theologian, God's self-revelation to humanity is the essence of our being (that is, one will see, it forms us from the inside out) and it should be human will that guides one to this conclusion. This having been said, it is easy to see how theology takes the subject of morality much deeper than philosophy can. Morality may indeed begin in the mind, but not without being influenced by Divine Revelation, the correct image of God, an appropriately formed conscience, and the proper ordering of relationships.

The issue of Divine Revelation is essential for the subject of moral theology. The defining difference between theology and simple philosophy, this revelation is God's self-disclosure to all of humanity. With knowledge of God's presence and activity within and throughout humanity, a new depth has been discovered in the definition of the human being. "The acquisition of knowledge of any kind presupposes that relationship has been established and is operative in a person's life. Everything we know we learn from someone else either directly or
indirectly by combining fragments of knowledge into new insights or different avenues of approach. The gathering of knowledge is a sophisticated learning process.\textsuperscript{12} As people of faith willing to accept a rational approach to knowledge, we can conclude that indeed a relationship exists in the unknown that the human mind is completely incapable of comprehending. We come to know and accept the fact that this relationship is indeed a reality existing beyond the tangible. This is where the connection between knowledge and Divine Revelation is made. One may be cognitively aware of this reality which exists beyond the physical, but in order to truly know anything about it, the reality must disclose itself. For those of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the reality that exists is the presence, action, and will of Jesus Christ within and throughout humanity. The self-disclosure comes through tradition and is illustrated by the sacred Scriptures, faith-evidence that a divine relationship between God and humanity does exist. That is the reality.

Morality is one's ability to live in this reality, doing "what a person ought to do, by reason of what a person is."\textsuperscript{13} Through Divine Revelation, God enters into a covenant, a contract with all of humanity and simply asks that we do the same. Fulfilling this responsibility is a difficult task. In order to do so, one must understand what is being asked of them and must also find the best means of accomplishing it.

One must begin by defining for oneself an image of God that is true and will present with clarity the reality that exists as a result of God's revelation.


\textsuperscript{13} Peoples. Pp.4.
"There are certain images which adhere to the human spirit, both individually and collectively, and can set the destiny of the individual as well as entire communities and cultures. There are especially great, overwhelming dominant images that possess a molding power. They seem to enter the psychic realm not so much through the external senses but arise out of one's own depth and press toward personal life formation."14 Psychologically speaking, these are referred to as archetypes. Although these archetypes are permanently adhering to the human spirit, it is one’s choice to acknowledge them. Therefore, the argument that archetypes are evidence of predestination is unreasonable. The most profound of these images are those that connect the human being with the intangible reality existing beyond the physical - those that connect the human soul with God. Father J. Eugene Peoples, Carroll College professor of Moral Theology, asserts "the God image has always been the most powerful archetype, the most hidden energy center by which ultimately all areas of human life are formed."15 Now, it almost goes without saying, if a distorted God image is present, taken into the conscious, and eventually into the subconscious, there becomes a conflict between creator-image and false-image. This false image of God then allows us to form a false human image. Recognizing that it is from this human image that we act and interact, it only stands to reason that a distorted and false image of one’s self will lead to an improper order of relations. "If an authentic and true God-image radiates the energy of healthy human formation, a distorted image of God is a

source of dissolving, dissociating, and decomposing energy or of tendencies
toward inhibitions and rigidities which cause an unproductive rhythm of life and a
reduced, lopsided image of man.”16 A true God image is one that creates us from
within if we become aware of and accept the archetypes that are readily fused to
our spirit.

Through tradition and Holy Scriptures God reveals to humanity the true
image of God that we ought to accept and internalize. The life and ministry of
Jesus Christ illustrates the love and compassion that God has for all of humanity
and challenges us to uphold our side of the covenant we’ve entered into with the
divine. Jesus defined for us a God that is like a father: compassionate, loving,
understanding, forgiving, and willing to lay down his life for our salvation. He
encourages us to deepen our relationship through conversational prayer. It is the
Jesus-God image that is true, and our openness to that image – already fused to
our soul – will result in our proper ordering of human relations. Jesus proclaimed,
“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” In our search for truth we find Christ, the
true God-image, and the means to a proper order of relations. As a result, because
of Christ, we are able to live the reality revealed by God’s self-disclosure. In
order to do so to the best of our ability, however, humanity requires a tool to guide
us in our decision-making and course of action – the conscience.

Before we tackle conscience whole-heartedly, however, we must first
examine its foundation in Catholic moral theology. Rather than in St. Augustine
of Hippo who begins with a negative view of human existence, Catholic theology

is rooted in the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas asserts that people are inherently good and the natural course of action is directed toward attaining that which is good. Thomas Aquinas incorporates this presupposition into Natural Law – the human participation in the Divine Law. “The Natural Law presumes that there is a God and that the will of God determines the proper ordering of relationships. This ordering of relationships according to the Will of God is what is called the Divine Law. Seeking the meaning of God is the first step in discovering the Will of God as to the proper ordering of relationships. Natural Law asserts that morality is based on reality.”¹⁷ Again, “what a person ought to do by reason of what a person is” is based on the proper ordering of relationships as influenced by God’s divine revelation. The Natural Law does not impose itself upon humanity externally like laws drafted by legislatures. Rather, Natural Law influences one from the interior of the human being. It tends to affect us from deep within in the form of deep inclinations that move us toward the end for which we are spiritually destined, toward the happiness to which God calls us. It is the light of reason of which Natural Law is a symbol.

The Natural Law should not be seen as the expression of the pure will of God imposing a code of obligations and prohibitions. It is the work of the wisdom of God, imprinting his law within human reason, which God enlightens. It is the light of understanding infused by God. Receiving this light reason is able to show us what our nature is and where our good lies, and the moral quality of our actions. In this way we can participate actively in the divine government and discern what is good and what is evil for us and for others.”¹⁸

This internal motivation and knowledge of the true good leads to the obligation of following one’s conscience. “Natural Law [and human conscience] both insist on the profound unity of body and soul in the human person...a unified totality. In the human person the biological and moral planes cannot be separated.”¹⁹ We begin to see the advent of human conscience and witness its growth beyond the theory of Natural Law.

When broken down and interpreted, conscience literally means ‘with knowledge’ (con = with; science = knowledge). Defined with more depth, conscience is “internalized accumulated knowledge systematized and formulated by the experience of the human community with reference to the realization of the human vision.” It becomes an educated guide with two distinct levels. The first is a slight variation of Thomas Aquinas’s initial contention. Here we shall refer to it as the Anamnesis. This Christian anamnesis is “the reality that something like an original memory of the good and true has been implanted in human beings, that there is an inner tendency with the human who is created in the image and likeness of god, toward the divine.”²⁰ From St. Paul in his letter to the Romans, to St. Basil and his monastic rule, to St. Augustine Bishop of Hippo, one can easily find evidence to support the development of the anamnesis. We also see simple examples of everyday qualities that speak in support of the anamnesis.

Virtues are statements about the anamnesis and the Beatitudes are statements about what is in the anamnesis. “The action of recognizing, bearing

witness, judging and applying the anamnesis to particular situations" is known as the conscientia. This becomes our second level of the conscience. These two levels of the conscience can not be mutually exclusive; each must refer to the other in order to be understood. If one neglects either the difference or the connection between the two, the conscience becomes dysfunctional. If this becomes the case, the question of proper formation of conscience arises.

The act of conscience applies basic knowledge to a particular situation. In order to do so, a conscience must first be properly formed.

Conscience must be informed and moral judgement enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings that are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings. 21

Informing one’s conscience does not occur only once and never again.

The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency, born of human weakness and faults. The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart. 22

We can easily assert – as noted in the above excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church – that the conscience is a source of freedom. Christ promised that if one comes to know the truth, the truth will set one free. If we recall, he also stated “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

22 CCC #1784.
In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path, we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord’s cross. We are assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church.\(^\text{23}\)

If Christ is the source of truth, truth is the foundation of the conscience, and the conscience presents us with freedom to do the good, then it is exceptionally easy to draw the obvious conclusion – Christ is the source of morality and the means to freedom.

The theological aspect of human morality can be stated thus: God’s Divine Revelation defines the proper ordering of human relationships through God’s son Christ Jesus. This is truth and reality. In order to live in this reality, one must choose the correct image of God with which to attach them and define one’s internal and external person. In doing so, a conscience – a tool, a guide – is properly shaped and formed. From this intricate foundation, the focus is once more shifted to the human being, intellect, and human will. In every situation, the choice is ours to make: the choice of God images, the choice of self-formation, and the choice of action. In the same way, the consequences for incorrect choices are ours as well. For the philosophers morality begins in the human mind. For the theologian, the human mind draws from a bank of resources, which allows for action of truth, faith, and proper conscience. We may now move into the nature of moral theological discussion and ethical Christian action.

\(^{23}\) CCC #1785.
3: Moral Decisions and Christian Action

In moral decision and Christian action, the mind of philosophy and the revelation of theology converge to form the moral essence of the human being. In order for the ethics of the good to become a reality, the conscience must be accurately established and followed. The result will be the Christian moral action. As stated in the first chapter and echoed in chapter two, every human situation involves a choice. The question of right versus wrong should be an easy one to answer provided the two distinctions are clearly drawn. We are reminded, however, the complexity of a situation increases dramatically when the distinction is not clear, when both choices seem bad, both seem good, or when the good choice appears bad or vice versa. Discussion, which ultimately leads to clarity, is the solution. Moral discussion leads to moral decisions and moral decisions lead to the Christian action. The challenge is to put into practice all that has been discussed thus far. “There is a sense in which we create the world in which we live. Each of us has the power to make decisions, and the effect of all these choices results in the goodness or badness of our society. Every action we take affects not just us but the world.”24 Let each decision, therefore, be the moral one and each action the Christian one.

Inevitably the question that seems to arise is: How does one go about making a truly moral decision? The answer demands the participation of the

human will and the conviction of the human soul. "We must not only know that we are choosing good, we must have the intention of choosing something good. When we set out to do something we must will to do the right thing." A simple good intention, however, does not make an action truly moral. The conviction must now come from the soul and the correct image of God found therein. And, even with the participation of the will and the conviction of the soul, the issue of guiding one to the decision one wishes to make in the depth of one’s soul is still in question.

"Ethical decisions are made on a number of levels. On one level, decision-making seems to flow easily. Individuals follow their gut-level intuitions and muddle through situations reactively. This approach can be effective if the individual is caring, the situation is uncomplicated, [and the human conscience is properly formulated]." This level of conscience and 'gut-feeling reasoning' places the moral decision in the control of the human being. Morality truly becomes "what a person ought to do by reason of what a person is." "There is right and wrong, human freedom and the choice that each of us makes. At the core of human freedom is knowing and doing what we 'ought' to do rather than what we 'can' do. It is the choice of conscience that keeps reminding us what we ought to do even though there are enticing reasons to do otherwise." One must always follow his/her conscience. Granted, if it is poorly formed then judgement in accordance with the conscience may be erroneous. However, if one chooses to

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identify themselves with the Jesus God-image, this archetype fused to the human
soul will more than simply transcend the soul, it will tend to create the entire
person from the inside out. The essence of one's being will be a foundation in
Christ. Centered in Christ, human life then has no choice but to be Christ-like in
desire, conviction, and action. Knowledge of true good will give way to true
moral decisions and ultimately true Christian actions.

Man is sometimes confronted by situations that make moral
judgements less assured and decision difficult. But he must
always seriously seek what is right and good and discern the
will of God expressed in Divine Law.28

A good and pure conscience is enlightened by true faith, for
charity proceeds at the same time “from a pure heart and a
good conscience and sincere faith.”29

The Word of God is a light for our path. We must assimilate
it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. This is how
moral conscience is formed.30

It is easy to see how one’s ability to live in tune with a well-formed conscience
makes all the difference in moral decision making. However, the “correctly
formed conscience” ideal is often just that – an ideal, not a reality. Decision-
making is once again a difficult task. Where do we go to know right from wrong
in moral issues today? Jesus has not left us orphans. Indirect decision-making
guidelines – those which first influence the development of the conscience and
thereby the decision to be made – are now apparent to be taken advantage of.

26 Evans, Robert A., Evans, Alice Frazer., Stivers, Robert L., Gudorf, Christine E. Christian Ethics.
28 CCC #1787
29 CCC #1794
30 CCC #1802
The first of these guidelines to be considered is simple reference to Scripture. By studying the life and ministry of Christ and his apostles one can expose oneself to the reality of a Christian lifestyle. This exposure hopefully will influence the identification of the correct God-image, the correct formation of the conscience, and eventually the proper Christian action. Jesus said, “you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Mt. 22:37-40) The direct words of Jesus Christ should serve as motivators for our souls enticing us to pursue the proper ordering of relations. Scripture may be used as a personal indulgence or the foundation for tradition in the Church.

This brings us to the second resource that can be used as a guideline for humanity. “Although the church does not have as much moral authority today as it once did, it nevertheless exerts significant influence in shaping a common national morality.” Rooted in scripture, Christ’s church brings to life through tradition the reality of Christian action. This church was instituted by Christ, blessed by the Holy Spirit, and sent forth as a guide to us in all things. “When things are presented with a range of good attached to each of the multiple choices, we need to listen to the sure and Spirit-led voice of the Church’s teaching office. It guides us in issues as complex and emotional as artificial insemination;

physician-assisted suicide; exploitation of the powerless; and the range of social justice, bioethical and medical-moral dilemmas that manifest the complexity of the human condition.”32 Teachers, books, sermons, symbols, realities, and faith have all served to nurture the proper ordering of relations. “There are many issues confronting church and society. First are all those that relate to Christian teaching and piety and the role of religion in the public life of the nation.”33

As we discussed briefly at the beginning of Chapter one, morality is both collective and individual. Although the individual does not necessarily have a bearing on the collective, those social norms must first be addressed before more substance can be manifest in the individual. In the same way, many people all at once face some problems or questions; therefore, the Church’s collective approach is appropriate. Many individual human situations are at the same time as diverse as the human beings involved. This having been said, one will see how the Church’s focus narrows as it moves from the collective whole to the individual. Theology deepens and spiritual formations as well as God’s revelation are emphasized. The Church’s approach to both collective and individual morality is a very effective guideline for life. “If the Church takes its own message seriously, it will find itself on the frontier of social morality, addressing words of healing and understanding when difficult issues cause rifts between Church and society, and exercising an intense concern for justice on behalf of those who are being victimized. The Church’s mission demands that it address every issue which

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33 MI/CR. Pp.xiii.
involves the welfare of our society, and the destiny of particular individuals."^{34}

We have seen how humanity's guides to Christian action sharpen their focus from the Scriptures to a specific interpretation of them, and now we shall investigate human character as a guide to moral decisions.

"In doing ethics faith is the heart, reason the head, and Christian character the mature union of the two in love. Insofar as faith is a gift of grace, character cannot be taught. Insofar as character is a product of reason, it can be both taught and developed."^{35} In the secular sense, character is formed through continual individual/societal interaction and many varied elements – such as gender, social class, race, religion, ethnic background, experiences, etc. – contribute to the character's complete formation. The central focus of any Christian understanding of character, however, is the loving relationship established between God and all persons. "Rationality...keeps faith and love from wandering aimlessly down the path of good intentions. But, reason often degenerates into duplicity and hardenedness without faith and love."^{36} Knowledge of God's promise of love to all of humanity and our contract of faith together work to prevent the erosion of character. Life lived, experiences had, knowledge internalized, and a firm grasp on God's love bolsters one's character and leads us to freedom. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. Coming to know Christ, one will know the truth, and it is that truth that shall make us free. Freedom to make the moral decision and carry out the Christian context is a process in which information becomes grist for

^{34} MI/CR. Pp.xiii.
^{35} CE. Pp.9.
liberation in Christ. Liberating education involves genuine dialogue between teacher and student, [God and humanity]. They are partners in education, teaching each other.\(^{37}\)

The ideal decision making tool is therefore the correctly established conscience, molded by a soul attentive to the authentic image of god. However, when the ideal is slow to become a reality, other means to the same end may be used as a guide to accomplishing the Christian action.

Life is complex. Moral decisions are difficult. But we need not fear because we have a sure moral guide. Christ reveals to us the way. He [knocks on the door of our heart], He sends the Holy Spirit to guide us, He enlightens his Church in a way that we can with confidence and trust follow its teaching in matters of faith and morals, [and He lays the foundation for one’s complete character].\(^ {38}\)

Morality begins in the mind, but its essence dwells in the soul. The moral decision is ours to be made, the Christian action is ours to carry out, and God’s divine revelation is ours as a guide. Now informed, let the investigation commence.

\(^{36}\) CE. Pp.9.
\(^{37}\) CE. Pp.9.
\(^{38}\) Wuerl. Pp.11.
4: A Difficult Moral Question

It has often been said that the world in which we live waits for no one, and making moral decisions is no exception. It seems as though one no sooner establishes one’s conscience or chooses a stance on an issue, they are bombarded with a number of issues, questions, and challenges. We are thrown into situations and expected to sink or swim. We are given choices to make with many varied outcomes; some apparent, some hidden only to surface later. Indeed, this world in which we live waits for no one. Contemporary issues of morality press us for a decision and an action and the only hope humanity has is to put into practice all we have discussed thus far. Although there are many pertinent issues of human morality facing us today one could spend a lifetime on, we shall use this opportunity to discuss only one – human cloning.

Relatively new, the issue of human cloning became a tangible concern of humankind in July, 1996. With the birth of Dolly – a sheep cloned by Dr. Ian Wilmut and a team of Scottish researchers – the threat of human cloning again knocked on the door of the human conscience. Before delving deep into the moral issue of cloning, however, I would like to first express the awe with which I look to the field of biological research. Although a Systematic Theology major, I maintain an area of concentration in both biology and chemistry and am continually amazed with what ease the field of science advances itself. The human mind coupled with a desire to explore has brought humanity to levels unimaginable. From observation, exploration, and experimentation we have
attained cures for disease, treatments for disabilities, vaccines, and technology with which one develops more technology. It is no surprise that humanity has found itself on the threshold of this miraculous cloning technology. The question that remains, however, is: Just because one has the ability to implement this technology, should one necessarily do so? One final disclaimer before we attempt to answer this difficult moral question – I acknowledge and respect the fact that many different variables and ‘sub-issues’ must be considered if one were to address the subject of cloning completely. My aim here, however, is to establish a general feel for the subject and explore how it entertains the human conscience as well as how it challenges one’s response to God’s call.

“Some 30 years before the birth of Dolly, the cloned sheep, and sometime near the beginnings of Bioethics, Nobel laureate Joshua Lederberg wrote an article for the American Naturalist (September-October 1966) commenting on the prospects for cloning a human being. Frogs, toads, salamanders and fruit flies had been cloned, and Lederberg was hospitable to the prospect of cloning a human being. The article prompted a reply by several theologians.”39 Thirty years later, the concern is coming closer to reality and it is drawing the attention of many government officials, legal professionals, philosophers, theologians, and various religious and special interest groups. For purpose of an example, consider this possible contemporary scenario:

Dr. Matthew Watkins, Ph.D. is a 42-year-old director of McCormick Research Institute – a center for biological research in central California – and a specialist in the fields of Genetics as well as

39 MI/CR. Pp.364.
Molecular and Cellular Development. His career as a research biologist has been quite distinguished and hallmarked by great success. Among his achievements are advancements in Bioremediation (technology capitalizing on microorganisms' ability to filter impurities from water), Genetic Manipulation (processes by which the genetic sequence of an organism is altered to produce a desired result), and the Human Genome Project (an attempt by researchers to complete the blueprint of all human genetic sequences). Recently, Watkins and his team of researchers have been awarded a multi-million dollar grant intended for funding the development of human cloning technology provided Senate Bill 840 – a bill allowing the continuation of such experimentation – is passed.

Dr. Watkins views cloning technology as a window of opportunity and the next natural step in the progress of scientific research. In addition to his desire to advance the field of Cellular and Molecular Biology, he is also a husband and father of three. For these reasons, Dr. Matthew Watkins is of the opinion that all of science as well as his family and colleagues stand to benefit from the passing of Senate Bill 840. The conditions surrounding the situation of Dr. Watkins and the research community, however, should not be the only ones taken into consideration.

Turning our attention now to our nation's capital we are introduced to Senator Allen Greene, a Republican from California. Senator Greene is aware of the progress being made at McCormick Research Institute and, as a matter of fact, hails from the same area of central California as Dr. Watkins does. He is familiar with the economics surrounding the issue – concerning both the individuals involved as well as the benefits the community would experience – and he struggles with the desire to represent his constituents well. The problem that arises, however, is an ethical one.

Senator Greene – along with the rest of the United States Senate – has regarded testimony from several proponents as well as several adamant opponents. Members of the research community (and specifically a number from McCormick) along with various other special interest groups (i.e. investors, other fields of research, etc.) have voiced a strong opinion in favor of Senate Bill 840. They carefully illustrate the contribution to science and the benefit to humanity. A very convincing argument gains support for their cause. Their opposition, however, seems to match them stride for stride. Several ethicists, Moral Theologians, Roman Catholic clergy, legal professionals, and even fellow congressmen speak passionately against the bill's passing. They argue human cloning experimentation undermines humanity's position in creation. It will erode the essence of the human being and allow for less individuality. "Humanity becomes structured for power, prestige, and achievement," they contend, "and where is God in that?"
Senator Allen Greene now has a challenge before him. He and his colleagues will vote not only on the fate of Senate Bill 840, but also on the various implications it holds toward all of humanity. Should certain technology be used simply because it is at our disposal? Should economics weigh heavier on the human conscience than the myriad of possibilities that may result from one biological procedure? Is God really being subtracted from the equation? Should God even have been a factor in the equation to begin with? What should a person do by reason of what that person is? How do Senator Greene and his colleagues vote? What is the moral decision that will lead to the Christian action?

The issue has been raised and the debate ensues. Tempers rage, rivers of emotions well up, opinions clash with beliefs, and the ultimate question of humanity’s role in its own creation is being explored. Philosophers, theologians, and individuals are lobbying with many reasons supporting their side of the argument. Many of the philosophical ethicists and their followers argue on the basis of the Principle of Utility that the ability to clone or be cloned is one more option with which humanity can choose to maximize happiness. “If one is able, one should be allowed if that is what one wishes.” This attitude – which is extremely liberal and least of all altruistic – is countered by its exact opposite. Just because one is able does not mean one should be allowed; we must do what we ought rather than what we want in order to maximize happiness and uphold the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The principle of Utility is used on both sides of the argument and thus philosophically we find ourselves at a standstill with this moral dilemma. If one wishes to explore another avenue by which to discover the truth about right and wrong, one may wish to consult the source of true good. It is here – with Divine Revelation – that theology brings to the table a means to the end.
In this field of moral theology, we shall entertain a number of different approaches to this difficult moral question of the ethics of human cloning. We shall begin, as we did at the onset of this thesis, with the beginning of human conscience formation. One cannot stress enough the importance of choosing the correct God-image, for it is this choice that will ultimately create us from within and dictate our course of moral decision and Christian action (or, unfortunately, the lack thereof). Using this approach, the ethical question of science and human cloning can be answered thus: Human beings have placed credence in a vertical view of reality, one ordered for power, prestige, and control. As a result, God has been lopped off, and power has been placed in the hands of humanity (i.e. science, doctors, government, etc.). This in turn results in the emergence of a false God-image that enters the psychic realm, blocks the Creator-image, and forms a false human image – one with a distorted view of God. Here begins the clash between Real God and Worldly gods. We must choose to get in touch with our soul and the archetypes that are already fused to our soul and correctly define our human image with a true definition of a God image. Through this moral choice we become created from within. Here morality truly becomes what a person ought to do by reason of what a person is. Through this technology of human cloning and the choice to use it, the Secularized God-image\(^{40}\) has become paramount. Therefore, by choosing a false God-image rather than a true image of God, humanity is out of order. Being out of order means one is not in the correct order of relations. If we are out of this order of relations, we are not living in the reality

of a correct God-image and therefore one or one’s actions are not within the realm of Christian moral action. By adjusting one’s mind to the correct order of relations, one finds reality – one finds the truth. Again, Christ stated, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” It is in Christ that one will find truth and ultimately Christian moral action. Still another approach may be taken to arrive at the same conclusion – one of answering God’s call correctly.

Russell B. Connors, Jr., a Catholic ethicist and author of The Ethics of Cloning (an article in the March 1998 issue of St. Anthony’s Messenger), notes the importance of three specific challenges God makes to humanity. The first is God’s call to be stewards of creation.

First, we are called to be stewards of all creation. This is how Catholic bishops and theologians today commonly interpret the biblical call in Genesis: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.” But let us be careful. Increasingly, Catholic tradition has emphasized that the words subdue and dominion ought not be understood as permission to treat the rest of God’s creation recklessly. Our gifts of intelligence and creativity mean that we human beings have a special role to play in caring for the rest of creation.41

As stewards, we must not be too shy or too boisterous. Rather we must realize that which has been placed before us has been placed in our care. As stewards, we are not owners or creators, only caretakers.

The second challenge is God’s call to create. In addition to being stewards of God’s creation, we are asked to take it one step further and use our responsibility to be co-creator with God.

Although God is and remains the creator, God has chosen to use humanity to be instruments of God's ongoing creativity in this world. We are invited to believe that God is fashioning a new heaven and a new earth, a new creation marked by reconciliation, healing, harmony, peace and love. God uses our efforts at these qualities as the building blocks of the new creation. In this sense we are co-creators of God's new heaven and new earth.42

This image will suggest to us that science and technology (instruments of humanity's creativity) are not necessarily enemies of the faith and tradition.

"Reason and faith ought never to conflict. Both have their origin in God. This does not mean that any and all scientific endeavors should be automatically thought of as part of human progress."43

Is it designed to cure, to heal or to ease the pains and scars of humanity or of the earth itself? Does it contribute in this manner to reconciliation or healing? Is it likely to foster harmony among all of the creatures of the earth?44

Although these questions may not seem pertinent to contemporary technology and scientific issues, they will help put into perspective our role as co-creators and in turn enable us to answer whether we are answering God's call appropriately or not.

Finally, the third challenge God poses to humanity is God's call to revere life. The poet Gerard Manly Hopkins asserted, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God."45 We are therefore called out of our humanness and into reverence for creation.

Anyone who has ever been brought to silence by the beauty of the autumn trees, been spellbound by the magnificent

diversity of the creatures of the earth and of the seas, or been awed by the dearest freshness of a newborn baby knows this. For those of religious faith, the world is not only beautiful, but also holy. It is not only to be respected, but reverenced as well.46

The call to revere life in all its forms gives us a way of seeing and assessing a scientific achievement like cloning.

Do each of these aspects answer the moral question of human cloning on their own? Certainly not. They do, however, come together to present us with a means of evaluating our actions by associating them with the will of God. If one is looking for an out-right answer concerning the morality of human cloning, one could look to the theology of the Catholic Church and specifically to the *Vatican Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*. Catholic theologians, ethicists, and the hierarchy agree cloning is immoral. According to the *Vatican Instruction*: “Attempts or hypotheses for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through ‘twin fission,’ cloning or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union.” In the same way, human cloning is in direct opposition to the challenges God presents to humanity. Moral theologian Father Richard McCormick, S.J., has consistently argued that science and technology must be assessed by the manner in which they serve human persons. He told *Time* magazine, “I can’t think of a morally acceptable reason to clone a human being.” I must say – until presented with a worthy moral explanation otherwise – I concur.

46 Connors. Pp.31.
Conclusion

“In the United States of America, there is great spiritual poverty, which is of the worst kind and the most difficult to cure.” Indeed Mother Theresa of Calcutta may have been making reference to any number of issues, but despite the diversity of human conditions, all can be seen as an issue of a properly/improperly formed conscience.

“Christian morality is not only for Christians. It is for everyone, because all are called to follow God’s law manifest in the natural moral order, revealed in the Ten Commandments and made complete in Christ. Christian morality is the authentic, central and integral form of morality. It is the fullness of teaching on the human condition before God. Apart from faith in Christ, the great questions about the reality of freedom, the rationality of conscience and the value of pursuing human good unselfishly cannot be fully answered. It is for this reason that we look to Jesus and listen to his Church.”

So, how should the United States Senator Allen Greene vote on Senate Bill 840? I know how I would vote. Perhaps one day by the Grace of God and will of humankind, humanity will one day overcome their moral differences and persevere with a well-formed conscience and a divine sense of morality.

47 Wuerl. Pp.11.
Bibliography


