

# CONSCIENCE AND THE TEACHING OF THE MAGISTERIUM ON MORALITY

**Brian Lewis**

## **Abstract**

Against the background of the development in the understanding of the magisterium in the history of the Church, the article considers the difference between the teaching of the magisterium in relation to morals and concerning faith. The different levels of authoritative teaching in the area of morals is clarified in the light of the distinction between formal, attitudinal norms and concrete, behavioural norms, which govern the broad field of moral living. It is in regard to these latter norms that Christian conscience may experience tension with the teaching of the magisterium. Pronouncements on issues of behaviour need to be well researched and supported by sound arguments. Otherwise they become purely “extrinsic” in terms of conscience decisions.

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In his paper on conscience and authority, ‘Struggling to Recover a Catholic Sense’, delivered at a conference in Rome on March 3, 2007, Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney contrasts two extremes, which he sees at opposite poles of the moral spectrum: insistence on the primacy of conscience and undue emphasis on the magisterium of the Church.<sup>1</sup> Fisher equates primacy of conscience with personal infallibility and understands it as meaning primacy over truth or faith or the teachings of Christ. This issue has already been discussed in this journal.<sup>2</sup> However, his views on the magisterium of the Church and its relationship to conscience also invite further examination. This paper will consider these questions under the headings of the meaning and authority of the magisterium in moral matters and the appropriate response of conscience to the moral magisterium.

## The Meaning of the Ecclesial Magisterium



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Fisher several times gives his own novel slant to this question. He rejects the notion of magisterium as “a voice external to conscience which commands things to which conscience is not naturally disposed” (a notion that he identifies as the approach of the later scholastics).<sup>3</sup> Citing Pope John Paul II (*Veritatis Splendor*, 64,2), he adds: “The magisterium does not bring to the conscience truths which are extraneous to it, but serves the Christian conscience by highlighting and clarifying those truths which a well-formed conscience ought already to possess”.<sup>4</sup> And again he says: “The magisterium is not some external force with which private conscience must grapple. It informs conscience much like a soul informs a body, giving it shape and direction from within”.<sup>5</sup>

These ideas need to be considered against the background of the history of magisterium,<sup>6</sup> which illuminates how the term is to be understood. The New Testament speaks of two kinds of teaching among believers: an *interior* teaching about everything, deriving from the anointing of the Spirit which the believer receives (1 John 2:27), and an *external* teaching role residing in certain members of the community, which Paul numbers among the many different charisms and ministries involved in the teaching process: apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and administrators (Rom12: 6-8; 1 Cor12: 28-31). This second emphasis on an external teaching role is the basis for subsequent Church practice. However, in the early Church this teaching role meant catechesis, continuing instruction in the lived experience of faith. It was, as Gregory the Great said, a “pastoral” office, part of the bishop’s total pastoral responsibility.

In early centuries the authority behind adherence to the truth of faith and acceptance of its demands was that of the truth itself borne by the whole Church. Only in

the course of time authority came to be seen as deriving from the status of the person within the community teaching the truth.

Much later on, the scientific study and teaching of the truths of faith and their realization in an appropriate lifestyle began to develop in the European Universities of Christendom. Thus, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Aquinas was able to distinguish an *academic* magisterium of theologians from the *pastoral* magisterium of bishops. The latter was by and large content to leave the great subtleties and intricacies of theology to the academic *magistri*, except for some threat that the simple faithful might be disturbed by them. Despite some friction at times between them, the two kinds of magisterium long managed a sort of peaceful co-existence.



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However, following the Reformation the power of the great universities began to wane, until the majority of them were suppressed in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The academic magisterium was thus effectively brought to an end in the Roman Catholic Church and its teaching role began to be absorbed by the hierarchical magisterium, particularly that of the pope, which enshrined the responsibilities of all other teaching offices in the Church. Two levels in the acts of the magisterium came to be distinguished: the *extraordinary* magisterium of the pope or the bishops gathered in communion with the pope, exercised in special circumstances when the maintenance of the Church in the faith requires it, and the *ordinary* magisterium of the bishops and especially the pope, exercised in their day-to-day ministry.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards this focus on the hierarchical magisterium led to the distinction between the *teaching* Church (the pope and the bishops) and the *learning* Church, which came to be regarded as largely passive. This distinction was taken up by the first Vatican Council and was given strong expression in its definition of papal infallibility in matters of faith and morals. In practice this did not lead to infallible papal statements on moral issues but rather to increasing recourse by the papacy to moral

teaching said to be an exercise of the pope's *ordinary magisterium*, for example, in encyclical letters. The emphasis on the authoritative nature of this ordinary magisterium of the pope reached a climax in Pius XII's encyclical letter *Humani Generis* in 1950. Any other kind of authoritative magisterium or teaching office in the Church was ruled out and there was a danger of a sort of 'creeping infallibility' being attached to the papal exercise of the ordinary hierarchical magisterium.

Vatican II sought to redress the undue emphasis on the role of the papacy, initially by clarifying the functions of bishops in their dioceses and in relation to the whole Church, then by focusing on the proper role of the laity in the Church. The resolution of many of the complex moral problems of today is no longer seen as the exclusive preserve of the hierarchy. Rather, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this pertains to the People of God as a whole, including of course pastors and theologians. The distinction between the teaching and learning Church is finally laid to rest and it is recognised that the laity, as well as the bishops, share in the priestly, kingly and prophetic (teaching) office of Christ, in the world and also in the Church (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, n.2). In the community we call Church formed by the Word of God and shaped by apostolic tradition, no one person has exclusive access to the truth about God and the mystery of our relationship with God. The bishops are the official teachers in the Church, but all are led by the Spirit of God. We thus return to the early Tradition of the Spirit as internal teacher.

The official teaching office of the bishops (the magisterium as we know it today) is clearly a development of the traditional external teaching role residing in certain members of the community. Fisher's contention that the magisterium is not an external force or a voice external to conscience has no basis in tradition. The analogy of the magisterium informing conscience much like the soul informing the body is far-fetched, to say the least. As will be shown in our third section, magisterial teaching is not by any means a single principle, an exclusive influence in forming and informing conscience, which is the fruit of many other factors during childhood and in adult life.

### **Levels of Authority of the Ecclesial Magisterium in the Moral Field**

Fisher in his paper says that undue emphasis should not be laid on the magisterium of the Church but he does not specify what limits should be set. Current Catholic theology

generally accepts<sup>7</sup> the primary object of the magisterium of the Church to be coextensive with revelation, that is, the deposit of faith in Scripture and (apostolic) tradition (*Lumen Gentium*, 25); this level embraces the *dogmas* of faith. The secondary object is generally agreed to be what is indispensable for the maintenance of revelation, including both the statement of what would necessarily flow from revelation and the condemnation of propositions that would contradict revelation. This area comprises *doctrines* generally considered to be at least “theologically certain”, if not irreformable. A large number of Church teachings, however, do not fit into either of these categories. It is appropriate then to speak of a third category that includes teachings about what has traditionally been referred to as *discipline*, that is, practices, customs and ways of living in keeping with the Gospel, whether these be religious in character, such as sacramental and liturgical practices, or not clearly religious in character, such as many areas in the field of morality.<sup>8</sup>

Speaking of morality, it is important to note that the teaching of the magisterium in morals differs from its teaching in matters of faith. As Rigali points out, the sole source of Christian faith is revelation and therefore the magisterium stands in direct relation to the entirety of faith. Clearly, however, morality does not have its only source in revelation. It is borne by all in whom conscience has been awakened and so is a shared responsibility of the human family, not an exclusive responsibility of the Church. Since the magisterium does not have a direct relation to morals in their entirety, it does not have the competence to answer all moral questions.<sup>9</sup> With this in mind, let us consider the different categories or levels of the teaching of the Church in the field of morality.

(1) The contention that the magisterium does not confront conscience with truths extraneous to it but serves conscience by highlighting and clarifying truths already possessed is only partially true and needs further elaboration. To illustrate this it is sufficient to recall the distinction between formal, attitudinal norms relating to the exercise of virtue in moral life and concrete, behavioural norms attempting to spell out in detail the human goods we should promote and the evils we should proscribe. The formal, attitudinal norms are generally accepted by Christians because of their link with revelation, which specifically affects virtuous attitudes and calls on Christians to love as Christ loved. Love applied to the breadth of human endeavour reveals the virtues, telling us the kind of person we should *be*: just, chaste, kind, generous, patient, compassionate, and so forth (1 Cor 13).<sup>10</sup> Formal, attitudinal norms, and the moral values they express

and support, are on the first level of moral teaching. When the magisterium (or indeed any member of the faithful) highlights or clarifies virtuous attitudes, it teaches with the authority of revelation itself and its teaching is certainly not extraneous; rather it resonates strongly with the depths of Christian conscience.

The same may be said of the precepts of the Decalogue. As Pope John Paul II says, “the different commandments of the Decalogue are really only so many reflections of the one commandment about the good of the person, at the level of the many different goods which characterize his identity as a spiritual and bodily being in relationship with God, with his neighbour and with the material world” (*Veritatis Splendor*, n.13). Again they define the form or the shape of moral living, the sort of person one should *be*, “loving”, “honest”, “fair minded”, “just”, and so on, which are virtuous attitudes. Although these formal, attitudinal norms are expressed in a normative way, either positively, for example, “Love and do what is good, avoid what is evil”, “Honour your parents”, “Be loving”, “Be honest”, “Be just”, “Be respectful of others”, or negatively, “Do not murder”, “Do not steal”, “Do not commit adultery”, “Do not covet your neighbours possessions or spouses”, they express basic moral obligations in a general and exhortative way. They are very fundamental moral principles or truths that can be known by all. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n.2070) states: “the Ten Commandments are part of God’s Revelation. At the same time, they teach us man’s true humanity. They shed light on the essential duties, and so indirectly on the fundamental rights, inherent in the nature of the human person”.<sup>11</sup>



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(2) The Church teaches all its members not only the revealed command to love as applied to all the facets of daily living, not only the basic elements of moral life enjoying pretty much universal acceptance such as the Decalogue, but also at a second level doctrines that flow from or are necessary to protect the revealed Word of God, for example, the doctrine of free will or the doctrine of grace. Such doctrines continue to be taught authoritatively by the Magisterium and are taken for granted by the faithful as part of the Church’s teaching office.

In this category of teaching can also be included statements widely taken for granted by members of the Church and even non-members as characteristic of the Christian community, for example, that Christians pray together, worship fairly regularly, marry for life. All these elements describe the very character of the community and so of its members, who are expected to be attentive and to freely accept what can be called the basic tenets of the Christian way of life (though they are not necessarily exclusive to Christian communities, particularly as individual elements).<sup>12</sup> Such statements are certainly far from extraneous to the Christian conscience.

In this context mention needs to be made of the claim Fisher makes in his paper that several specific moral issues be included in these two categories. Arguing in support of three examples of what he says is infallible magisterial teaching on specific moral matters, he recalls the three “dogmas” solemnly proclaimed by Pope John Paul II.<sup>13</sup> The first is direct killing of the innocent, which is placed at the first level of magisterial teaching and requires the assent of faith. In the second category he places direct abortion and euthanasia. In his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, the pope argued that the condemnation of these doctrines is based on the natural law, the written word of God and tradition. The pope’s rests his teaching on the biblical principle of the inestimable worth and dignity of all human beings, something that resonates with the heart of all people of good will. Arguing deductively, the encyclical sees these three issues as logical conclusions from this fundamental principle. For instance, after explicitly admitting that scripture does not address the question of deliberate abortion, the encyclical goes on to maintain that the great respect shown in scripture for human life in the womb logically requires the condemnation of direct abortion.

This may be so, but the force of the condemnation of these three kinds of behaviour actually depends on the philosophical distinction between direct and indirect that began to be accepted by the magisterium only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and that, at the very minimum, is somewhat controversial. This philosophical distinction is quite removed from the core of faith and even from more general moral norms, such as the respect due to all human life, including life in the womb.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, to claim that the specific condemnation of direct killing, direct abortion and euthanasia is revealed truth seems to be going too far. One cannot claim the same certitude of faith for this as can be claimed for the more general principles of respecting life and doing good.<sup>15</sup> There seems to be

confusion here between formal, attitudinal norms and concrete, behavioural norms. To what extent one can say that the condemnation of such behaviour as against faith resonates with the Christian conscience is not at all clear.

(3) Granted that the former, attitudinal norms taught by the magisterium, resonate with Christian conscience, we face a different matter in regard to the level of concrete, behavioural norms, governing the very broad canvas of moral life. These relate, as has been said, to the area of discipline: practices, customs and life-styles and cover almost every aspect of living. Formal, attitudinal moral norms are very general and have universal validity. Concrete, behavioural norms on the other hand admit of variability and exceptions, since specific human behaviour always occurs in a cultural and historical context. They attempt to give specific information about what should or should not be *done* in particular situations in order to *be* just, compassionate, honest, patient and so on. As the human race evolves there is development in our understanding of what it means to be and to live as a human person in community, and so in the enunciation of concrete moral norms, which cannot be hard and fast for everybody forever.

We enter here the territory of what is often called natural morality, which for St. Paul is the law written in the human heart (Rom 2:14 – 15) and which has come to be called in the Church *the natural law*. The Church has long claimed authority to teach about natural morality on the basis of the special assistance of the Holy Spirit, given to the hierarchy in its teaching role. Thus the magisterial teaching of the Catholic Church includes many statements, concrete norms and guidelines about the field of natural morality, such as those raised in the previous section, which for the most part the faithful can share with all people of good will. Such teaching about specific human behaviour always takes place in an historical and cultural context and hence, apart from any possible connection with revelation, is time-bound and subject to change.

There is no common agreement about how the Holy Spirit aids the hierarchy in its teaching, but it is evident that hierarchical teaching on specific moral issues has changed over time. One need only think of what was said in different eras about slavery, the taking of interest on a loan, the divine right of kings, or earlier expressions of the theory of the just war. In fact, in the course of history the leaders of the Church have issued condemnations of many activities as *against the natural law* that are now seen to be



without foundation, e.g., giving vaccinations, espousing democracy or the “natural subordination” of women to men.<sup>16</sup> The relationship of the hierarchical magisterium to issues of natural law is therefore a delicate matter, needing careful consideration.

Specific moral issues, which are usually not dealing with revealed truths or with truths of faith at all and are often based upon the so-called natural law, have to be learned. Clearly the Church has to learn them before it is able to teach them. The guidance of the Holy Spirit does not override the normal human process of learning nor absolve Church leaders from the need of quality research. Nor does it obviate the need for sound argumentation under penalty of becoming purely “extrinsic” authority. Provided that a particular position regarding the natural law has no demonstrable connection with revelation, there is no guarantee that such a position has absolute certitude.<sup>17</sup> Selling goes so far as to assert: “In most areas of natural morality, church leaders enjoy no more – or less – competence than any other intelligent or wise persons on most issues”.<sup>18</sup>

There is no guarantee then that a particular teaching on some aspect of human behaviour will not be found to be extraneous to the mature Christian conscience. What may be said is that the more a teaching is universally accepted among the majority of the People of God over significant periods of history, the greater the claim that that teaching has to be accepted by the faithful. Many teachings regarding moral questions, however, are so new and so complex, for example in the field of bioethics and the stewardship of human fertility, that there can be as yet no clear consensus of this nature. Through its official teachers in their everyday teaching ministry the Church seeks to offer practical help to the faithful to understand and live the Christian life in the contemporary situation, but the kind of behaviour appropriate to the following of Christ cannot be found in the day-to-day official teaching of the hierarchy alone. Selling concludes, ‘In order to determine the appropriateness of human behaviour to the message of the Gospel it would seem inescapable that we need to consult those who are committed to living their lives in the faith – the People of God’.<sup>19</sup>

### **Responding in Conscience to the Magisterium**

Whereas the dogmas of faith must be accepted by Christians who consider themselves to be members of the Church and doctrines are generally judged to be at least

‘theologically certain’, if not irreformable, the third level of magisterial teaching in the area of morality is more complex and problematical. The text of Vatican II initially addressing this issue states that ‘religious submission of will and mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*’ (*Lumen Gentium*, n.25). The meaning of this text has been critically examined by Richard McCormick, Francis Sullivan and others theologians.<sup>20</sup> In their view the *Decree on Religious Freedom* of 1965 gives a significant clue to the correct resolution of the matter. ‘In forming their consciences the Christian faithful should give *careful attention* (italics mine) to the sacred and certain teachings of the Church’ (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n.14).

In summary it may be accepted that the appropriate response to the ordinary teaching of the Church on the part of the faithful is *attentiveness* rather than blind obedience, an attentiveness and readiness to listen that is born of respect for the hierarchical office and the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. Fisher concedes that such teachings “do not command the unconditional ‘obedience of faith’” and that there can be cases in which “a person’s own reasons against a particular non-infallible teaching are so convincing to him that he cannot give an honest interior assent to the teaching”.<sup>21</sup>

In practice, it seems reasonable to assert that, in difficult areas of moral concern, there ought to be wide consultation of those who are competent in a particular sphere together with an openness and collaboration between bishops and laity on the one hand and bishops and moral theologians on the other. Although the experience of much that has occurred in the Church since Vatican II might seem to indicate the contrary, it is worthwhile recalling in this perspective the Council’s optimistic statement: ‘All the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about matters in which they enjoy competence’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 62).

In the light of this it would seem more truthful and certainly more fruitful to focus attention, less on the adversarial claims of conscience versus authority, and more on the question as to how “prophecy, both constructive and critical, is to be exercised in the Church as we articulate and address God’s word to society, but also to ourselves and to each other”.<sup>22</sup> If this challenge is faced, disagreement within the Church will be accepted

as not only inevitable but also necessary for the pilgrim people of God as they are led by Christ's Spirit towards "all truth" (Jn 16:13).

Formation of conscience involves two aspects. In the first place, a mature adult conscience means then that one can freely undertake responsibility for the direction of one's life and the choices one makes. This is the fruit of a proper formation of character, requiring commitment to living as a good person and the internalisation of the principles by which one stands and lives.

Forming conscience also requires adequate information and is more usually taken in this sense. The human person has an innate orientation towards the good and an intuitive grasp of fundamental moral principles of living and acting. However, the basic orientation towards moral good has to be realized, and the broad outlines of a truly human and Christian lifestyle have to be translated into practice, by choices of particular goods and values in concrete situations. This means that in facing a particular issue to be decided upon one must have sufficient knowledge to make a reasoned judgment of conscience regarding what should or should not be done. Not only the initial act of faith but also the whole moral and Christian life are essentially free. Human dignity in the mind of Vatican II consists in the human person's responsible use of freedom' (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 673-4).

When the moral values at stake in a particular situation are reasonably clear, which is often enough the case, a morally mature person knows and judges the right course of action instinctively, one could say intuitively. This is what St. Thomas Aquinas calls 'knowledge by connaturality', a kind of knowledge that comes, not in abstract concepts or by purely intellectual reasoning, but by a certain resonance of the whole person with the goodness involved or by a sense of revulsion in confrontation with evil.<sup>23</sup> The moral value or principle shines out and lights up the mind as something to be sought here and now without further ado. There is no need for rational deliberation prior to the decision. Deliberation about reasons and principles, if there be any, comes after the decision is made.

In some cases, however, the crucial moral values or disvalues in a concrete situation do not shine out clearly at once. Then one has to embark upon a process of

deliberation. Armed with the relevant factual information about the issue, one must reflect upon it in the light of one's personal beliefs, convictions and moral principles, both human and Christian. It is important that one have sufficient practical life experience to be able to recognize and face up to the most probable consequences of certain types of actions, the pros and cons of which must then be weighed up. If after doing all this to the best of one's ability a reasonable judgment cannot be made, there is still the alternative of taking counsel from wiser heads. One can and should if possible consult others, who because of their expertise or experience can help one arrive at what would seem to be a correct conscience decision. In the teaching of their Church the Christian faithful have a rich heritage of moral wisdom to enlighten them in making conscience decisions.

The ordinary members of the faithful are fortunate in not normally being required to solve complex issues of morality for themselves. The official teachers of the Church have access in resolving difficult moral problems to experts in the various moral fields and, at least these days, reach conclusions only after a great deal of study, thought and wide consultation. The Church should be a community of reflection and deliberation, for in the field of natural morality – unless there be a clear link with revelation, a teaching is as strong as the quality of the research underlying it and the force of the reasons supporting it. It is important that there be discussions in the public arena and that the reasons for a position be made available to all the faithful to consider and understand, so as to be able to make an informed decision in conscience in what concerns them in their personal moral life. They need to be aware of the relevant teachings and the reasons for them, to be attentive to them, to listen and to learn. For a Catholic to make a decision in conscience, deliberately ignoring the official teaching of their Church, would be to forfeit one's claim to be acting as a committed Catholic and in accord with a properly informed conscience.<sup>24</sup>

Although the moral teachings of the Church relating to specific aspects of daily living should be respected as a valuable contribution to living morally and gratefully accepted, they cannot possibly cover the whole gamut of moral living. Human life is too rich and too varied and too complex for this. Clearly, for instance, in a rapidly changing world, moral teachings that were considered sufficient to deal with life's problems in the past may have little relevance to the complexities of life today. One thinks of the questions raised by the spectre of nuclear warfare, not to mention issues arising out of

space age technology and global warming. Specific moral teachings about conduct deemed appropriate for the follower of Christ of necessity relate to a limited area of moral life, particularly regarding marriage and sexuality as well as important matters in regard to life and death, but there is much more that the individual person must address in making life's journey. One might be a stickler for carrying out these directives, and yet fall far short of what is required to be a mature human and Christian person.

The reality is that much of everyday life has to be lived without specific guidelines from the Church. What should be done in the best interests of an elderly parent not coping well at home and putting great strain on other family members? Would hostel accommodation or even a nursing home be the right alternative in the circumstances? What proportion of one's time and energy should be allotted to work commitments and what to one's family? Should a father or mother be more available for each other and for their children, when less time at work will mean that they are economically worse off? Is a spouse justified in leaving partner and children when love is dead, when there is brutality, when there is infidelity? How much freedom and personal space should be given to teenage children?

One would look in vain for specific teachings to resolve these and a myriad other daily concerns. Christians must make their own conscience decisions as they face the demands that living together in the contemporary world throws up. The great contribution the Church makes in guiding and aiding the faithful here is to be found less in offering concrete solutions than in teaching, nourishing and protecting the revealed word of God and in helping the faithful recognise the course of a truly Christian life style for today. A Christian conscience is the conscience of a member of the People of God and in the People of God it is the Holy Spirit who is the true teacher and guide and leader. As Vatican II stressed, the "teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it" (*Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, n.10), a service that has been exercised and understood in different ways down through the history of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> Reported from Zenit News Agency in *Cath.News*, 06/04/07.

<sup>2</sup> *Australian EJournal of Theology*, Issue 6, February 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Struggling to Recover a Catholic Sense*, 1.1.

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<sup>4</sup> *Struggling to Recover*, 3.1.

<sup>5</sup> *Struggling to Recover*, 3.4.

<sup>6</sup> See the important historical studies of Yves Congar OP, especially *A History of Theology* (Doubleday: New York, 1968). See also Jack Mahoney, 'Magisterium and Moral Theology', *The Month*, March 1987, 90-94.

<sup>7</sup> See Francis A. Sullivan, *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (Paulist Press: New York, 1983), 127-52.

<sup>8</sup> See Joseph A. Selling, 'Authority in Moral Teaching in a Catholic Christian Context' in *Christian Ethics* ed Bernard Hoose (Cassell: London, 1998), 58-59.

<sup>9</sup> Norbert Rigali, 'Moral Theology and the Magisterium', *Horizons* 15 (Spring 1988), 121-122.

<sup>10</sup> This is not to imply that these virtues are the exclusive preserve of Christians. See my article, 'Faith and the Moral Life', *The Australasian Catholic Record* 78/3, 291-299.

<sup>11</sup> Although the natural law is not specifically revealed, its most basic and general moral principles are closely allied to revealed moral truths. They hold good for all, Christian and non-Christian; they are unchangeable and universally valid. According to Aquinas (*Summa Theologiae*, 1-11, 94 6 ad 2), the same holds for the norms that command the preservation of personal and social life and the search for truth and social order. The secondary principles, are subject to change because of changing circumstantial factors (*Ibid.*, articles 4,5,6).

<sup>12</sup> See Selling, *Authority in Moral Teaching*, 59-60.

<sup>13</sup> *Struggling to Recover*, 2.2, 3.1.

<sup>14</sup> The biblical writers could not have had the scientific information regarding the early development of the embryo that is possessed today. Indeed the magisterium of the Church in theory recognises the possibility of delayed animation (*Veritatis Splendor*, 60.2, 61.4).

<sup>15</sup> See Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 31, 51, 146-159.

<sup>16</sup> Some interpretations of natural law thinking remain unduly focused on biological nature and deductive in method. Elements of this approach are reflected in some official documents of the Church, e.g., *The Declaration on Sexual Ethics* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (1975) and in other statements about human life and sexuality, such as Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968). The heart of the debate over contraception in the Church is precisely whether the giving of self in sexual intercourse must in all situations be limited by the physical/biological structure of the act. See my comments in "Vatican II and Roman Catholic Moral Theology", *Australasian Catholic Record* 80/3, 282-84.

<sup>17</sup> See Curran, *The Moral Theology*, 42, 136.

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<sup>18</sup> Selling, *Authority in Moral Teaching*, 61.

<sup>19</sup> *Authority in Moral Teaching*, 69.

<sup>20</sup> See Richard M. Gula SS, *Reason Informed by Faith* (Paulist Press: New York, 1989), 157-161.

<sup>21</sup> *Struggling to Recover*, 2.1.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Mahoney, *Magisterium and Moral Theology*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> See Jacques Maritain, 'On Knowledge through Connaturality', *Review of Metaphysics*, 4(1951), 483-94.

<sup>24</sup> See Richard M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith* (Paulist Press: New York, 1989), 154-155.

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## Author

Brian Lewis is a graduate of the Angelicum and the Alphonsian Academy in Rome and formerly lectured in moral theology in Ballarat and Melbourne. Prior to retirement he taught scripture, theology and ethics on campuses of the present Australian Catholic University. He has contributed articles to many journals and reviews.

**Email:** [bjlewis@netconnect.com.au](mailto:bjlewis@netconnect.com.au)