

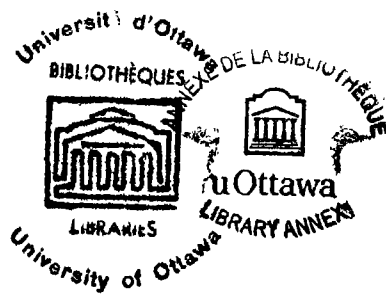
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UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA ÉCOLE DES GRADUÉS

THE VIRTUE AND THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE
IN ADOLESCENT PERSONALITY GROWTH

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CURRICULUM OF STUDIES

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INTRODUCTION

An educator wishes to bring his students to the fullness of the subject matter which he is presenting to them. The teacher of religion aims to bring his students to the fullness that God expects of them and this fullness is Christian maturity.

The Christian must be as capable as every other man in the area of technique and function; he must demand, however, to know the why at all times, to see a relationship to the ultimate end of things which his richer and deeper view of things (his faith) tells him are essential.

It will be necessary for him to take care that the questions of operation and action do not become completely separate from the questions of direction and value. For the Christian, the greater action or operation will always be related to the highest meaning.¹

Maturity is analysed in this thesis from the psychological and theological viewpoints with special reference to this growth in the adolescent. It is at this life stage that the person passes from the immaturity of childhood to the maturity of adulthood.

Currently, religious educators are convinced that the data supplied by the psychological sciences are useful for the understanding of the spiritual development of the adolescent. They agree that

¹ Pierre Babin, Options, trans. John F. Murphy, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, p. 98.

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spiritual maturity is achieved more effectively when there is a corresponding natural maturity.

... young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy.²

Natural maturity is the achievement of ego-identity and is gauged by numerous ways of acting. Spiritual maturity is the achievement of personal adherence to and fulfillment of the Christian truths which direct a man in his relation to God, himself, and his fellowman. St. Paul (Ep. 4) speaks of a growing up to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, resulting from faith and its practice in love. A change in self-realization will follow because one accepts and follows the standards of Christ, putting out of his personal and interior life all that Christ has not taught. In his relationships with others, in the everyday conversations (Ep. 4:29), he must be aware that his actions will give grace to others if he acts in kindness, in mercy, in forgiveness. As he helps others

² Vatican II, "Declaration on Christian Education", in The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, Boston, St. Paul Editions, 1966, par. 1, p. 236.

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to grow to the measure of Christ he himself is maturing. "Rather are we to practise the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in him who is the head, Christ" (Ep.4:15). In the Christian scheme of life there is found a fruitful meeting of the psychological and theological viewpoints on personal maturity. There is a great need for wholeness at the natural level if religious values are to become a part of the person; there is a great need for a knowledge and response to religious truths and a normative morality if a person is to mature psychologically.

Once a person commits himself to faith in God he must make a full response to the demands of this commitment in faith to be authentic. This full response, even when expressed through the Liturgy, is the person freely and totally giving himself. Active participation in the Liturgy whose aim is the worship of God, through, with and in Christ is effective in a transformation of the person. When the person is responding to values in the liturgical celebration, he increases his actualization. This helps him obtain a greater participation in being by giving him a greater unity. The person cannot advance to maturity, be transformed in Christ without the "I-Thou" encounter which is effected through his relations with other beings.

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It is to the credit of the new moral theology that it insists on reinstating love or charity in its true place at the centre of Christian morality. If asked what effect this renewal of true emphasis has on our moral theory a contemporary theologian would say that it makes charity the form of the virtues once more, that is, it shows how all the moral activity of our lives can be given a new intentionality, a single unifying direction and an entirely satisfactory purpose. It makes the whole of our active lives the very embodiment of a love-relationship, in the case of religious men, of a love-relationship with God. But I think that the exponent of the new moral theology could say even more. I think, to put it very bluntly, that he could say that love of another not only gives a higher, unifying purpose to all the activity of life, but that, in actual human circumstances, it even contributes to that very freedom which we demand of moral decisions and moral action, by which they are truly moral.³

We consider in this paper, that worship of God, in particular as this is done in the practice of the virtue of penance and in the Sacrament of Penance, helps the adolescent to grow towards natural and spiritual maturity. The adolescent is looking for true values. Through an openness to value and a conscious response here, he participates in his environmental circumstances in the meaning of his existence. The sense of his own inadequacies in the face of the superabundance of the Divine Love promotes within him a penitential spirit,

³ James P. Mackey, "The Idea of Sin in the Modern World", in Irish Theological Quarterly, Vol. 33, October 1966, p. 323.

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which leaves him no alternative but to express outwardly through acts of mortification his acknowledgment of this situation, and, at the same time, his trust and love in the benevolence of his Father. However, the adolescent will not have trust and love in the benevolence of his Father unless he has met Him as a Person. He needs first to have felt the love of others. This he has experienced as a child from his parents. Parents find it easier to accept the younger child than to accept the adolescent with his complications, rebellions, and independencies. Yet, as the adolescent experiences the love and acceptance of his parents despite his weaknesses, blemishes, failures, bad habits or general unattractiveness he can be convinced, then, of the message of forgiveness of the Father for the sinner as proclaimed by Christ. As he realizes how great is God's love for him, he gets a new idea of himself, and he can express his love and thanks to Him by being like Him and by loving other people.

When he actively and freely chooses a value which is a disorder on the horizontal level he turns his back on the love of his Father, thus destroying the vertical relationship with the Father. The adolescent, by choosing not to love, whether it be God or man he turns from, chooses the selfishness of egoism which is sinful. Through re-assessing his values in sorrowful humility he

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can through Christ again reach out to the Father. In the meeting with his Redeemer in the Sacrament of Penance, he indicates to Him his great need; Christ, through the priest, signs and effects His forgiveness. The more fully the adolescent with his whole person enters into this re-establishing of friendship with Christ, the more will he experience the great grace of this Sacrament. From his sin he will rise, like St. Peter, to a fuller measure of holiness. The acts, preceding and during Confession, bring about a dynamic evolution towards personal maturity both on the spiritual level and on the natural.

In order to understand the processes involved in a growth to maturation, we have considered personality development and in particular that of the adolescent, from both natural and spiritual levels.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF PERSON AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

The fact of existence does not of itself guarantee wholeness of person nor a full human personality. The question is then, How is fullness of person to be achieved? It can be achieved because each person exists dynamically in a state of becoming. There is here a process, a making, a coming to be. Jung says that a completed personality is "an unattainable ideal".¹ Erich Fromm remarks that personality growth is an art, an art that challenges the deepest instincts, an art whose perfection brings a pearl of great price.² Jung says that all are called to human development, that each man instinctively searches for fullness:

It is what is commonly called vocation: an irrational factor that destines a man to emancipate himself from the herd and from its well-worn paths. True personality is always a vocation and puts its trust in it as in God, despite its being, as the ordinary man would say, only a personal feeling.³

1 C. G. Jung, Development of Personality, Jung's Comment on Self-Realization for Adults, New York, Pantheon, 1954, p. 172.

2 Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving, New York, Harper and Rowe, 1956, p. 7.

3 C. G. Jung, op. cit., p. 175.

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Jacques Maritain, the foremost Thomistic philosopher of our day sees each man with a greatness within, which calls for fulfillment.⁴

Gabriel Marcel describes man as "homo viator"⁵ one who is always on the way towards wholeness of being or nothingness. Gordon Allport, a contemporary psychologist and personality theorist, defines personality as "the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought."⁶ We see from this that the personality is constantly changing or becoming.

The human personality can change and improve. This is one of the most basic facts regarding personality and its development. Personality is a constantly emerging thing, a developing, growing, changing reality that adapts itself to changing circumstances, and that tends to improve with age.⁷

The organizing and centering of forces within is a gradual progressive movement of the person to "become" and is a striving of the personality converging toward

4 Jacques Maritain, Person and the Common Good, New York, Scribner, 1947, pp. 12-14.

5 Marygrace McCullough, "Liturgy in Adolescent Personality Growth", in Insight, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1963, p.11.

6 Gordon Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p. 28.

7 Alexander A. Schneiders, Adolescents and the Challenge of Maturity, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1965, p. 192.

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maturity. Since "personality is the fulfillment of personal being",⁸ it is when the person actuates himself that he becomes a personality. Development involves action which must be permeated by insight into reality. Through active participation in existence and awareness of the experiencing "I", through self-realization, through self-development, maturation is gradually achieved.

Some aspects of personality develop quite directly through one's associations with others. One cannot develop as an individual person in his own right independently of his social associations with others.

All human life and behaviour, let us not forget, takes place in a dialogue between people in a world of relationships of human beings with each other and of man with God.⁹

The infant depends on others for survival and through association with another human being first learns to respond to reality. Man learns from others and remains dependent on them for culture, knowledge, and the wisdom of the past ages.

Man achieves his personality only through relation to another, to the "Thou". He finds himself the

⁸ Josef Goldbrunner, Cure of Mind and Cure of Soul, New York, Pantheon, 1958, p. 36.

⁹ Marc Oraison, Love or Constraint?, Trans. Una Morrissey, New York, Paulist Press, 1959, p. 36.

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experiencing "I" only when another person — the "Thou" — has been met. The person, therefore, "finds its true nature only in dialogue."¹⁰ Accordingly as man encounters the other "Thou" is his personality called into being. Man must speak to the "Thou" with the whole being.

The "thou" is not a spoken word (in the sense in which words are uttered and exchanged in normal discourse, for, although the Thou is spoken, it may be spoken without sound and, if spoken only with sound, a true Thou has not been spoken, for only with the whole being can a man address his Thou). The Thou is spoken out over being and, as such serves to draw being together.¹¹

Man can refuse to remain open to being and thus retard or never complete his progress to maturation, since the encountering of the "I" with the "Thou" calls forth a growth in man.

Man must encounter man and as the two persons meet they waken to the presence of each to the other and to themselves. "An encounter is characterized as a mutual, unique, non-objectifiable and personal relationship in which two persons surrender ... the whole of their being."¹²

From this horizontal relationship of man to man grows the vertical relation of man to God which is true

10 J. Goldbrunner, op. cit., p. 36.

11 Idem, ibid., p. 37.

12 Arthur A. Cohen, Martin Buber, London, Bowes & Bowes, 1957, p. 51.

THE NATURE OF PERSON AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT 5

living. Through man, man goes to God. The same "I" that enters into an interpersonal relationship with another human being is the same "I" that seeks union with God. If man's relations are mature, or striving to become so, the result is a process of constant growth to personal maturity. We do need others in order to live. Human personality cannot exist without people living in relationship with each other. Unless man meets man at every level and degree of relationship, man-to-man, man-to-men, and man-to-many, it is impossible to encounter the Transcendent. Only when man can encounter man is he able to relate to the Creator. For:

The ground of man's being as a person is the dialogical relationship to transcendence; or to put it more precisely: the relationship to the Almighty who calls on the person by name.¹³

In that process by which man is made aware of another, he becomes dimly aware of the eternal Person. In each thou he addresses, ultimately, the eternal Thou.¹⁴

The growth of personality depends then on man getting to know himself through meeting a person who is free to give himself or to refuse himself through love.

¹³ Gordon Allport, Becoming, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955, p. 96.

¹⁴ Barry McLaughlin, Nature, Grace, and Religious Development, Maryland, Westminster, Newman Press, 1964, p. 84.

THE NATURE OF PERSON AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT 6

To the degree that man is opened by another to communion with man and God, his relation to that other is true and personalizing; thereby is deepened the realization of what he is and what he can become.¹⁵

Through meeting with others, man discovers his own meaning. Man discovers what it means to be a Christian first in the person of those who are following Christ in Christian love, then second, and more totally, in the person of Christ.

¹⁵ Gabriel Moran, Theology of Revelation, New York, Herder and Herder, 1966, p. 152.

CHAPTER II

THE ADOLESCENT AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

At what moment is a person capable of speaking forth the "Thou"? True self-awareness and a responsible response to existence and values cannot be attained before the period of adolescence according to Allport.¹

There are many reasons why the adolescent is more self-conscious than the younger child. He is undergoing physical changes that affect the image he has of himself. While these changes are going on, there can be considerable anguish and uncertainty. Because of the physical changes he experiences impulses to behaviour and secret longings that are often confusing and frightening. He is still the same person but is in a state of change or becoming. He strives to achieve inner unity while displaying at the same time in his actions a great lack of unity. At this period his inner disunity is evidenced by excessive moodiness, sensitivity and such.

Conflicts help one to grow. The adolescent faces new situations which are demanding his decisions for the first time. The task of handling frustrations, of coping

¹ Gordon Allport, Becoming, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1955, p. 96.

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with personal conflicts, of regulating his emotions are all an important part of becoming mature. Successful solving of conflicts during adolescence influences success in the years to come. There are conflicts between moral ideals and enjoyable behaviour. Psychologically, he is in a poor position to cope with the changes going on within him and between himself and the external world. Besides being in a state of continuous transition which makes him uncertain and unstable, he has in addition, not yet acquired the knowledge or wisdom, the values, principles, or attitudes that would enable him to resolve conflicts. Since he has not yet achieved a certainty about himself or a self-identity, he is not able to take resolute action against his difficulties. The adolescent is striving for maturity, for the time when his development, learning and discipline, fuse together and form a responsible selfhood.

This is the essence of maturity — responsible, disciplined selfhood which converts the adolescent into an adult, and enables him to make choices, cope with problems, and develop satisfying relationships with the people around him.²

The adolescent wants to "be on his own", he wants to choose his own friends, to stand on his own feet, to reach out for the added responsibilities of adult living.

² Alexander A. Schneiders, Adolescents and the Challenge of Maturity, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1965, p. 192.

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In a word, he seeks independence. He wants to be a self or a person. This means being free from the possessiveness of other selves or persons, "an independent, personal existence in which one's self is the core or nucleus of experience, striving, and action."³

The achievement of selfhood brings about the achievement of self-identity. Self-identity enables us to answer such questions as "What am I?", "Who am I?", "What am I supposed to be or to become?", and "Where am I going?"

What is this self-identity? It is a quality of both personal experience and of existence that is closely linked to the primary goals of maturity, independence, and selfhood. In the simplest terms it means an awareness of one's role and status in life, one's goals and purposes, and one's relationships to reality, to society, and to existence.⁴

Without self-identity the adolescent is confused and uncertain as to what he is supposed to be and where he is going. "The point is that, in adolescence, long-range purposes and distant goals add a new dimension to the sense of self-hood."⁵

3 A. Schneiders, op. cit., p. 37.

4 Idem, ibid., p. 22.

5 Gordon Allport, Pattern and Growth in Personality, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, p. 127.

The adolescent who does not gain knowledge of who or what he is, who is afraid of responsibility, who is dependent on other persons for his opinions or decisions, is certainly poorly equipped to do any constructive thinking about the important goals of career or marriage.

This matter of gaining self-identity means that the adolescent acquires a sense of inner security and self-knowledge to feel like an individual who, though different in some ways from his fellowmen, is nonetheless capable in certain areas, that he find a job to do which is interesting and pays back something in the way of satisfaction and gratification, and lastly, that he have a religion or some theory about what life is all about which is thoroughly satisfying to him.

The goals that give purpose and direction to youth's search for maturity create certain tasks and so, in his striving for self-perfection and self-actuation, a dynamism is evident. The tasks of learning to make decisions and of building a scale of values are important steps in the process of achieving maturity. The adolescent learns to accept responsibility for himself by learning how to make his own decisions. In making his own decisions control passes from the hands of parents or other authority figures into the hands of the adolescent who is striving to be an adult. Accepting responsibility

for self means that the adolescent gradually learns internal self-control with its important principle of deferring immediate gratifications for long-term goals. He has to learn for instance that his needs or longings for companionship and sexual intimacies cannot be properly gratified until much later, that a good conscience or a happy marriage is more important than the gratification of a teenage infatuation, that a college education is more important than owning a car.

According to Abraham Maslow, who has studied the actualization and growth of the person extensively, it is only when the basic needs for safety, acceptance and love are first satisfied that the higher needs for actualization can be satisfied. As the basic growth needs are fulfilled, the adolescent becomes problem-centered and less self-conscious, thus giving the psychological and religious growth needs a firm basis on which to live.

The adolescent finds that through conformity, he can gain social approval. However, he feels he must rebel against the rules and prescriptions of the parent or family if he is to win independence. Thus, not receiving parental approval, he will conform to the standards of the peer group in order to fulfill his need for security.

The adolescent is filled with bursting energy to be. He desires to be part of a group.

The adolescent needs to belong to a group because he needs something to which to identify himself: a set of coordinates which will serve to determine his behavior, a set of facilitating mechanisms which will minimize his uncertainty in new situations.⁶

If accepted by the group, the adolescent feels security and receives respect from others which is necessary for his self-esteem.

Through relating to others personality gradually develops. "The full flowering of each man's personality is only possible in the interplay and complicated relations of human society."⁷

However, in meeting with others the adolescent must build for himself a set of values that will enable him to make the choices and decisions necessary for wholesome living. Behaviour on account of values determines personality. The behaviour of the adolescent then, in his search for maturity and in his learning how to relate to others will depend greatly on the values that he himself already has or on those of others with whom he associates.

In his struggle for independence, his search for self-identity and selfhood, his disappointments with the ideas and beliefs of his parents, the adolescent often

⁶ E. F. O'Doherty, Religion and Personality Problems, New York, Alba House, 1964, p. 53.

⁷ Idem, ibid., p. 6.

deserts the family circle to look for gratifications in other relationships. He may experience "crush" relationships. In the matter of sexual development the adolescent passes through a critical period of choice. The choice involves the inner conflict between homosexual and heterosexual impulses. Maturity does not tolerate fear of the opposite sex, hostility, or exclusion. Again if he has a sense of value given by the example of happily married parents, if he has been educated in sex knowledge, he will learn to avoid or overcome such tendencies.

At this time too, the adolescent is greatly influenced in his choice of values by his contact with or membership in the peer group. Clothing styles, hairdos, social behaviour, modes of communication, and sexual mores are determined to an important extent by the adolescent's peers. To the young girl, wishing to keep pace with the peer group, her mother's ideas of modesty and propriety may seem wholly unrealistic. The young adolescent, involved with a group that is socially or morally detrimental must make a choice, the outcome of which depends greatly upon his appreciation of values. His values will be influenced by personal experiences which lead him to the achievement of personal goals. Family living will become a personal value to him if from experience he has found family life gratifying; education or health or

social status can become a value if experience teaches that these things are personally gratifying. His personal values are also determined to a degree by basic needs and motives. His need for independence and status can cause money, wealth, or social position to seem extremely important; his need for acceptance and belonging can make a car very desirable; his need for love or affection can cause early dating or marriage to seem to him the chief immediate goal.

Given these needs as a prerequisite how does the human being advance toward the goal of maturity? As he starts off in life, the child needs more than the mere bestowal of what is necessary for survival. The experience of physical well-being brought about by affectionate mothering allows the infant to develop unhampered by frustrated longings. The groundwork is laid for the feeling of community with other human beings.

Through satisfying experiences with others — receiving and giving; bestowing and contributing — the healthy child comes to feel at home with mankind and with himself. Because others love him he comes to love himself. Having been the recipient of true love of benevolence, he can acquire such a love for himself. He is limited and yet he accepts himself. Others are limited and he comes to accept them. When his self-love grows to

the point where it is firm and secure, he is able to give of himself without fear or misgivings. Only to the extent that the adolescent has learned the lesson of love in reference to himself can he be secure in bestowing true love of benevolence on others. In giving of himself he abundantly satisfies his need for union with another person or other persons and he thus prepares the way for higher self-fulfillment.

The adolescent must be helped to see that all values are not of equal importance; he must develop a hierarchy of values. He must learn that the better things in life must take precedence over the lesser things.

The adolescent must develop healthy relations with his parents and members of his own family.

In the nature of things, there will be rebellion, aggressiveness, and hostility; but the achievement of maturity requires that the adolescent learns how to blend his newly developing independence with continuing dependence on parents, brothers, and sisters.⁸

Through relating with his parents, his family, and later with his friends, the personality and individuality of the individual grows. Contacts with worthwhile persons who can provide meaningful ideas and experience will bring the goal of maturity somewhat closer.

8 A. Schneiders, op. cit., p. 45.

Nuttin maintains:

This complex double tendency—towards self-development and towards contact with others—which enters to some extent into the whole of human activity, can ... be considered the dynamic expression, on the psychic level, of what man is.⁹

Oraison holds:

If the primary significance of the energy of the universe is a straining toward existence, ... its secondary significance is a straining almost equally as imperative, toward the greatest and the most enduring unity in the relationships of human beings, one with another...¹⁰

As the adolescent struggles for personal identity he borrows from the strength or weaknesses of all those with whom he comes in contact — his parents, friends, teachers, clergymen, professors, and employers. When his self-consciousness gives place to his true "I", the "Thou" arises. This seems only to be possible at the time of adolescence when the personality structure of the child is lost and the young adult emerges. "Maturity advances in proportion as lives are decentered from the clamorous immediacy of the body and of ego-centeredness."¹¹

9 J. Nuttin, Psychoanalysis and Personality, Trans. George Lamb, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1953, p. 237.

10 M. Oraison, op. cit., p. 22.

11 G. Allport, op. cit., p. 285.

It is at this time then that the adolescent needs to find a set of values which will give purpose to his existence and help him to establish a true self-image and self-ideal, "religion is the search for a value underlying all things, and as such is the most comprehensive of all philosophies of life."¹² Thus is seen the necessity of religion as a guide through life.

By surrendering himself to this purpose (not by "using" it), religion becomes an "intrinsic" value for the individual, and as such is comprehensive and integrative and motivational.¹³

Before adolescence it is impossible to speak of steady religious growth from within. The adolescent, then, must formulate moral and religious principles.

Religion and religious values are as much a part of his life (or should be) as going to school, recreating, and socializing; and for pretty much the same reasons. The human personality needs a healthy spiritual orientation. It needs a scale of values and a philosophy of life that cannot leave God out of the picture. Food for the soul is as important as food for the body if our youngsters are going to meet the challenge of maturity in an effective manner, and if they are going to move to higher levels of effectiveness, productivity, and mental health.¹⁴

12 Alois Gruber, "Difference in Religious Evolution of Adolescent Boys and Girls", in Lumen Vitae, Vol. 12, No. 2, April-June 1957, p. 308.

13 G. Allport, op. cit., p. 301.

14 A. Schneiders, op. cit., p. 60.

The adolescent rebels against authority; he behaves in extremes; he reverts to solitude. However, "in the end the seeking 'I' discovers the liberating 'Thou' in the encounter with God."¹⁵

The adolescent takes his first step toward advancing in maturation when he involves himself in the world around him. He must seek for the purpose in existence. His awareness that much in present-day society is not what it should be makes him long for that to which he can hold fast. "There exists ... a strong sense of a need for religion and for help on religious problems."¹⁶

For the Christian, the greater action or operation will always be related to the highest meaning. To see the real meaning behind an operation, to go to the permanent value rather than the immediate, to seek the infinite value rather than the immediate temporal success, this is, it seems, the approach for the education in faith for our times.¹⁷

The neglect of this religious dimension will bring ruin to personality development.

15 A. Gruber, op. cit., p. 308.

16 Sidney L. Pressey and Raymond G. Kuhlen, Psychological Development Through the Life Span, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1957, p. 481.

17 Pierre Babin, Options, trans. John F. Murphy, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, p. 98.

Many psychotherapists believe from their own experience that humanity has lost its soul and that the psychotherapists must find it again; only when a patient has made a place for his religious disposition in the "household of the soul" will he be cured. Depth psychology has established therefore, that the religious predisposition and its activity forms an essential part of the human psyche. Psychic culture includes religiousness.¹⁸

This religious need can have its authentic fulfillment in the belief and love of a personal God. "The encounter with Christ is a real contact of the human person with a divine person, so that a personal response befits this decision as no other."¹⁹

The freedom of the individual can only be realized in an act of love that breaks through his own isolation and encounters a personal being in whom he finds the fullness of love, truth and beauty. If the adolescent surrenders to God, he binds himself in the most worthy of relationships, with the only one able to measure up to his expectations. "In the end, the seeking 'I' discovers the liberating 'Thou' in the encounter with God."²⁰

In concluding this chapter we may summarize by saying that in becoming mature one seeks for identity.

18 Josef Goldbrunner, Cure of Mind and Cure of Soul, New York, Pantheon, 1958, p. 85.

19 Idem, ibid., p. 96.

20 A. Gruber, op. cit., p. 308.

Seeking identity involves finding a unity of life. What the adolescent becomes in later life, in the areas of citizenship, marriage, vocation, or personality, will be determined in large measure by the value system he develops during his formative years. The variety of values and the fulfillment of needs call for a unity — and this unity is supplied by that which is the highest value. The highest value and therefore the most unifying is religion.

In the decision for Christ the person is aroused to the significance of its own name. In the commitment to Christ the person is fully actuated, it is wholly existent, it finds itself. The final stage of individuation begins with the personal relationship to the divine person.²¹

However, it is only at adolescence, or after, that a person is capable of a conscious response with the "Thou". By encountering the "Thou" the "I" is called into being and this horizontal "I-Thou" relationship is necessary before a vertical Creator-creature relationship can be fully formed.

As was noted above, if as a child the adolescent had received the love of benevolence, now as an emerging adult he has the foundation for the surrendering of himself to God in charity. How well the adolescent is able

21 J. Goldbrunner, op. cit., p. 96.

to manifest charity is influenced by the psychological level of unity with others that he has reached. However the receiving of God's love and the giving in return will help the adolescent to rise to further growth in love for himself and benevolence for others.

By striving for a higher ideal the adolescent may find a reduction in the potency of other drives which may come into conflict with the ideal. Thus the adolescent will be better enabled to control the sex drive, until as a man sex can be for him a means of communicating and experiencing love or until as a man he foregoes marriage for a higher relationship with God and others.

It is in worship that man is able to fulfill both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of personality development. To find the position of the adolescent in his becoming through worship, we must have a basic understanding of Liturgy and of the Sacrament of Penance.

CHAPTER III

LITURGY AND ITS SPECIAL MEANING TO THE ADOLESCENT

The word "liturgy" comes from the Greek.

Two Greek words, leiton (people) and ergon (work), were put together and the resulting word leiturgia (liturgy) described the kind of work that was done for the benefit of the community.¹

Liturgy was a work done by an individual for the good of the people but in order to be truly beneficial, the collaboration of the people themselves was demanded. Gradually the term liturgy applied to the actions of one who benefited the community in the religious sphere. Yet the active cooperation of the people was always of extreme importance. Biblical history traces an evolution of different ways men found to worship God. This worship of God and communion with Him became known in the Church as the "liturgy". The Liturgy now means the "work of the people of God." Generally speaking, it is an action of a community that expresses the corporate external worship of the Church. As an external ritual, it includes, as well, a deep interior attitude. That this interior attitude is necessary is pointed out in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy:

¹ Roger Roenach, The Mass and Sacraments for Teenagers, New York, Paulist Press, 1966, p. 140.

But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain.²

The exterior signs as seen in the rubrics are only the means of portraying the interior sentiments of worship.

It would be taking the part for the whole to identify rubrics, or chant, or vestments, or even theology or the prayers in which theology is expressed, with the liturgy, as though they were one and the same thing. For what we have here is the material out of which the liturgy is constructed, or the forms in which it is clothed. We do not have the liturgy itself until we do something, because essentially liturgy is an action or an act.³

Since man realizes there is one greater than himself he feels the need to respond to this transcendent one. Because man has the innate need to express a relation to this Other, symbolism provides an adequate way of doing so. Symbolic rite and sacrifice are employed to stress the bond that unites man with God. Yet we must keep in mind that this innate need of man to worship is a gift from God attracting man to himself. On examining the Old Testament we find that the Israelites, conscious of

² Vatican II, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", in The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, Boston, St. Paul Editions, 1966, par. 2, p. 20.

³ William J. O'Shea, The Worship of the Church, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1960, p. 26.

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God's favours, felt the deep impulse to give themselves to God in grateful worship. Among the rites in favour, the different kinds of sacrifice were preeminent, but prayer, purification rites, and consecration rites were also featured, thus preparing the way for rites in our own Christian liturgy of today. Where symbols in the Jewish religion merely signified, symbols and sacraments in the Christian religion not only signify, but also effect that signification in the sacraments. It is in the sacraments that the Christian encounters the God who initiates this meeting.

The whole function of the liturgy is that God reveals Himself to man and man responds in acceptance or rejection.

The Liturgy is man speaking with God and God with man by means of signs. Without God's initiative man could never approach him and dialogue would have been impossible. Due to God's revealed grace there is a point of contact with man. Thus, "Liturgy finds its dynamic character in this conscious exchange."⁴

Signs are of great value in the Liturgy, for reality is made present through these signs. Man worships

⁴ E. Cunial, "The Dynamism of the Liturgy", in Liturgical Arts, Vol. 25, No. 1, November 1956, p. 6.

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God through sign and symbol. Man attempts to externalize his experience by means of symbol, the most expressive of which are gestures and words.

They become means of communication because over and above their direct and definite meaning, they are able to convey something to our personal mystery.⁵

These symbols are expressive of man's need to communicate. Signs are part of the Liturgy, for God has chosen to use these signs in order to encounter man. Man in seeking God must use his intellect to devise means of expressing his desire to know God. Worship is the perfect synthesis of this desire and expression. The visible symbol and ritual are necessary roads leading to the Infinite, for, symbols embody man's natural desire for communication and worship, "according to his natural need to evoke, to express and to stabilize his thoughts and feelings."⁶

Symbol and ritual are not ends but only means to express a deep interior spirit of love. Sincere worship is acceptable to God. Worship, however, to be sincere, must be completely representative of the whole self. In representing the whole self, it finds its normal expression

⁵ Jean Mouroux, The Meaning of Man, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1948, p. 53.

⁶ Charles Magsam, The Inner Life of Worship, Indiana, Grail Publications, 1958, p. 37.

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in external manifestations of ceremony and formula. God has intervened in history and still intervenes by communicating His life to man. He does this through sensible realities which are intermediaries which man must make use of to receive that life of God. This life of God raises man to a divine way of acting. Thus, "man grasps the ineffable through the creation of symbols, in signs and speech which reveal God to man for this age."⁷

The Liturgy is communal in character. Gathered together, the people together offer worship to God. Because the Liturgy is a united effort, it is most personal for each individual since each is a rational, social being and man grows as a result to a greater individuality. The nature of Liturgy is communal, social worship. Thus external rites and rubrics are a necessary part of Liturgy, but the inner reality and true meaning must not be overlooked. The external needs for communal worship are an overflow of a deep interior spirit, the spirit of Christ. Through the Liturgy the person is called to a life of worship, to a sharing in the spirit of Christ of the worship of His Father. With this spirit the external rite will contain the necessary interior dispositions. Thus

⁷ Maurice Freidman, Martin Buber; The Life of Dialogue, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1956, p. 41.

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the consecration of the Christian is authentic only when the interior spirit is in conjunction with the external manifestations.

[The Christian] will be fully actuated and the participation in the Church's worship will reach its perfection only when, besides this essential contribution of his sanctity, the whole interior activity of the soul in unison with that of Jesus Christ and of the Church, lends to the liturgical rites the spirit and the inward feeling which is expressed outwardly.⁸

It is the whole man, body and soul, that participates in the worship of the Father. Indeed, "it is through the body that our interior life is expressed, that our souls become open and apprehensible."⁹

In this study of the nature of Liturgy we have seen that man has an innate need to worship and to express this interior desire by exterior manifestation. Since God is Transcendent man can reach Him exteriorly only through the use of symbols in rites and ceremonies. Through Liturgy the "I" of man seeks to encounter the Eternal "Thou" and yet this dialogue is really initiated by God and Liturgy is the means man uses to respond. In answering to God man grows, for the outward expression of the interior spirit calls forth the response of the total personality.

⁸ Gabriel M. Braso, Liturgy and Spirituality, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1959, p. 29.

⁹ J. Mouroux, op. cit., p. 47.

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Now we will direct our attention to an analysis of the relationship of the adolescent to Liturgy in personality development. As stated in the previous chapter man has a thirst for union with God. This desire produces a tension in man because he is struggling between his ultimate realization and the here-and-now in which he finds himself. This conflict geared toward unity of being is ultimately a unity of transcendence. When man realizes his position with regard to the Infinite he can shape to an extent his own life, and through positive decisions man can existentially grow to fullness. As one author points out:

In secular conceptions of the development of personality, brought out more recently in scientific pursuits, the teleological striving of individuals toward maturity is pictured through the process of growth ... The scientific conception of maturity today is in a sense a secularization of the religious conception of perfection and eschatology.¹⁰

Each person is to perfect humanity through the perfection of his individual person. "To be perfected as a human person is to be perfected for one's proper good in due relation to other persons."¹¹

¹⁰ Wayne E. Oates, The Religious Dimensions of Personality, New York, Association Press, 1951, p. 163.

¹¹ Foley, Sister Thomas Aquin, Authority and Personality Development According to St. Thomas Aquinas, An abstract of a dissertation, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1956, p. 12.

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In knowing others and in being known by them, the person finds his own identity. Personal development is endangered without friendship and intimate communication. Man needs others in order to come to self-knowledge. "Man exists only insofar as he exists for others. To be in the final analysis is to love."¹²

We see then that worship brings about unity and maturity of the personality and we will develop the idea that the adolescent stage is the level at which worship brings maturation.

Religion and worship must grow from within and are dependent on living experiences as much as any other element of personality.¹³

There will be a correspondence between the development of the personality and the willingness to participate in worship. To find God man must first have overcome self-consciousness. Adolescents have this task of becoming mature.

The crisis of adolescence is needed before the transcendence of the giving and serving stage required for adult maturity is consciously perceived and consciously experienced — before in other words, the "good" and the "evil" are recognized as being "in oneself" and as "personal"... But this crisis is also needed in

¹² Barry McLaughlin, Nature, Grace, and Religious Development, Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1964, p. 84.

¹³ R.S. Lee, Psychology and Worship, London, SCM Press Ltd., 1955, p. 16.

order that the subject may experience his definitive forces at the level of instinct and may recognize them — in order, in other words, for him to attain a sufficient level of conscious knowledge of himself and of liberty.¹⁴

The more mature one becomes the better may he begin to worship God. "The importance of maturity for the religious dimensions of life and personality cannot be overestimated."¹⁵

In examining the developmental stages of worship we see that since neither intelligence nor self-identity are sufficiently developed the first apparently religious responses of the child are not religious at all, but wholly social in character. Inevitably his ideas of God are marked by the egocentricism of this stage of life. Gradually the theology and morality of his culture slowly seep in and replace some of the self-centered thinking. In the years preceding puberty additional influences are brought to bear on the developing sentiment. The child finds his self-centered prayers unavailing and must begin to revise his views of God passing from self-interest to self-disinterestedness. His maturing intelligence begins to comprehend the abstractions taught at home and in

¹⁴ Marc Oraison, Love or Constraint?, trans. Una Morrissey, New York, Paulist Press, 1959, p. 155.

¹⁵ W. E. Oates, op. cit., p. 265.

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Church and he begins to identify his theology with that of his parents.

And normally there is in the pre-puberty period an intense desire to identify with the in-group. Religious practices, if such occur in the family, are taken for granted; and the institutional membership of the parents is rarely questioned.¹⁶

In adolescence prayer begins to change to a person-to-person communication. During childhood, the youngster accepted the life of faith as presented by his family or school surroundings. He was then enriched by the fervour and forms of natural religious tendencies. The adolescent, however, no longer accepts the forms, so spontaneously received in childhood. He begins to rethink religious truths and thus enters into a more personal faith.

Father Guardini says that although many young people do not break with the faith of their childhood, yet that many do pass through a period of crisis of faith. The faith previously lived in the simplicity of family associations must be wholly reconstituted.

In growing up a young man must assume the responsibility of faith on his own. It is no longer his father, his mother, teacher, friend or environment who are responsible ones, but he himself. It is he who finds himself face to

¹⁶ Gordon W. Allport, The Individual and His Religion, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 32.

face with Christ and the Church, it is he who hears the divine word in his conscience, there where no one else can act as his proxy.

He must therefore assimilate what he has heretofore only received, stand on his own feet, take on his own shoulders the burden of responsibility which formerly rested on others; all this can also be accompanied by severe conflicts and by all kinds of uncertainty, by doubt, and abandonment; by struggle and attainment, by possession and loss again.¹⁷

In speaking of the adolescent stage, Fr. Babin says: "It is a period rich in drives, in the force and quality of its opening toward something greater than man."¹⁸

He states further that as a result of a study of adolescents, he is convinced that they are responsive to biblical and liturgical modes of thought since these are filled with symbolism; with the dimensions of interpersonal relationships; and with historical and dynamic perspectives. An explanation of worship of God in terms of reason, nature and being will not appeal to the adolescent. Since the mental structure of adolescents is less in accord with rational systematization the Liturgy must be presented to them in terms of the heart, of person and of action. Through the Liturgy youth becomes aware of God's

17 Romano Guardini, The Life of Faith, Glen Rock, N.J., Paulist Press, 1961, p. 17.

18 Pierre Babin, Faith and the Adolescent, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1965, p. 31.

deathless love and eternal purposes for them.

Youth should feel that they belong to the family of God, ... that ... worship voices their own feelings and responses to God, and that God speaks to their hearts and lives in worship.¹⁹

Worship, which will enable the adolescent to grasp values, which will aid in stabilizing him in his search for identity, must go beyond ritual, habit, fear, or superstition. His developing intellect readies him to use his freedom to rise above instinctual and emotional choices so that he may enter the more distinctively human realm of intellectual, moral, and spiritual values. Freedom resides in the ability to make choices, that is, to distinguish what is good from what is bad, and then execute a decision in favour of the one and a rejection of the other. Without freedom there would be no inner conflict. In the use of his freedom to choose values on the spiritual level (and on other levels as well) the adolescent experiences anxiety in the face of possible ways of acting. This anxiety offers him opportunities to acquire greater self-awareness and greater strength within himself. The adolescent who does not accept anxiety gives up his freedom of choice and conforms to the group. The Liturgy places before the adolescent the possibility of

¹⁹ Marvin Taylor, ed., An Introduction to Christian Education, Nashville, N.Y., Abingdon Press, 1966, p. 249.

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accepting a commitment of mind, heart and action to the ideals of the Father as revealed in the Son. In choosing to commit himself and in re-affirming his commitment in face of repeated failures, the adolescent experiences in each case an anxiety. Confrontation of his possibilities, with the expectation of a deeper friendship with God brings about a strength of self to the adolescent. The adolescent becomes self-conscious, that is, he can see himself as though outside himself. This consciousness of self enables him to imagine himself in someone else's place. In the fulfillment of the command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself" (Mt. 22:39), the adolescent is compelled to be aware of his own dignity and feelings and because of this self-awareness he can feel or experience how another person feels. God's standard to love one another makes the adolescent become aware of others. Through this empathy with another person the adolescent becomes capable of love. In choosing to worship God in the acts of the Liturgy the adolescent with a sense of his own existence gathers together with others in relationships which are truly meaningful.

The adolescent comes to understand that the cultivation of the spiritual life is a "discipline" which includes his personal problems with his family, with his peers, and with all others to whom he relates.

The practice of the virtue of penance will help him regulate and keep right order in his relations with others; when he fails, he turns in contrition to Christ for forgiveness with a readiness to accept the consequences of his sins. A comparison will bring out the symbolism of the Sacrament of Penance. Having failed an earthly friend, the adolescent seeks that person and conveys his sorrow to him. He may speak his sorrow or indicate it through an act of kindness, a smile or a gift. If his friend accepts his sorrow as being sincere he in return by sign or token will show forgiveness and thus there is a re-establishment of friendship. The virtue of penance shows the adolescent's sorrow. The Sacrament of Penance is the assurance for the adolescent that he is restored to the friendship of Christ after personal sin for which he now has sorrow. The ceremony which reflects the inward restoration of friendship is made up of actions of priest and penitent. The priest has the intermediary role of giving the grace of God and Christ to the penitent by the words of absolution. The penitent's external actions signify his interior sorrow; he confesses his sins and indicates his willingness to make recompense.

Through sign and symbol the adolescent sinner has met the forgiving heart of Christ. He has in examining his conscience increased his self-knowledge; in seeking

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forgiveness he has opened his heart to Another; and in willingness to do expiation he is expressing his desire for a deepening love of God and his neighbour. Through the Liturgy, the adolescent is in fact becoming, his personality is growing.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEANING OF SIN

At adolescence, then, the young person is beginning to make a responsible response to existence and to values. In the Liturgy he opens himself to God and to Christian values. In order to see how the proper reception of the Sacrament of Penance necessitates a personality growth in the young person, it is essential to study the actions which make this Sacrament needful and, therefore, in this chapter will follow a study of the meaning of sin.

The clarification of the nature of sin is urgent today as Pius XII has pointed out: "Perhaps the greatest sin in contemporary society is the fact that men have lost the sense of sin."¹

A sense of sin helps make one aware of the distinction between good and evil as taught by the Prophets and proclaimed by Jesus to his followers.

The sense of sin originates in the realization that an act, and so the state in which a man finds himself as a result of that act, is contrary to the right order laid down by the law of God, and therefore, a violation of that law and a declaration of enmity to God.²

1 Paul Anciaux, The Sacrament of Penance, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1962, p. 11.

2 Raimondo Spiazzi, "The Social Evil of Sin", in Sin, ed. Pietro Palazzini, Republic of Ireland, Scepter, 1964, p. 202.

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That today many lack a sense of sin is readily found when one hears some proclaim that sin is something for children and old women; that one makes a mistake when it should be said that one has committed a sin, the result being that remorse is felt not from violating the divine law but as arising from failure. Many are unmindful of the nobler reasons for living but spend their lives in pursuit of material affairs, enslaved at times by sexual instincts. Many seem convinced that man is not responsible for acts he does when under certain pressures whether social, physical or psychological. That followers of Christ have been infected by a loss of the sense of sin is evidenced by a lack of enthusiasm for penance. It is difficult for man to hear the call of the Kingdom, living as he does in a pleasure-orientated society.

Another kingdom seems to dominate,

... the ascendancy of what might be called the "pagan kingdom", a substitute kingdom made up of man's marvelous technological successes and their results — greater material comfort, greater wealth, almost total supervision of earthly destiny; but made up also of a number of unfortunate side-effects of technological society: life in what Harvey Cox has described as "the giant switchboard" or the "cloverleaf", life being characterized by constant, enervating communication and motion. It is an age which has little time for reflection, little reverence for or remembrance of past values.³

3 Pierre Babin, *Options*, trans. John F. Murphy, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, p. 98.

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Many reject evil, not because it offends God, but because of its personal and social consequences. They deny the universal norms of good in favour of an ethical existentialism. Many sources have contributed to this tendency of our times but there is an optimistic outlook for the future in that there seems to be a re-awakening of the sense of sin. Much of the superstition (carrying of relics to be sure of salvation), fear (Jansenism), and formalism which obscured true faith have disappeared. No longer is the presence of sin and occasions for doing penance an attitude of mind found in the most innocent pastimes and actions (prudishness in the hygienic care of the body, in dressing, etc.). Also there is a stress away from sin being only found in violation of the sixth and ninth commandments, to sin being found in the lack of love of one's neighbour. Modern theologians in an effort to bring about the refining and deepening of the sense of sin are faced with the question of whether moral law is absolute or situational. If one believes himself to be making a decision which is only valid for himself and only for his situation, then morality is entirely relative and there is no moral law at all. If one is making a decision which is valid for other men and for similar situations, then moral law is absolute. To agree that moral law could

be situational would be to say that there is simply no morality.

If situation ethics indicates anything important at all, it indicates a theory according to which a moral decision must or may vary with every individual situation so that there are no moral principles which can be held to govern all men in similar circumstances, so that, there is, in fact, no morality.⁴

A good result of the thinking which has been provoked by the situation ethics or "new morality" is the conclusion that there has been too much emphasis on a legalistic relationship between God and man which resulted in man conforming to the rules rather than acting freely and responsibly out of personal conviction.

For how many Christians do religious practices turn into a kind of defense against God, a performance under contract, in terms of which he, on his side, binds himself to fend off temporal and eternal danger? This is not to participate in a dialogue of love, but to cover and insure oneself against a real meeting with the living God.⁵

Many today seem to be rejecting God which may be due in part to the presentation of God as a stern judge. In presenting God we must show the loving regard he has for his creature, man.

4 James P. Mackey, "The Idea of Sin in the Modern World", in Irish Theological Quarterly, Vol. 33, October 1966, p. 310.

5 L. Monden, Sin, Liberty and Law, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 115.

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If we misconstrue the relationship, then the picture of God himself is necessarily put out of focus. That we do believe ourselves to have misconstrued the relationship between God and man is clear from our contemporary discovery that there was too much legalism in recent moral theology.⁶

Today theologians are making a fresh appraisal of the existential character of sin emphasizing that sin is not so much an infraction of a law as a betrayal of a personal relationship. Sin is:

... a refusal of the Other, a flaw in the texture of Love, a closing in upon oneself. If it is not conceived as such, it is no longer "sin" but an infraction of the "law", and this attitude is no longer really religious or Christian.⁷

This means that we must consider sin both from the point of view of God against whom it is committed and from the point of view of man who commits it.

The sinner is one who is engaged in a struggle for liberation in a context of victory which is expected and certain in Jesus Christ, of a triumph that is assured and begun in Jesus Christ, of a sanctity that is achieved, in its first step, in the desire for it.⁸

6 J. P. Mackey, op. cit., p. 314.

7 Marc Oraison, Love or Constraint?, Trans. Una Morrissey, New York, Paulist Press, 1959, p. 117.

8 François Coudreau, "Catechesis and Sin", in Sin, trans. Bernard Murchland and Raymond Meyerpeter, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 70.

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A true presentation of God is that in which God is seen revealing Himself to man so that man might come to know Him, even as he himself is known. Knowing God, man would be enabled to return God's personal love, even as people on earth love each other because of their personal self-revelations and resulting knowledge of each other. Sin is seen then as a moral fault that causes a breach in this love relationship between God and man.

In the books of the Old Testament there is found a growing faith in the personal God. There we find God gradually bringing the Israelites to an understanding and grasp of the real meaning and import of sin. Through the prophets He revealed sin as a break with Him. "Your sins have separated you and your God" (Is. 59:1,2). Sin is rooted in man's heart and is directed against God Himself. The unwillingness to submit to God is several times represented as an unbending hard neck, as stiff-neckedness, as stubbornness, as hardness of the heart (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,5; Dt. 9:13; 10:16; 2 K. 17:14; Ne. 9:16; Jr. 7:26). When man repents he should tear up that hardened heart, rather than his garments (Jl. 2:13). The stiff neck and the hardened heart are the most telling expressions known to the Old Testament for a sinful disposition. In all these expressions sin is placed more in the core of the person; likewise it is considered more and more as a

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turning away from the Divine Person who wishes to meet us. In the New Testament the sin of the Pharisees is that in keeping the Law they do so on their own, independently, without need of God, without heart, in their meticulous fidelity (Mk. 2:17; 8:12; Lk. 3:31).

Sin is personal but also social as is evident in the Charter of the Covenant. In the psalms the personal dimension of sin is clearly indicated. "I have sinned against God." A contrite heart is the condition God demands to re-establish friendship (Ps. 31 and 50).

An awareness of the bond of dependence between the Uncreated and created inspires a dependence of respect, of gratitude, and of hope. To sin, then, would be to turn one's back on the source of all being and of all good. To be independent would be to deprive ourselves of what makes us live as well as a sin against Him who gives us the gift of life. Understanding God's holiness brings an authentic understanding of sin. There is scarcely a page of the Bible which does not reveal God most generous in his love. He wills man to be holy. Acceptance of this sanctity brings life. Sin, a refusal of this sanctity, brings death.

The meaning of sin is clarified in the light of God's paternity. His paternity is the perfection of His sovereignty. This Divine paternity is the motive of God

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in communicating His holiness to man. The Bible reveals the epiphany of God's paternity. Understanding this divine attribute reveals the revolt of man when he no longer knows himself or forgets to think of himself as God's friend. Sin is not wanting to be God's son.

This is seen most forcefully in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. As Lyonnet states,

Of all the Synoptic narratives the fifteenth chapter of Luke is without doubt the clearest on the notion of sin, and without doubt, too, it is not by chance that it reveals to us the mystery of God's love.⁹

This parable teaches two attitudes towards sin and justice. The elder brother obeys his father, conducting his father's business as a matter of precept rather than love. In his concern for obeying the commands of his father, he cannot understand his father's love for his wayward son, precisely as son, and cannot understand the feast, the expression of a fatherly love and joy. On the other hand, this parable shows that sin is against God, but shows wherein lies the offence. The real offence is not the squandering of the family inheritance but rather the offence is that the prodigal son refuses to be a son, that is, he refuses to accept fully his father's

⁹ S. Lyonnet, "Péché", in Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément, 7, 1962, col. 498-490.

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love and attempts like Adam in the Garden to rely on himself alone. The parable indicates that it is not the father who punishes the son but rather that it is the sin of the son which bears its own punishment of estrangement and misery.

Also present-day thinking links the redemption of sin more to the Resurrection than to the Crucifixion. The mystery of Christ's Passion and Death is completed in the Resurrection which definitively establishes the Kingdom in the world and fulfills the messianic promise. It is the risen Christ, vivified by the Spirit, who gives life to man.

It is in Jesus Christ that the revelation of God and His plan for man is given to us and therefore, in Christ is man's sin revealed. God planned to give His own life to all men, gathering them in unity for His glory through His Son made man. Christ would bring back all men to the Father. But there is in man a resistance, a barrier, an independence, a refusal to obey the divine commands. Sin is the supreme evil because it breaks and prevents relationship with God. Love of God and the love of one's neighbour are the law of Christian living. The Pharisees reject the love of God as made manifest in Jesus. Sinners are those who in their unbelief reject the Son of God.

The heaviest punishments threaten those who do not accept Christ and the kingdom of God: "But, whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 10:33; Lk. 12:9). The cities which were not converted despite the miracles of Christ would have a harder time at judgement than Tyre and Sidon (Mt. 11:20-24; Lk. 10:12-15). Anyone who puts a stumbling block before another's faith in Christ deserves being thrown into the sea (Mt. 18:6; Lk. 17:2). The greatest sins then, are those which in some form are lack of faith in Christ, not only in his human appearance but also, in the divine mission and the power of the spirit with which he has come. Hence the difference between the forgivable sin against the Son of Man and the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit (Mk. 3:28; Mt. 12:31; Lk. 12:10). The sin against the Holy Spirit is sin in its deepest malice.

Bad deeds, acts of human weakness, and disobedience are forgiven if in childlike simplicity man begs the pardon of his Lord and Saviour. John the Baptist summons sinners to conversion and repentance. The death of the Son of God reveals the horror of sin. The apostles tell the people: "Be converted and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." We see then, that sin is the greatest personal disaster that can befall a man in his relationship with God.

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Sin as culpable disorder is a fault with reference to God: man's deed is deprived of its goal, union with God. The break with God is, in fact, for man the gravest fault, the most disastrous error. Sin is unqualified disorder. It is a blameworthy false step which turns man away from God, the goal of human life.¹⁰

Sin is the choosing of a created reality, of something man is attached to as a value, of something which attracts him as being good. Since this attachment is disordered, man, although he may have no direct intention of doing so, turns away from God and loses touch with Him.

Our relation to God does not exclude, but includes our relation to our fellowman. This is so because in creating man, God wishing to be a father for man, sent us his only begotten son as a true fellow man. In the Old Testament as a father he favours the poor, oppressed by the wealthy Jews. David's sin of adultery is brought out by Nathan as an injustice among men and as a scorning of Yahweh. Jesus tells his followers that loving one's neighbour is like unto the commandment of loving God. Hence, brotherly love is equal to love for God (Mk. 12:28-34; Mt. 22:34-40). Also that my neighbour is everybody who meets me, even my foe, so that here every conflict should be overlooked (Lk. 10:29-30; Mt. 5:43-48; Lk. 6:27-36).

10 P. Anciaux, op. cit., p. 23.

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Sin becomes the offence against love for God and love for one's neighbour.

For he who sins against man sins against a being who stands open to his Creator and for whom that Creator wishes to be a father.¹¹

Duly ordered relationships with every creature form the conditions for a real conversion to God. Thus sin really is a false step, a disorder in a man's life that comes into being through relations with others. The vertical relationship to God presupposes harmony and order in the horizontal relationships with other creatures established with the Creator of the universe in mind.¹²

A sin which causes a break with God to such an extent that man of his own effort cannot repair is known as a mortal sin.

Perhaps the most Christian as well as theological notion of mortal sin signifies contradiction of the divine will, disobedience to it, apostasy from it. By its essence and by its effects, sin is a negation of Christian perfection and a renunciation of the following of Christ. In the final analysis, sin is the refusal to love God and neighbour. It is a profound egoism which is expressed in a basic insubordination to God's law (transgression) and an inordinate attachment of one's own will in placing one's end in a creature or a created reality. The traditional definition of sin as a turning from God and a conversion to creatures is, therefore, clearly justified.¹³

11 P. Schoonenberg, Man and Sin, London, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 15.

12 P. Anciaux, op. cit., p. 23.

13 P. Riga, Sin and Penance, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1962, p. 44.

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When God is scorned on account of a disordered attachment to a creature in direct opposition to God's law or his love, we have a mortal sin. The rupture is not necessarily willed for its own sake as in final impenitence or real apostasy.

This inordinate turning towards a creature puts the creature towards which it turns outside of the ordination towards God and also by turning away from God it also in some manner or other turns away from the creature.

That is why in Wisdom of Solomon XIV and in Romans I the idolatrous rejection of God is described as the source of all sins of men towards each other. As the same love goes out to God and creation, so sin, which is always a denial of love, is also directed against the whole reality of God and his creation, of the world and its God.¹⁴

Man achieves his own person by ordered interpersonal relationships and so man must build communities. Yet we see in the Bible, in history, and in everyday life an opposition (of separation) between the individual and community or society. This tension is the work of sin.

Sin, because it is basically the attempt to affirm a spurious autonomy and independence from others, is also basically an act, or even better, a condition which isolates the self from authentic interpersonal relationships and hence destroys community.¹⁵

14 P. Schoonenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

15 Donald P. Gray, "Sin and the Destruction of Community", in *Chicago Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1965, p. 206.

The sinner seeks to use others for his own purposes as if they were things. By depersonalizing the other, the sinner enters into an impersonal relationship with that other which destroys all possibility of community. The denial of the person and consequently of community, is the root of conflict in all its forms. We see sin then as the principle of division, conflict, and war, for sin is the destruction of the person and therefore, of community.

Where self had thought to find fulfillment through autonomy and exploitation, it finds only frustration and conflict, having effectively destroyed the only viable ground for personal fulfillment — interpersonal relationship.¹⁶

The history of an individual's personal sin may indicate that many people must share the blame. If the sin is public, personal though it may be, it becomes at the same time a source of scandal and a possible occasion of sin to others. Sin is social in its effects since it undermines the solidarity and welfare of society causing harm to its members. We see in the Bible that the most poignant confessions of sin are usually in the first-person plural. The prophet cried out against the sins of Israel and Judah. Some of our most deadly sins are committed within the context of societies. It is well for one to

16 D. Gray, op. cit., p. 208.

ponder what sins have been committed without effective protest by his neighbourhood, his social club, his Church, his city, his nation, his economic class and his racial group. Sin is an attack upon the very life and mission of the Church, since any sin of any member impedes the goals of the Church, namely, to spread the message of Christ. In Christ the social characteristic of sin acquires a new meaning:

God comes into contact with men through the Church and He intends that, in the wake of Christ, they should enter whole-heartedly into the visible community of his Body, the Church. Participation in the divine life can only be fully received and lived within the community of believers. Christian grace creates brotherhood because it makes us children of God in Christ. Hence for the Christian mind sin has an "ecclesial" meaning and import.¹⁷

A break with God is a blow against the community of men in God.

... the sin of the Christian is not only a private matter. It is also a sin against the Christian community ... This is especially evident in the case of notorious scandal. But even lesser sins are in some sense public, at least as a failure in the Christian to witness to the holiness that has come into the world in Christ.¹⁸

It is an injury to the bonds of love between men in the Church, signifying a lowering of the power to love

17 P. Anciaux, op. cit., p. 39.

18 C. J. McNaspy, Our Changing Liturgy, New York, Hawthorn, 1966, p. 108.

and thus lessening the unity and the inter-relatedness of men.

One of the great advances of this age of ours must surely be the fact that Christians nowadays are much more sensitive to forms of sin which were formerly regarded as not a matter for the individual conscience, social justice, for example, or political oppression, or failure in civic or professional responsibility — sins which, in the last analysis, are opposed to love of our neighbour, which is also love of God.¹⁹

That the sense of sin has been blunted is a fact yet there is hope for the future when we see today evidence of social justice, of tolerance and of unselfish concern for the under-privileged portions of mankind.

In concluding this chapter, we will summarize our description of sin.

Since God's whole plan with the world and with us is to "unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ep. 1:10), then every sin is in some way a refusal to take part in this. Sin is a "No" of the human person to God, to one's fellow men, to the whole of creation. Sin is not only a violation of norms, but also, a refusal to help in building and establishing norms. Sin is opposition (consciously or unconsciously) to Christ who through His Spirit wishes to assume us in himself.

¹⁹ Henri Daniel-Rops, "Sin In Our World", in *Sin*, ed. Pietro Palazzini, Republic of Ireland, Scepter, 1966, p. 210.

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Sin comes from the heart, from the core of the personality, from our freedom. Finally, sin is man refusing to imitate Christ's "loving unto the end" his Father and us.

CHAPTER V

SIN AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ADOLESCENT

We have already in Chapter I attempted an explanation of the meaning of person and of personality development. In Chapter II we applied these insights to the adolescent and his personality development. We saw further in Chapter III that the personality develops through worship. Since worship involves on man's part a sense of creaturehood and dependence upon God with a sincere sorrow for sin it was necessary in Chapter IV to look into the meaning of sin. In this present chapter it will be seen how sin affects the adolescent.

Let us reconsider the education in sin that the adolescent has already received. As a small child his liberty was not sufficiently freed from biological determinisms and his reflective conscience was not sufficiently awakened to enable him to be responsible for his actions.

... he does not yet have an autonomous "ego", the center of reference and of attribution, which permits a moral life of value judgments and personal responsibility.¹

¹ François Coudreau, "Catechesis and Sin", in *Sin*, trans. Bernard Murchland and Raymond Meyerpeter, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 70.

The child cannot make value judgments but he can make judgments about reality. The child at this age judges the gravity of his acts by their external results. Accidentally breaking a pile of dishes is much more serious for him than breaking his little sister's doll for revenge. He needs help from his parents to arrive at distinguishing what is dangerous, or improper, or annoying for adults from what is sinful. Through relations with others he can discover God. If he knows God as someone he has an indispensable basis for a later understanding of a deep sense of sin. He begins to have faith in God and in God as a Father.

At the age of reason the child assumes responsibility; he begins to acquire a personal sense of good. Henceforth he feels pressed not only by his mother's command but by an interior call to good. He is taught that to do good is to say "Yes" to God and love Him; to sin is to say "No" to God and to refuse His love. The child understands that sin takes place when God calls but the child turns away, and so sin is not a thing but a personal happening between God and himself. Between the ages of nine and twelve disobedience to God is shown in its consequences to the person of Christ. Thus sin is not an exterior thing but a personal drama. The preadolescent has his first discoveries of human problems: love, money,

suffering, etc. He begins to feel that sin is attractive and a moral life difficult. He must become more aware of the reality of God and of his grace as lived in the sacramental life.

Finally at the age of adolescence, from puberty to eighteen years, the young adults are confronted with their own sin, the sin of others, and the sin of the world. How are they affected by sin as they meet it in themselves and in others? First of all we must establish the fact that the adolescent is not particularly prone to evil or to sinfulness; nor is he lacking in the moral traits necessary to good behaviour. The problem of the normal adolescent is to make the transition from childhood to adulthood in such a way that he emerges with the skills, attitudes, and values that will enable him to cope effectively with the demands of adult life. Adolescence is a time for searching out the truth of existence. It is especially in the religious and moral sphere that he has a concern for truth.

When we face the development of personality through worship, we embrace at once the formation of the mind in Christian values, the formation of the will in Christian virtues, and the formation of emotions in moderation and control.²

² Charles M. Magsam, The Inner Life of Worship, Indiana, Grail Publications, 1958, p. 188.

Moral values are without meaning unless they are the result of a deep religious commitment. Before the adolescent can in truth make this commitment he must go through an identity crisis in which he re-defines and re-evaluates his present goals. During this period all former beliefs and relationships, previously taken at face value are now re-examined.

... the adolescent's desire to find a new yet reliable identity can be seen in his persistent endeavour to define, over-define, and redefine himself in relation to others and in the testing of the newest in possibilities and the oldest in values.³

At this time a particular ego-quality emerges, that of fidelity. He wants something worthy of his intense love. He cannot find this in ritual, observations, laws and norms, but only in surrender to a person. Christ is the only one able to measure up to his expectation. In this relationship he is able to be fully and completely himself.

In the process of attaining self-identity and commitment to Christ the adolescent meets with sin in relation with himself, and to others. His evolution to maturity is never absolutely harmonious but is always marked with the sign of conflict, conflict within himself,

3 E. H. Erikson, Insight and Responsibility, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1964, p. 92.

with his parents, teachers and peers. This conflict is a great potential for his religious growth and is in fact necessary if his religious convictions are to be mature and intelligent.

The adolescent must learn to develop healthy relations with members of his own family. It is through the family that his attitudes, ideals, values, and habits of a social nature are first acquired. The ability to get along or to communicate with parents, or with brothers and sisters, is a sure step toward the growth of social relationships outside the home. Moral standards, spiritual values, racial and religious tolerance and a solid grounding in Christian truths can result from the right kind of family environment. When the parent-child relationship is that of love, acceptance, mutual respect and confidence the adolescent has been prepared to discipline himself and to grow in morality. However because of the storms and conflicts within himself the adolescent will experience in spite of good home environment difficulty in doing what is right. If he has come to the stage where he has looked at his religious beliefs and sincerely turns to Christ he will see rebellious acts against his parents, brothers and sisters as acts of infidelity to Christ. The adolescent must see that if proper relations with his family are to be kept he must overcome silent brooding, bad temper,

out-of-bounds aggressiveness, which denies respect for others' rights, and excessive excluding of his family from his friendship. If he sins in these respects he is not loving his family and therefore he is not loving his God. He is turning in on himself and in selfishness he is refusing to love. Sin is refusal to love. The adolescent under proper home environment will have learned from childhood a healthy attitude towards his sexual development. He will be prepared for the physical changes that have reverberations in his body, his impulses, his thoughts, his dreams and his desires. He (and the adolescent girl as well) must learn to forego sexual behaviour either with himself or with others. Sexual deviations with himself tend to impair the young person's image of himself. In turning in to himself he refuses to go out to others which is the purpose of sex. In this sin he refuses to be open to others and in so doing refuses the response of love to His Father. The adolescent in his (or her) relations with the opposite sex must learn to avoid the stimulating of sexual pleasure with each other. To give to themselves the pleasures of sexual petting and of sexual intercourse is a turning away from each other in selfish love. They refuse in their sexual relationships to welcome the person of Christ, whose presence with them

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is signified and effected through the Sacrament of Matrimony.

The adolescent sees much in today's world which could lead him to an attitude of cynicism or pessimism. He must avoid the despairing attitude which would lead him to escape into early alcoholism, sexual orgies, early marriages, or the taking of trips induced by LSD. His sin of despair must be forestalled by his opening himself in trust, faith and optimism to Christ.

The adolescent in the loneliness which he at times experiences must avoid self-pity and learn to reach out towards others in a way to generate love.

When the adolescent has failed in his love relationship with Christ he has to learn to cope with the guilt, shame, and self-rejection that result.

In his return to true values and to the Ultimate Value these feelings are helpful. Yet he does not respond in sorrowful humility to the Father, if he becomes despondent, giving in to excessive or neurotic guilt, to destructive shame, to paralyzing self-rejection, to scrupulosity and the conviction of personal worthlessness. With the trust of the prodigal son he must return to his Father, Who is Himself instigating his response.

The adolescent has to come through the crisis of self-identity in a situation which comes from sin and

invites to sin, although his personal freedom remains intact. How is the adolescent interiorly affected by the situation? The sin of the world is a reality in the adolescent himself. He is unable of himself to know what it means to love God for His own sake and since he has lost this love which had inclined him to choose God he had instead an interior suppression of his highest power and has a consequent stronger turning to creatures. He has an inability to live his life for God and His grace; there is in him an inner refusal to strive for the higher goal; his will turns to lesser goods. This does not mean that his freedom is determined by the situation so that it is forced from without to perform certain actions.

What we mean is that our liberty is affected in its field of action, that the objects about which our liberty must decide are affected as are also the insights and the motives from which such decisions proceed.⁴

We shall apply the above quotation to the adolescent and examine in what way and to what extent his being situated in sin can restrict the field of operation of his freedom. In his seeking for values a sinful influence will be felt. The adolescent, in the process of having honesty as a value formed, finds only examples of dishonesty. Deprived of good example he feels the appeal of

4 Piet Schoonenberg, Man and Sin, trans. Joseph Donceel, London, Sheed and Ward, 1965, p. 105.

evil. In speaking of the effects of sin for the sinner himself, we spoke of an inability for the good and an inclination towards evil. The influence of bad example points up these two dispositions. The adolescent may be in an environment where doing the good excludes one from the group. He does not belong unless he follows the wrongdoing of the group. The difficulty of a good choice increases. A yearning for a fuller life or for more esteem from others impels him not to a good choice, but in the other direction. Only by opening his soul to God's offer of grace can the adolescent receive the help to have the will for good in spite of the decrease for liberty with which his environment challenges him. Also bad example increases his inability for the good since it brings about an obscuration of values and norms. The adolescent who sees around him in every day life the opposites of what is presented to him as values in religion will have great difficulty in moulding his conscience. In his communion with God through grace man is, in some way, a mediator for his fellow man. It follows then that man could refuse grace, which is sin, thus depriving himself and also his fellow man and bringing both the neighbour and himself in some way into a situation where grace is wanting. The highest degree of catastrophe in the sinful situation was brought about by man's rejection of Christ.

The inability for good has spread to the whole world, and only the spirit of the Lord can remove it. The adolescent thus situated by the sins of others finds in himself an inability for the good. Of himself he has difficulty in realizing that the value of the world is not the final value. As he learns to have faith in Christ he realizes that those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with Him.

The adolescent in his growth towards maturity is faced with sin which is the result of his own personal decision. Instead of a choice for the good, he has committed himself to a disordered attachment to a creature in direct opposition to God's law or his love.

The development of a value system will bear directly on the adolescent's moral, spiritual, and social development and his spiritual and religious development hinges on the growth of a true value system.

Truly spiritual values include such things as the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God, the boundless mercy of a loving God, the dignity and worth of the human person, and the redemptive power of Christ.⁵

The adolescent must learn that true social values are closely related to virtues. The virtues of courage,

5 Alexander A. Schneiders, Adolescents and the Challenge of Maturity, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1965, p. 178.

honesty, charity and temperance are the translation of values into behaviour or human relationships. Many of the adolescent's values will be derived from his contact with or membership in the peer group. His personal values are also determined by basic needs and motives. The needs for independence and status can make money or social position seem extremely valuable. The needs for acceptance or belonging can cause the adolescent to consider a car or money as essential. The need for love or affection can cause the teenager to look on marriage as the state immediately desired. The process of learning that first things in life must take precedence over the lesser things is a slow growth towards the acquiring of a mature outlook on life with the accompanying translation of these values into virtues. In accepting the life of virtue the adolescent needs to put faith in Christ. The adolescent must personally mould himself by ordering, unifying, and integrating all his drives and powers — and also all the situations in which he happens to live — with respect to the human community and to God. "By his nature man is for himself a chaotic datum in need of integration through love."⁶

6 P. Schoonenberg, op. cit., p. 79.

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Sin is felt in the fact that it makes the adolescent unable to love, therefore, to integrate.

Man is marked by sin not in so far as he lacks integration, but insofar as he lacks the love which alone can bring about his integration.

It is growth in the supreme virtue of charity which is the gauge of Christian maturity. The Holy Spirit can find no entry into a soul that is landlocked in its preoccupation with self. The Holy Spirit needs a soul open to him.

So, the adolescent matures as he makes the transition from childish and self-centered love to adult and other-centered love. By meeting others in meaningful interpersonal relationships the adolescent is prepared for encounter with Christ. The same adolescent that enters into an interpersonal relationship with another human being is the same adolescent that seeks union with God. His relationship with others affects his relationship with God and vice-versa. Lack of love robs him of openness and joy in the depths of his personality. Because of his inability to step outside of himself in love the adolescent experiences loneliness. This loneliness is a product of sin because sin always and necessarily makes for loneliness. Love goes together with faith and hope. The

7 P. Schoonenberg, op. cit., p. 79.

faith of the adolescent who lives in mortal sin is really faith, but the self-donation to God and to Christ which faith contains has partially been withdrawn. The same is true for hope because the salvation the adolescent hopes for looks dimmer and his confidence in God and Christ is uncertain. The adolescent with God's grace perceives that in sin

... he fails Someone who loves him and whose Love is infinite, all-powerful, and finally conquering on the condition that he open himself to it totally.⁸

In discovering what sin costs them in their bodies, in their souls, and in their lives the adolescents gradually realize the reality of sin. They are ready to launch into a fully adult Christian life where they can raise themselves up and "use sin" to save the world.

The adolescent in his struggle towards adulthood will make many mistakes and perhaps even sin grievously. He will feel encouraged if he can realize that, while all sins are mistakes, nevertheless not all mistakes are sins. He needs to know that while he makes mistakes — even sins — these need not be a detriment to his development. He will rise stronger provided he has the security of loving trust both of his parents and of Christ. Jesus seized

⁸ Marc Oraison, "Psychology and the Sense of Sin", in Sin, trans. Bernard Murchland and Raymond Meyerpeter, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 28.

every opportunity to show that the Father cares for us. If a few sparrows settled near the place where He was teaching, they could be used as an example for the down-hearted and depressed in the crowd. The tense and worried adolescent needs to find relief in Christ's message: Trust God. You are accepted by Him. You belong. He knows, and what is more, He cares. From Matthew 5:45 the adolescent learns again of the concern of the Father. He "lets his sun rise upon bad and good alike, and makes the rain fall on sinners as well as saints." No one is forgotten; no one is ever abandoned for a single instant. God's offer of forgiveness and a share in His life extends always to each and every one of His children.

Only if the adolescent is secure, will he be able to learn from his mistakes. In this atmosphere of security he feels that he is taken as he is, weak and inexperienced. Because of the trust he experiences he is helped to recover his balance and he is encouraged to try again.

CHAPTER VI

THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE AND THE SACRAMENTAL RITE

If the adolescent has begun to commit himself in faith to Christ, he will begin to feel his own inadequacies when confronted with his lack of love and resulting sinfulness. He will want to gain His Friend's help; he will want to let Christ know that he is unfaithful but contrite, and so he will turn to Him in hope and trust. Through the virtue of penance and through the sacrament, he is enabled to become united again to Christ and in so doing grows himself more in unity.

This chapter is a study of the virtue and of the Sacrament of Penance.

As members of the Church our mission is to participate in the work of Christ and therefore, to carry out the work of redemption in poverty and persecution as Christ did in a spirit of expiation.

While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled knew nothing of sin, but came to expiate only the sins of the people, the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal.¹

¹ Vatican II, "Constitution on the Church", in The Sixteen Documents of Vatican II, Boston, St. Paul Editions, 1966, p. 116.

Although Christ was holy and without blemish His Church in its members is in continuous need of conversion and renewal. This conversion must be internal and individual, but also external and social.²

The Church has the "mission of showing man the right way to use earthly goods and to collaborate in the 'consecration of the world'."³

The Church likewise must encourage in her members salutary abstinence which will forearm them against the danger of allowing the things of this world to delay them from fulfillment in Christ.

Scripture makes it clear that for "homo viator" an awareness is demanded of his relation with God as sinful creature before sinless deity. Man does penance as a real personal act — it is an act of worship to show his love and surrender to God. God was displeased if man fasted without the spirit of humbling himself before, of conversion, towards Yahweh. "Today you have not fasted in a way which will make your voice heard on high. Rend your heart and not your garments, and return to the Lord your God" (Is. 58:4).

² Vatican II, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", op. cit., p. 48.

³ "Penitential Discipline of the Church", in The Jurist, Vol. 26, No. 2, April 1966, p. 247.

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The social aspect of penance is also found in the Old Testament. Together the people did penance showing a collective awareness of sin (Lv. 23:29).

Penitence was understood to be a means and a sign of perfection and sanctity. We read of those who served God day and night with fasting and prayers, with joy and cheerfulness (Si. 31:12; Dn. 1:12).

Some offered personal penance to satisfy for the sins of the community. Moses fasted forty days to placate the Lord for the guilt of his people. Isaiah presents the Servant of Yahweh as taking on the infirmities and the iniquity of us all (Is. 53:4-11).

In the New Testament we find Christ inviting us to repent, and we see Him willing Himself to suffer punishment for sins which were not His own but those of others.

As a follower of Christ then each Christian must participate in the suffering of Christ, no longer living for himself, but living for Christ and the members of His Church, completing "in his flesh that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ ... for the benefit of his body, which is the Church" (Col. 1:24).

In the act of penitence whereby man recognizes divine holiness and majesty, his whole being, body and soul must actively participate, and so we see the necessity of the mortification of the flesh. The exercise of bodily

mortification aims at the liberation of man who, because of concupiscence, is almost chained by his own senses. Christ Himself gave the example of an asceticism which chastises the body (Mt. 17:20; I Co. 9:24-27; Ac. 13:3).

All then are invited to accompany the inner conversion of the spirit with the voluntary exercise of external acts of penitence.

At Baptism the Christian received the gift of conversion, of "change of heart." When lost through sin it is restored and reinvigorated through the sacrament of penance.

Those who approach the sacrament of penance receive from the mercy of God forgiveness for offenses committed against Him and at the same time become reconciled with the Church on which they have inflicted a wound by sinning, and the Church cooperates in their conversion with charity, example and prayer.⁴

The sinner's return implies in him an attitude of welcome, consent, trust, humility, and hope. Without contrition sins are not remitted. Real contrition involves the readiness of the sinner to submit to the sacrament of penance in order to be an ecclesial member of good standing. Contrition is an act of the virtue of penance and forms part of the sacrament.

⁴ Vatican II, "Constitution on the Church", op. cit., p. 121.

To know the sacrament of Penance we must understand the meaning of "sacrament." Since the acts of Jesus on earth were acts of a man, but of a God-man, they had divine power to save. This divine power, because it appeared in visible form, was sacramental.

For a sacrament is a divine bestowal of salvation in an outwardly perceptible form which makes the bestowal manifest; a bestowal of salvation in historical visibility.⁵

Jesus as Son of God became present to men through his human body. Being "present" meant showing his divine saving power through human love and acts. He was the sacrament of God encountering man and of man encountering God. In the acts of the man Jesus, God's grace is realized in visible form. His acts cause what they signify; they are sacraments. Since the Ascension of Jesus, men have not been able to encounter him in the living body as he is invisible to us. Jesus overcomes this by performing saving acts for us through earthly realities. Through things that we can see and touch Christ continues to intercede for us and make himself present to us.

The Church's sacraments then are not things but encounters of men on earth with the glorified man Jesus by way of a visible form.⁶

5 E. Schillebeeckx, Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1963, p. 15.

6 Idem, ibid., p. 44.

When on earth Jesus taught his Church to perform the saving acts through earthly realities. Since His Ascension, His followers have continued to do so. A sacrament then is a visible saving action done in the name of Christ by persons empowered by the Church for His followers.

A sacrament is primarily and fundamentally a personal act of Christ Himself, which reaches and involves us in the form of an institutional act performed by a person in the Church who, in virtue of a sacramental character, is empowered to do so by Christ himself: an act ex officio.⁷

A sacrament then, is not a thing, but it is inter-communication between Christ and us. This is seen in the sacrament of Penance.

Among the sacraments, Penance is the most human, in the sense that it has the most intimate bonds with human psychological make-up, and at the same time the two are inter-related in a number of important ways.⁸

The authentic conversion and sincere repentance of a sinner always presupposes willingness to submit to the Church by receiving the sacrament of Penance. The Church "binds" the sinner in that he is excluded from the sharing of grace to the same extent as if he had remained

7 E. Schillebeeckx, op. cit., p. 53.

8 Louis Boutin, Penance, The Most Human of the Sacraments, trans. G. Cousineau and C. Lavigne, Ottawa, University Press, 1954, p. 5.

sinless. She raises the ban when she "looses" him on earth by recognizing his reconciliation with herself. "... to the extent, we may say, that this has a sacramentally symbolic value, the sinner is "loosed" in heaven too."⁹

The regaining of peace with the Church is the sign of and the accomplishment of reconciliation with God. Sin has an ecclesiological aspect in that reconciliation through and with the Church, is also reconciliation with God. The acts of the contrite penitent confessing to the Church and of the Church giving reconciliation on behalf of God is the visible and manifest expression of the Church fulfilling her own nature as the abiding sacrament of God's mercy in the world. The imposition of an act of penitence in the sacrament

... becomes a form of participation in the infinite expiation of Christ to join to the sacramental satisfaction itself every other action he performs, his every suffering and sorrow.¹⁰

The essential relations between interior conversion, external penance, and the daily practice of penance are all basic to the sense of what the sacrament signifies — the restoration of peace and love between Christ and the sinner.

9 Karl Rahner, The Church and the Sacraments, Trans. W.J. O'Hara, Montreal, Palm Publishers, 1963, p. 94.

10 The Jurist, op. cit., p. 251.

CHAPTER VII

THE VIRTUE AND THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE
AND THE ADOLESCENT

Love and affection help pave the way to feelings of security and safety, needs that are prominent in the adolescent personality. Since the adolescent is in a stage of transition, he feels confused and uncertain. Acceptance means that he is taken as he is, loved despite his shortcomings. The young person begins to be conscious of his need for friends. He becomes conscious of others, aware that they are different from himself. He discovers that a friendship is something that lives and grows. As a result of friendship, the adolescent notices in himself an expansion of interests, an increase of self-confidence, a change of personality, either in himself or in others. He realizes that loving is sometimes very difficult and painful, but he also sees that by giving something of himself he gains, grows, becomes more than he was before, in his aloneness. As the adolescent realizes that God has made him the kind of being who can grow up in loving, he can conclude that God must want him to have friendships. He can become acquainted with God's feeling towards love and friendship from a study of the first epistle of St. John. Here he learns that all love between persons comes from God: that dying, as Jesus did for man, is the greatest

expression of love a man can make; and, that we can express our love and thanks to God by loving as He does.

Through developing his own personality and in meeting others in meaningful relationships, the adolescent is being prepared for encounter with Christ. Man is man's way to God. It is through others and with others that the adolescent works out his salvation.

When the second Person of the Blessed Trinity assumed to Himself a human nature, He, by that divine act, sanctified the whole of human nature in all its aspects and relationships. The fullness of man lies, therefore, in realizing in its plenitude his incorporation in the Mystical Christ. This implies the full development of all his potentialities, even those which were primarily natural. The supernatural order does not destroy the natural but perfects it. So, in seeking the fullness of man, which is the legitimate work of the psychologist, we will not be led astray in our search for the fullness of Christ. On the contrary, the two roads are parallel and with good will they can be made to meet where they should meet, in the heart of man and of God.¹

Yet, the adolescent, in spite of his friendships with his peers, finds that they are unable fully to understand him. He fears that he will not be able to say what he really feels; that he will not be able to convey an understanding of himself to the other. Feelings of loneliness surge up within him — a loneliness that comes from being unable to share those thoughts and feelings which mean so much to him.

¹ Sister Rose Francis Finney, "The Psychodynamics of Adolescence and Religious Education", in Insight, Winter, 1966, p. 8.

The adolescent feels the need to commit himself to another, that he cannot live an unrelated mode of existence. He is a person in need of relation. His inner being urges him to seek out someone in whose presence he can be totally free to be himself; someone who values him for what he is and not for what he does. In looking at God, as revealed by Christ, and learning of His unbelievable love for mankind, he comes to see a person in whom he can confide, and knows, that regardless of his defects and failings, he will be accepted. He sees One who will want him only to be most fully himself. He begins to realize that Christ is the only one able to measure up to his expectations. Christ alone can fill the adolescent's life with the love and security of the most worthy of friendships; a relationship in which he can be fully and completely himself.

The encounter with Christ is a real contact of the human person with a divine person, so that a personal response befits this decision as no other. In the confession of faith and in the commitment to Christ there occurs a "steepening" of all the psychic powers, an awakening at the heart of the person, an increasing knowledge of the creatureliness of the person. It comes to know increasingly who it really is as though it had been called by name, by its own name. In the decision for Christ the person is aroused to the significance of its own name. In the commitment to Christ the person is fully actuated, it is wholly existent, it finds itself. The final stage of individuation begins with the person relationship to the divine person.²

2 J. Goldbrunner, Cure of Mind and Cure of Soul, New York, Pantheon Books, 1958, p. 96.

Let us suppose that teachers and parents and events have been successful in arousing in the adolescent an acceptance of the message of Jesus as good news, as an exciting promise of life. The adolescent feels that the message of Christ touches on his deepest yearnings and desires for fulfillment. He sees the proclamation of Christ as a value, as a message he will have to think seriously about, as an invitation directed to him here and now. As a result he will be more and more driven by the urge to improve himself. As a follower of Christ, the adolescent will begin to see the world as Christ does and to act as Christ acts. That the adolescent can reach his highest peak of existence and fulfillment in communion with Christ has its basis in fidelity. The young person is someone who can commit himself, who has a capacity for fidelity. His fidelity to Christ is the value response to the worth of Christ as a person. The adolescent arrives at the greatness of his personhood by responding to the love of Christ. The following quotation can be applied to the adolescent:

Only Christ can sustain me in love. Only Christ can open me to growth. Only Christ can love me so deeply that I can continue to call out to others to be, and to be in Christ. For without Him, at best I find I can only whisper this call like a dying echo. For my despair, my helplessness,

my frustrations crush me deeper into myself with their growing weight if I move toward becoming a person outside of Christ.³

The adolescent must allow his belief in Christ to influence his behaviour and conduct. Hence, he must open himself to Christ, giving himself through love. He must show his responsibility for what he believes by putting it into action. Through an unconditional love, based on fidelity to the presence of Christ, the adolescent can face life with confidence. He experiences a joie de vivre which he shares among all with whom he comes into contact. He possesses the strength to go out from himself and believe in others, to love and to give to those outside himself.

To carry forward this human task of becoming a person means that after we have been called by another's love to discover who we are, we then go on to share this discovery with others. We accept the challenge of being loveable and turn this outward, not inward onto self but we open ourselves to others, taking on the risk of exploitation and approaching them in availability in order that we may give.⁴

The adolescent, in fidelity to Christ, learns the meaning of himself and his relation to those about him.

3 Edwin McMahan and Peter Campbell, Becoming A Person In the Whole Christ, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1967, p. 285.

4 Idem, ibid., p. 284.

The adolescent cannot meet Christ in a direct affective experience. It is through the Liturgy that divine grace meets the liberty of the adolescent. Grace is the bond of the person's encounter with God, and grace is another factor in the shaping of personality.

It is personal presence that is involved in the mystery of sanctifying grace. The three divine Persons make themselves available to us, reveal their personalities to us (as Father, Son, Spirit), manifest the depths of their concern and love for us, open themselves to us so that we may intimately relate ourselves to them. If the deeply personal presence of a human friend can have such a transforming effect, can make it possible for me to find myself as a person and turn outward in friendship and genuine humanity, then the impact of the personal presence of Father, Son, and Spirit, should be even greater. And it is. Because of this intimate Trinitarian presence, man's very being as a person is reoriented, his entire ordination to knowing and loving is radically changed, he becomes capable of being and living divinely. This...is the reality of sanctifying grace.⁵

Also the same source tells us:

As the expression of the Father's love for us, the Holy Spirit works dynamically to form us to divine sonship, thereby drawing us to the Father. As the expression of the Son's love, the Spirit teaches us the profoundest meanings of Christ, who is the Son; he molds our personalities from within according to the model of Christ's own sonship.⁶

5 Bernard Cook, Christian Sacraments and Christian Personality, Toronto, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p. 41.

6 Idem, ibid., p. 42.

In the sacrament of Penance and in the practice of the virtue of penance the adolescent meets with Christ and receives grace.

The adolescent in his struggle toward moral maturity is helped by the voice of his conscience which begins to replace the voice of parents, teachers and religious authorities. He will experience difficulty in listening to his conscience in face of strong desires, needs, or anxieties. He does not find it easy to be moral when there are powerful internal impulses that insist on expression. Disorderly forces must be mastered, unified and guided together. It is conscience, by means of its choice of worthy ends, that brings about this unity. The adolescent cannot triumph unless he knows clearly to whom and why he is faithful. The liberating power of God against temptations of evil is unlimited; but it is necessary that the adolescent open himself to it with his whole soul and his whole heart. Thus St. Paul writes:

Nay more, I count everything loss because of the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ, my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I count them as dung that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a justice of my own, which is from the Law, but that which is from faith in Christ, the justice from God based upon faith; so that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings: become like to him in death, in the hope that somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this, or already have been made perfect,

but I press on hoping that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me (Ph. 3:8-12).

For the adolescent, Christian asceticism is the allowing of himself to be remade by God, to be open to what the Gospel asks of him, to accept encounters with others and the openness it requires of him. On examining the Gospel, the adolescent sees that Christ's sanctity involves his mature confrontation of life in honesty and in love. His triumph over temptation is a triumph of love, love of Christ and of all mankind. When faced with a difficult decision, personal love for Christ must be brought into play. The adolescent must draw upon a growing gift of self to Christ, upon a deep personal commitment and a developed loyalty that will cling to those values for which Christ laid down his life. In every temptation the adolescent has the choice to give or deny love. In choosing love he himself is opening to another and becoming more himself. This asceticism he chooses is in itself, directly or indirectly, an act of worship through which he himself is becoming, his personality is growing.

In the fulfilling of his commitment to Christ the adolescent must confront life in honesty and love. He must make the decision to die to himself, to be open to what the Gospel asks of him. When faced with a particularly difficult decision, when strongly moved by emotions of fear or

desire, his personal love for Christ must come to the fore. Every temptation is a choice to give or to deny love and so every temptation is a task of personal maturity. To overcome temptation the adolescent must reach out to Christ for strength. Unless he does so he will often reject what he knows is best for him; he will close himself off and thus, in turning in on himself, will refuse the other-centeredness which leads to maturity.

But this choice, this tendency of the whole spiritual being toward the good, is what marks a true personality just as the refusal to do good, at this level, obscures and unhinges it.⁷

He will find in this growth much difficulty. Left to his own resources he finds that he cannot accomplish the things that he would, and finds himself doing what he does not wish to do (Rm. 7:19). Only with the help of God, with the grace of Christ can the adolescent accomplish what is good and achieve his destiny. Further we see from Romans 8:9-10, that it is the grace of Christ which frees the adolescent from his enslavement to sin and enables him to do things most compatible with his nature, as a free and dignified individual. The more the adolescent loves rightly, the freer he is. In all that he does he is dependent; yet it is his choice to accept or reject the

7 M. Oraison, Sin, New York, Macmillan, 1962, p. 9.

power of Christ within him. He has the option to take the good or evil course of action. His choice of evil indicates the privation of something that should be there. His relation with Christ has not been sufficiently deepened in belief, in trust and in love. He, like the Prodigal Son, in spite of His Father's benevolence, will not be His son. He will not open to the light of the Holy Spirit but refuses to open his door to His knock. His sin, as an expression of egoism, separates, divides, and opposes. He saddens the Holy Spirit who works among men to gather them in one love and make them come out of themselves, to unite them among themselves and with God. In sinning the adolescent refuses unity; he drives away the Holy Spirit.

The adolescent upon reflection perceives that he has failed Someone who loves him and whose Love is reaching out again to him. He feels uneasiness since he has badly responded to the love of Christ. He is experiencing contrition. At this stage it would be a consolation to the young person to read the prophets Osee and Ezechiel, in which the relations of love between God and His people are described under the allegory of conjugal love. Although he has failed the God who loves him, the love of that same God conquers on the condition that the adolescent open himself to it totally. The adolescent comes to know that the saving love of God is more powerful than his own

ambivalence; that although he has failed in his response of love to the love of God he can find a new and deeper means of loving: he can have recourse to God's forgiveness.

Even in ordinary life the adolescent needs to learn that he must somehow bridge the separation, caused by hurting another; that basically, his self-esteem cannot be broadened at the expense of someone else's discomfort; that he must be willing to pay the cost of growing up, by knowing that he can have one thing at a time, that the best value is the high regard others have for him.

By confronting this closing in upon himself, which was his sin, with the gaze of Christ, he makes choice to turn with hope, joy and love to this gaze as did Peter or to turn away in despair as did Judas. If he allows the love of Christ to draw him, he sets up a dialogue of penance in which his relations with Christ are deepened and extended. As a result of the dialogue of penance his whole personality will be influenced, he is reaching out for the 'pearl of great price', and in so doing, both the unified and the dynamic character of his personality is emphasized.

Now he has the need for reconciliation with Christ and with his body, the Church. Immediately he feels the need to unite again, the need to bridge his separation, the need to come out of his isolation, the need to repair his broken relations with God and with the friends of God.

Christ provides for this reconciliation; He Himself will meet with the adolescent and will assure him of His friendship and that of His friends. If, in sorrow and humility, the adolescent will come and tell his misery to one of Christ's friends, to whom He has given special power, then the adolescent can be sure that Christ is with him again, ready to help him in closer worship of the Father.

The sacrament of Penance is the setting for the adolescent to externalize his internal conversion, to profess that his deepest response-to-value is response to Christ, to re-affirm his commitment to Him and to all the values He proclaimed. The adolescent begins intellectually to see signs rich in content, eloquent in their power to teach and mighty in their power to bring him into personal contact with God.

The sacrament of Penance then restores the personal order that should exist between himself and Christ, between himself and the Church. He feels the peace of the Holy Spirit, the peace that his wrongdoing could not give. In the sacrament of Penance the adolescent meets Christ living on in the Church, continuing to perform the action which he did on earth, the forgiving of sins. Through signs on the part of the adolescent, and through signs on the part of the priest, Christ comes with his forgiveness. It is natural in man to express his sorrow to God through the

Liturgy, through sensible signs.

... since man is a composite of body and soul, we must admit that his very nature urges him to express to God by some sensible sign his spiritual sorrow for having betrayed His trust. Now the human mind, in order to be united to God, needs to be guided by the sensible world. Because man is a social being, we must also admit that he has a general undetermined inclination to confess his fault.⁸

Contrition must be shown outwardly in order to belong to the order of sacramental signs. The exterior attitude of the repentant adolescent, kneeling at the feet of the priest orally telling his sins acknowledges the fact of his sorrow. The examination of conscience required as preparation for confession helps the adolescent to see wherein he is failing in his loving response to Christ. He has to re-assess his goals and determine to replace his lack of generosity with a more fervent commitment. In the telling of his sins he opens his interior to the priest, he allows Christ, through the priest, to see him a sorrowful sinner. Through the absolution the priest lets the adolescent know that Christ has loving pity and abundant forgiveness. Not only is his actual sin forgiven but he experiences a strength and healing of interior dispositions which are conducive to sin and are often the result of

⁸ L. Boutin, Penance, The Most Human of the Sacraments, Ottawa, University Press, 1954, p. 105.

previous sin. Father Cooke, in speaking of the sacrament of Penance, brings out this point when he says:

As Christ's instrument, it heals those devious tendencies which in themselves may not be explicitly culpable, but are nevertheless, aberrations in the psychological make-up of the individual.⁹

Thus, on the adolescent's part worship in the sacrament of Penance involves a sense of creaturehood and dependence upon God with a sincere sorrow for sin. This brings with it for the adolescent a renewed strength, a strong intellectual deepening, and a new and deep spiritual vitality to aid his personality in facing conflicts that beset it.

Penance brings about a restoration of friendship with Christ. It is possible, because of this restoration, for the adolescent to have greater unity still by sharing a new way of living in and with Christ. The adolescent, cut off by sin, needs the sacrament of Penance before he can partake of the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Curé of Ars began one of his sermons with the words: "To talk to you about Confession is to talk about all that is most precious in religion."¹⁰

9 B. Cooke, op. cit., p. 87.

10 Richards and P. De Rosa, Christ In Our World, Milwaukee, Bruce, 1966, p. 140.

The adolescent, united with Christ, can once again bring about holiness in others as he is able in the love of Christ to go out to others. Penance frees him from his own enslavement and thus he can more effectively assist Christ in His redeeming work.

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The process of becoming a mature human being is dynamic since at no stage or age can one look at himself and say, "Now I am a mature person". Personhood is not only a possession, but a process. It is not bestowed, but achieved; one never is completely a person, but is always becoming one. From childhood to adulthood one ever presses onward to fullness of being. It is the whole person who is striving for this end.

In the growth necessary for the attainment of maturity one meets with limitations in himself, limitations on the intellectual, emotional, physical and moral levels. This is why achieving maturity is a challenge. Despite the difficulties one must dare to aim and become. A change from childhood to adulthood means a transformation from the ego-centeredness of the child to the other-centeredness of the adult. It is at the adolescent growth stage that this process of changing and reorientating can take place.

The adolescent is a personality in transition, having within him a powerful thrust toward maturity and adulthood. Without this built-in thrust, there could be no transformation from childhood to adulthood. Without this thrust the adolescent would remain forever immature, dependent, and irresponsible. It is at this period that

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his character and personality mature and become enriched. A first step toward maturation is the overcoming of a sense of uncertainty about himself, the attaining of his self-identity. As he encounters others, he becomes more aware of himself. This becoming aware of his "I" is most intense at the adolescent age. Through inter-personal relationships he begins to see himself differently and understand himself more and better. He begins to experience an independent, personal existence in which his self is the core of striving and of acting.

In learning how to relate to others he has to develop healthy relations with members of his own family, and with members of the opposite sex. He learns to love others and recognize his dependence on other persons while at the same time he guards his personal independence and individuality. At this time he questions even the truth of existence. Because during adolescence there is an intellectual development, when moral principles, attitudes and ideals become more clearly defined, the adolescent begins to decide for himself on moral issues and depend less on adults for moral judgments. He becomes keenly aware of his relationship to God and the responsibilities involved in this relationship. If Christ has been presented to him as a dynamic figure, capable of dispelling strangeness and enkindling love, the adolescent will take

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up a meaningful relationship with Christ. The idealism, characteristic of adolescence, makes it possible for him to believe in Christ, for Christ is the only one able to measure up to his expectations. The adolescent searches humanity for a person with whom he can become one, yet who will permit him to be fully and only himself. He finds this person only in Christ.

The following is an account of a young girl, who tells the story of her commitment to Christ. This story seems to summarize the points brought forward in the first chapters of this thesis.

As a child of a very Christian home, I have been exposed and re-exposed to the Christian faith by its finest example. It is often assumed that such children turn out in one of two ways: either they become Christians automatically, "oozing" by some process of osmosis into the Church, or they rebel, cut loose, and want nothing more to do with religion. I was a third variety. I participated in church activities taking in a second-hand way what my family and church offered. I knew that by comparison with my parents I was merely going through the motions; for I could see that they felt a joy and an enthusiasm about what they were doing which I did not have. So as I grew into a teen-ager, and "youth's crisis" began to beset me, I realized that there was no meaning in all of this for me. I was a phony. I really didn't care very much about anything, except perhaps my gay social life; and as I began to grapple with some of the bigger questions, a strange confusion and anxiety crept in. I began to be lonely. Meaning, I decided, was something that one found only as an adult; so I put up with my state of mind, deciding, in spite of my Christian exposure, that it was all useless.

When I was sixteen, I heard a very famous man preach one summer night. This man said just this: Whatever life was for me, Christ could answer it.

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I was given an opportunity to make a decision as to whether I wanted this personal relationship with Christ, and I accepted, feeling, in all honesty, that I had nothing to lose.

I do not believe in "overnight" conversions. God often takes a very long time to undo what we have done to ourselves. But I do believe that when God takes hold of our lives in this personal way, we can be, and are, transformed. And, although the crisis of my youth was not a very big one, God cared to meet it. I can honestly say that from that moment of acceptance I have never since felt that life was meaningless. If my crisis had been a bigger one, I believe that God would have answered that, too. That evening's challenge to confront God in my own life led me to the place where solutions to my particular problems could be found¹.

A young boy likewise writes of the fulfillment he found in committing himself to Christ.

... But to whom are we to turn if we cannot turn to parents and teachers for advice as we attempt to chart a path through this jungle? ... Chaos is all that most of us see. Hence our lack of purpose and lack of direction, our lack of values, or more precisely our conflicting values.

If our basic needs, then, are an understanding of ourselves, a purpose, a direction, a goal, where are we to find them?

I have found them in Jesus Christ. I have found them and a great deal more.

... For Christ becomes the reference point outside the chaos, and, very significantly, inside the chaos, too. And all of this promises us a confidence, a vital hope, that Christ is Lord of the universe and Lord of our lives, and that, ultimately, all things do have positive meaning and coherence. It promises a fulfillment, and a freedom, which can only result from the knowledge

¹ Helen Shoemaker Rea, "The Crisis As We Saw It", in Youth In Crisis, ed. Peter C. Moore, New York, Seabury Press, pp. 135-136.

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and the experience of doing that for which we were created.

And the Christian is empowered by God to do just this. He is not given ethical exhortations without an explanation of how it is possible to achieve the same. He is not called upon to exemplify Christian principles, without being introduced to the only Person in history ever perfectly to have exemplified them, the Person without whom it is impossible for him to do the same.

... What I am speaking about is a radical re-orientation, reintegration, redirection of life. Despite what some will argue, this is not too idealistic. I have seen it and I have experienced it. ... aren't we all lost until we meet its Master?²

If the adolescent approaches Christ through a loving relationship he can offer himself to Him. This is the free response of the adolescent before God and yet this response is initiated by God. For, the response is itself a gift, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that, not from yourselves, for it is a gift of God" (Ep. 2:8). Once the adolescent has committed himself to Christ, it is through worship that his body and spirit unite to respond to the Transcendent "Other". Worship cannot leave the creature the same as he was before the encounter. Liturgy, under all its forms, gives the Christian the opportunity to grow "to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ep. 4:13). The deepest response-to-value is response to God and the sacraments provide the

² George W. Renwick, "The Crisis As We Saw It", in Youth In Crisis, ed. Peter C. Moore, New York, Seabury Press, 1966, pp. 138-139.

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means of man encountering Christ. Intellectually, the adolescent is in a position to realize the importance and reality of symbols. He believes that Christ effects what the signs and symbols signify. In response to Christ as "the way, the truth and the life", the adolescent has committed himself to think and act as Christ would. However, since he has not yet acquired the knowledge or wisdom to act consistently in the favourable resolving of conflicts, he experiences confusion and anxiety. When, and if he gives in to making mistakes and committing sin, he needs and wants that sort of help, which will not discourage him but rather help him up, despite those sins. The practice of the virtue of penance and the Sacrament of Penance will give him the security he desires even if he makes mistakes, even if he denies Christ, breaking friendship with him through sin. Penance, in the practice of the virtue and the Sacrament, keeps the adolescent in touch with Christ who is able to satisfy the longing in the heart of the adolescent to be loved for himself, to be loved as a person, no matter what are his abilities.

If the adolescent can be deeply aware that Jesus has a full humanity with a human intellect and will, he can become more conscious that His human love for him is more profound because more fully human. His is a love that is based on intimate human knowledge of the adolescent;

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His is a love of His human will that goes out to the adolescent in his need, and despite his misery. A love, yes, that is also expressed and integrated by his emotional concern for the young person. Happy the adolescent who is convinced that the human love of Christ is not a mere sentimental attachment, but the love of a fully conscious human being, acting intelligently, with a readiness and indeed a longing to love him through thick and thin. The response of the adolescent will be an awareness, then, that he is never alone, that he has a friend always ready to receive him, and to show His human love for him, a love that will lead him beyond himself and convince him of the infinitely greater divine love that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has for him.

In the sacramental celebration of Penance the adolescent meets with Christ, the man, and experiences His forgiveness. With the security that he has the love of Christ, the adolescent is enabled to make reconciliation to others without being crushed by the experience, although he may not meet with adults who, like Christ, are willing to forgive and forget. The consciousness of the love of Christ will sustain the adolescent in the hurting experience of receiving non-forgiveness from an adult.

That the adolescent can grow in personality through the virtue of penance and through the sacramental rite is

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evident, especially in the preparation for the Sacrament. He has a confrontation of his relationship to God; a confrontation of his response to his family members and to others; a confrontation of his lack of charity with the charity of Christ; of his poverty before the riches of God. The ego-centeredness expressed by his sins has to become other-centeredness now in his re-committing of himself in sorrow, humility and love to Christ. His person-to-person horizontal relationships must be re-assessed and re-orientated by the charity exemplified by Christ, before his person-to-Person relationship can be re-established. In opening to others and to The Other he himself is enlarged and fulfilled. Through the Sacrament he participates in the personality of Christ, with the result that he himself is strengthened and purified and that the whole Church grows in holiness.

Stating our hypothesis once again, we have contended that the virtue of Penance and the Sacramental Rite do provide effectively for the personality development of the adolescent.

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