His second proposal is the claim that it can be deduced from the nature of God that the world must have been endowed with at least "conditional material sufficiency," that is, "sufficiency contingent on human response and cooperation" (199). One could object that this amounts to denying the very problem that an economic theodicy should face. More pertinent is perhaps the question of whether there are conceivable properties or states of the world that this ontological principle excludes. If not, a skeptic might object that it is just a piece of defensive rhetoric. Here, we are led back to Malthus, who conceptualized "misery and vice" as necessary concomitants of the "principle of population," aspects of the inexorable working of what he thought was a law of nature. Luckily, the principle of population is not true. Even in the last decade of the eighteenth century Malthus could have found in Adam Smith the observation that the size of the family is in almost all societies inversely related to the height of their income class. (See Mark Blaug, *Economic Theory in Retrospect*, 4th ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 73.)

If the principle of population were true, would it be compatible with Barrera's principle of conditional sufficiency? One should think not. Barrera seems unconcerned. Indeed, he expresses the belief that the principle of population holds (16). Then in a footnote argues that, even if it may not, "Malthus' basic theological question remains valid: Why does God permit a world characterized by material scarcity?" (240). After his 287-page treatment, the meaning of the question, let alone the answer, is somewhat more obscure.

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A Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching

John T. Noonan

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It is my hope that John Henry Cardinal Newman is in heaven—not only because he was a wise and saintly man but also because he would then be spared the indignity of spinning in his grave every time his important work on the development of doctrine is abused. Since the Second Vatican Council, one hears of theological "developments" here, there, and everywhere. The claim to a "development of doctrine" nowadays often masks a chronological snobbery, in which the attitudes and prudential judgments of modern men are, by that fact, superior to those found in preceding times.

A Church that Can and Cannot Change is John T. Noonan's most recent exploration of the development of doctrine in moral theology that, as Noonan notes, goes untreated by Cardinal Newman (3). After eleven books in this area, Noonan's thesis is familiar to most: namely, that the ordinary magisterium has declared certain practices to be morally acceptable in one age that it has denounced later on (e.g., slavery) and has denounced

other practices that it later came to accept (e.g., usury, religious liberty, certain forms of divorce). Noonan describes these changes as developments, by which the Church has grown in love and "empathetic identification with the other" (215).

Does development have the same meaning for moral theology that it has for dogma? Noonan's treatment proceeds as if the organic growth one sees in dogma, say in the understanding of the Trinity or the Incarnation, is also present in morals. Pope John Paul II, however, observed that development in moral theology is "analogous to that which has taken place in the realm of the truths of faith" (*Splendor of the Truth*, n. 28). The word *analogous*, implying as it does that there is only a proportional similarity between development in moral teaching and dogma, invites important distinctions that Noonan, for all his scholarly references, fails to make.

Unlike the dogmas of the faith, the principles of the moral law are part of our human nature. They are "written on our hearts," to use the beautiful words of Saint Paul. Consequently, they do not demand a long period of time to grasp, as do the dogmas of faith. Rather, more often than not, they demand the application of moral principles already grasped by new situations and circumstances. Saint Thomas likens this to the work of the house builder who must adapt the plan he has to different sites and materials.

Certainly, man's grasp of the moral law was improved by the teaching of the gospel and divine grace offered in baptism, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches (n. 1960). However, after this infusion, man's moral understanding does not develop—he does not necessarily have a better grasp of the moral law in 1500 A.D. than he does in 500 A.D. Rather, one sees a succession of adaptations to changing social circumstances, changes that are not necessarily "progress."

This is precisely what Noonan denies. For Noonan, the history of the Church's moral practice is one of contradictions that eventually resolve themselves in a direction that is more loving, more "empathetic" of neighbor. The Church once accepted slavery but now condemns it as intrinsically evil. She once accepted the persecution of unbelievers but now affirms religious liberty, and so on.

The first and most obvious problem with Noonan's work is his understanding of what the Church teaches. For example, in his discussion of slavery (which occupies half the book), the opinions of Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, and Saint Alphonsus Ligouri are simply put forward as Church teaching. While much of what these doctors have written was adopted by the Church as its own teaching (hence the honor of "doctor") their writing is not simply convertible with Church teaching.

Hence, if these theologians fail to condemn slavery, or even justify some forms of it, this is not Church teaching. Nor does Noonan demonstrate a consensus among the fathers and doctors in favor of slavery and slaveholding. It is easy to show that a number of theologians and bishops failed to address slavery as an injustice, but one wonders how much of that silence is more prudent reserve than tacit approval. Silence may seem to give consent, but silence is the very opposite of teaching. The historical evidence of popes' and bishops' owning slaves that Noonan documents is not teaching either, even if we are scandalized by it.

Further, Noonan merges several issues into one to create doctrinal discontinuities. In his discussion of religious liberty, for example, one could distinguish at least five different issues: (1) whether unbelievers in general should be compelled to the faith, (2) whether those who have fallen into heresy should be compelled to renounce it, (3) whether the secular government should endorse the Catholic Church, (4) whether the government should restrict religious practice in any way, and (5) whether religious truth is unrelated to religious liberty.

One might hold (2), without holding (1), as is the case with Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas. *Dignitatis humanae* rejects (2) but does not reject (3) entirely because it allows for "special civil recognition to one religious community" (n. 6), so long as the freedom to worship is granted to other faiths. *Dignitatis humanae* does not clearly reject (4) either because it allows for restricting religious liberty in view of violations against "the objective moral order" and the "common good" (n. 8). One can reject (5) (as all the popes of the nineteenth century had done in their discussions of the liberal understanding of "religious liberty") and affirm religious liberty as a means for seeking the truth about God and his Church, which is, in fact, the teaching of *Dignitatis humanae* (n. 1). For Noonan, these important distinctions are merged into "coercion of belief" (220), as if everyone before 1965 believed in indiscriminate persecution of unbelievers (item [1] above).

The principal problem in Noonan's consideration is his assumption that modern people are more developed than were people of earlier times.

> Deepening, finally, occurs by the development, intellectual, moral, emotional, and social, of human beings. How do we know such development occurs? We know it empirically. The practices of enslavement and persecution that appeared appropriate to our ancestors are to us absurd, unjust, and outrageous beyond comprehension.… Our judgment comes not merely from reflection on revelation but from an enhanced capacity to comprehend what the pursuit of truth and happiness by human beings depend upon. (216)

With this development, Noonan explains, has come empathy: "empathy with those seen as brothers and sisters leads to the rejection of practices formerly considered to be compatible with Christianity such as the enslavement of human beings and persecution for the sake of religion.… Love accomplishes this task by abounding in 'knowledge and in insight of every kind,' that is, by empathetic identification with the other" (215). For Noonan, Christian love and empathy are one and the same.

By collapsing charity into empathy, Noonan has left the thought of Newman far behind him. Newman strongly criticized what he described as "the Religion of the Day," which "has taken the brighter side of the Gospel,—its tidings of comfort, its precepts of love; all darker, deeper views of man's condition and prospects being comparatively forgotten.… benevolence is the chief virtue; intolerance, bigotry, excess of zeal, are the first of sins" (*Plain and Parochial Sermons*, vol. 1, n. 24). For Noonan, moral development amounts to the Church's adopting the liberal rights-oriented outlook of the twentieth century.

Is this progress? Are not the empathetic moderns, who are so outraged by slavery and religious persecution, the same ones who accept the murder of unborn children in abortion? Noonan is quick to lay the charge of "moral blindness" on previous ages but fails to recognize it in his own. One can even find plenty of churchmen and theologians who are willing to defend legal abortion and the Catholic politicians who promote it. Pope John Paul II has spoken of the "surprising contradiction" of those who "solemnly proclaim the inviolable rights of the person" and yet deny "the very right to life" itself (*Gospel of Life*, n. 18).

This would suggest that, far from a smooth development from moral darkness to moral enlightenment, people of the last century have embraced some virtues at the expense of others. One could even ask whether our empathy has come at the price of other virtues. How many of those who trumpet religious liberty are really indifferent to religious truth? How many of those who celebrate emancipating the slaves are sympathetic to oppressive left-wing regimes?

Pope John Paul II provided a more likely model for moral development than Noonan when he wrote, "history is not simply a fixed progression toward what is better, but rather an event of freedom, and even a struggle between freedoms that are in mutual conflict … a conflict between two loves: the love of God to the point of disregarding self, and the love of self to the point of disregarding God" (*On the Family*, n. 6). Moral development, for Christians, is measured principally by the love of God, not by the rights of man. In that respect, one wonders if the words of our Lord, that the "love of many shall grow cold" apply especially to our own age, even if our so-called empathy is great.

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Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

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The problem that Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) addresses in *Truth and Tolerance* is both theological and political. It concerns the polemics surrounding the encounter of Christian belief and other religions and the call to all religions to promote peace. Since Karl Rahner first began exploring the theme in 1961, Christian theologians have focused their discussion of the relationship of Christianity and world religions almost exclusively on the possibility of salvation for the non-Christian. As a result, they have treated it under a rubric in which distinctions between the religions have been considered irrelevant (17). Ratzinger proposes that prior to and perhaps instead of trying to decide the value of religions for eternity, the more basic questions of the meaning of religion, of faith, of culture, and of the possibility for their fruitful interaction need to be addressed (see 18, 207).