

UST's Contribution to the Development of Moral Theology in the Philippines

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Abstract: The paper discusses the contribution of the University of Santo Tomas (UST), particularly of the Faculty of Sacred Theology, to the development of Moral Theology in the Philippines. It traces the foundations of UST's Moral Theology tradition from the Thomistic Aristotelian tradition of the Dominicans who taught this discipline in UST. It also talks of missionary catechesis as a method in moral theology, and of the manualist moral theology. It moreover discusses the development of moral theology after the Second Vatican Council. It will end with a mention of the emergence of Bioethics, treated as a theological moral discipline, and the introduction of the Salamanca process in the teaching and research of Moral Theology. It concludes with a presentation of how the professors of moral theology in the University responded to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: University of Santo Tomas, Moral Theology, Bioethics, Church in the Philippines, Missionary Catechesis

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The Faculty of Sacred Theology is as old as the University of Santo Tomas (UST). The Foundational Act on April 28, 1611 shows that the University started as a colegio-seminario in which, a few years after its establishment, was authorized by the Holy See to confer academic degrees in Philosophy and Theology. On November 20, 1645, Pope Innocent X elevated this colegio-seminario into a university enjoying the same rights and privileges that were granted to European universities. The original name of UST was “Colegio-seminario de Nuestra Señora del Rosario.” This was later changed to “Colegio de Santo Tomas” and finally, to “Universidad de Santo Tomas.”¹

The Faculty of Sacred Theology is indeed an integral part of the University of Santo Tomas, and it is one of the reasons why Pope Leo XIII honored the University with the title “Pontifical University” on September 17, 1902, and Pope Pius XII officially declared it as the “Catholic University” of the Philippines in 1947. The Faculty of Sacred Theology commits itself to the promotion and development of theological disciplines through scientific research and competent instruction, continuing theological formation and education of the clergy, the religious, and the laity and the undertaking of extension services to other theological institutes through affiliation, aggregation, and incorporation.

During its foundation, the standards of teaching followed at Santo Tomas have always been compared favorably with those of any leading university throughout the world.² The seven chairs, or departments, at the institute were patterned after the systems found in the best European halls of learning. The study of Theology was the most comprehensive of all the higher studies. One of such theological disciplines is Moral Theology.³

Scholastic Moral Theology

Moral Theology that was being taught in European universities when the university was founded were Scholastic and Thomistic in orientation. Scholasticism was a medieval school of philosophy that employed a critical method of philosophical analysis predicated upon a Latin Catholic theistic curriculum which dominated teaching in that period. It originated within the Christian monastic schools that were the basis of the earliest Christian universities.⁴ The rise of Scholasticism was closely

¹ Fr. Quentin Sweeney, O.P. “Santo Tomas de Manila: The First University of the Philippines,” *Dominicana*, vol. 27, no. 1 (1942): 25.

² Sweeney, “Santo Tomas de Manila: The First University of the Philippines,” 26.

³ Sweeney, “Santo Tomas de Manila: The First University of the Philippines,” 26.

⁴ Steven Marone, “Medieval Philosophy in Context” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

associated with these schools that flourished in Italy, France, Spain, and England.⁵ The 13th to 14th centuries were generally seen as the high period of Scholasticism. Universities developed in large cities of Europe during this period and rival clerical orders within the church began to battle for political and intellectual control over these centers of educational life. The two main orders founded in this period were the Franciscans and the Dominicans. The leader of the Franciscans was Bonaventure, a traditionalist who defended the theology of St. Augustine and the philosophy of Plato and little of Aristotle. Other Franciscans were Duns Scotus and William of Ockham.

In contrast, the Dominicans placed more emphasis on the use of reason and made extensive use of the new Aristotelian sources derived from the east and Moorish Spain. The great representatives of Dominican teaching in this period were Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas whose artful synthesis of Greek rationalism and Christian doctrine eventually came to define Catholic philosophy. Aquinas placed more emphasis on reason and argumentation and was one of the first to use the new translation of Aristotle's metaphysical and epistemological writing. A complete course in St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica* was given as a standard practice in Dominican universities. Moral theological reflection was enriched by numbers of commentaries on Part II of the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomistic renewal, the first signs of which appeared in the Rhenish universities during the 15th century, emerged at the beginning of the 16th century simultaneously in Germany with Conrad Kollin, O.P. (1538) and his commentary on the I-II of St. Thomas; in Italy with Cardinal Cajetan (1534) who published the first complete commentary of the *Summa Theologiae*; and in France, where Pierre Crockaert, O.P. (1514) replaced the Sentences of Peter Lombard as a textbook with the *Summa Theologiae* of the Angelic Doctor, a step of considerable importance in the evolution of moral theology.⁶ Later, these were affected by the Renaissance and thus acquired a naturalistic flavor, the biblical tradition receding more and more in the background.⁷ In the 16th century the Spanish Dominicans of Salamanca wrote commentaries on the *Summa* of St. Thomas in which they attempted a synthesis between the great orientations of Thomism and penchant for concrete data of the nominalists. Some of these like Francis de Vitoria, known as the founder of Western international law, addressed themselves to problems of justice and international law arising from rapid economic expansion

⁵ Jorge Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, eds. *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2008).

⁶<https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/moral-theology-history-700-vatican-council-i>.

⁷ George Lobo, S.J. *Christian Living According To Vatican II* (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1980), 9.

and the conquest of vast territories by Christian powers. They sought to bring in an element of humanity if not the Gospel spirit, in the horrible process of colonization.⁸

At the turn of the century, the great Jesuit theologians like Gabriel Vasquez and Francis Suarez wrote commentaries on St. Thomas, and they already showed an independence of thought. The great movements of the Reformation and Counter Reformation did not produce a ferment in Catholic moral theology that might have been expected. Still the desire of the Council of Trent for a thorough pastoral “care of souls” had to be met. To prepare the clergy for this work several authors beginning with John Azor (1603) prepared a new type of “*Institutiones Morales*” which were somewhere in between speculative theological “summas” used in the universities and the extant “summas” for confessors.⁹

They contained fundamental moral theology treatment on the commandments of God and the Church, regulations concerning the administration of the sacraments, and ecclesiastical penalties. The former in which the divorce between moral and dogmatic theology was substantially continued in the Manuals of Moral Theology that lasted until Vatican II.

This was the moral theology brought by the missionaries who came here to preach and teach at the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the University of Santo Tomas .

Moral Theology as Missionary Catechesis

The missionaries in the Philippines outside of their catechetical works, sermons, devotional manuals, dogmatic and moral treatises, the early church history of the Philippines offered rather few apologetical writings. The missionaries overall emphasized the “positive” teachings of the gospel, rather than the “negative” duty of defending it against its enemies.¹⁰ What we could guess was that there was no need to “defend” the Catholic faith against schisms and heresies. It was only in the latter half of the 19th century, when modern liberalism and freemasonry began to seep into the Philippines, we find the beginnings of what we may call Philippine apologetics even in moral theology.¹¹

⁸ Lobo, *Christian Living According To Vatican II*, 9.

⁹ Lobo, *Christian Living According To Vatican II*, 9.

¹⁰ Pablo Fernandez, O.P., *History of the Church in the Philippines (1521-1898)* (Navotas: Navotas Press, 1979).

¹¹ Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 97ff.

Moral Theology and Apologetics

It was in the 20th century when writings were clearly intended to refute errors against the Catholic faith. Refutations of errors came through Sunday sermons by the missionaries, formation of various pious associations and confraternities like the Holy Name Society, League of the Sacred Heart, the Apostleship of Prayer, and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine with their own publications necessarily of limited subscriptions.¹²

In the University of Santo Tomas, some individuals, however, stood out in their task of defending Catholicism by spoken work or in writing. The Dominican Fernando Arias was a well-known essayist and literary writer. Some of his poetic compositions were on theological themes like “Dialogo sobre el materialismo.” This was a beautifully written dialogue between a student of medicine and law. Typical, too of his sermons and conferences was his “La teoria del mal menor segun el criterio catolico.”¹³

If one reads the individual lectures given at the annual inauguration of the academic year at the University of Santo Tomas, he would find that towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the present, the lectures dealt with the errors of modern liberalism and attacks on the Catholic religion.¹⁴

There were also other Dominican professors and writers. In what we now call Systematic Theology (Dogma) Fr. Pedro Soto, O.P. won the respect of his contemporaries and was consulted on various matters and problems of conscience. Fr. Sebastian Oquendo, O.P. described as well-read “in all sciences, especially in scholastic theology, in which he could compare with more learned, left many theological essays and written solutions of numerous cases of conscience proposed to him. He is said to have annotated the entire Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas, and the unpublished manuscript, preserved before in the archives of the University of Santo Tomas entitled 'Summa casuum conscientiae' is attributed to him. He probably wrote several treatises entitled 'De peccato originali' preserved in the same archives.”¹⁵

Fr. Pedro Fernandez de Ledo, O.P. (1660) wrote a “Cursus theologiae scholasticae” whose original manuscript disappeared when the British occupied Manila in 1762–1764, together with other essays on moral problems by other

¹² Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 48.

¹³ Mariano Velasco, O.P. *Ensayo De Bibliografia*, V, 130.

¹⁴ Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 420.

¹⁵ Fernandez, *History of the Church in the Philippines*, 420.

Dominican thinkers. However, to the credit of the Jesuits, Fr. Raimundo del Prado, S.J. (1605) was the first moral theologian in the Philippines in the sense that he was the first to teach Moral Theology in Manila and give moral conferences to the clergy.

Fr. Domingo Gonzales, O.P. (1574-1647), a great teacher and organizer of the studies offered at the University of Santo Tomas was an “oracle” and the counselor of archbishops and bishops in the Philippines. Monuments of his inspiration and theological wisdom still exist in the volumes and manuscripts preserved both in AUST and APSR: learned treatises, consultations on such themes as “Inquisition in the Philippines,” “Cases of Peculiar to the Philippines” and other moral issues. Fr. Diego de Rivera, OP (+1623) was a veritable reference on moral problems. “It seemed impossible that one man alone could find solutions to so many hundreds of cases and questions as difficult as were raised down on this great theologian and illustrious counsellor.”¹⁶ AUST still preserves his answers to questions on theology, morals, legal problems - manuscript collection totaling 1000 pages.¹⁷

Towards the end of the 17th century, Fr. Juan de la Paz, O.P. (+1699) was hailed as the greatest theologian in the Philippines in the 17th century. His writings include the well-received volume “Consultas y resoluciones teologicas, judicias, regulares morales,” first printed in Sevilla and re-edited in Antwerp; three volumes entitled “Respuestas morales: Opusculum in quo ducenta et septuaginta quattuor quaesita a RR. P.P. missionariis Regni Tungkini, totidem resdponiones ad ipsa continentur, expeditae per Admo., Joannem de Paz,” first edited in Manila and then in Sevilla.¹⁸ Fr. Frigola, O.P. (1938) once Provincial Vicar of Pangasinan and Professor at the University of Santo Tomas for 30 years, used to be consulted on moral problems by the hierarchy. Fr. Gregorio Echevarria, O.P. (+1901) for years Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, reedited with his own notes the “Teologia Moral” of Fr. J. Moran in which he incorporated new norms issued by the Roman Congregation and the amendments of the civil code of Spain. He was appointed to pass judgment on Rizal’s “Noli Me Tangere” an evaluation which he embodied in his “Informe de la Universidad de Santo Tomás.”¹⁹ Fr. Jose Ma. Ruiz, O.P. who won fame as a polemist, was recalled from his assignment at Villasis, Pangasinan and was named Regent of the Department of Moral Theology at the University of Santo Tomas. His writings appeared in several periodicals, like “El Diario de Manila,” “La Estrella de Antipolo” where in the latter review he wrote the very interesting “Hojas de Catecismo.” Lastly, we find Fr. Miguel Saralegui (+19121) another professor at

¹⁶ Manuel Arellano, *Discurso De Apertura*, 1924, p. 23.

¹⁷ Velasco, II, 84-85; AUST, Libros “Tomo” 182.

¹⁸ Salazar, 731, col. 1.

¹⁹ Velasco, IV, 383, ff.

the University who used his free time to reedit the famous moral theology textbook of Larraga, which is said to have left an imprint in the thinking of his students of Moral Theology.²⁰

Through the 18th century, the changes observed in the Colegio de Santo Tomas are relatively few.²¹ It was certain that some students also took interest in Canon Law for the priesthood. The second half of the 19th century brought about significant changes in Philippine history, both civil and ecclesiastical, which ended in the revolutionary movement of the end of the century.²²

The Filipino clergy may be said to have taken lead in that change with the arrival of young clerics, who by their intellectual training and vision, started the movement of the secularization of the parishes.²³ Frs. Pedro Pelaez, Jose Burgos, Mariano Sevilla, and some others were graduates of the Thomasian faculties.

Manualist Moral Theology

Manualist theology at the beginning of the 20th century shaped the clergy's own disposition toward the pastoral care of Catholics on moral matters. Manualists like Thomas Slater (1855-1928), Henry Davis (1866-1952), and Heribert Jones (1885-1967) operated out of a very legalistic world in which the principles themselves were safeguarded by their very interpreters. These principles were indelibly linked to a vision of moral truth that was certain, universal, historical, and remote.²⁴

As the century unfolded, however, five developments occurred within the manualist tradition. First, the Vatican defined more and more to the extent that the moralist became the translator of the teaching and no longer a scholar offering an informed opinion. By the eve of Vatican II, the manualist became primarily dependent on the dictates of the Vatican.²⁵ The agenda of moral theology was altered by these teachings. While the Catholic teachings regarding war were few, their attentiveness to the necessity of Catholic education, to prohibition of theological books, and to matters dealing with the appearance of women, highlighted that their interests were more set on controlling life within the Church. As time went on, Catholic manualists were more and more concerned not with facing the challenges of the world but rather

²⁰ Velasco, V, 14; IV, 520.

²¹ Fidel Villarroel, O.P., "The Colegio de Santo Tomas Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary," *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. 37, no. 11 (September-December 2002): 526.

²² Villarroel, "The Colegio de Santo Tomas Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary," 526.

²³ Villarroel, "The Colegio de Santo Tomas Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary," 526.

²⁴ James F. Keenan, SJ, *A History of Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 29.

²⁵ Keenan, *A History of Moral Theology*, 29.

conforming with the rigors of the Church.²⁶ Third, with greater research into human psychology the manualist's perception of the Catholic as a wounded and uncertain penitent became more and more evident. As the century progressed, manualists considered the laity as growing in greater and greater incompetency. Though the manualist was always known as a physician of souls, now he became the psychiatric caregiver of the inculpable sinner. Fourth, he became more and more opposed to innovation. As other Church leaders tried to persuade the manualist in a more holistic direction, the more the manualist receded from moral theology into canon law. Fifth, the metaphysical principles that the manualists followed were unable to address the real critical issues of the day.

In the Faculty of Sacred Theology of the University of Santo Tomas since the 1960s even to the late 80s, Spanish moral theologians were using the books of Fr. Francis Cunningham, O.P. (*The Christian Life*. Iowa: Priory Press, 1959) and Fr. Dominic Prummer, O.P. (New York: Kennedy and Sons, 1957) as textbooks and manuals in Moral Theology.

Vatican II Moral Theology

Vatican II represents a point of departure for the renewal of the Church. This internal and external renewal includes two basic elements: first, it entails a deepening in the knowledge of faith and in conversion; and second, it implies the reading and interpretation of the “signs of the times” according to the word of faith.²⁷

Vatican II did not come out with a specific document on moral theology. There was a pre-Vatican II Commission on Moral Theology. However, the draft of the document was not approved by the Council and thereafter not replaced.²⁸ In general, specific topics of Moral Theology or Christian ethics – for instance, freedom, sin, and conscience – were treated in various Vatican documents, particularly in *Gaudium et Spes*.

The concrete text on the renewal of Moral Theology is not found in any of the major Council's constitutions but in *Optatam Totius*, the Decree on Priestly Formation. The Council stated: “Special attention needs to be given to the development of moral theology. Its scientific exposition should be more thoroughly nourished by Scriptural teaching. It should show the nobility of the Christian

²⁶ Keenan, *A History of Moral Theology*, 29.

²⁷ Fausto Gomez, O.P., *The Journey Continues: Notes On Ethics And Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2009), 20.

²⁸ Gomez, *The Journey Continues*, 20.

vocation of the faithful and their obligation to bring forth fruit in charity for the life of the world.”²⁹

Three important elements were given in the renewal of Moral Theology namely:

- a. The Biblical and Scientific Exposition of Moral Theology. The main principle of moral theology is faith and not reason. The study of Sacred Scriptures must be like the soul of theology.³⁰ The Gospel is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching.³¹ Tradition is another source of theological knowledge. The Magisterium of the Church is also important. It interprets authentically the two sources of revelation.³² That is why biblical theology is a part of moral theology together with scientific theology. It is more than kerygmatic theology but also scientific under the tutelage of St. Thomas Aquinas.³³
- b. The Primary Object of Moral Theology: “The Nobility of the Christian Vocation.” All Christians are called to holiness, that is, to perfection of charity, by different paths. What matters is one’s fidelity to his/her vocation or charism.
- c. The Consequent Object of Moral Theology: “To Bring Forth Fruit in Charity for the Life of the World.” The Christian vocation is truly a vocation to the apostolate.³⁴ The central fruit is charity: the practice of love and of all the other virtues as mediations of love.

Post-Vatican II Moral Theology

Right after Vatican II, the classical manual of Moral Theology began to be archived and publication attempts at producing new textbooks started.

Revisionist Moral Theology

Odon Lottin (1865-1965) and his historical critical method was developed from a set of assumptions very different from those manualists who his

²⁹ *Optatam Totius*, no. 16.

³⁰ *Dei Verbum*, no. 24.

³¹ *Dei Verbum*, no. 7.

³² Gomez, *The Journey Continues*, 21.

³³ *Optatam Totius*, no. 16.

³⁴ *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 2.

contemporaries in Moral Theology were. He wanted to investigate how medieval theologians like St. Thomas Aquinas developed their arguments. His was also an incentive for important historical research by Dominicans. James Weisheipl paved the way with his study on Thomas' life and works.³⁵ Leonard Boyle examined the 13th century Dominican deliberations at Angnani that led to Thomas' decision to write the "*Summa Theologiae*."³⁶ Boyle described the deeply pastoral agenda of the *Summa* written for the training of young Italians who were not assigned to become university professors but simply to be theologically-trained pastors. It insisted that Moral Theology needed to locate its practical teachings as the fruit of its systematic foundations and then within the context of Dogmatic Theology. Jean Pierre Torrell gave further insights into the *Summa's* historical background and purpose, as well as its legacy.³⁷ Simon Tugwell then analyzed the influence of Dominican spirituality on Aquinas' theology.³⁸ Finally, Brian Davies presented a comprehensive study of Thomas's work.³⁹ The *Summa* was then seen as a very Dominican theological synthesis of the 13th century.

After Lottin, two scholars presented historical investigations of portions of the Roman Catholic moral tradition. John T. Noonan studied the development of moral teachings on very specific topics like abortion. Louis Vereecke wrote about moral theologians from the 14th to the 18th century by looking at their cases, particularly interests and philosophical influences. In 1972, Giuseppe Angelini and Ambrogio Valsecchi wrote their history of Moral Theology. Later in 1985, Servais Pinckaers published his study on the sources of Moral Theology. However, it was John Mahoney who contributed an investigation into the central historical themes that formed Moral Theology. The moral theologians following the lead of Odon Lottin discovered that the proprium of Moral Theology was more humane and truthful than neo-scholastic manualists suggested. By looking backwards, moral theologians found a new way of looking ahead. Inevitably, through historical investigations of major authors and their texts, moral theologians would re-discover the Scriptures.⁴⁰

In the University of Santo Tomas, the Dominican professors especially in Moral Theology were reminded by the Master of the Order to read and study Servais Pinckaers most especially his writings on the sources of such.

³⁵ James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D' Aquino*, 2nd edition (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1983).

³⁶ Leonard Boyle, *The Setting Of The Summa Theologiae Of St. Thomas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1982).

³⁷ Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Aquinas' Summa: Background, Structure, and Reception* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

³⁸ Simon Tugwell, ed. *Albert And Thomas: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

³⁹ Brian Davies, *The Thought Of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University, 1993).

⁴⁰ Keenan, *A History of Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 52.

The New Morality

After Vatican II moral theologians continued their efforts to develop a renewed Moral Theology for a post-Vatican Church – a church deeply involved in internal renewal and dialogue with the world.

With the “New Morality” renewed situation ethics emerged among liberal Catholic moralists. Situation Ethics, partly condemned by Pius XII, resurfaced in teleologism, consequentialism, and proportionalism. Natural law ethics and deontological ethics were de-emphasized in favor of an ethics of autonomy and conscience. The discarded old manuals of Moral Theology gave way to attempts at new manuals, written in modern languages and more attuned to the situation and the signs of the times.

During this time, the professors of Moral Theology like Fr. Gabriel Pastrana, O.P., Fr. Bonifacio Solis, O.P., Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P., Fr. Magin Borajo, O.P. taught in the Ecclesiastical Faculties using the books of Bernard Haring “Faithful to Christ” (1978) and the “Law of Christ” (1980), George Lobo’s “Guide to Christian Living” (1984), Karl Peschke’s “Christian Ethics: Moral Theology After Vatican II” (1981), German Grisez’s “The Way of the Lord Jesus” (1983), Marciano Vidal’s “Moral de Actitudines” (1979), Servais Pinckaers “The Sources of Christian Ethics” (1995), among the sources.

However, even during that time, Fr. Antonio Cabezon, O.P. (Moral and Cardinal Virtues) and Fr. Frederik Fermin, O. P. (Justice and Marriage) continued to use Cunningham and Prummer as a springboard for tackling such relevant moral problems in the post-Vatican era.

For those teaching Moral Theology in the Faculty, the general characteristics of the teaching was in terms of the centrality of Christ, the globalization of ethics as well as its contextualization and inculturation, a fundamental Moral Theology in view of ecumenical, interreligious and secular dialogue, importance of Christian anthropology grounded on the human person as a fundamental criterion of morality, orthopraxis based on liberating and compassionate theological ethics, holiness, the continuing relevance of social ethics in the pursuit of justice and solidarity, environmental ethics and virtue ethics.⁴¹

⁴¹ Gomez, *The Journey Continues*, 34.

Liberation Theology

Liberation Theology is a Christian theological approach emphasizing the liberation of the oppressed. In certain contexts, it engages socio-economic analyses, with social concern for the poor and political liberation for oppressed people.⁴² In summary, it addresses other forms of inequality, such as race or caste.

Liberation Theology is best known in the Latin American context, especially within Catholicism in the 1960s after Vatican II, where it became the political praxis of theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez who in later years became a Dominican, Leonardo Boff, and Jesuits Juan Luis Segundo and Jon Sobrino, who popularized the phrase “preferential option for the poor,” an expression used first by Fr. Pedro Arrupe in 1968 and soon after the World Synod of Catholic Bishops in 1971 chose as its theme “Justice in the World.”⁴³ However, the best known form of liberation theology is that which developed within the Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1960s, arising principally as a moral reaction to the poverty and social injustice in the region.⁴⁴ The term was coined by the Peruvian Dominican Gustavo Gutierrez, who wrote one of the movement’s defining books “A Theology of Liberation.”⁴⁵

The Philippine political and economic situation in the 1970s has made Liberation Theology popular among Filipino theologians in the Philippines. In the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Pedro Salgado, O.P. wrote extensively about agrarian conflicts, social inequalities in his books espousing the same theological paradigm. He also taught the same things in his classes in the Ecclesiastical Faculties. Fr. Virgilio Ojoy, O.P. took up his studies in Leuven, Belgium; he then took up Marxism and Liberation Theology for his doctoral studies. Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P. excelled in his treatises on “Justice and Injustices” in the same faculty even up to now as a visiting professor.

The Emergence of Bioethics as a Theological Moral Discipline

Bioethics has developed in the Philippines against a backdrop of strong Catholic influence, poverty, massive migration of health care professionals, and other health related problems. Reproductive health issues, some of which are more prominent in Philippine bioethics discourse have been debated in a context characterized

⁴² Chris Cook, ed. *Dictionary Of Historical Terms*, 2nd Edition (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1998), 203.

⁴³ Lira Dault, “What is Preferential Option for the Poor”, *U.S. Catholic* 80 (January 22, 2015): 46.

⁴⁴ See Simone Cecchini and Rodrigo Martinez. “Protección social inclusiva en América Latina: una mirada integral, un enfoque de derechos,” (Santiago: Cepal, 2011).

⁴⁵ See Chapter 4 of Richard Brian, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper and Collins, 1994); cf. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology Of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1973).

by tensions between Catholic values and her detractors.⁴⁶ Public debate on other bioethical issues has been less controversial, except for organ selling or black market for organs, which has evolved in response to certain contentious development.⁴⁷

The Faculty of Sacred Theology and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery in cooperation with the UST Medical Alumni Association and the Catholic Physicians Guild of the Philippines have been in the forefront of this endeavor. Fr. Jerry Manlangit, O.P., Fr. Rodel Aligan, O.P. (presently the Dean of the Faculty of Sacred Theology and Ecclesiastical Adviser of CPGP), and Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P. have written books and articles on bioethical manuals and issues. Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P. has pioneered in the study of gerontology and geriatrics and its relation to health care. He founded a movement called “Ascending Life” which dealt with healthcare for the elderly and senior citizens. Lately, a molecular biology scientist and bioethicist Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. from Providence College, R.I. has been added to the roster. Bioethical committees have also been formed in the different hospitals in Metro Manila in cooperation with the Morals and Bioethics sections of Sacred Theology and the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery respectively. In fact, even in the CBCP Commission on Bioethics, the executive secretary of the said commission is Fr. Jannel Abogado, O.P., a professor of the Faculty of Sacred Theology. The Catholic Physicians Guild of the Philippines (CPGP) under its Ecclesiastical Adviser Fr. Rodel Aligan, O.P. has for its advocacy bioethical and moral issues confronting the medical professionals and hospital problems.

Other bioethical issues like environmental ethics, justice and injustice, and the moral virtues are being taught by Fr. Pablo Tiong, O.P. and Fr. Ferdinand Bautista, O.P. In 2013, the Center for Theology, Religious Studies, and Ethics (CTRSE) was established in response to the need of the University to have a Center that will encourage faculty members to be actively involved in ethical and theological discourses through research and other forms of scientific activity to help clarify pressing issues that have religious and moral implications in the service to the Church and the Philippines.

The Salamanca Process and Moral Theology

During the colonization of America in the 16th century, when the Dominicans in Hispaniola realized that dignity and rights of the indigenous people were both

⁴⁶ Leonardo de Castro and Sarah Jane Toledano, *Handbook of Global Bioethics* (Singapore: NUST, 2013).

⁴⁷ Leonardo de Castro and Sarah Jane Toledano, “Bioethics in the Philippines: A Retrospective,” *Asian Bioethics Review*, vol. 1, Issue 4 (December 2009): 426-444.

being respected and violated, their preaching against these practices was not easily accepted by those in power, including many Church leaders. To assist their mission, the theologians of Salamanca led by Francisco de Vitoria, began to engage in theological research that led to the formulation of principles and laws that could protect the life and culture of forgotten, exploited, and dispossessed people.

Thus, proposed by the Order, the Salamanca Process refers to a way of doing theological research that places theology at the service of law and the promotion of respect for human dignity in both its individual and social dimensions. Therefore, it proposes a regular conversation between preachers, theologians, and people of other disciplines along with those whose rights and dignity were disrespected. Moreover, it identifies God's words and actions that are needed to respond effectively to such situations of suffering and marginalization today.

Such a process was introduced to the Faculty of Sacred Theology and the Simbahayan program of the University of Santo Tomas in 2019 and has been translated into projects and programs by the same Faculty in cooperation with the other units of the University.

Moral Theology in the Time of the Pandemic

The pandemic has brought to the fore the full use of digital technology especially in education. In the University of Santo Tomas, educational instruction has continued through its online, synchronous and asynchronous classes or hybrid classes. Instruction in the Faculty of Sacred Theology followed the same especially in teaching Moral Theology.

In this context, the moral theologians of the Faculty of Sacred Theology have engaged netizens in the ethical discussions revolving around the pandemic protocols and about the use of the vaccines. Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P. and Fr. Rodel Aligan, O.P. have been very active in online discussions on the present pandemic situation. Fr. Austriaco is a consultant in the OCTA Research and IATF, while Fr. Aligan is part of the DOH Ethics Committee that drafted the protocols on how to deal with patients who died of COVID 19.

The pandemic and even the advent of the “new normal” would not prevent moral theologians from proclaiming Catholic morality in these uncertain times.

Today, the moral theologians of the Faculty of Sacred Theology continue to help tackle ethical and moral dilemmas such as the ethical problems brought about

by this pandemic to the country, the pressing problems of divorce, abortion, LGBT, and other bioethical issues and the political situation in the country. There are many other moral problems in the Asian and global context. For all these things, the need to continue to teach and conduct research as contributions to the Philippine Church remain to be the top priorities of the Faculty.

The history of the more than 400 years of the University of Santo Tomas will never be complete without the significant contributions of the Dominicans who were assigned in the University, particularly those who have taught and who are still teaching at the Faculty of Sacred Theology. This will forever be the Dominicans' continuing legacy to the Church and to the nation - from a Catholic university that is "imbued with unending grace".**PS**

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