any of the hypotheses proposed about him. Again, the statement that answers
given to the question of how Jewish and Christian materials influenced
Muhammad "fail to tell us in what form these elements came to Muhammad" is
not universally true. Finally, some of the source material cited in Chapters
Seven and Eight is open to interpretations other than those given by Cook.
But his evaluation is cumulative and builds up to a strong probability that
much now held as factual about the early history of Islam and about the
Qur'an itself may have to be revised.

Thomas J. O'Shaughnessy, S.J.

DIRECTIONS IN FUNDAMENTAL MORAL THEOLOGY. By Charles E.
280.

In this volume Charles Curran updates nine of his essays on fundamental
moral theology found in his popular Themes in Fundamental Moral Theology.
There is no attempt at a systematic treatment but rather reflections on the
most important issues involved in this area of theology. One of the most pro-
lific writers in moral theology, Curran puts at our disposal a wealth of erudi-
tion, the fruit of his extensive reading and teaching in the post-Vatican II
years which have witnessed so much ferment in moral theology.

After an overview of fundamental moral theology, a methodological
approach is presented in summary form and then examined in detail through-
out the subsequent chapters with Curran's special gift for clarity. The basic
stance of moral theology and its theoretical and practical importance, the
person as moral agent and subject, the presence of sin, the natural law
methodology of the Catholic tradition, the controversy concerning various
ethical models in conflict situations, the tension between the authoritative
teaching of the Church and the conscience of the individual, conscience and
morality, and the fundamental question of unity and diversity in the Church
today — all of these are treated competently by C.

The signs of the times are important for C. and he emphasizes the histori-
cal conscious worldview as opposed to the classicist. The classicist world-
view offered a methodology that tended to be abstract, a priori, and deduc-
tive whereas the more historical holds that the concrete, the particular, and
the individual are important for telling us something about reality itself.
C. offers the insights of John Courtney Murray on Church and State as
flowing from this more historically conscious methodology which begins with
observations of states as they function in contemporary society. This world-
view now so popular is more in harmony with the overall approach of Vat-
ican II, the "pastoral" council that was so much concerned with the signs of
the times and open to a dialogue with the modern world, by which Catholics
might learn from other religions in the pilgrim Church's ongoing search for
truth.

The basic stance for C. consists of a perspective based on the fivefold
Christian mysteries of creation, sin, incarnation, redemption and resurrec-
tion destiny. These seem obvious to a Christian but then adequacy must be
shown. The Catholic natural-law theory is based on the goodness of creation
but C. cautions that it has tended to neglect the effects of sin, whereas the
Protestants have at times tended to exaggerate the effects of sin in the world.
C. sees the two traditions today as more inclined to correct their excesses and
tending to converge. Both groups in the 1960s were proven over-optimistic
about the coming of the kingdom, "quickly, readily and without struggle or
suffering."

Liberation theology, as C. sees it, must also be careful to avoid under-
estimating the reality of sin in the world and not to expect the eschaton too
readily and too quickly. C. feels that the liberation theology writers do not
give due recognition to the complexity of the modern world and at times are
overconfident in being able to know quite easily what God is doing in the
world. The other extreme would be to despair of knowing God's will due to
sin in the world. A middle way must be found.

In the ongoing debate concerning the ethical model in view of which one
understands the Christian life, C. offers his own solution, a relationality-re-
sponsibility model rather than the teleological or deontological without ex-
cluding them altogether. His preference is based on his concern to emphasize
each person's multiple relationships with God, neighbor, world and self and
the subject's actions in this context. He sees it as corresponding best to the
biblical notion of covenant rather than law, and the scriptural call for a re-
sponse to God's gracious gifts and invitation. Likewise it seems to best reflect
the scriptural notion of sin as disrupting our relationship with God, neighbor,
world and self, thus revealing all the aspects of sin including social sin with its
influence on our political and economic structures — one of the main concerns
of moralists today. Even in the new name for the sacrament of penance,
reconciliation, C. sees an endorsement for his relationality-responsibility
model of the moral life, calling for a renewal of our relationship with God,
neighbor, world and self.

Naturally, the choice of this model will influence solutions to particular
moral problems, for example, stressing the person's whole good over the
physical finality of a faculty, as in the question of concealing the truth on
the matter of contraception. Those who would disagree with his conclu-
sions should examine well his premises which have been basically accepted
by many leading catholic theologians of the world.

Treating of the current much discussed dissatisfaction with the older notion
of negative absolutes, C. opts for the solution proposed by many catholic
moralists distinguishing between moral evil which is always forbidden and pre-moral, physical as ontic evil which may be allowed if there is a commensurate or proportionate reason. It is a reaction of contemporary moralists to the great number of conflict situations in our modern life, due, as C. insists, to the reality of sin. He proposes his own theory of compromise for those conflict situations in which sinfulness predominates, recognizing the tension between justifying such actions because of the presence of sin and the Christian obligation to try to overcome sin and its effects, admitting that "at times in this world sin and its presence cannot be overcome — a fact which the Catholic tradition has recognized in its discussion of war and private property." It must consider recognizing this reality of sin in more areas of contemporary life, for example, in the divorce situation.

For C. the understanding of consciences found in the older manuals was too legalistic, minimalistic, overly rational and too deductive. To offset the danger of the individual making an erroneous judgment, C. stresses the role of the Church as moral teacher helping to overcome the twofold generic limitation of human conscience: finitude and sinfulness. He also regrets the current loss of interest in the lives of saints which inspired so many younger Catholics in the past, supplying heroes for them, and appealing to the imagination and affectivity of the readers.

The contemporary approach in Christology, Christology from below, focuses attention on discipleship, recognizing our redemption as having concrete social dimensions. We study Christ as the man of Nazareth rather than starting from the eternal Word consubstantial with the Father as elaborated by St. John and Chalcedon. We concentrate on the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus who sided with the poor and oppressed and was put to death for the way he lived. The moral life of the Christian stresses the call-response theme, a response not based on fear but given out of gratitude for the Good News in Jesus Christ, including always the communitarian and social aspects of discipleship, with the same option for the poor manifested by Christ. Thus Christology from below is intimately linked with our moral life.

Space does not allow for more comments but this should suffice to show the breadth and scope of this volume. The thoughtful reader will be enriched and challenged by it and will be forced to face the premises from which more and more revisionist moralists draw their conclusions.

        Gerald W. Healy, S.J.