Now a personal note. Fr. Fitzmyer, a scholar of international reputation, who wrote learned studies on Semitic languages, the Aramaic background of the NT, the Gospel of Luke, has also authored and edited several books that provide practical help for an audience much wider than that of specialists. An outstanding example is the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* which has made his name widely known in theological schools in Asia and in English as well as Spanish speaking lands. Since the first appearance of this statement on Christology, he has been appointed a member of the Biblical Commission. This book, his 147th publication — excluding book reviews and translations — is the last title listed in the *Festschrift* in his honor, which appeared as the third number of the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 (1986). It also signalled his retirement from the Catholic University of America, but his lectures and prolific publications continue! *Ad multos annos!*

*Philip J. Calderone, S.J.*


Gathering together in this one volume and updating various articles that he had published in recent years, Lobo offers us pastorally interesting and often challenging insights into some of the key moral and pastoral problems of our day. Almost a quarter of a century of lecturing and writing in his native India provides the specific background for his analysis and comments.

The articles range from problems in Fundamental Moral Theology, especially concerning the formation of conscience, the questioning of moral absolutes in our complex modern life, through the sacrament of reconciliation, and the problems of justice in the area of labor and human rights. Chapters on marriage and sexuality and medical ethics, including *in vitro* fertilization, and pastoral reflections on the 1983 Code of Canon Law round out the volume.

In the dispute over the relevance of moral absolutes that has increasingly engaged moral theologians since Vatican II Lobo gives the various opinions that have been broadly labeled as absolutist (traditionalist) or consequentiast (proportionalist). Lobo, along with many other theologians, holds that the traditional approach of the absolutists was based on too rigid an adherence to the "intrinsically evil" concept together with a too mechanical application of the time-honored principle of the double effect. For L. the principles have often become divorced from reality when applied to many of today's ambiguous moral situations. Still L. sees a danger in simply rejecting moral absolutes: a weakening of respect for certain human values. A middle way has to be found.
As various episcopal conferences did when faced with the problem of artificial contraception and the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, Lobo proposes a second look at the principle of the lesser evil to guide us when the complexity of the human condition confronts us with an unavoidable conflict of values. Whereas older authors treated of the lesser evil under perplexed conscience, considering it a rare problem due mostly to some error or indicating a scrupulous bent of mind, Lobo insists that the principle should be upgraded for frequent use today when such conflicts are very real and quite numerous. Even with the best of intentions the sincere follower of Christ can not always realize all the values present in a given human situation today. Immersed as he is in a social atmosphere where good and evil commingle he can frequently only try to avoid evil as much as possible, choosing the lesser evil and regretting that it is inextricably mixed with his actions. Since no one is bound to the impossible, an agent can not be held personally responsible for not realizing all the moral values involved in each moral act. A law of growth is recognized and accepted wherein people sincerely seek the values involved more and more, knowing that there will be many ups and downs as they struggle towards the moral ideal.

The social aspect of sin is emphasized by L. in his treatment of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Our personal sins are a manifestation of the more basic “sin of the world”, in which we live our daily lives with countless people being caught up in unjust structures. L. insists that we need the sacrament to give us the inspiration and the courage to strive to break down the evil structures and to build up a society based on freedom, brotherhood and equality. Our “penance”, to be genuine, should imply a readiness to share our resources and to struggle against the oppression and injustice that have become so commonplace in our world.

L. draws two important pastoral consequences from his reflections on the Sacrament of Reconciliation: it must be understood as a spiritual activity, opening the heart to the action of the Holy Spirit; the charismatic movement that is so strong in the Church must lead to the Sacraments.

In his chapter on the Church and Neo-Colonialism L. takes a dim view of the role of the multinationals in India. Every Third World catholic interested in the great social problems of our day might well ponder L.’s comments. L. notes that no multinational can enter or operate in a Third World country without the approval of the government and the cooperation of the moneyed class. They must share the blame and responsibility for any injustice that results in the host country. L. faults the catholic church for unwittingly contributing to the alienation of the people of India by fostering the idea of the superiority of Western Culture, even negatively by her failure in inculturation in worship and other aspects of life. While recognizing the immense good the catholic church had done in India, L. believes that the links with the colonialism of the past and the neocolonialism of the present should be admitted and
broken off. The Church should identify herself only with the Risen Lord and the cries of the Poor. Papal encyclicals are quoted to prove his point but L. regrets that episcopal conferences in the rich countries have not always re-echoed these papal statements. Even bishops in the poor nations have sometimes been silent in the face of these glaring injustices, with Latin American bishops, by and large, notable exceptions. L. sees such silence as making its own unwitting contribution to the injustices of neocolonialism.

We in the Philippines can wholeheartedly endorse the censure of Switzerland’s system of secret bank accounts for those who plunder their own poor nation’s wealth. L. notes that by providing such safe haven for stolen fortunes Switzerland, with no direct colonial past, “now contributes mightily to neocolonial exploitation”.

Turning to the tragedy and scandal of an ever increasing number of broken marriages around the world, L. discusses the various pastoral solutions offered for the case of the divorced and remarried catholics without weakening respect for the marriage bond and avoiding the scandal of the faithful. Once the couple are seen to be in a second stable union wherein it could appear to be the will of God that they stay together L., along with a growing number of theologians, would favor allowing them to receive the sacraments as long as they are trying their best to live up to their christian vocation in a difficult situation from which they cannot extricate themselves. When an ecclesiastical annulment can not be obtained, L. proposes this solution as a middle position between a formal church blessing for a second marriage and an attitude of total rejection and condemnation.

These comments should more than suffice to attract the interest of those seriously concerned about the moral and pastoral problems facing catholics today around the world. These views of an experienced Third World Jesuit moral theologian are well worth pondering as we all grapple with the common moral problems of our global village, sharing the same humanity, the same doubts and anxieties, the same redemption, seeking the glory of the same Risen Lord.

Gerald W. Healy, S.J.


Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer is co-director of the James Mayer House of Studies in Managua, Nicaragua. His book is a broadside attack on the U.S. foreign policy and economic interference in Central America – and also in South America and the Philippines.

Nelson-Pallmeyer bases his approach on the Bible’s defense of the poor, especially on the Parable of the Good Samaritan, which he exegetes at length.