

Dissertation Abstract

“The Christocentricity of the Virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Saint Bonaventure: Mining the Tradition for the Renewal of Moral Theology in Light of *Veritatis Splendor*”

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A few years after the Second Vatican Council issued its call for renewal of moral theology in light of Scripture and the call to holiness, the crisis that had been building for several centuries fully erupted with the promulgation of *Humanae Vitae*. Dissenting theologians held that the Church had indicated the course for a personalist approach to contemporary moral questions at Vatican II and argued that the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* was based on the natural law interpreted biologically.

Through an erroneous use of the principle of double effect dissenting theologians developed a teleogistic moral methodology rooted in casuistry which they argued reflected the tradition. Blessed John Paul II condemned this methodology in *Veritatis Splendor* and brought moral theology back to its foundation in faith. Even so, the question is asked, “What does Jesus have to do with ethics?” Some have held that reason alone, apart from faith is the foundation for universal moral norms, but this results in the separation of freedom and truth. Moral Theology must be rooted in Scripture for the life of holiness, for “Only God can answer the question about what is good, because he is the Good itself” (VS 9).

The history of moral theology reveals the great achievement of the scholastic period in which theology, morality and spirituality were completely integrated. Moral doctrine emphasized the virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the life of grace. The renewal of moral theology in our day also requires that Scripture, theology, morality and spirituality be closely joined. For this reason moral theology today should look to the scholastic achievement and discover how much St. Bonaventure’s doctrine can be relevant along with that of Saint Thomas. Bonaventure’s vision is eminently Christocentric. His doctrine of creation avoids the dualism between nature and grace. The Christian shares fully in the virtues of Christ through a three-fold grace which heals, strengthens and perfects the soul. This grace gives rise to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Beatitudes, confirming the soul in the love of the Bridegroom, equipping it to act in accord with the love which belongs to the bride, the Church.