

SEMINAR ON MORAL THEOLOGY

The seminar covered a distinct topic in each of its sessions.

I. THE JUST WAR THEORY AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Each of the panelists, Michael Duffy (Marquette) and Michael Schuck (Loyola Chicago), made a twenty-minute presentation in which they raised questions or posed objections to the just war theory and its continued validity in Christian ethics. Prof. Schuck began by questioning the possibility of the right intention criterion, and the subsequent direct-indirect voluntary distinction, when one knows that one's actions will effect the death of innocents and noncombatants. He also proposed the need for some *post-bellum* criteria to go along with the *ad-bellum* and *in-bellum* criteria.

Prof. Duffy raised questions about most of the just war criteria, particularly in their application in the Persian Gulf War. He suggested that the principle of noncombatant immunity should possibly be extended to include the structures of society that sustain and enable innocent human life, e.g., a society's water and electric systems.

The comments of the panelists provoked a considerable discussion. A number of participants found Prof. Schuck's suggestions of *postbellum* criteria an intriguing one and sought to explore what such criteria might be as well as the practical consequences of such criteria. Other participants raised questions about Prof. Duffy's suggestion to extend noncombatant immunity to social structures in as much as they also are essential to waging war.

No overall consensus emerged in the discussion, though there was a strong view that possibly no type of modern warfare could meet just war criteria. It also appeared that present reservations about the continued validity of just war theory are being made on the grounds of the theory itself.

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II. HOW SCRIPTURE INFLUENCES THE WORK OF MORAL THEOLOGIANs

The second session of the seminar consisted of small group discussions followed by a conversation with William C. Spohn (Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley). The session was designed to evaluate how Roman Catholic moral theologians allow the power and wisdom of the Scriptures to be reflected in their teaching and writing. In particular, the charge of Vatican II to those who do moral theology that they work to more richly nourish their teaching through recourse to Scripture (*Decree on Priestly Formation*, 16) was a springboard for discussion. This discussion was carried out in three small groups. The following questions were discussed:

1. To what extent is there (or should there be) dialogue between moralists and Scripture scholars? Do you participate in such a dialogue, and, if so, under what circumstances? If, to your knowledge, moral theologians and Scripture scholars are not in dialogue, what steps would you suggest to correct this situation?

2. Does a moral theology with a strong natural law influence differ in its methodology and conclusions from a morality which is scripturally based? How? What reasons, if any, would you propose for favoring either approach? Do you agree with the suggestion of Vatican II that a moral theology nourished by Scripture is preferable to a system of ethics based solely, or largely, on natural law? If so, suggest ways to bring about a more scripturally influenced moral theology as envisioned by the Council.

3. Comment on the history of moral theology since Trent: the heavily neo-scholastic character of the discipline following Trent and both theoretical and actual attempts to effect a transition to a more truly theological moral theology following Vatican II. In recent history, what has been achieved? What remains unachieved? Why?

4. In your opinion, since Vatican II, what part have the Scriptures played in the moral teachings of the papal and episcopal magisteria? What aspects of these teachings would you be inclined to validate? What aspects would you tend to critique in a negative fashion?

5. What have you learned from non-Catholic Christians, Jews and others in regard to how the Bible should influence ethics? Suggest ways to incorporate these lessons into the Catholic approach to morality.

6. How are you accustomed to incorporating Scripture into your moral reflection? What successes/difficulties have you experienced in your teaching and/or writing? In regard to the task of informing your moral reflection with scriptural insight, what kinds of assistance would be useful to you?

7. As a moral theologian, do you consider some ethical issues more connected to scriptural insight and others less so? Give examples of issues for which it would be fairly straightforward to establish a scriptural connection, and

examples where this is less evident. Based on your discussion, what conclusions would you draw?

8. Identify the principal elements of feminist criticism of patriarchal structures, and determine what impact feminist criticism should have for moral theologians as they seek to enrich their work by calling upon the wisdom of the Scriptures.

After approximately forty-five minutes of discussion, Spohn led a wide-ranging conversation which touched on such matters as the implications of Christian discipleship and how a moral theology rooted in natural law might be revised to be reflective also of the Scriptures.

The seminar concluded with the participants thanking James P. Hanigan (Duquesne University) for his two years of service as convenor, and with the selection of Michael J. Schuck (Loyola University, Chicago) to serve as a convenor in 1993 and 1994.

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