

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONTEMPORARY MORAL THEOLOGY

This exploration of the role of the Holy Spirit in moral theology will be divided into two major movements. First, the paper will review several themes from contemporary moralists which seem to suggest that an integration of pneumatology into moral theology may be of great assistance to moral theology. Second, the paper will review current pneumatology with a view to showing a series of themes from today's pneumatology which might serve to enhance contemporary moral theology. In some cases, the themes raised from moral theology will match those raised from pneumatology. But in other cases, a theme raised from moral theology will not yet have been addressed in much detail by pneumatology, or, vice versa, pneumatology will suggest a fresh approach to moral thinking which has not yet been developed extensively in moral theology itself. The decision to frame the paper by exploring the movement from moral theology to pneumatology and then the movement from pneumatology to moral theology will create some overlap in the treatment of different issues, but my judgment is that the exploration of both of these movements will be the most fruitful way to proceed. Hopefully my approach will help show how a number of potentially rich connection points between pneumatology morality and a natural law morality can cohere with one another.

MORAL THEOLOGY'S NEED FOR PNEUMATOLOGY

Many aspects of post-Vatican II moral theology suggest that moral theology has the potential to be much enriched by pneumatology. Herein seven spirit-oriented aspects of moral theology will be reviewed: the relevance and limits of moral principles, human knowing and moral theology, the role of history and experience, the place of the Bible in moral theology, moral theology as an art, moral theology and discernment of spirits, and the importance of a virtue-based moral theology. Obviously these seven themes overlap each other in various ways, but it will help us to consider each of them.

The Relevance and Limits of Moral Principles

First, the history of moral theology shows a strong reliance on clear moral principles as the basis for moral judgments. This reliance on principles, with its roots in the natural law tradition, is still a very strong factor in moral theology today. Even those who might criticize particular aspects of the moral encyclicals of Pope John Paul II tend to be praiseworthy of the Holy Father's clear insis-

tence on the importance of moral principles.¹ As this implies, the principled approach to moral theology is here to stay.

But are moral principles enough? Is it too simple to view moral theology as based solely on a major premise—minor premise—conclusion approach? Even the history of the moral manuals raises questions about an overly easy reliance on principles alone as the key to all moral theology. The persistent discussion of cases in the manualist tradition illustrated clearly that more than principles are needed for good moral judgments. In our own century, the limits of moral principles were noted in a particularly useful way by Karl Rahner. In his famous article on a formal existential ethics,² written in 1955, Rahner, without abandoning moral principles, spends a number of pages describing the limits of moral principles. In a later work he goes on to state that no moral decision is ever a simple deduction from principles. There is always what Rahner calls "the more" (*das mehr*), always more in the decision than what is found in the principles alone.³

Many other authors have picked up on this Rahnerian theme. Those who link moral theology to discernment of spirits, those who argue for the narrative nature of moral theology, those who are searching for a more strongly virtue-based approach to morality, and those who stress the role of imagination in Christian ethics are all examples of scholars seeking to get beyond the level of principles in their approach to moral decision making. Names of theologians such as Hauerwas, Maguire, and Rossi come rather quickly to mind, along with many others.⁴ Philosophers such as MacIntyre and Ricoeur are also part of this picture.⁵ In my judgment, none of these authors are rejecting the importance of moral principles. But all, in quite diverse ways, are searching for a level of moral understanding which goes beyond moral principles. All are recognizing that the application of clear moral principles is often not that simple, that the application of principles must go beyond logic to a deeper level of visioning. Once this

¹A helpful compendium of responses to John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor* can be found in *Veritatis Splendor: American Reactions*, ed. Michael Allsopp and John O'Keefe (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1995).

²Karl Rahner, "On the Question of a Formal Existential Ethics," *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 217-34. An important recent study of the casuist tradition can be found in Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, *The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

³Karl Rahner, "On The Theological Problems Entailed in a 'Pastoral Constitution,'" *Theological Investigations* 10 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973) 295-301, 317.

⁴Cf., e.g., Stanley M. Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue* (Notre Dame IN: Fides Press, 1974); Daniel C. Maguire, *The Moral Choice* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1978) 189-217; Philip Rossi, *Together toward Hope: A Journey to Moral Theology* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983) 37-80.

⁵Cf., e.g., Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Paul Ricoeur, "The Metaphoric Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 5 (1978): 143-59.

position is taken—that moral theology calls for a level of vision which goes beyond principles—the potential for pneumatology becomes rather obvious. Can the Holy Spirit lead moral theology to a new way of visioning, a new way of seeing? It would seem that the limits of moral principles clearly invite moral theology to listen for the guiding power of the Spirit. All this will be explored further in what follows.

Diverse Ways of Human Knowing

A second aspect of current moral theology which seems to open up a ground for the action of the Spirit has to do with the developing understanding of the way in which we humans know and learn. There are several different themes related to human knowing which suggest a possible role for the Holy Spirit in moral theology. The twentieth century has seen many significant developments in the metaphysics and epistemology of human knowing. Beginning with the work of scholars such as Rousselot and Maréchal in the first decades of the century, Catholic transcendental metaphysics (in authors such as Bernard Lonergan and Karl Rahner) has stressed that human knowing is as dependent on the transcendental horizon of the knower as it is on the facts which are known.⁶ This means that who we are as knowers has a great impact on how we come to judgment, including moral judgment. The more one can know one's deepest self, know the core of one's existence, the more apt one's moral judgments are likely to be. Here again we see that moral theology involves a deeper vision of reality, a vision which may be significantly enriched by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another theme in today's understanding of human knowing which suggests a role for the spirit in moral theology has to do with the two hemispheres of our brain. Since the last century, it has been understood by science that the left side of the brain seems to control logic and structural thinking while the right side of the brain is more open to creativity and imagination.⁷ From this perspective, it seems that traditional Catholic moral theology has worked very much from the left side of our brain. Many would suggest that moral thinking would be much richer if it were to involve a greater use of the right side of the brain. This does not mean that logical thinking should be abandoned in moral theology, but it does hint at the value of new, perhaps a more spiritual way of thinking about moral issues and what they really mean. There would seem to be a clear potential for the role of the spirit in the development of this more right hemisphere-oriented approach to moral issues. In this context it should also be noted that some important scholarship has been devoted to the links between literature, the

⁶Two of the most basic sources are Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), and Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, Green, 1957).

⁷Cf. Sally P. Springer and Georg Deutsch, *Left Brain, Right Brain* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman, 1981).

arts, and morality.⁸ Such an opening of moral theology to the world of aesthetics also suggests an important potential role for the Spirit in moral theology.

Still one more aspect of current scholarship on human knowing should be noted as perhaps suggesting a stronger role for the Holy Spirit in moral theology. Do women think and learn differently from men? One needs to be careful here not to polarize the sexes and not to deny the common humanity and ability to learn which is surely shared by both sexes. But the fact remains that women and men may indeed integrate certain aspects of their learning differently from one another. The well-known book *Women's Ways of Knowing* makes this point.⁹ More directly connected to moral theology is the work of Carol Gilligan in works such as *In a Different Voice*.¹⁰ As I understand it, one of Gilligan's key points is that on moral matters, men are more likely to ask rule-oriented questions while women likely to ask relationship-oriented questions. Gilligan's relational concerns go far beyond the specific question of gender roles, and her interest in a relational approach to moral decisions can be seen in modern moralists such as Häring, McDonough, and H. Richard Niebuhr.¹¹ It may well be that pneumatology has significant potential for developing a more relationship-oriented (and perhaps more feminist) approach to moral theology.

Other facets of today's understanding of human knowing might also be cited. In sum, moral theology is very much about visioning, about knowing and moral truth, even knowing the splendor of moral truth as Pope John Paul II puts it.¹² As we look at human knowing, and shifting perspectives on this knowing, there clearly seems to be fertile ground for an enhanced role for the Spirit in moral theology.

History and Human Experience in Moral Theology

A third major aspect of contemporary moral theology which opens up possibilities for pneumatology is the growing interest in history and experience. Beginning with the decade or so preceding Vatican II there has been a shift from

⁸My own thinking on this theme has been especially shaped by Rahner. Cf. Karl Rahner, "Priest and Poet," *Theological Investigations* 3 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967) 294-317; idem, "Poetry and the Christian," *Theological Investigations* 4 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966) 357-67.

⁹Mary Field Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

¹⁰Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, rev. ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹¹Cf. Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ* 1 (New York: Seabury, 1978) 59-103; Enda McDonagh, *Doing the Truth: The Quest for Moral Theology* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963).

¹²Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (6 August 1993).

a what Bernard Lonergan described as a classicist worldview in which history had no real meaning to a historically conscious understanding of reality, an understanding in which history become a true *Locus theologicus*.¹³ Some of the key Church documents from the 1960s onward echo this same theme when they speak of the "signs of the times."¹⁴ But what in history is important? What movements or currents in history are truly the work of God, and what movements are leading us astray? Does the mere fact of the Newt Gingrich phenomenon mean that all of his issues (smaller government, fewer social programs) are true? If, as this suggests, we need a deeper hermeneutic out of which to understand and interpret history, might not the Holy Spirit be the source of such a hermeneutic?

Similar considerations rise to the surface when we think about the increased emphasis on human experience in today's moral theology. This emphasis has roots in Cardinal Newman's work on the importance of consulting the faithful, and there are notable philosophical grounds for the turn to the experiential in twentieth century philosophers such as Heidegger and Husserl.¹⁵ But again, how are we to interpret our experience morally? We must attend to the real experiences of people, something moral theology has not always done well in the past. But the mere fact that many people experience something as good or normal does not mean that we can endorse it morally. Otherwise, we could find ourselves locked into racism, sexism, and a host of other problems. As with history, it may well be that life in the Spirit can be a helpful basis for an adequate consideration of human experience as well as human nature. We do need to focus on whose experience counts and on why their experience counts. Here especially, a focus on the Holy Spirit may be of notable value.

A Biblically Based Moral Theology

Still a fourth main aspect of today's moral theology which opens up ground for pneumatology is the concern that moral theology in our times be much more biblically based than was the case early in this century. Theology students today tend to have a stronger biblical background than was the case in years past. Some of them find it quite amazing that a major moral thinker of the past such as John A. Ryan could have written a work as significant as *Distributive Justice*

¹³Bernard Lonergan, "The Transition from a Classicist Worldview to Historical Mindedness," in *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974) 1-9. One of the early CTSA papers that helped open up this type of thinking was Eugene Burke "The Use of Sacred Scripture as a *Locus Theologicus*," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 14 (1959): 54-96.

¹⁴Cf. Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in terris* (11 April 1963); Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965).

¹⁵John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961); Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 424-546.

with only a handful of scriptural quotations.¹⁶ So we have made progress from the days when proof texting was the norm in Catholic moral theology. The shift to a more biblically based moral theology can be seen especially in the work of Bernard Häring.¹⁷ Many interpreters of John Paul II's *Veritatis splendor* are impressed with the Holy Father's decision to use the story of the rich young man in the first part of the encyclical, even if these interpreters have questions about the biblical methodology employed by the encyclical.¹⁸

But still it can be asked whether Catholic moral theology has become biblical enough in its methodology. A great deal of Catholic moral thinking still is rooted to the natural law tradition. Too often, when Catholic authors do use biblically oriented approaches, these approaches seem to be poorly integrated. In a specific field such as medical ethics, a biblical outlook seems quite limited in Catholic scholarship, so that this field is largely dominated by works, sometimes very good works, of a more philosophical nature.

There is no doubt that serious biblical study by moral theologians will be the most important single route to a more biblically based moral theology. But what about the matter of just which scripture passages might serve best in shedding light on specific moral issues? The answer to this question, while grounded in a broad knowledge of the Scriptures, is to a substantial degree, a matter of vision, of having the overall sense of Scripture which comes from charismatic inspiration. So it seems that the Holy Spirit might help us in forming a moral vision of Scripture which can lead us to a more biblically based moral theology. In a larger sense, the whole of the twentieth century debate about the role of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of the Scriptures would seem to open important links between moral theology and the Spirit.

Moral Theology as an Art

A fifth main aspect of modern moral theology which may suggest a role for the Holy Spirit is the theme of moral theology as an art as well as a science. This was one of the major emphases of my earlier work *Christian Ethics and Imagination* and the same themes can be seen in other authors such as Maguire and Rossi.¹⁹ This theme is related to the foregoing comments about the limits of principles, and it also ties in with the way in which Catholicism can accept some aspects of situation ethics, even if Catholic ethics has grave reservations about other features of situation ethics. In moral theology there is always a certain

¹⁶John A. Ryan, *Distributive Justice* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

¹⁷Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, 1:8-27.

¹⁸For a thoughtful critique of the use of Scripture in *Veritatis splendor*, cf. William C. Spohn, "Morality on the Way to Discipleship: The Use of Scripture in *Veritatis Splendor*," in Allsopp and O'Keefe, eds., *Veritatis Splendor*, 83-105.

¹⁹Philip S. Keane, *Christian Ethics and Imagination* (New York: Paulist, 1984). For Maguire and Rossi, cf., n. 4 above.

degree of risk, even if the principles are clear. Is this specific judgment really a legitimate application of the principles in question? Have we understood the principles well enough, or do we need a deeper insight into the principles? The eighteenth century discussions of probabilism recognized this point. If a solidly probable opinion is indeed enough for action, the risk that the opinion might eventually prove to be incorrect is also clear. Cardinal Newman's epistemology in the *Grammar of Assent*²⁰ leads to a similar conclusion: to the extent that moral certainty and moral truth are to be based on a cumulation of probabilities, we moral decision makers are acting as artists and poets, as much, indeed even more, than we are acting as scientists.

Again, none of these comments about moral theology as an art are intended to put down moral principles or to gainsay the place for clear moral teaching by the Church's magisterium. But if it is true that many—in essence all—of our moral decisions involve that touch of the poet or artist, might not a vital presence of pneumatology in moral theology help us be the artists who we need to be as decision makers? In this context it may be helpful to consider decisions about vocations, about states of life, as in some respects, paradigmatic for all our moral decisions. These decisions, while grounded in principles about the states of life, clearly call for an artistic sense which goes beyond principles. Even in traditional theology, we have understood state-of-life decisions as calling for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Prayerful Discernment of Spirits

A sixth element in moral theology with a clear relationship to pneumatology is the growing awareness that good moral decisions need to be grounded in a life of prayerful discernment of spirits. Such discernment has roots in the ancient church and in the works of Ignatius of Loyola.²¹ But recent decades have seen an important revival of interest in discernment, not only in major Catholic authors such as Karl Rahner and Avery Dulles, but also in leading Protestant scholars such as James Gustafson.²² While the term "spirits" in the traditional phrase discernment of spirits is best not construed as an explicit reference to the Holy Spirit, the underlying theme of a moral theology prayerfully open to the work of God in the world is a theme of great richness and potential. The implica-

²⁰John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1955).

²¹Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*, a translation and commentary by George Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992).

²²Karl Rahner, "The Logic of Concrete Individual Knowledge in Ignatius Loyola," *The Dynamic Element in the Church* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964) 89-114; Avery Dulles, "Finding God's Will," *Woodstock Letters* 94 (1965): 139-52; James Gustafson, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life," in *Norm and Context in Christian Ethics* (New York: Scribner's, 1968) 18-36.

tions of this theme for a strong relationship between pneumatology and moral theology seem rather clear. If we seek, as moral decision makers to be prayerfully open to God's ways in this world, how can we not understand ourselves as moral decision makers listening for the word of the Holy Spirit as this word is spoken into the world. To paraphrase Rahner, as moral theologians we become "Hearers of the Word."

A Virtue-Based Moral Theology

Finally, we should note the rich and significant efforts of ethical scholars such as Stanley Hauerwas, Jean Porter, and Alasdair McIntyre to retrieve a theology of virtue as a crucial element in moral theology.²³ The emphasis on virtue was a central element in the work of Thomas Aquinas.²⁴ In earlier days, a major course on the virtues was a standard part of the Catholic moral theology curriculum, but such courses fell out of favor in many recent moral theology curricula. If we can recover this emphasis on virtue, many important links between the Spirit and moral theology should emerge very quickly. We shall see more on this theme of the Spirit, moral theology, and virtue in the latter part of this paper.

PNEUMATOLOGY'S POTENTIAL FOR MORAL THEOLOGY

Perhaps the preceding section might best be described as the reflections of a moral theologian, familiar with his discipline, on the ways in which moral theology would seem to reach out to and draw support from pneumatology, while at the same time presenting certain challenges to pneumatology. But what about running the question the other way. What about the state of contemporary pneumatology? What elements in today's pneumatology seem to offer important connections to moral theology? This is the question to be explored in this part of the paper.

The Trinitarian Context

While it will be important to look at pneumatology in and of itself, it seems helpful to begin this section by noting that much of the better contemporary work on pneumatology has taken place within the context of trinitarian theology. As trinitarian theologies have been developed in our century, there has emerged a very helpful framework for understanding the role of the Holy Spirit in general and for understanding the Spirit's particular role in moral theology. To explain this trinitarian context, recall that most traditional trinitarian theologies have tended to focus on the inner relationships of the members of the Trinity. Rela-

²³Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990). Cf. Also nn. 5 and 6 above.

²⁴Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I-II, qq. 49-89.

tively little was said about the Trinity in relationship to the world at large. The result was that much in trinitarian theology appeared to be mental gymnastics with rather little application to Christian life in general. I recall that when I was a theology student, one of the professors stated that traditional trinitarian theology was rather like an attic which we stored a variety of arcane theological concepts for which we had no ordinary use.

Twentieth century trinitarian theology has shifted from this perspective to a viewpoint in which the Trinity is construed as much more actively involved in the world around us. Perhaps the most important example of this shift in trinitarian theology can be found in the work of Karl Rahner. Rahner offers the famous dictum: the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity,²⁵ meaning that the Trinity is indeed active in the world and that we can best understand the inner meaning of the Trinity by being aware of the Trinity as active in today's world. Among more recent scholars, I have found the work of Catherine Mowry LaCugna to be especially helpful in following up on Rahner and setting forth a vision of the Trinity as dynamically active in the world around us.²⁶ The writing of John Milbank also helps articulate the importance of emphasizing the economic aspects of the Trinity and especially the spirit.

If we conceive of the Trinity as dynamically active in the world around us, how can we not think of the Spirit as real and active in the world, indeed as present in the moral decision making processes of Christians (and even anonymous Christians) as they live and seek to act as Christians in today's world. In sum, today's trinitarian theology gives us a framework from which we can very easily attune ourselves to the role of the Spirit as active in our efforts to live as moral persons.

Besides this basic concept of our knowing the whole of the Trinity through the Trinity's activity in the world, three additional and more specific themes from today's trinitarian theology help give significant background to our effort to understand the role of the Spirit in moral theology. First, if there is an identity of the economic and immanent Trinity, the relationality of the persons of God becomes a model or goal for all human relationships. This means that we are called to take relationships with absolute seriousness, to have an absolute respect for the dignity of each human person. If we consider that the Jewish tradition spent thousands of years struggling to articulate a radical monotheism (itself an important concept for ethics), the relational dimension of the Trinity becomes a challenge to the building of right relationships. Among recent authors who have expressed this theme, I find the work L. Gregory Jones to be particularly helpful.²⁷

²⁵Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 22.

²⁶Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991).

²⁷L. Gregory Jones, *Transformed Judgment: Toward a Trinitarian Account of the Moral Life* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) 73-98.

Jones also helps with another trinitarian theme with implications for the pneumatology/morality issue, the theme of community.²⁸ The Trinity is a community of persons being towards one another and being towards the world. This fact helps point out the enormous importance of community in the world around us and in the Christian life. Both ecclesiology and the social/political worlds are much influenced by this trinitarian notion of community. The quest to build truly just communities—both in society and in the Church—is thus a trinitarian quest and pneumatological quest. The power of the Trinity and the power of the Spirit are forces which impel us to build truly just communities. As Rowan Williams puts it,²⁹ the Spirit creates for us a puzzlement about what sort of community the Church ought to be. This puzzlement engages us in the ongoing effort to link our foundational faith experience with the character of community today.

The final theme I want to mention from trinitarian theology, is that just as the emphasis on the economic character of the Trinity drives us towards a way of understanding the Holy Spirit, so too the economic emphasis on the Trinity drives us towards an understanding of Christ which stresses Christ's humanity, his historicity, and his genuine involvement in the concrete social world. In the past there had been a strong tendency to see Christ as somewhat ahistorical or transhistorical, just as there had been a tendency to see the Spirit as largely removed from the world. Nowadays however, many Christologies are moving from below, from an emphasis on the human, historical Christ. This can be seen not only in European/North American Christologies, but also in the work of the Latin American liberation theologians.³⁰ In general, these contemporary Christologies are more established than are today's pneumatologies. Thus the emphasis in today's Christologies on Christ as God's self-communication out into the world can serve as a paradigm out of which to shape a world-oriented and clearly morally relevant pneumatology. In the end, this sort of approach helps us see pneumatology and Christology as two sides of one coin.

THE SPIRIT AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Based on the modern trinitarian and economic approach to pneumatology, several current pneumatological themes can be seen to have special importance for moral theology. Herein we shall review four such themes: epistemology, asceticism and character development, celebration, and the potential of the Spirit for feminist thinking. Turning first to epistemology, my view is that one of the most important aspects of today's pneumatology is that it sees spirit as the way in which we humans know Christ and God. This theme of the spirit and episte-

²⁸Ibid., 122-29.

²⁹Rowan Williams, *Resurrection* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982) 207-208.

³⁰Cf. e.g., Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1973) 168-78.

mology is especially well explained by Killian McDonnell who relies on great modern theologians such as Rahner and Barth and on ancient thinkers such as Basil of Caesarea.³¹ McDonnell's point is that for us as humans to know God's speaking his Son into the world, we must have within our consciousness a power enabling us to know God. This power is precisely the Holy Spirit. In language which is especially fascinating for the moral theologian, McDonnell speaks about the Holy Spirit as giving us a "proportionality" out of which we can know God in our world.³²

I think that this theme of the Spirit and epistemology offer a very rich potential to moral theology. A great deal of moral decision making has to do with knowing whether or not we are doing the right thing when we make a specific choice. Across history, there has again and again been an awareness that moral knowing is somehow not the same as and somehow transcendent to scientific or philosophical knowing. This transcendent or transrational character of moral knowing was suggested by Aristotle's description of moral knowing as practical reason, by Alphonsus Liguori's use of probabilism as a means of moral knowing, and by Karl Rahner's statement that moral decision making is ultimately an art rather than a science.³³ In all these descriptions of moral knowing, there is an effort to understand moral knowing as touching a level in our humanity which goes beyond logical categories, a level in which the human person is ultimately seeking to find God in the very core of human moral decisions. McDonnell's position that pneumatology is our way of knowing God helps show that pneumatology may be exactly the way in which we arrive at the knowledge necessary for adequate moral decisions, that is, pneumatology may be a critical element in the epistemology of moral decision making.

In contemporary moral theology, one of the most important and interesting debates has to do with the meaning of the principle of double effect.³⁴ In the mind of many of its recent interpreters, the double effect principle is to be understood in such a way that proportionate reason is the central element of the double effect. This means that making moral decisions is a matter of knowing true proportionality. On the other hand many critics of the revisionist approach to double effect fear proportionality, because of a (sometimes well grounded) fear that proportionality will be twisted into rationalization instead of being a true movement towards moral truth. For some years I have been convinced that if a religious/spiritual foundation could be given to proportionate reasons, the criti-

³¹Killian McDonnell, "A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit?" *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 219-26.

³²*Ibid.*, 222-23.

³³Karl Rahner, "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," *Theological Investigations* 2 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963) 254.

³⁴For a collection of some of the major articles on this theme, cf. *Readings in Moral Theology No. 1: Moral Norms and Catholic Tradition*, ed. Charles E. Curran and Richard A. McCormick (New York: Paulist, 1979).

cism of proportionate reason might be mitigated and the solid values of the newer approaches to double effect might be able to be more widely accepted. In this context, McDonnell's assertion that pneumatology is our proportionality for knowing God has the potential to be a crucially important link between moral theology and pneumatology, a link which can help us move beyond the impasse which marks much of today's double effect debate. Even as an author who has supported many aspects of the revised approach to double effect, I have been somewhat dissatisfied with the lack of a spiritual foundation for double effect thinking. The epistemological role of the Holy Spirit may be the answer to this dissatisfaction.

A final note on the epistemological role of the Holy Spirit has to do with the work of the Spirit in helping us understand and accept the moral teaching of the Church. This receptive aspect of the Spirit's work is cited by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Dominum et vivificantem*³⁵ and it is also noted by theologians such as Karl Barth.³⁶ It is certainly true that the Holy Spirit can inspire the entire community to develop moral instincts and insights which are not formally taught by the Church, and equally true that the Spirit can inspire both theologians and the community to reflect on the adequacy of the Church's moral formulations. But the fact remains that the Church community has a critically important role as a moral teacher and that the believing members of the Church face the challenge of understanding, appropriating, and committing themselves to the Church's moral teaching. If moral knowing is ultimately to be grounded in an epistemology of the Holy Spirit, such an epistemology is our means of coming to terms with the Church's role as moral teacher.

The Spirit and Moral Character

One very important aspect of contemporary pneumatology is that it has numerous ways of understanding the Spirit as a shaper of the kind of persons we humans want to be. Sometimes the Spirit is described as the source of self discipline or asceticism. Sometimes the Spirit is described as the source of our freedom. The Spirit is also presented as one who shows us our sinfulness. Similarly the Spirit is seen as giving us strength of character, as enabling us to live a life of virtue.³⁷

Much of this aspect of pneumatology is rooted in the Scriptures. Galatians 5 makes it clear that if we are led by the Spirit we are called to freedom and no longer under the law. First Corinthians 3 speaks of the Spirit of the Lord as the Spirit of our freedom. The contrast between spirit and flesh as described in Galatians 5-6 and Romans 8 gives us numbers of ways in which we can see the

³⁵John Paul II, *Dominum et vivificantem* (30 May 1986) nos. 42-43.

³⁶Karl Barth, *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 6-12.

³⁷Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* 2 (New York: Seabury, 1983) 124-25.

Spirit as giving us power over sin and over flesh. The well known paraclete texts in the Fourth Gospel present us with a Spirit who is coming to convict the world of sin, of justice, and of judgment. The traditional listings of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit relate very closely to the picture of the virtuous moral persons we should all be striving to become. In the context of the Spirit bringing power and self discipline, the gift of the Spirit as fortitude or strength is especially significant. Significant also is the traditional pneumatological theme of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Indwelling surely suggests the Spirit is a shaper of the kind of persons we are trying to become.

Many of these biblical images of the Spirit as a spirit of asceticism and virtue are echoed in twentieth century theologians. In this context I found the work of Karl Barth and Yves Congar to be especially helpful.³⁸ For Barth, for the power of the Spirit to be in reality the grace which conquers sin, the Spirit cannot be any kind of abstract spirit. Rather the Spirit must be the actual Holy Spirit who strives with our hostility, that is, with our sin. Only in the power of this Spirit can we move to a new life of love in true freedom. As for Congar, my judgment is that his treatment of the Holy Spirit is the most complete formal treatment to be found among modern Catholic writers. I was especially taken by Congar's detailed and careful description of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit in relation to the moral and theological virtues. He presents this description in the context of a commentary on Aquinas.³⁹ The rational and historical character of moral activity is not lost, but the gifts of the Spirit serve the natural virtues enabling them to be practiced perfectly. Following Thomas, Congar describes the fruits of the Spirit as the delightful products on God's actions within us, enabling us to love one another peacefully and joyfully, while not abandoning the need to confront evil. The mention of confrontation ties in with Congar's earlier citation of Albert Delp who sees the Spirit as giving us a wider and more audacious vision.⁴⁰ Congar also sees the power of the Spirit as critical in enabling us to exercise true freedom.⁴¹

Most of these same themes about the Spirit's shaping our moral character can be found in John Paul II's encyclical *Dominum et vivicantem*. The encyclical contains an extended reflection on the previously cited biblical text about the paraclete convicting us of sin, justice, and judgment. Much of John Paul's reflec-

³⁸Besides the work cited in the two preceding notes, cf. *The Word and the Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

³⁹Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2, 134-41.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 128-29.

⁴¹While Congar has the strongest content on the Holy Spirit of any twentieth-century Catholic theologian, in terms of a methodology for pneumatology and moral theology I found that Karl Rahner had the most to offer. In this judgment I was helped by John R. Sachs's plenary address to the CTSA given on 6 June 1996, entitled "Do Not Stifle the Spirit": Karl Rahner, the Legacy of Vatican II, and Its Urgency for Today," printed in this volume (15-38).

tion on this text has to do with the Holy Spirit's role in teaching us the moral life, that is, with the epistemological role of the Spirit discussed in the preceding section. But a close reading shows that the encyclical speaks of the Spirit as motivator, giver of courage, prompter of obedience, converter of the human heart, and corrector of the imbalances found in the human person.⁴² All these themes suggest to me that John Paul has a clear understanding of the Spirit as a builder of virtue and character. Towards the end of the encyclical, the Holy Father mentions explicitly the struggles of the human person for true integrity and makes it clear that the Holy Spirit strengthens us in this struggle. Interestingly, John Paul's reflections on this theme seem to presage his reflection on the life versus death struggle, which he described at length ten years later in *Evangelium vitae*.⁴³

Why should it be argued that this focus on the Spirit as the source of asceticism, character, and discipline is of real value for today's moral theology? More and more in current moral literature, the case is made that morality is about more than individual decision making, that morality is about the sort of persons we want to become in relation to each other and God, that is, persons of virtue and character. Thus the pneumatological themes just outlined make an important connection to one of the key goals of today's moral theology, the building of persons of character, the formation of people of virtue who can live in true freedom. Part of this insight comes from the fact that in our historically evolving world, we can never tell people the answers to all the questions they will face in the future, since we do not even know what many of those questions will be. But, through discipline and character building, we can help shape good people who will be able to make good decisions, on matters about which we may never have even dreamed.

Some caution is needed here, since for the Roman Catholic tradition, the natural formation of moral character must be retained as a crucially valuable perspective, a perspective which any role for the Spirit as character builder cannot cause us to lose. But even if we commit ourselves to the integrity of the natural moral order, the existential or concrete reality is that our nature functions as a graced nature and that the Spirit is critical as the mediator of the graced aspect of our concreteness. Hence it seems that much in our approach to moral education and moral formation can be enhanced by the use of the virtue and character building themes which can be found in today's pneumatology.

The Spirit, Liturgical Celebration, and Prayer

Another important theme of modern pneumatology is its realization that the Holy Spirit is so very much a part of liturgical celebration and prayer. For Congar, the Church's life of praise and worship is only possible in and through

⁴²*Dominum et vivificantem*, nos. 44-45.

⁴³John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (25 March 1995) no. 12.

the Spirit.⁴⁴ Congar in no way denies the importance of Christ in our prayer, but operationally we pray through the Spirit, as for instance when we say "Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8, 15). Congar goes on to cite a host of Scripture texts on the Spirit and prayerfulness, especially texts from Romans and Ephesians. In another context, Congar discusses the role of the Spirit in discernment, an issue which ties not only to the theme of prayerfulness, but also to the epistemological aspect of the spirit which we discussed earlier.

In working out his trinitarian theology of the Holy Spirit, Killian McDonnell mentions the importance of both liturgy and private prayer as part of the mission activity of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Catherine Mowry LaCugna's work is also very helpful. Working from Prosper of Aquitaine's axiom that the law of prayer is the foundation of the law of belief (*legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*), she argues that the worship and praise of God is the living context for the theological enterprise.⁴⁶ Even more specifically LaCugna argues that liturgy celebrates the self-communication of God and that it is the Spirit who enables our ecstatic response to God and to one another.⁴⁷ Celebration is not just one way among many of knowing our God. It is the way in which we, in the Spirit, form our bonds to God and to each other.

I find in these passages about liturgy and the Holy Spirit a very deep resonance to the project of moral theology today. In so many ways, moral theology is about knowing who we are and what we are called to do. Liturgical celebration is so important in this self-knowing process. In celebration, empowered by the Spirit, we discover ever more deeply who we are and who we are called to be. To say this another way, in celebration our character is formed or shaped in a way which helps us become more genuine moral agents. If today's pneumatologists are correct in their vision of the Spirit's role in liturgical celebration, they are pointing to a very central connection between moral theology and pneumatology, a connection mediated and made real in liturgical celebration.

Moral theology itself has shown its awareness of its relationship to liturgical celebration. This can be seen very prominently in the works of Bernard Häring over the years. The Society of Christian Ethics has focused on the liturgy and ethics theme, with a plenary session on the subject some years ago, and with a major symposium on the theme at the beginning of its convention this past January.⁴⁸ My view is that moral theology still has a good deal of work in front

⁴⁴Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 2, 113.

⁴⁵McDonnell, "A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit," 226.

⁴⁶LaCugna, *God for Us*, 226.

⁴⁷Ibid., 357.

⁴⁸The papers and responses on liturgy and ethics from the January 1979 convention of the Society of Christian Ethics are found in the *Journal of Religious Ethics* 7 (1979): 139-202. The January 1996 session, entitled "A Seamless/Theory Practice: Rethinking Liturgy and Ethics," was presented by panelists Michael Baxter, Sidney Callahan, Timothy Jackson, and L. Gregory Jones.

of it to come to terms with the liturgy and ethics theme. If the liturgy and ethics discussion can be extended to become a liturgy—ethics—pneumatology discussion, my judgment is that the discussion will prove all the more fruitful.

Pneumatology and Feminism

Before moving to this paper's conclusions, I want to mention briefly one more theme where modern pneumatology might offer important assistance to moral theology. For some years I have been fascinated with the work of the Russian religious philosopher Sergius Bulgakov (1870–1944), whom I discovered through the work of George Tavad.⁴⁹ In particular, I am interested in Bulgakov's construal of the Holy Spirit as linked to the feminine aspect of God's self communication (with Jesus linked to the masculine aspect of God's self communication). More recently, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Johnson have reflected on the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the feminine.⁵⁰ But in general, in the pneumatological works which I surveyed for this paper, I did not find the possible feminist aspect of pneumatology developed in any extensive fashion. It is clear that coming to terms with feminist perspectives is an important task before moral theology. If pneumatology develops the feminist theme further, there may emerge an important ground for conversation between moral theology and pneumatology.

CONCLUSION

This paper has followed a twofold direction, first surveying themes and issues in today's moral theology which would seem to call for and profit from pneumatology, and second, reviewing themes from current pneumatology which seem to reach out to and challenge moral theology. In a number of cases we have seen a rather clear convergence between the interests of moral theology and the interests of pneumatology. This seems to be especially true in the area of epistemology and the area of virtue, asceticism, and character building. In other areas there seems to be the ground for a potentially strong connection between moral theology and pneumatology, but with one of the two disciplines not yet having developed as much as the other. This may be the case in terms of the theology of celebration, a theme which, so far, may be more present in pneumatology than in moral theology.

Methodologically, the biggest issue needing careful analysis in the relationship between moral theology and pneumatology is how to maintain due respect

⁴⁹George Tavad, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 163-67.

⁵⁰Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983) 58-61; Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1993) 124-49.

for the natural law tradition while seeking to articulate a pneumatologically based moral theology. I judge it crucial to maintain the natural aspect of Catholic moral theology and thus not to develop any pneumatological ethic which tends to wipe out the natural roots of our moral wisdom and motivation. My view is that the natural aspect of morality and the role of the Spirit, can be kept in a proper relationship, perhaps by underling the fundamentally natural character of moral life, while acknowledging the concrete existential presence of the Spirit in all aspects of moral living.

My hope is that we can continue the movement in the direction of finding the linkages between moral theology and pneumatology. This paper has been little more than an initial survey of the question, but I believe the survey has shown much fruitful ground for the articulation of a more productive relationship between moral theology and pneumatology.

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