

MORAL THEOLOGY, I

Convener: William C. Mattison, III, Catholic University of America
Moderator: Dawn M. Nothwehr, Catholic Theological Union
Presenters: David A. Clairmont, University of Notre Dame
David Cloutier, Mount St. Mary's University

Clairmont's paper explored the challenges of teaching moral theology to the current generation of students whose lives are significantly affected by the complexity and speed at which moral issues unfold in an environment of selective anonymity and stylized self-presentation (typified by the online social networks of "Facebook" and "MySpace"). The paper recalled the discussions about the nature of basic freedom, prior to and following John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*, and argued that the most helpful way to introduce students to this discussion is by exploring the connection between basic freedom and structural sin. The paper illustrated the distinction between terminal and cumulative moral problems by examining two questions: "To what moral issues shall I commit myself?" and "How do I understand actions that appear morally neutral despite their highly negative cumulative effects?" These questions were considered in light of experiences teaching about the cumulative problems of racism and environmental degradation.

Cloutier's paper, entitled "Revising Revisionism: Bernard Häring, Herbert McCabe, and Postconciliar Moral Theology," proposed the work of Bernard Häring and Herbert McCabe as crucial "classic" sources for a revised revisionist moral theology that moves beyond the proportionalist debates over norms and the mere reappropriation of Aquinas and virtue. These authors were compared in four areas in which they develop a framework for the Christian moral life. Häring views the moral life as centered on interior conversion, while McCabe concentrates on the practical and communication-based bonds that develop in relationship to others. The authors make significant contributions to the development of a genuinely postconciliar sensibility for Catholic moral theology, which is especially important in addressing the problem of identity formation, so critical for the postconciliar generation.

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