History of Moral Theology Bibliography

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Traditional and/or Important Manuals of Moral Theology

N.B. For Post-Vatican II moral manuals see the Fundamental Ethics section


Arregui held the moral chair at the University of Deusto in Bilbao from 1904-1915; 1918-1919. This moral manual of his went through 14 editions by the time of his death in 1942, and a further ten posthumously, as revised by his successor at Deusto, Marcelino Zalba, S.J.


A one-volume summary of Davis’ multi-volume treatment of moral and pastoral theology. Davis begins with “treatises” on human acts, conscience, law, sin, virtue, the theological virtues, and then proceeds to treat the Ten Commandments and precepts of the Church (such as fasting, censorship of books, etc.). Following these treatises Davis then considers the various “states” of life (clerical, religious, lay), and then moves to a treatment of the individual sacraments. Davis’ treatment is highly influenced by the canon-law approach to moral theology and the administration of the sacraments which predominated in the typical moral manual prior to Vatican II.


Not really a manual of moral theology, but the book addresses psychological and moral perspectives on counseling, including chapters on masturbation, homosexuality, alcoholism, mental illness, etc. Is of interest as an example of pre-Vatican II pastoral moral counseling.


See especially pp. 3-33 for Härting's overview of the development of moral theology prior to Vatican II.


Revised edition of Healy's 1942 moral manual. This would be typical of the type of moral textbook used in Catholic undergraduate religion courses.

Healy taught at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.


Classic "pocket-size" moral manual, translated into numerous languages.


A traditional manual of the Pre-Vatican II genre.


Classic pre-Vatican II moral manual in Latin.


A classic dictionary of moral theology which is an excellent resource for definitions and short encyclopedic articles of a wide variety of moral terms, though obviously in the spirit of the pre-Vatican II manualist tradition.


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*Articles on the History of Moral Theology*


Papers delivered at a conference on the history of medical ethics held at the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine 1989. The three sections treat: 1) medical propriety prior to the formalization of medical ethics in the lectures of John Gregory and the Code
of Thomas Percival; 2) the philosophical framework which formed the background of Gregory and Percival's studies at Leiden and Edinburgh; 3) the lives and writings of Gregory and Percival.


Critiques, in light of contemporary theological reflection, the received notion of the concept of the ordinary magisterium from the work of 19th century Jesuit theologian, Joseph Kleutgen through *Tuas Libenter*.


Discusses the changes from the pre-conciliar schema "De Ordine Morali" to the final version of *Gaudium et spes*, and thus evidences an important paradigm shift in the consideration of fundamental moral theology.

Callahan was ordained in 1969 for the Detroit Archdiocese.


1990 Presidential Address of the American Academy of Religion.

Clark is Professor of Religion at Duke University.


Ernst, Wilhelm. "The 'Classical' and 'Modern' Foundation of Ethics in the Middle Ages."


English digest under the title “50 years of moral theology.” *Theology Digest* 45 (Spring 1998): 7-11.

Fuchs is on the Protestant faculty at the University of Geneva.


Looks at recent moral syntheses in terms of four basic and dominant methodologies for formulating moral theology, based on: 1) a consciously constructed system of adequately formulated material norms as the first and principle step; 2) an explicitly articulated system of a coherent Christian ethos; 3) giving coherence and continuity to moral analysis through a systematic reflection on morally relevant experiences; 4) searching for the historical continuity with past forms and placing a statement of contemporary moral theology in the context of present historical and cultural realities.


Summarizes and discusses the themes of the theology of papal primacy developed by Charles Journet (1891-1975) and notes some recent ecumenical proposals.

One of several articles dealing with the theme of teaching new moral duties.


One of eleven essays covering aspects of the Christian tradition, contemporary pastoral practice, and the liturgies of penance.


Gives a good basic overview of the history of moral theology in the light of Häring's organizing themes of creative freedom and fidelity.


Hoose did his doctorate in moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.


Analyzes the "paradigm-shift" in Roman Catholic moral theology from a physicalist understanding of human nature and moral reasoning to a personalist version and then discusses the origins of physicalism, its problematic features, and solutions proposed by personalism. Finally, Johnstone identifies and evaluates 3 basic personalist models.

Johnstone, an Australian, is professor of moral theology at the Alphonsianum in Rome.

See Kelly’s “The Changing Face of Moral Theology at the Dawn of the New Millennium” in the same issue, pp. 5-13.


Brief historical overview of the tradition of this issue.

Keenan did his doctorate in moral theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and taught at Fordham University in New York, taught at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts and is now the Founders Professor of Theology at Boston College.


Part of the annual “Notes on Moral Theology Section.”


Gives an overview of the principal debates in moral theology in the 1970s, as well as some of the new trends in the discipline which developed in the 1980s.


Langan begins with an overview of the uneasy relationship between Catholicism and modern philosophy back in 1940, then outlines the major features which had traditionally given Catholic moral theology a sense of confidence in its own rationality and objectivity, and finally concludes with a consideration of various aspects of post-Vatican II theology which have strained the position of Catholic rationalism.

Langan is Rose F. Kennedy Professor of Christian Ethics at Georgetown University's Kennedy Institute of Ethics.


Presents a thematic overview of the last fifty years of moral theology, especially as its development was reflected in various articles published in Theological Studies.


Considers the history of moral theology of the last 50 years from the perspective of concerns and impressions given by students at the Institut Catholique de Paris look on these changes.

The author is a professor at the Institut Catholique de Paris.


Treats the contribution of Jesuits to moral theology from the founding of the order until the Suppression in 1773.


Looks at how moral doctrine has changed over the centuries in some concrete instances, such as marriage, taking of interest, slavery, and so on. Noonan notes that sometimes what had been permitted in the past was later proscribed, at other times what was proscribed was later permitted. Similarly, certain other practices which had been encouraged were later discouraged and vice versa.

Noonan is a legal historian, professor of law at the University of California-Berkeley (Boalt Hall), and United States federal appellate court judge.

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Brief article which considers how the Church has developed its moral doctrine in five key areas: adultery, the death penalty, religious liberty, slavery, and usury.


Using the publication of the "Moral Catechism" as a thematic issue in *Chicago Studies* in 1974 as a reference point, Rigali argues that the reform of moral theology in the past thirty years is but a prelude to a still more profound reformulation. Gives an overview of the contemporary discussion on moral themes such as Sin and Reconciliation, Moral Norms, Models of Morality, and the Specificity of Christian Ethics.


Schmitz did his dissertation under Josef Fuchs, and taught moral theology at Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt before moving to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.


Also found in *Historia: Memoria Futuri. Mélanges Louis Vereecke (70° anniversaire de naissance)*, 351-402. Edited by Réal Tremblay, C.Ss.R. and Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R.
By analyzing the teachings of Popes Leo XIII to Paul VI Humanæ Vitæ's claim of the existence of a clearly definable body of teaching with respect to marriage which has been "constantly" taught by the Magisterium is evaluated. Selling concludes that a new norm, "openness to procreation" emerged which went "considerably beyond what Pius XII had explicitly taught." Humanæ vitæ itself "can be better characterized either as a radical development in the line of teaching of Leo XIII, Pius XI and Pius XII, or a departure from the developing teaching of [these same popes] and the Second Vatican Council."

At this publication Selling taught moral theology on the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Louvain.


Using the evolving Church teaching on the moral licitness of regulating fertility by married couples Selling outlines several differing modes of moral reasoning and analysis employed in the various teachings, and raises significant problems associated with an insufficiently nuanced understanding of terms such as “intrinsically evil/immoral.” He illustrates his discussion by using examples from Augustine to John Paul II, and focuses especially on the development of moral reasoning from Pius XI’s 1931 Casti Connubii to Pius XII’s 1951 Address to the Italian Midwives, to Vatican II’s 1965 Gaudium et spes and then on to Paul VI’s 1968 Humanæ vitæ before concluding with John Paul II’s employment of terms such as “culture of life” and “culture of death” in his 1995 Evangelium vitae and elsewhere.


Critique of the first draft of the Universal Catechism's overall approach to moral theology.

Spohn did his doctorate under James Gustafson at the University of Chicago and taught for many years at the Jesuit School of Theology-at-Berkeley before taking a chair at Santa Clara University.


Vélez is professor of moral theology at the Universidad de Deusto in Bilbao.

Overview of principal post-conciliar Western European moral theologians.


1929 article reviewing the previous sixty years of developments in moral theology.

Vermeersch taught for many years at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and was instrumental in the drafting of Pius XI’s 1930 Encyclical *Casti Connubii* condemning artificial contraception.


Zalba taught moral theology for many years in his native Spain, and at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He was involved in the Pontifical Birth Control Commission, and allied strongly with the conservative minority.


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*Books on the History of Moral Theology*


History of Christian ethics from the Protestant perspective.

Boyle, John P. *Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995


Presents an historical overview of the traditional teaching, followed by a consideration of contemporary objections to the teaching as well as a critical evaluation of both traditional and contemporary teachings on the parvity of matter in sexual sins.


Looks at 5 strands: 1) Sin and the Moral Manuals; 2) The Thomistic Tradition; 3) Natural Law Theory; 4) The Papal Teaching Office; and 5) Vatican II. Particularly well-done is the chapter on the papal magisterium which deals with the arguments and claims revolving around papal Catholic Social Teaching from Leo XIII onwards, and special focus on Paul VI’s 1968 *Humanae vitae* and John Paul II’s 1993 *Veritatis Splendor*.


Forell is Carver Distinguished Professor of Religion at the University of Iowa.


Treats particularly the history of moral theology as it moved from the neo-Scholasticism and neo-Thomism of the manualist tradition through Conciliar and post-Conciliar developments.


Extended interview with Häring covering the theologian's whole life, with particular emphasis in the form of documentation given to his difficulties with the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Licheri offers a long introduction in the beginning, filling in the context of the Italian church of the transition from Paul VI to John Paul II.


Translated from the German. This text is not identical with the Italian original, which contains more material.


See especially pp. 3-33 for Häring's overview of the development of moral theology prior to Vatican II.

Revised doctoral dissertation done at the Pontifical Gregorian University under Josef Fuchs, S.J., tracing the development and theological issues contained in the moral theory of proportionalism, from the initial publication of Peter Knauer, S.J.'s 1965 article on a revised approach to the Principle of the Double Effect through subsequent writings and debate primarily in Germany and North America.


Initially published in the U.S.A. in 1985 under the title *The Politics of Sex and Religion*.

Journalistic style account of the origin and history of the work of the Pontifical Commission on Birth, first established by John XXIII and then augmented by Paul VI. Includes the so-called "majority report" which was presented to Paul VI, and discusses some of the reasons for the rejection of this report, and the drafting of the encyclical *Humane vitae* which took an opposite tack.


Discusses probabilism, infallibility and many of the issues connected with the proclamation of the birth control teaching of the Church.


Good theological discussion of the major developments in the renewal of Roman Catholic moral theology from the end of the 19th century up to the present. Treats especially well the contemporary debate between the "Moral Autonomy School" (e.g. Alfons Auer, Josef Fuchs, Bruno Schüller, etc.) and the "Faith Ethic School ([Glaubensethik], e.g. Joseph Ratzinger, Heinz Schürmann, etc.).


Treats the development of moral theology from a thematic perspective.


A series of essays, many previously published elsewhere, treating a wide range of many of the critical issues in moral theology, such as pluralism, dissent, sexual ethics, bioethics, etc., since the close of the Second Vatican Council.


Collection of McCormick's "Notes on Moral Theology" published annually in the March issue of *Theological Studies*.


Continuation of the collection of McCormick's "Notes on Moral Theology" published annually in the March issue of *Theological Studies*.


Revised doctoral dissertation reviewed by Valerie L. Garver in Journal of Theological Studies flx218, https://doi.org/10.1093/jts/flx218 Published January 17, 2018. From Garver’s Review: Mistry’s central thesis is that “one cannot examine abortion in the early Middle Ages with modern assumptions or preconceptions and that scholars have failed to account for many early medieval texts that touch upon this subject. The book’s success lies in his careful and painstaking discussion of a wide range of early medieval sources and in demonstrating the variety of thought they convey.”


From the publisher’s blurb: “Using concrete examples, John T. Noonan, Jr., demonstrates that the moral teaching of the Catholic Church has changed and continues to change without abandoning its foundational commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Specifically, Noonan looks at the profound changes that have occurred over the centuries in Catholic moral teaching on freedom of conscience, lending for a profit, and slavery. He also offers a close examination of the change now in progress concerning divorce. In these changes, Noonan perceives the Catholic Church to be a vigorous, living organism, answering new questions with new answers, and enlarging the capacity of believers to learn through experience and empathy what love demands. He contends that the impetus to change comes from a variety of sources, including prayer, meditation on Scripture, new theological insights and analyses, the evolution of human institutions, and the examples and instruction given by persons of good will. Noonan also states that the Church cannot change its commitment to preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Given this absolute, how can the moral teaching of the Church change? Noonan finds this question unanswerable when asked in the abstract. But in the context of the specific facts and events he discusses in this book, an answer becomes clear. As our capacity to grasp the Gospel grows, so too, our understanding and compassion, which give life to the Gospel commandments of love, grow.”


Noonan is a legal historian, professor of law at the University of California-Berkeley (Boalt Hall), and United States federal appellate court judge.


Payer is Professor of Philosophy at Mount Saint Vincent University.


Volume 1, published in 1979, is on Biblical Ethics. The Second Volume is a history of
Christian ethics, in the Protestant perspective, from the time of Christ up to the present.


Selections from the first five centuries of Christendom.


Woods, who taught moral theology for nearly two decades in the Boston Archdiocesan St. John’s Seminary, has sought to write a text on the history and formative influences on Catholic morality from the period of the Hebrew Scriptures to Post-Vatican II. Too much, frankly, is undertaken and the overall result lacks a clear sense of organizing and/or interconnecting themes which might have better guided the reader through the centuries covered. The author is at his best in his concise thumbnail sketches of figures like William of Ockham and Duns Scotus, but other major figures and themes are missing altogether while still others make only the briefest of appearances. However, the author does include a wealth of material in his copious footnotes which would be of value to those who would wish to pursue a given topic further, though many of the works cited are somewhat dated and very few references are given to either feminist and/or contemporary non-Anglo-European authors.

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