

BOOK REVIEWS

James F. Keenan, ed., *Catholic Theological Ethics: Past, Present, and Future. The Trento Conference*, Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2011. Pages: xiv+337. ISBN 978-81-88821-86-0. (Originally published by Orbis Books)

This book is an exciting collection of research articles presented by a wide range of scholars, including new scholars, during the plenary sessions of the Second Cross Cultural Conference on Catholic Theological Ethics, "In the Currents of History: From Trent to the Future," in Trent, Italy, from July 24 to July 27, 2010. This international conference was an outstanding and remarkable event in the World Church by the participation of over six hundred theological ethicists from seventy two countries. This was the greatest exciting experience in my life both as a student and as a teacher. The Trent Conference was envisaged to share fundamental insights and claims, to reflectively and respectfully consider the needs of today within the context of a world church and its evolving and constantly emerging traditions (p. 1), and to find ways of retrieving a model of theology that is more anxious about whether we are understanding the challenges facing us in the first place (p. 2).

The book is divided mainly into four parts, Part I: Ethics and Interreligious Dialogue in a Globalized World; Part II: Theological Ethics and the Past; Part III: Theological Ethics and the Present; Part IV: Theological Ethics and the Future, with a brief and clear Introduction to each part. In the General Introduction, "The Trento Conference," James F. Keenan explains the uniqueness and importance of the place Trento for this Conference, the four long years of preparation, the selection of different participants including women scholars, new scholars, and senior theological ethicists, forming a local committee in Trento and establishing the fund, the

proceedings of the Conference with a profound hope and commitment for the future.

The Part I discusses what the sixteenth-century Trento did not and could not do on ethics and interreligious dialogue. It includes a catholic perspective, a protestant perspective and a Muslim perspective on interreligious dialogue. All the three speakers are major figures in the world. Archbishop Bruno Forte affirmed that there is no ethics without transcendence (p. 15). Again, "there is no ethics without gratuitousness and responsibility; there is no ethics without solidarity and justice" (p. 15). Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an African woman theologian, finds in interreligious dialogue the hope of greater justice, stability and equity. She concludes that in the project of ethics and interreligious dialogue in the globalized world, we must not forget to listen to the voices of women and children and to indigenous spiritualities that are life affirming (p. 26). The third speaker, Dr. Ahmad Syafi Ma'arif who won the prestigious Ramon Magasasy Award for his work in advancing peace, dialogue and tolerance in 2008, establishes that religion has a very important and unique role to play today in such a way that no other values can replace it (35). He concludes by inviting all human beings to compete with one another in goodness, in fostering peaceful coexistence among nations and religions, not in war and enmity (p. 34).

In Part II, there was a full plenary session which deals exclusively with the Council of Trent, and a pair of parallel plenary sessions which deal with the importance of history in shaping theological ethics and the importance of hearing the voices of those whose histories were not considered. In the first presentation, Paolo Prodi offers fourteen theses on the legacy of the Council of Trent. In these theses one can find theological ethicists attempting to distinguish crime from sin, positive law from magisterial authority, canon law from moral law, by upholding the primacy of conscience (p. 38, 40-43). In "The Council of Trent in the African Experience," Laurenti Magesa argued that The Council of Trent made the African Church primarily a Tridentine Church, and, for various reasons, the Vatican Council II has not been able to make significant changes, suspicious of everything African (p. 57). The paper, "Living with Losses: The Crisis in the 'Christian West,'" by Regina Ammicht-Quinn affirms that the Council of Trent was a reaction to the uncertainties of the Reformation and, to a great extent, an identity crisis of the Church

and theology (p. 60). According to her, in light of the crisis of sexual abuse a similar sense of shame has again shaken the Church (p. 67). She suggests that capturing history helps to give us new footing (p. 68).

Alberto Bondolfi presents "Critically Differentiating the Past: History and Ethics" in which he affirms that history is concerned with facts (p.71), praxis (p. 72), doctrines (p. 73) and mentalities (p. 74). He also demands the need to correct the relevant historiography, opening it to new themes and to more critical research (p. 77). In "Moral Theology and History: A Peculiar Relationship," Diego Alonso-Lasheras urges the theological ethicist to make the historical investigation of moral theology as a theological act. According to him, every generation is charged with renewing the Church by getting in touch with the sources and developing them in order to hand them to the next generation as something alive (p. 84). Roger Burggraeve through his presentation, "Historical Building Blocks for a Consistent Relational and Sexual Ethics," argues that Christian ethics should also be pastoral in facing the challenges not only to develop orientations and rules for those who experience marriage according to the 'Catholic book' but likewise for those who enter into a different form of intimate and enduring relationship (p. 94).

In his presentation, "Trent: The Historical Contribution and the Voices That Went Unheard," Antonio Moser critically evaluates the Council of Trent and its achievements and failures. He respects the courage shown in the council to tackle the highly complex situation (104). However, the council could not welcome and discern the 'signs of the times' (p. 105). According to him, many voices, including charismatic voices, were unheard or silenced (p. 105). Anne Nasimiyyu-Wasike, through her presentation, "The Missing Voices of Women," reminds us that "The unnamed and unremembered individuals are referred to as missing voices. Every cultural setting has its missing voices, depending on the social structure that governs the life of the people. Perhaps the largest numbers of missing voices throughout history have been the voices of women" (p. 107). The presentation, "The Systematic Erasure of the Black/Dark-Skinned Body in Catholic Ethics," by Bryan Massingale urges us to acknowledge the systematic erasure of the black embodied voice. He argues that "the 'missing' voices of our darker sisters and brothers are significant not only for the personal integrity of Catholic moral

theologians but also for the integrity and adequacy of Catholic ethical reflection" (p. 120).

On the third day, there was a full plenary on moral reasoning and a pair of parallel plenaries on political ethics and health issues. In his presentation, "In What Sense Is Moral Theology Rational," Eric Gaziaux offers a synthesis of moral reasoning in the light of the debate from the time of Second Vatican Council up to the present between autonomous ethics in the context of an ethics of faith (p. 128). He argues that "the intersection between theology and ethics... allows us to envisage human and Christian freedom as a liberty which is in accord with hope" (p. 135). Margaret A. Farley's paper, "A Framework for Moral Discernment," illumines the meaning of moral discernment by exploring three important human experiences, namely, moral obligation, free choice and love. She asserts the importance of communal as well as individual moral discernment (p. 138). She argues that "all members of the church have a task of moral discernment in their own life situations and in the larger context of a believing and acting church" (p. 138). In "Reasoning and Methodology in African Ethics," Benezet Bujo argues that at the basis of African ethics, there is a fundamental understanding of African anthropology which is relational in three-dimensional community of the living, the dead and the not-yet born where the person is constituted (p. 147). In the evolving of moral norms and moral life, the spoken word and the cosmologically conscious communal discourse have a unique role (p. 152).

Brian V. Johnstone, in his presentation, "The Presumption against War and Violence," attempts to make a more relevant understanding of just war in the contemporary world. According to him, just war thinkers and pacifists "are both committed to a fundamental intention, in charity, to seek the universal family of humankind, but that they differ as to the kind of historical process that could embody that intention" (p. 164). "Urban Life, Urban Ethics," by Miguel Sanchez Carlos, invites important and immediate attention of Catholic ethicists and contemporary magisterium on the urban life in the cities. According to him, "city is an ambiguous phenomenon: it is the laboratory of a vibrant culture, but it excludes all those who do not share in that vibrancy." (p. 167). He asserts that the fundamental and achievable task of Christian ethics in the urban context is not the

moral redemption of the city but rather collaboration in building and rebuilding more humane and thus more Christian cities (p.174).

In "Catholic Social Teaching at a Cross Road," David Kaulemu highlights the importance of the role of the laity in the promotion and consistent application of Catholic social teaching (p. 178). He argues that the Catholic social teaching should deal with the various ambivalences and ambiguities created by the development of social teaching at three different levels: first level, by teaching general values and principles; second level, by involving itself in social policy debates; third level, by witnessing in Christian values (p. 181).

Leo Pessini, in his presentation, "Justice and Equity in the Health-Care World: An Ethical Cry from Latin America and the Caribbean," urges the need to change the concept of health from 'charity' to 'right' (p. 195). He argues that "in addition to taking care of the sick we must also work to change unequal social structures and policies as well as to preserve the Christian identity of the church institutions and Christian values in the formation of future health-care professionals" (p. 195). In her presentation, "Health Issues: A Gender Perspective," Pushpa Joseph presents important challenges and contradictions found in the health scenario in India (p. 198). She argues that "women from infants to senior citizens get an unfair deal in matters of health" (p. 200). Margaret A. Ogola's "Looking Back and Looking Forward at HIV/AIDS in Africa: Serodiscordant Couples, Re-infection, the Role of Women, and the Condom" discusses the issue of discordancy, re-infection and the challenges of care and prevention of HIV today (p. 201). She argues for the ethical legitimacy of the use of condoms as part of preventing a spouse from becoming infected by the partner (p. 205).

The fourth and final day of the Conference began with two parallel plenaries, followed by the discourse of Reinhard Cardinal Marx and a plenary on the future of Catholic theological ethics. In "A Vision of Marriage for Twenty-First-Century Christians: Intimacy, Reciprocity and Identity," Julie Hanlon Rubio offers, in the place of the traditional understanding of marriage as procreative, permanent, exclusive and complementary, a new understanding for the twenty-first-century with three other key concepts: intimacy, reciprocity and identity to face the new challenges in marriages (p. 210,219

Christa Schnabl's "Vulnerability, Reciprocity, and Familial-Care Relations: A Socioethical Contribution" focuses on family relations

from the perspective of care in a just way, especially nurturing children and caring the elderly (p. 225). She argues that the division of the responsibility of care should be guided by an ethics of care with an ethics of justice (p. 231, 232). Aloysius Cartagenas offers a profound paper, "The Abuse of Power in the Church: Its Impact on Identity, Reciprocity, and Familial Relations," in which he finds the effects of the clergy sexual abuse crisis on the church's ability to promote credibly honest and enduring relationships (p. 235). He argues, "If the grounding mystery of the Church's unity is the reciprocity of the Triune God, it has to embrace democratic ethos and structures into its own life, absolve the disparity between the power of order and the power of governance, and listen to the voice of the victims of power abuse as it builds a church of reciprocal relationships" (p. 243).

The other parallel plenary discussed the topic, *Pressing Global Social Challenges*. In the first paper, "Economics as if People Mattered," Peter J. Henriot takes enduring insights from three social encyclicals, *Populorum Progressio*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, *Caritas in Veritate*, to develop an approach that guides economics to promote human dignity for each and for all (p. 254). Simone Morandini, in his paper, "Sustainability: An Ethical-Theological Perspective," develops theological foundations for an environmental ethics (p. 267). He demands that "sustainability requires a subject who is vulnerable and well aware of the relationality on which his or her life is based" (p. 260). Finally, to promote sustainability, he presents some important ecological virtues like gratitude, sobriety expressed in eco-sufficiency and eco-efficiency, universal siblinghood and caring (p. 263, 264).

Muroslav Marynovych, through his paper, "Citizenship," raises the issue of migration and citizenship around the world from his personal experience of the Ukrainian context (p. 267, 270). He argues that "the fate of Ukrainian emigration cannot be resolved solely within the framework of Ukraine alone. The fate of this project... is implemented on a global field and depends significantly on international factors" (p. 272). Richard Cardinal Marx, in his discourse, "An Archbishop's Perspective on the Future of Theological Ethics," challenges the ethicists to find critical and creative ways to offer anew a natural law, and to make deeper understanding of autonomy and freedom in order to appreciate the needs of the local in a globalized way. He concludes by presenting three examples of challenges for the future: globalization

and common good of the whole world, personal dignity of the human being, and democracy and freedom (p. 280).

In "Gender and Moral Theology: A Shared Project," Julie Clague presents the encounter between theological ethics and gender. She succeeds in showing us that, even though the area gender seems new, it has always been in the human history (p. 282). According to her, moral theology has benefited in immeasurable ways from being a more gender-inclusive subject area. (p. 283). She asks: "A test for all social groups therefore is how far they can accommodate those who transgress sexual norms, reject sexually differentiated roles, and challenge sexual symbolism" (p. 285).

Shaji George Kochuthara, in his paper, "Context and the Future of Theological Ethics: The Task of Building Bridges," expresses a great hope for the future of theological ethics. At the same time, he cautions us that "while the future of theological ethics is bright, this also implies tremendous responsibilities, considering the developments within the church and in the society as a whole" (p. 297). According to him, in the face of profound challenges, the main task of theological ethics in the future is the task of building bridges through openness, dialogue with different branches of ethics and cultures, compassion and hope (p. 304).

Maria Teresa Davila, through her presentation, "Racialization and Racism in Theological Ethics," affirms that theological ethics must find a way to acknowledge the historical 'sin of the world,' which is the individual and corporate consequence of the evil we do to one another in the course of human history, in order to highlight the human damage in which we continue to participate. She argues that "the human family is in desperate need for a theological ethic that takes into account the scars of history, an ethic of humanization that is grounded in honesty" (p. 313).

I am delighted to acknowledge that this book is one of the greatest works ever published in the field of Catholic theological ethics. James Keenan, the chief organizer of this World Conference at Trento and the editor of this book deserves special appreciation and hearty congratulations for creating such a master piece. I wish this outstanding book good readership and wide publicity.

Lucose Chamakala (jiji.chamakala@gmail.com)
DVK, Bangalore