

## EIGHT

# The Imperative Connection between Scripture and Ethics in a Catholic Context

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As this volume makes abundantly clear in both its title and its content, Lúcas Chan's work as a theologian was shaped by the project of building bridges. In his essay for this volume, James Keenan highlights the impact of Chan's bridge-building project on theological ethics in an Asian context. Here I want to return to the significant bridges Chan built in the field of biblical ethics, where he was able to make distinctive contributions as a result of his unique training in both biblical exegesis and theological ethics.<sup>1</sup> In the spirit of honoring and also advancing Chan's legacy, I would like to reexamine one of the central claims of his research into the bridge between Scripture and ethics. To a certain extent, this claim is implicit in all his work, but it was most explicit in his dissertation, which bears the evocative title, *Why Scripture Scholars and Theological Ethicists Need One Another*.<sup>2</sup> Tellingly, "Exegeting and Interpreting the Beatitudes as a Scripted Script for Ethical Living" was added only as a subtitle. As that project transformed into Chan's second book,<sup>3</sup> the stated emphasis flipped, with Chan using the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes to develop and defend the subtitle—that is, to support his particular process of exegesis and application. Nevertheless, one can still see the echoes of his dissertation's original title resting just below the surface, and the justification of that initial claim is a unifying feature of Chan's research as a whole.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, it should also be a hallmark of his lasting legacy.

To that end, this chapter will reassert and strengthen the claim that started Chan's academic career by insisting that there is an imperative

connection between Scripture and ethics in a Catholic context. The implication is that Chan's arguments about the interconnection of Scripture and ethics can go even further, for the mutual dependence of these two fields is not merely required of someone like Chan, whose work explicitly explores biblical ethics and presumes a "double competency," but is also incumbent on the Catholic biblical scholar and the Catholic theological ethicists when they work *within their own* competencies and not just on interdisciplinary projects.<sup>5</sup> If one is to recognize this fact, then Chan's overall legacy has lasting consequences not only for biblical ethics in the twenty-first century, but for Catholic theological ethics as well, which is a fitting testimony to all that he accomplished in his unexpectedly brief academic career.

In this chapter, the case for the imperative connection between Scripture and ethics proceeds in three steps. First, the chapter will describe the theology of revelation that emerges from the Second Vatican Council in order to identify its logical implications for Catholic biblical interpretation. Second, the chapter will use the concept of theological anthropology to establish an imperative reliance on biblical scholarship in Catholic theological ethics. Third, flipping the reliance, the chapter will defend the application of John Rawls's idea of "reflective equilibrium"<sup>6</sup> to Catholic biblical interpretation in order to create a similarly imperative incorporation of theological ethics into Catholic biblical scholarship. This process will go beyond the mere statement of a connection between Scripture and ethics, which one already finds in the Second Vatican Council's exhortations to recognize that "the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology"<sup>7</sup> and to create a moral theology "nourished more on the teaching of the Bible."<sup>8</sup> Instead, it will provide a systematic rationale for what the Council seemed to presume, and it will insist, as Chan always did, that the relationship between biblical scholars and theological ethicists cuts both ways.

## A CATHOLIC THEOLOGY OF REVELATION AND THE TASK OF INTERPRETING SCRIPTURE

To begin with the question of revelation and its interpretation, the Catholic theology of revelation is articulated most clearly, and most authoritatively, in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*.<sup>9</sup> The crux of *Dei Verbum's* theology of revelation is that revelation is fundamentally God's *self*-revelation to humanity. "Through divine revelation," the Constitution proclaims, "God chose to show forth and communicate *Himself* and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of [humanity]."<sup>10</sup> A number of commentators have acknowledged that this definition represents a profound shift in Catholic thinking because it moves from a "propositional model" of reve-

lation to a much more “personal” one.<sup>11</sup> The suggestion is that the purpose of revelation is not to come to some new set of propositions *about* God, but to know God, personally, in relationship.<sup>12</sup> The paradigmatic text is §2, the first paragraph in the constitution’s chapter on “Revelation Itself,” which states, “In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will. . . . Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col 1:15, 1 Tim 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to [human beings] as friends . . . so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself.”<sup>13</sup> The “so that” (Latin: “ut”) is important here because it indicates purposefulness. Specifically, this construction indicates that the very purpose of revelation is “having [an] intimate relationship with God.”<sup>14</sup> The result of this personal relationship is twofold: knowledge of the nature of God and, with it, deeper knowledge of God’s plan for salvation.<sup>15</sup>

This reconceptualization of revelation obviously has implications for the Catholic understanding of Scripture, which is the written account of divine revelation.<sup>16</sup> In *Dei Verbum*, the Catholic Church insists that Scripture is inspired by God and yet written by humans. Thus, the constitution proposes that a careful process of interpretation is required “in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us.”<sup>17</sup> Taking the constitution at its word that what God wants to communicate to us in divine revelation is God’s very self, this means that the task of biblical interpretation in a Catholic context is to identify more clearly God’s very self in the sacred texts. Or, to put it another way, the task of biblical interpretation is to facilitate and illuminate a personal knowing of God.

Admittedly, this is a claim that needs some clarification; otherwise it will likely seem quite presumptuous coming from someone trained as a theological ethicist and not as a biblical scholar. First, this is not a personal assertion about what Catholic biblical scholarship should do; instead, it is an interpretation of what *Dei Verbum*’s own internal logic implies about the task of Catholic biblical scholarship. The heart of the claim is therefore merely that a serious consideration of the Catholic Church’s official theology of revelation implies certain things for the interpretation of Scripture in a Catholic context. Given that the basis of this claim is, properly speaking, an analysis of internal consistency, it is not an assertion that stretches a theological ethicist beyond the expertise of that discipline. More importantly, this conclusion is supported by a close analysis of the revisions that led to the final version of *Dei Verbum*. Reimund Bieringer has charted the revisions of earlier drafts, and he notes that the initial language identified “the content of revelation” as “*the truth* which God wished to communicate to us” before eventually transforming into “*what* God wished to communicate with us (*nobiscum*)” in the final version.<sup>18</sup> As Bieringer persuasively explains, the change from “truth” to the more general “what” (*quid*) and the shift from *nobis* to *nobiscum* both reflect a

greater integration of the constitution's reinterpretation of revelation in personal rather than propositional terms.<sup>19</sup> This redefinition of the content of revelation would, of course, have implications for the task of biblical interpretation, revealing that the proposed definition here is not alien to the vision of *Dei Verbum*.

Second, and more pertinent for the charge of presumption, this articulation of the task of Catholic biblical interpretation is not alien to the field of biblical scholarship itself. Since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic biblical scholars have worked in dialogue with *Dei Verbum* to develop methods of exegesis that incorporate the Catholic Church's official guidelines for Scriptural interpretation alongside the highest standards of academic rigor. This dialogue has, at times, occasioned debate about the distinctive nature of Catholic biblical interpretation, and these debates illustrate an understanding of the task of biblical interpretation that is fundamentally consistent with the task articulated above. Specifically, the terms of that debate demonstrate the presupposition that Catholic biblical scholarship must do more than merely exegete a set of facts from the Scriptural text. Consider Luke Timothy Johnson's challenge to the Catholic Biblical Association in 1997, when he offered an address entitled "What's Catholic about Catholic Biblical Scholarship?"<sup>20</sup> He insisted that a form of biblical interpretation exclusively relying on historical-critical methods was insufficient in a Catholic context because it failed to appreciate the deeper spiritual significance of divine revelation in the scriptures. Since his challenge, a number of scholars have followed his lead to push the question further, and although some of them have disagreed with his premise that there should be a distinctively Catholic method for interpretation, the conversation as a whole has widely supported Johnson's assertion.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the Catholic Church has officially affirmed, through the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC), that although historical-critical scholarship is a necessary component of Catholic biblical interpretation, it is not sufficient alone.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, this *status quaestionis* among Scripture scholars indicates a consensus that Catholic biblical interpretation must afford space for both historical-critical exegesis and theological, or spiritual, means of interpretation.

Significantly, the consistent defense of a careful balance between both the historical-critical method and theological interpretation supports the notion that the task of Catholic biblical interpretation is to promote a personal appreciation of God, because the combination of these methods only makes sense if one is pursuing a type of knowledge that is not primarily propositional in nature. Otherwise, more objective, "scientific" methods would suffice on their own. That this should not be the case indicates, at the very least, that one is not wrong to speak of the task of biblical interpretation in the Catholic context as the pursuit of deeper personal knowledge about God's very self. If this is indeed a fair assessment, then the claim that Catholic theological ethics needs Catholic bibli-

cal scholarship is all but self-evident, for how could one say theological ethics does not need deeper personal knowledge of God? This is not merely a matter of instinct, though; there is a rational argument to be made on the basis of the methodologies at work in Catholic theological ethics, none of which can function effectively without a full account of who God truly is.

### THEOLOGICAL ETHICS NEEDS BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP: THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In practice, there are a variety of ethical methodologies employed by Catholic theological ethicists, but a fair sampling can be deduced from the methods at work in three major areas that shape the contemporary field of Catholic theological ethics: virtue ethics, social ethics, and natural law ethics. While not mutually exclusive,<sup>23</sup> there are nonetheless important distinctions between these three categories, such that treating all three of them offers an adequately comprehensive account of the field of theological ethics. When examined together, these three areas reveal a remarkable consistency at the heart of their diverse methods, namely the prominence of theological anthropology as a necessary starting point for their various ethical analyses and conclusions. This consistency indicates why theological ethics needs biblical scholarship in a Catholic context, for theological anthropology attempts to understand the human person in light of God, and that project naturally requires a deep awareness of who God is. Insofar as Catholic biblical scholarship is designed to discern the nature of God's very self in scriptural revelation, Catholic theological ethics must rely on the insights of biblical studies in order to avoid faulty premises about the nature of the human person and her or his ethical responsibilities.

Of course, the strength of this argument depends on the actual prominence of theological anthropology in the various areas of theological ethics identified above, so each must be considered in turn. To begin with virtue ethics, the link to theological anthropology is evident in the Catholic virtue ethicist's distinctive way of proceeding, which involves posing three interrelated questions: Who am I? Who could I become? How am I going to get there?<sup>24</sup> The first of these, "Who am I?," is fundamentally an anthropological question, as Chan himself pointed out.<sup>25</sup> The impact of this anthropological question for virtue ethics is abundantly clear in James Keenan's influential *Theological Studies* article, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," which asserted that the traditional list of cardinal virtues, based on an anthropology of the human person as an individual with distinct personal capacities, is inadequate.<sup>26</sup> As an alternative, Keenan offered a new list of cardinal virtues based on the claim that human anthropology is better understood in relational terms.<sup>27</sup> In this case a revised anthropol-

ogy dictated a new understanding of the proper virtues that ought to govern our lives. Given this reality, theological anthropology is essential for *theological* virtue ethics. Thus, Catholic virtue ethics cannot prescind from theological claims about the nature of God, because those claims are the source of the theological anthropology that is so central to its methodology. In this way, virtue ethics needs biblical scholarship.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, social ethics and natural law ethics rely on theological anthropology in similar ways. Catholic social ethics, for instance, offers prescriptions for the proper ordering of societies on the basis of theological assertions about human nature. This is readily apparent in the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, which defended specific proposals for family life, economics, politics, and international peace on the basis of an anthropological account of the human person as the bearer of an innate dignity that stems from the human person's creation in the image of God and his or her call to communion with God.<sup>29</sup> All of the social teachings in this document hinged on assertions about who God is—for it is hard to know what it means to be made in the image of God if we do not know who God is—and what God wants for us. These are, according to *Dei Verbum*, the chief forms of knowledge gleaned from the interaction with revelation, meaning that Catholic social ethics needs the work of biblical exegesis if it is to sustain its ethical conclusions.

Finally, natural law ethics is emphatically rooted in anthropological claims. This is most evident in the natural law reasoning employed in the Magisterium's analysis of sexual ethics, where the assessment of the human person's proper nature serves as the basis for specific ethical applications. Thus, Pope Paul VI's encyclical on birth control, *Humanae Vitae*, defended the inseparable connection between the procreative and unitive aspects of human sexuality "as a result of the laws written into the actual nature of man and of woman."<sup>30</sup> Likewise, on the question of homosexuality, the Magisterium's much commented description of same-sex sexual activity as "intrinsically disordered" is based on assumptions about the proper order, which the Magisterium locates in the nature of the human person.<sup>31</sup> In both cases, the Magisterium insists that human nature is normative because God is the author of that nature, which logically entails that the divine will for human life is identifiable within the design of the human person. The Catholic Church's natural law approach to ethics would therefore benefit from the work of biblical scholarship, because greater knowledge of who God is allows for a fuller picture of the normative aspects of human nature. Like virtue ethics and social ethics, natural law ethics needs the insights of biblical studies as well.

As this admittedly brief discussion of the three most prominent areas of contemporary Catholic theological ethics should indicate, theological anthropology is of central importance to Catholic ethical norms. In the Catholic context, virtue ethics, social ethics, and natural law ethics all

depend on anthropological claims. Since all these areas of ethics develop their anthropology from theological sources, they must be accountable to theological developments that would shift their anthropological presuppositions and thereby impact their normative ethical conclusions. This means that Catholic theological ethics needs insight into the nature of God if it is to provide a truly theological form of ethics; otherwise its anthropology will not be theological in scope. Given the task of scriptural exegesis in the Catholic context explicated above, one can therefore rightly say that Catholic theological ethics needs biblical scholarship. The dependence does not stop there, though. If this interaction is developed appropriately, there is also a similar need on the part of biblical scholarship to engage the work of theological ethicists in return.

### BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP NEEDS THEOLOGICAL ETHICS: REFLECTIVE EQUILIBRIUM

To recap briefly, in the interaction depicted so far, Catholic biblical scholarship is shaped by the Catholic theology of revelation and therefore seeks to draw out personal knowledge of God from the Scriptures. Catholic theological ethicists then use this understanding of who God is to form the anthropological claims that in turn shape the ethical norms they develop. This may sound like a straightforward, linear process, but such an interpretation overlooks a complicating factor: the identification of God's very self is a strikingly difficult task. Precisely because God is fundamentally a mystery, any human understanding of God is incomplete,<sup>32</sup> and therefore needs to develop in an ongoing process.<sup>33</sup> The Catholic Church recognizes this challenge, and consequently describes the task of interpreting revelation, especially scriptural revelation, as a perpetual project that needs to occur in dialogue with both tradition and the broader community. This dialogue with the community of faith creates a context in which Catholic biblical scholarship also needs Catholic theological ethics.

The best way to understand the need for ethics in biblical scholarship is to draw on the idea of "reflective equilibrium" found in the work of the political theorist John Rawls.<sup>34</sup> Rawls used the notion to describe a process in which theoretical claims are tested against lived experiences so that a person can continually refine the theory until an equilibrium between theory and practice is reached. To clarify, consider the immediate question with which Rawls was concerned: justice. He suggested that a theory of justice would be continually revised in dialogue with the experience of injustice, such that any experience of injustice that would not be identified by a working theory as unjust would occasion either the revision of the theory or the rejection of the initial judgment.<sup>35</sup> A similar process can be applied to the exegetical insights into the personal nature

of a God who is mystery, for whenever these insights are incorporated into theological ethics through theological anthropology, there is an opportunity for a reflective equilibrium test. If the application of those insights yields a moral principle or ethical judgment with which the community of faith is unsatisfied, the demands of reflective equilibrium suggests that there are two possibilities: either the insight about God is in some way deficient, or the application of that insight via theological anthropology in ethics is somehow flawed. Of course, it will take a process of discernment (ideally communal in nature) to determine which of these two possibilities applies in a given situation, but the fact is that without the application of a process of reflective equilibrium, the question would never be posed in the first place. Thus, a dialogue with theological ethics has the potential to enrich biblical exegesis.

To put this argument in concrete terms for a moment, consider the biblical image of God as a God of vengeance, or even more pointedly, as a “warrior God” (e.g., Ex 15:3; Zep 3:17). The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reflected on this image in *The Challenge of Peace*, acknowledging that the idea of God as a vengeful warrior is prevalent in the Hebrew Scriptures, where “God is often seen as the one who leads the Hebrews in battle, protects them from their enemies, makes them victorious over other armies.”<sup>36</sup> This conception of God held a lot of power for the people of Israel because it “enabled them to express their conviction about God’s involvement in their lives” and “provided the people with a sense of security,” which were especially important attributes during the historical periods when the destruction of Israel at the hands of foreign adversaries seemed like a very real possibility.<sup>37</sup> Over time, however, Israel’s ethical hopes for a more peaceful way of life grew, creating a disconnect between its traditional image of God and its embodied ethical life. Eventually, this dissonance prompted the Israelites to replace the central image of the warrior God with a more sympathetic symbol.<sup>38</sup> Today, this process continues, as the collective experience of Christian communities further complicates the image of a warrior God. For instance, now that attention has grown to the ways in which the symbol of God “functions” (to use Elizabeth Johnson’s powerful language), the ethical consequences of defining God in warrior terms have led to the conclusion that this image is particularly problematic in a nuclear age and ought, therefore, to be all but abandoned.<sup>39</sup> While this is not to say that the entire notion of a warrior God has been repudiated, the experience surrounding this image nevertheless reveals what the process of reflective equilibrium can look like when ethics begins to shape, or at least to inform, the interpretation of Scripture.

Beyond the practical example, the proposal for reflective equilibrium has support in the abstract as well, for this idea is not inconsistent with the guidelines for biblical interpretation put forward by the Vatican, nor is it foreign to academic biblical scholarship. *Dei Verbum* explains that

“the living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account” in scriptural interpretation,<sup>40</sup> while the PBC’s guidelines for Catholic interpretation speak of a process of “actualization” in which “the living tradition of the community of faith” applies and, to a degree, ratifies biblical exegesis in light of their immediate context.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, Pope Benedict’s apostolic exhortation following the 2008 Synod of Bishops all but demands a form of reflective equilibrium by claiming, “the Scripture can only be understood if it is lived.”<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in academic scholarship, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued for the use of an “evaluative hermeneutic,” which entails rejecting any reading of Scripture that leads directly to unethical action.<sup>43</sup> The added layer of evaluation that emerges from engaging theological ethics in a process of reflective equilibrium is not, therefore, an unreasonable imposition upon biblical scholarship. It is, instead, an affirmation of the ways in which biblical scholarship also needs theological ethics in a Catholic context.

## CONCLUSION

I hope, at this point, that I have given a persuasive case for the logical consistency of professing an imperative connection between Scripture and ethics in a Roman Catholic context. That this imperative connection should stem from the Catholic theology of revelation is entirely appropriate, for if revelation is truly the manifestation of God’s very self in a way that invites us into a personal relationship, this is undoubtedly supposed to be a personally transformative process. To put it another way, the Catholic theology of revelation implies that the ultimate purpose of God’s self-manifestation is a new way of life—in a word, ethics. To stress an imperative connection between Scripture and ethics in light of the theology of revelation, then, is to make explicit the implicit. It is also, as the outset of this chapter indicated, to advance Lúcas Chan’s legacy for biblical ethics in the twenty-first century by doing precisely the same thing with respect to a theme in his work. By making (or, really re-making) explicit the implicit presupposition that Catholic biblical scholars and theological ethicists *inherently* need one another, and by doing so in a way that links directly to the emphases of the Second Vatican Council, it is possible to ratify one of Chan’s central insights and to solidify its place in the future of biblical ethics. As one of the true founders of that burgeoning field, Chan certainly deserves at least this much from us now.

## NOTES

1. George Griener, “Remembering Lúcas Chan Yiu-Sing,” *America* (May 24, 2015), <http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/remembering-lucas-chan-yiu-sing>; James F. Keenan, “Lúcas (Yiu Sing Luke) Chan, S.J.: Bridge Builder,” *dotCommonweal*,

last modified May 31, 2015, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/%C3%BAC%C3%A1s-yiu-sing-luke-chan-sj-bridge-builder>.

2. (Yiu Sing) Lúcas Chan, S.J., *Why Scripture Scholars and Theological Ethicists Need One Another: Exegeting the Beatitudes as Scripted Script for Ethical Living* (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 2010).

3. (Yiu Sing) Lúcas Chan, S.J., *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

4. Indeed, this concern is more readily apparent in his first book. See Lúcas Chan, *Biblical Ethics in the 21st Century: Developments, Emerging Consensus, and Future Directions* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2013), especially 3–4.

5. On this double competence, see (Yiu Sing) Lúcas Chan, S.J., “Biblical Ethics: 3D,” *Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (Mar. 2015): 112–28, at 121.

6. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 18–19.

7. *Dei Verbum* (1965) §24, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html).

8. *Optatam Totius* (1965), §16, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_optatam-totius\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_optatam-totius_en.html).

9. Ronald D. Witherup, *The Word of God at Vatican II: Exploring Dei Verbum* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2014), 5.

10. *Dei Verbum* §6 (emphasis added).

11. Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 32–33; Ronald D. Witherup, *Scripture: Dei Verbum* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2006), 34. In fairness, there remains some tension in the document between these two models, but the mere introduction of a personal model was itself a considerable development. See Witherup, *Scripture*, 55; Ormond Rush, “*Dei Verbum* Forty Years On: Revelation, Inspiration and the Spirit,” *Australasian Catholic Record* 83, no. 4 (2006): 406–14, at 407–8; and Reimund Bieringer, “Biblical Revelation and Exegetical Interpretation according to *Dei Verbum*,” in *Vatican II and Its Legacy*, ed. M. Lamberigts and L. Kenis (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 25–58, at 27.

12. Anthony Baxter, “The Bible, Knowledge of God and *Dei Verbum*,” *Heythrop Journal* 42, no. 2 (2001): 173–91, at 187–88.

13. *Dei Verbum* §2 (emphasis added).

14. Baxter, “The Bible, Knowledge of God, and *Dei Verbum*,” 187.

15. *Dei Verbum* §§2, 3, 6. Not coincidentally, these are also the two aspects of revelation that the Constitution insists are contained “faithfully and without error” in the Scriptures. *Dei Verbum* §11.

16. Scripture is, according to *Dei Verbum*, not the only form of divine revelation. The Constitution gives equal emphasis to both Scripture and tradition as two means of revelation that “flowing from the same divine wellspring . . . merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.” (*Dei Verbum* §9). Moreover, Christ himself is identified as the fullness and perfection of divine revelation (*Dei Verbum* §4).

17. *Dei Verbum* §12.

18. Bieringer, “Biblical Revelation,” 37.

19. *Ibid.*

20. A shortened version of the address was published in *Commonweal* the following year; an expanded version has since been published in a book Johnson co-authored with William Kurz. Luke Timothy Johnson, “So What’s Catholic about It? The State of Catholic Biblical Scholarship,” *Commonweal* 125, no. 1 (Jan. 1998): 12–16; Luke Timothy Johnson, “What’s Catholic about Catholic Biblical Scholarship? An Opening Statement,” in *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A Constructive Conversation*, ed. Luke Timothy Johnson and William S. Kurz, S.J. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 3–34.

21. See Bieringer, “Biblical Revelation,” esp. 51; Thomas McGovern, “Vatican II and the Interpretation of Scripture,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 104, no. 9 (2004): 6–16;

William S. Kurz, S.J., "Bill Kurz: Response to Luke Johnson," in Johnson and Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*, 143–56, and "Beyond Historical Criticism: Reading John's Prologue as Catholics," in Johnson and Kurz, *The Future of Catholic Biblical Scholarship*, 159–81. Cf. Roland E. Murphy, "What Is Catholic about Catholic Biblical Scholarship—Revisited?" *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 28 (1998): 112–19, at 118–19.

22. Pontifical Biblical Council, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993), III. An English translation is available in *Origins* 23, no. 9 (1994). See also *Dei Verbum* §12.

23. For instance, James O'Sullivan has pointed to the possibilities for social ethics in both virtue ethics and natural law ethics. Meanwhile, Daniel Daly has stressed that Thomas Aquinas's moral analysis presupposes the compatibility of virtue ethics and natural law. See James P. O'Sullivan, "Virtue and Catholic Social Teaching: A New Generation in an Ongoing Dialogue toward Greater Realization of Social Justice and the Common Good," *Asian Horizons* 6, no. 4 (2012): 824–45; James P. O'Sullivan, "Josef Fuchs' Revised Natural Law: Possibilities for Social Ethics," *New Blackfriars* 95, no. 1058 (2014): 379–96; Daniel Daly, "The Relationship of Virtues and Norms in the *Summa Theologiae*," *Heythrop Journal* 51, no. 2 (2010): 214–29.

24. These questions are most directly associated with James Keenan's work in virtue ethics, which presented them as a summary of Alasdair MacIntyre's concerns in *After Virtue*. They have since become a common starting point for Catholic virtue ethics. See James F. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 4 (1995): 709–29 at 711. See also Chan, *Biblical Ethics*, 82–83.

25. Chan, *Biblical Ethics*, 82.

26. Keenan, "Proposing Cardinal Virtues," 717–18, 723–28.

27. *Ibid.*

28. There is also another way in which virtue ethics relies on the doctrine of God and would therefore require the insights of biblical scholarship. Specifically, a number of virtues identified as pertinent for the moral life have expressly theological content that parallels Christian convictions about the nature of God. For example, promotion of the virtue of charity necessitates dialogue with the doctrine of God because of the Christian claim that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). I do not delve into this idea more fully here, however, because this connection is unique to the nature of virtue ethics, whereas the centrality of theological anthropology is common to social ethics and natural law ethics as well.

29. *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) §§12–22, 24.

30. Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (1968) §12.

31. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons" (1986), 3.

32. *Dei Verbum* §7; see also Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 138.

33. *Dei Verbum* §8; Rush, "Dei Verbum Forty Years On," 412–13; Witherup, *Scripture*, 46.

34. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 18–19.

35. *Ibid.*

36. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *The Challenge of Peace* (May 3, 1983), 31, <http://www.usccb.org/upload/challenge-peace-gods-promise-our-response-1983.pdf>.

37. *Ibid.*

38. USCCB, *The Challenge of Peace*, 31, 32, 38.

39. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* 10th ann. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 3–4; Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 14–21; Gordon D. Kaufman, *Theology for a Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 30–46.

40. *Dei Verbum* §12.

41. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible*, IV.A.1. This is also evident in the PBC's claim that the "spiritual sense" of the Scriptures should be sought

by “reread[ing] the Scriptures in the light of [the] new context” that emerges from attempting to live out scriptural insights (II.B.2).

42. Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* §47. See also §§48–49.

43. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 69–70.

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