

• NOTES ON MORAL THEOLOGY •

WHAT HAPPENED AT TRENTO 2010?

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J.

From July 24 to 27, 2010, some 600 theological ethicists from nearly 75 countries met in Trento, Italy, under the auspices of Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church. There they heard 30 plenary papers and opted to attend more than 240 concurrent presentations. This note studies the roots, mission, context, goals, and nature of the conference and its participants as a defining moment in church history.

ACTING ON THE NEED FOR CROSS-CULTURAL theological discourse began long before the meetings of theological ethicists at Padua in 2006 and Trento in 2010.¹ Cross-cultural discourse was, after all, the conciliar vision of the founders² of the international journal *Concilium*, which, for the past 46 years, has published five issues a year in five different linguistic editions: English, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

Women have taken the lead in this discourse and have almost always made it ecumenical in scope. In 1989, in Africa, the Methodist Mercy Amba Oduyoye established the “The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.”³ In 1999, in the United States, Regina Wentzel Wolfe and Christine Gudorf together edited cross-cultural case studies on ethics and world religions; this book was, as far as I know, the first such international project in theological ethics.⁴ In Asia, the Ecclesia of Women in Asia

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J., received the S.T.D. from the Gregorian University and is Founders Professor in Theology at Boston College. Specializing in the history of theological ethics, Thomas Aquinas, virtue ethics, and HIV/AIDS, in 2010 he has published: *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences*; *The Ethics of the Word: An Ethics for the Church Today*; and with Daniel Harrington, S.J., *Paul and Virtue Ethics*. He is editing the 30 plenary papers from the Trento 2010 conference, to be published as *From Trento to the Future: Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church* (Orbis, anticipated 2011).

¹ I take the title of this note from John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap of Harvard University, 2008).

² Anton van den Boogaard, Paul Brand, Yves Congar, Hans Küng, Johann-Baptist Metz, Karl Rahner, and Edward Schillebeeckx.

³ <http://www.thecirclecawt.org/profile.html> (this and all other URLs herein cited were accessed November 13, 2010).

⁴ Regina Wentzel Wolfe and Christine E. Gudorf, eds., *Ethics and World Religions: Cross-Cultural Case Studies* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1999).

movement has hosted Pan-Asian conferences among women theologians since 2002, publishing the papers of two of their four conferences.⁵ In terms of actual international meetings of Catholic theological ethicists, members of the Redemptorist order have been meeting about every four years since 1989. Still, the meetings in Padua and Trento mark a significant development in the history of Catholic theological ethics; this note aims to capture that development.

THE LEGACY OF PADUA 2006

On July 8, 2006, nearly 400 theological ethicists from 63 countries entered the University of Padua's Great Hall (where Galileo lectured for 18 years) and inaugurated the "First Cross Cultural Conference on Catholic Theological Ethics." In 2007, the 30 plenary papers from the conference were published,⁶ and in 2008, 30 of the 120 cross-cultural papers in applied ethics were published.⁷ Later, another five editions of the first volume were published elsewhere in the world: Manila, Buenos Aires, Bologna, Bangalore, and Sao Paolo.⁸ Similarly, the second volume was published in Manila.⁹ Comments on the essays from these two volumes appeared in *Theological Studies*' "Notes in Moral Theology" in March 2008, 2009, and 2010.

⁵ <http://ecclesiaofwomen.ning.com/>. See three of their collections of papers: Evelyn Monteiro and M. M. Antoinette Gutzler, eds., *Ecclesia of Women in Asia: Gathering the Voices of the Silenced* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2005); Agnes Brazal and Andrea Lizares Si, *Body and Sexuality* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila, 2007); Sharon Bong and Pushpa Joseph, eds., *Re-imagining Marriage and Family in Asia: Asian Christian Women's Perspective* (Selangor, Malaysia: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, 2009).

⁶ James F. Keenan, S.J., ed., *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: The Plenary Papers from the First Cross-cultural Conference on Catholic Theological Ethics* (hereafter CTEWC) (New York: Continuum, 2007).

⁷ Linda Hogan, *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008).

⁸ James F. Keenan, S.J., ed., *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: The Plenary Papers from the First Cross-cultural Conference on Catholic Theological Ethics* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2008); *Los desafíos éticos del mundo actual: Una mirada intercultural primera conferencia intercontinental e intercultural sobre ética teológica católica en la iglesia mundial* (Buenos Aires: San Benito, 2008); *Etica teologica cattolica nella chiesa universale: Atti del primo congresso interculturale di teologia morale* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 2009); *Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church: The Plenary Papers from the First Cross-cultural Conference on Catholic Theological Ethics* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Company, 2009); *Ética teológica católica no contexto mundial* (San Paolo: Santuario, 2010).

⁹ Linda Hogan, *Applied Ethics in a World Church: The Padua Conference* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2009).

The conference planning took three years, beginning in 2003. I had the original idea for it; I simply believed that Catholic theological ethicists needed to meet one another. I shared this with Paul Schotsmans at Catholic University at Leuven who helped me present it to the Stichting Porticus Foundation in Amsterdam. From the Foundation we met Hans Wennink and Peter Merckx, and with their help I formed a planning committee of some of the major theological ethicists in the world: Margaret Farley (United States); Benezet Bujo (Democratic Republic of Congo); Soosai Arokiasamy (India); Jose Rojas (Philippines); Roque Junges (Brazil); Linda Hogan (Ireland); and Paul Schotsmans (Belgium). In November 2003, Schotsmans and I invited these ethicists to Leuven to discuss the project.

In Leuven I presented four reasons for an international conference. First, inasmuch as ethical problems are often similar for all Christians, we ethicists tend to meet ecumenically more than most other theologians; there are few meetings specifically for Catholic ethicists. Second, being on the practical side of theology, theological ethicists are often interlocutors with scholars from other disciplines—medicine, public health, economics, political science, sociology, etc.; therefore it would benefit our inquiries if we met once simply among ourselves. Furthermore, years ago, Catholic theological ethicists were, for the most part, trained at one of the Roman universities. In the 1950s, students of moral theology began attending other European universities as well. Since the 1970s, they then began studying for doctorates at universities on the other continents. In the globalized world the occasion for studying together became increasingly rare; thus I believed it would be well for those trained on the different continents to meet one another. Finally, distinctive approaches to theological ethics arose on each continent. We needed to develop ways of communicating such that the developments on one continent were known on the others. Our catholicity was at stake.¹⁰

Besides validating the proposal to meet, the planning committee at Leuven made three fundamental decisions. First, we needed to draft a mission statement. Margaret Farley authored the statement—she and other Sisters of Mercy helped coordinate the All-African Conference: Sister to Sister, a gathering of women religious responding to HIV/AIDS.¹¹ It reads:

Since moral theology is so diffuse today, since many Catholic theological ethicists are caught up in their own specific cultures, and since their interlocutors tend to be in other disciplines, there is the need for an international exchange of ideas among Catholic theological ethicists.

¹⁰ James F. Keenan, S.J., *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Consciences* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

¹¹ <http://allafrica-sistertosister.org/index.html>.

Catholic theological ethicists recognize the need: to appreciate the challenge of pluralism; to dialogue from and beyond local culture; and, to interconnect within a world church, not dominated solely by a northern paradigm.

In response to these recognized needs, Catholic theological ethicists will meet to refresh their memories, reclaim their heritage, and reinterpret their sources.

Therefore, Catholic theological ethicists will pursue in this conference a way of proceeding that reflects their local cultures and engages in cross-cultural conversations motivated by mercy and care.¹²

Second, to be truly international we would have to underwrite the travel and housing of all participants from the developing world. This would require major fund-raising. Third, the experience of some members of the planning committee in securing visas, taught us that Italy was the most hospitable Western European country in terms of granting visas. Having therefore decided to meet in Italy, we quickly selected Padua. The city of Anthony was a pilgrim's city, but it was also the seat of one of Europe's oldest universities. The academy and the church were very present there. Schotsmans advised: "If you meet in Padua, you need a local organizer; you need to meet Renzo Pegoraro, a priest of Padova and an internationally known bioethicist. His center, the Fondazione Lanza, will serve as our local hosting center." At this point, I began to realize the effectiveness of international networking. Pegoraro joined our committee shortly afterward.

To forge our catholicity, we had two different types of plenary presentations at Padua. First, we had continental panels from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America wherein each panel had three presenters from different parts of the continent but each responding to the same three questions: what are our moral challenges, how are we responding to them, and what hope do we have for the future? We also hosted panels on arguably the four most relevant issues in our discipline: the sources of our tradition, the question of pluralism, justice and globalization, and the *sensus fidelium* and the magisterium. On these panels we looked to achieve balance by having a truly diverse spectrum of presenters; a case in point was the notable debate between Paul Valadier and Monsignor Giuseppe Angelini.¹³

From Padua, four developments emerged. First, the assembly clearly called for a second international conference in four years time. Second, it became clear that more specific steps had to be taken to ensure the involvement of women in the field. Specifically, we needed to see women

¹² <http://www.catholicethics.com/padua/info/mission.php>; <http://www.catholicethics.com/info/mission.php>.

¹³ See Giuseppe Angelini, "The *Sensus Fidelium* and Moral Discernment," *CTEWC* 202–9; and Paul Valadier, "Has the Concept of *Sensus Fidelium* Fallen into Desuetude?" *CTEWC* 187–92.

theological ethicists coming out of Africa. As narrated in the volume of the plenary papers, after the three African speakers gave their continental addresses and focused on civil strife, colonialism, graft, and trade, the three African women participants at Padua challenged them on why none of the three mentioned the plight of women, access to health care, and AIDS among the notable challenges affecting Africa today. Their voices resonated throughout the conference, and conference organizers saw the need to secure funding for African women to begin graduate studies.¹⁴

Third, cross-cultural initiatives began right at Padua. The 40 African participants held the first international meeting of African Moral Theologians at the conference in Padua! Days later, the Asians met as well. Later, Paul Chummar served as the chair for an “International Symposium on Natural Law” held from February 6–8, 2007, at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya. The conference aimed to articulate a common denominator for moral principles and laws affecting the rights and duties for all.¹⁵ Since then, Chummar hosted a second international conference, this time on the person.¹⁶

In August 2007, in Bangalore, 25 theological ethicists met and restored their association in light of the events at Padua. In the meantime, Mary Jo Iozzio decided with Mary Doyle Roche and Elsie Miranda to edit a collection of essays by Catholic women theologians from the United States, Congo, Canada, the Philippines, Australia, France, Germany, South Africa, Great Britain, Ireland, Vietnam, Jamaica, India, Uganda, and Brazil on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.¹⁷ The volume would be among other attempts to forge major collaborative relations beyond every continent and/or linguistic frontier.¹⁸

Interestingly, these global moves supported rather than diminished the concerns that were expressed locally. That is, as in the Iozzio volume, women found that local approaches had more overlap with other local approaches: the local was *not* antithetical to the universal; it was the grounds for the possibility of the universal.

¹⁴ See Keenan, “Introduction: The Conference at Padova,” *CTEWC* 1–6.

¹⁵ Paul Chummar Chittilappilly, ed., *Natural Law: In Search of a Common Denominator; Proceedings of 1st CUEA International Symposium 06-08 February 2007* (Nairobi: Catholic University of East Africa, 2010).

¹⁶ Paul Chummar Chittilappilly, ed., *The Person: In Search of a Common Denominator; Proceedings of the 2nd CUEA International Symposium* (Nairobi: Catholic University of East Africa, forthcoming).

¹⁷ Mary Jo Iozzio, with Mary Doyle Roche and Elsie Miranda, *Calling for Justice throughout the World: Catholic Women Theologians on the HIV/AIDS Pandemic* (New York: Continuum, 2008).

¹⁸ A prime example is the work of Shaji George Kochuthara, editor of *Asian Horizons*, who invited scholars from around the world to engage the moral theology out of Asia in the June 2010 issue.

Fourth, we eventually began to receive comments on the papers from Padua. Only five months after the conference, considerably in advance of the publication of the plenary papers, Luigi Lorenzetti published reports from ten authors invited to write synopses of the plenary panels for his journal, *Rivista di teologia morale*. Inviting these authors to review the panels brought a further distillation of the claims set forth at Padua. Particularly noteworthy were the reports of the continental panels, where Lorenzetti recruited commentators from each of the continents to name and develop a theme that emerged from the three presenters: Anozie Onyema (Nigeria) saw a distinctive African approach to theological ethics; Paul Lordusamy (India) recognized the globalization of injustice as a distinctively Asian issue; Marcio Fabri dos Anjos (Brazil) found in his continent the virtue of hope; Maria Cimperman (United States) heard the call for a Christian social ethics; and Luigi Lorenzetti (Italy) recognized new challenges to a reemerging Europe.¹⁹

From Padua's seminary, the senior moralist Giuseppe Trentin offered an extended critique concerning method, exhorting the plenary speakers to more rigorous argumentation. One sees here the hope for the development of the claims originally made at Padua.²⁰ Above all, Christopher Steck, having just reviewed the two volumes of papers from the conference,²¹ observes that the two volumes together offer a rare comprehensive glance at the nature of theological ethics today. He underlines four points about these volumes:

1. They bear a distinctive style of being "critically creative and ecclesially rooted."
2. They raise new awareness and vigilance about the critical (both positive and negative) influences in the formation of Christian communities.
3. They maintain the tension between the ultimate universality of moral goods while also arguing for the particularity of their local expression (here Steck notes the characteristically Catholic ability to live with the "both/and" of such tensions).

¹⁹ Anozie Onyema, "Africa: Una via africana all'etica teologica," *Rivista di teologia morale* 152 (2006) 467–74; Paul Lordusamy, "Asia: Le ingiustizie della globalizzazione," *ibid.* 475–82; Marcio Fabri dos Anjos, "America Latina: un continente di speranze," *ibid.* 483–92; Maria Cimperman, "America settentrionale: Dare voce all'etica sociale Cristiana," *ibid.* 501–6; Luigi Lorenzetti, "Europa: Le nuove sfide dell'etica teologica," *ibid.* 507–17.

²⁰ Giuseppe Trentin, "Situazione e problemi della teologia morale cattolica," *Studia patavina* 56 (2009) 471–40. See Celestino Corsato and Giampaolo Dianin, eds., *Fede cristiana e ricerche morali: Studi in onore di Giuseppe Trentin nel 70 compleanno*, *Studia patavina* 57 (2010) 1–424.

²¹ Christopher Steck, "Catholic Ethics as Seen from Padua," *Journal of Religious Ethics* (forthcoming, March 2011).

4. They contribute to attempts to achieve consensus in the articulation and defense of urgent human goods.

Steck is particularly attentive to the fourth point, not only for its evident importance but also because the reviewed essays highlight a methodology he calls “value-framing.” This method emphasizes discussion about shared values that are recognizably Catholic though not exclusively so. Here in postmodern discourse, Catholic writers are able to suggest matters that concern them, eliciting from those in other faith or cultural contexts their concern about similar values. Steck finds this method particularly germane for the development of more religiously based arguments that enter pluralist discussions.

Steck also made two critical observations about the volumes. He notes that the essays and the conference itself reflect an almost complete separation of Church leadership and Church scholarship. While the conference was not in any way framed in oppositional terms against the Church (indeed it was enthusiastically welcomed by the local Church leadership, and participants regularly worshiped together in the Church’s liturgy), the troubling separation of leadership and scholarship is clear in the lack of a formal, institutional role given to the conference. The conference brought together some of the ablest and most dedicated thinkers within the international Catholic community. It was a rare and unique expression of that community’s intellectual life and of the unity of its religious commitment, and yet the conference has virtually no formal status *vis-à-vis* (and, one might fear, no influence on) the leadership of Catholic Church.²²

He added:

It is all the more interesting, then, that even with this tension between hierarchy and scholar, these participants pursue their work intentionally, one might even say devotedly, within the context of the Catholic moral tradition. In a very real and serious way, these essays move within the linguistically and theologically bounded world of Catholicism, as evidenced by the fact that official Church pronouncements, not recent theological scholarship, are the guides for their scholarly thinking.²³

Steck’s observation here is correct. As I indicate below, the planning committee for the Trento conference recognized immediately after Padua the need to bring the hierarchy into the discussion with the theologians. Presence of church officials became an objective for the Trento event.

Noting the interest in moral formation, Steck also wrote:

It is interesting that the essays do not expressly reflect on contemporary virtue theory or on the range of practices that might encourage virtuous growth. This seems all the more surprising given how important the field has been for Catholic ethics in recent years as it has endeavored to recover its Christian roots. The renewed attention to biblical moral teachings and early Christian ideals and a turn away from an earlier focus on law and prohibitions fit well with a virtue ethics approach.²⁴

²² Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

As we will see shortly, on the way to and at Trento virtue ethics makes an indelible appearance.

INTERLUDE: MANILA 2008

The most significant moment between Padua and Trento occurred mid-way in time and place: Manila. Agnes Brazal, a leading lay moral theologian from Manila, who had already built several bridges among other women theologians across East Asia, decided in conversation with two Jesuits, theological ethicist Eric Genilo and theological contextualist Mario Francisco, to host the first East Asian conference in theological ethics. Ethicists from Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Malaysia met at the Ateneo de Manila in August 2008.

At Manila the conference participants recognized three issues.²⁵ First, unlike many other Christian traditions, Roman Catholicism had in the natural law tradition a way of communicating with common concepts and common language.²⁶ Within that tradition, the language of virtue, a language found in most cultures, offers particularly strong mediating claims. Virtue ethics was suitable for cross-cultural dialogue. Jean Porter notes that “the language of virtue builds in a kind of flexibility, even ambiguity, that is not so evident in the languages of law and duty.”²⁷

Second, the move to the local was in many ways similar to an earlier innovation. In the face of ahistorical, universalist claims for moral truth, theologians like Bernhard Häring, Louis Janssens, and Josef Fuchs taught that moral theology could not arrive at moral objectivity if it did not entertain the specific details of the particular. The shift from ahistorical, universal assumptions of truth to those more historical, more particular, and more contextual was one of the major developments of the 20th century.²⁸ We must find moral truth by descending into the particular. Descending into the local context is a further development from the original work of the revisionists. Still, this descent does not compromise the quest for

²⁵ See James F. Keenan, S.J., “From Padova to Manila: Promoting Cross-cultural Theological Ethics,” in *Transformative Theological Ethics: East Asian Contexts*, ed. Agnes M. Brazal et al. (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2010) vii–xiii.

²⁶ Christina Traina, *Feminist Ethics and Natural Law: The End of the Anathemas* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1999); Jean Porter, “A Tradition of Civility: The Natural Law as a Tradition of Moral Inquiry,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003) 27–48; see also Charles Curran, *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today: A Synthesis* (Washington: Georgetown University, 1999).

²⁷ Jean Porter, “Virtue,” in *Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, ed. Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski (New York: Oxford University, 2005) 205–19, at 219.

²⁸ See James F. Keenan, S.J., “New Foundations for Moral Reasoning: 1970–1989,” *History of Catholic Moral Theology* 141–72.

universal truths, as Lisa Sowle Cahill reminds us: there is no necessary contradiction between local developments and universal consensus.²⁹

Third, to do cross-cultural theological ethics, we would have to learn the language of method in theology.

Not surprisingly, then, at Manila the issues of context, method, and virtue emerged. Eric Genilo, Angeles Tan Alora with Josephine Lumitao from the Philippines, Antoinette Gutzler from Taiwan, and Y-Lan Tran from Vietnam gave arresting in-depth portraits of local challenges to human dignity, moral truth, and human solidarity.³⁰ Mario Francisco, Agnes Brazal, Armada Riyanto from Indonesia, and William O'Neill from the United States proffered methodological approaches.³¹ Finally, tapping the positive and cross-cultural resources of virtue ethics, Lisa Fullam from the United States spoke of reframing sexual ethics, Pham Van Ai from Vietnam reflected on Confucian virtue, and Monica Jalandoni from the Philippines examined the virtue of fortitude in the lives of Filipina women.³²

WHO WAS AT TRENTO?

The call to meet again after Padua was a call to frame the next meeting differently. At Padua we gathered to meet and listen to one another. The next time we would need a defining context.

While sitting at the closing banquet at Padua, Renzo Pegoraro turned to me and said, "Next time, Trento." This was a remarkable utterance. Theological ethics was defined by the Council of Trent: we became a specific discipline within theology. The compartmentalization of theology into the

²⁹ Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Community and Universals: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 18 (1998) 3–12; Jean Porter, "The Search for a Global Ethic," *Theological Studies* 62 (2001) 105–22; Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Toward Global Ethics," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002) 324–44.

³⁰ Eric Genilo, "Integrating Faith with Morals: The Challenge of Renewing Filipino Theological Ethics," in *Transformative Theological Ethics* 9–27; Angeles Tan Alora and Josephine Lumitao, "Contextualizing Medical Ethics: Cultural Values and Social Realities," in *ibid.* 156–70; Antoinette Gutzler, "'Am I My Sister's Keeper?' The 'Internalization' and 'Globalization' of Women's Homelessness: A Taiwanese Perspective," in *ibid.* 28–42; Y-Lan Tran, "Vietnam in Transition: Theological and Ethical Challenges," in *ibid.* 43–68.

³¹ Jose Mario Francisco, "Theological Ethics in Context," in *Transformative Theological Ethics* 1–8; Agnes M. Brazal, "A 'Models' Approach: Teaching Fundamental Moral Theology in an Intercultural World," in *ibid.* 69–87; Armada Riyanto, "Method in Christian Ethics: Building a Sense of Responsibility and Collaboration," in *ibid.* 88–97; William O'Neill, "Hoping against Hope: Rights and Reconciliation in Cultural Context," in *ibid.* 186–200.

³² Lisa Fullam, "From Discord to Virtues: Reframing Sexual Ethics," in *Transformative Theological Ethics* 98–118; Pham Van Ai, "Asian Concerns in Moral Theology: Challenges and Possibilities," in *ibid.* 119–37; Monica Jalandoni, "Fortitude in the Philippines: Impact on Women," in *ibid.* 201–18.

plan for seminaries was what gave birth to a separate enterprise known as moral theology. Why not go back to Trento?

Many may think of Trento as the beginning of a counter-revolution, of an intransigent institutionalization of the Catholic Church and as a definitive repudiation of the Reformation. Certainly Trent defined a great deal of the modern theology of the Catholic Church, but it only got to definition by sustained disputations. After 25 years of intermittent seatings, the Council Fathers defined and proclaimed those definitions, but from December 13, 1545, to December 4, 1563, their theologians disputed these matters. We could go to Trento 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. But we could also explore ways that for the next 25 years we too could dispute about sexuality, authority, conscience, sin, gender, sustainability, health, economy, the natural law, history, the right to food, the need to love, family, the emotions, and, yes, even the traditions themselves. In Trento, we could look to find ways of retrieving a model of theology that does not rush to declare orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, but rather one more anxious about whether we are understanding the challenges facing us in the first place.

Five other reasons made Trento our natural next step: the small city would be easily accessible for a large conference; like the archbishop of Padua, Antonio Mattiazzo, the archbishop of Trento, Luigi Bressan, had a well-known reputation for hospitality, and, having been trained in the Vatican Academy, he was already a Vatican emissary to two east Asian countries before his Trento appointment and was known for a broad linguistic competency; third, the leading Italian moral theologian of his time, Antonio Autiero, had an institute in Trento, the Fondazione Bruno Kessler; thus, as Pegoraro's Fondazione Lanza was so integral to the hosting of Padua, Autiero's staff at Bruno Kessler would be a natural local committee; fourth, few if any moral theologians had ever been to Trento; fifth, everybody would find an excuse to come.

At the end of Padua, the members of the planning committee stepped down and planning for Trento began quickly. Working with Renzo Pegoraro, Hans Wennink, and Peter Merckx, I assembled a new committee that could connect us to different constituencies. Unlike the first planning committee which was made up, in many instances, of the leading moralists from each part of the world, this time we looked for people known for networking. While Farley had striking connections throughout the United States and Africa, we wanted to have only one member from the United States on the committee. Eventually we kept Pegoraro and Hogan, but then added Tony Mifsud from Chile, Clement Campos from India, Agnes Brazal from the Philippines, Agbonkiameghe Orobator from Nigeria and Kenya, Marie-Jo Thiel from France, and Antonio Autiero.

From the very beginning of our planning we decided to target seven very different populations. First, while we had participation at Padua from Italy, Ireland, England, and Belgium, we felt that the French, Germans, Austrians, and Spaniards had taken a wait-and-see attitude toward our attempts. By having a French ethicist on the committee, we now expected better participation from France. The Napolitano-born Autiero, having been professor of moral theology at Bonn and now at Münster, would bring us not only Italian connections but also German ones. Two major figures in theological ethics from Spain, Redemptorist Marciano Vidal and Jesuit Julio Martínez, promised to bring colleagues and students.³³

By the same token we did not want to lose the support of the Italians, our second target population. Through Renzo Pegoraro, we were able to convince the Association of Italian Moralists (ATISM) to hold their biannual conference in 2006 near Padua, concurrent with our dates. As a result, more than 50 Italians were present in Padua. In 2006, ATISM elected Karl Golser from nearby Bolzano-Bressanone as their president for a four-year term. After Padua, I began regular meetings with him to see if we could persuade ATISM to meet once again in 2010 near Trento. We did.

At Padua only a few members of the Redemptorist order were present, mostly because in 2006 they had their international meeting of Redemptorist theological ethicists in Bogota, and few were inclined to travel to a second international conference. India's Clement Campos was on the General Counsel of the Redemptorist order, and through him we lobbied for the Redemptorists to host their next meeting at Trento, just before ours. Happily, they agreed.

We also wanted the participation of the hierarchy. Archbishop Bressan assured us that he would attend all our sessions. We then invited theological ethicists who were bishops from Bangladesh, the Sudan, South Africa, and the Philippines. In the course of our preparations two other ethicists were ordained bishops: Stephen Thottathil from India and Karl Golser. The latter's episcopal ordination was extremely advantageous for our purposes. As the ordinary of Trento's neighboring diocese, we knew that he would be present with Bressan at all our events. Two well-known Italian bishops could be helpful witnesses to what we were trying to do.

In this light, we decided to ask one of the invited bishops, Kevin Dowling, the noted "AIDS bishop" from Rustenburg, South Africa, to

³³ The prolific Vidal has recently used the two great threats to moral objectivity, relativism and fundamentalism, as the Scylla and Charybdis markers for finding moral truth. See Marciano Vidal, *Moral cristiana: En tiempos de relativismos y fundamentalismos* (Buenos Aires: San Pablo, 2009). Julio Martínez is an expert on John Courtney Murray; see his *Ciudadanía, migraciones, y religión: Un diálogo ético desde la fe cristiana* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2007); and *Libertad religiosa y dignidad humana: Claves católicas de un gran conexión* (Madrid: San Pablo, 2009).

present a paper on HIV on a concurrent panel. We then decided to recruit two archbishops as speakers. First, we wanted to open our conference with a nod to interreligious dialogue. After all, interreligious dialogue was not on the minds of the theologians who gathered in Trento 400 years before us.

For the opening session, we wanted to invite three scholars: a Muslim, a Protestant, and a Catholic. Through Peter Merx we learned of and invited Ahmad Syafii Maarif, the Indonesian who was the past chairman of the Muhammadiyah, the world's second largest Muslim organization with 30 million members; in 2008, he had won the prestigious Ramon Magasay award for his work in advancing peace, dialogue, and tolerance.³⁴ We also invited Mercy Amba Oduyoye from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians. We realized, however, that the most assured way to avoid any misunderstanding in the dialogue, was to invite a major Catholic prelate who was a theologian. Eventually we secured Archbishop Bruno Forte of Chieti-Vasto, known for his work on esthetics and an ethics of transcendence.³⁵ These three scholars would open our conference, with hope, a positive and constructed stance, and a firm belief that we share much in common. Maarif would remind us that people of faith share a cosmology, an anthropology, and a vision of the source and end of morality. Oduyoye found in interreligious dialogue the hope of greater justice, stability, and equity. Forte proposed four theses: no ethics without transcendence; no ethics without gratuitousness and responsibility; no ethics without justice and solidarity; and ethics points us toward that free, sovereign, ultimate, and absolute Transcendence who has first turned toward us.³⁶

In closing the conference, we decided that our final panel would focus on the future of theological ethics, and that it would be presented by three relatively young scholars: Julie Clague from the University of Glasgow, to speak on gender; Shaji George Kochuthara from Dharmaram College, Bangalore, to address context; and Maria Teresa Davila from Andover Newton School of Theology, Massachusetts, to speak on culture. Before their session, we invited Archbishop (now Cardinal) Reinhard Marx, archbishop of Munich and Freising, to address us on "The Future of Theological Ethics." Marx was known as an advocate for social justice as constitutive of charity.³⁷ He graciously accepted, despite his busy schedule.

³⁴ <http://www.maarifinstitute.org/>.

³⁵ Bruno Forte, *The Portal of Beauty: Towards a Theology of Aesthetics*, trans. David Glenday and Paul McPartlan (Grand Rapids, Mich., Eerdmans, 2008); and *L'Uno per L'altro: Per un'etica della trascendenza* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003).

³⁶ The plenary papers are presently being edited for publication: James F. Keenan, S.J., ed., *From Trento to the Future: Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, forthcoming).

³⁷ Reinhard Marx, *Das Kapital: Ein Plädoyer für den Menschen* (Munich: Pattloch, 2008).

He agreed to drive down from Munich that morning and return immediately after his presentation. Because the final day was going to be so full, and because we wanted to honor the young theologians with adequate time for questions and answers, we asked the archbishop if he would mind only delivering a talk and not taking questions. He accepted.

The fourth group we wanted to attract was women theologians. Together with Orobator, Hogan, and Wennink, we had secured from the Stichting Porticus Foundation grants for seven African women to begin graduate studies in theological ethics. Orobator oversaw the selection process, and by April 2009 we announced the names of the seven women who would study in Kampala, Kinshasha, Nairobi, and Yaounde. We also discovered that an African lay woman, Vivianne Minikongo, had earned the first doctorate in Africa in moral theology, without any funding. Also, through Linda Hogan, Dublin's Trinity College decided to award a full scholarship to another African woman to pursue the doctorate in theological ethics. All these women would be invited to Trento. Finally, Agnes Brazal in East Asia and Puspha Joseph in South Asia would help us with recruiting.

The fifth group that would define us were "new scholars." At Padua, 40 doctoral students were in attendance, mostly from the University of Leuven and Boston College, which provided for their travel and housing. Very few nontenured scholars were present. Immediately after Padua, while forming the planning committee for Trento, we established a "new scholars" committee. Italy's Andrea Vicini accepted our invitation to chair the committee; he then persuaded many students and young faculty at the Gregorian University to commit to Trento. Two other members of the committee, Kathryn Getek and Lúcas Chan Yiu Sing, as our representatives, solicited interest from a variety of contacts, especially the members of the U.S.-based initiative New Wine, New Wineskins. Founded in 2002, this organization of young Catholic moral theologians hosted annual events at the University of Notre Dame to support those in the early stages of their careers in theological ethics.³⁸

We coupled our invitation to the "new scholars" to come to Trento with the offer of a grant to cover some expenses: on a need-based sliding scale, we offered on a case-by-case basis up to \$700 travel and housing grants. Then, aiming at other universities—notably the Alfonsianum in Rome through President Martin McKeever, the University of Leuven through Joseph Sellinger and Johann DeTavernier, the University of Münster through Autiero, and certain universities in France through Philippe Bordeyne and Marie Jo Thiel—we sought out their present doctoral students and recent alumni.

³⁸ <http://ycmt-newwineskins.com/x/>; for an example of their work, see William C. Mattison III, ed., *New Wine, New Wineskins: A Next Generation Reflects on Key Issues in Catholic Moral Theology* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

These two decisions, forming the “new scholars” committee and establishing the grant fund, changed the face of the Trento meeting and, I believe, the face of theological ethics. Eventually 152 of our 600 participants belonged to this “new scholars” group. On Sunday July 25, the second day of the conference, after the evening Eucharist in the Cathedral four of us from Boston College hosted separate dinners for various participants: Lisa Sowle Cahill hosted 85 women scholars who were not among the new scholars; T. Frank Kennedy of the Boston College Jesuit Institute hosted Jesuits; Kenneth Himes hosted Franciscans; and I hosted the “new scholars” who came with spouses, partners, and children. Other participants dined elsewhere. The organized dinners were notable in their effect: no one could imagine at Padua that at Trento we would have such an empowered generation meeting one another for the first time, dining together, and conversing cross-culturally during that remarkable evening in Trento.

Our sixth target group were all the senior theological ethicists. Whether they would be plenary speakers or simple participants, we wanted them there: Soosai Arokiasamy, Sergio Bastianel,³⁹ Benezet Bujo, Roger Burggraeve, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Enrico Chiavacci, Charles Curran, Klaus Demmer,⁴⁰ Margaret Farley, Raphael Gallagher, Christine Gudorf, Peter Henriot, Brian Johnstone, Kevin Kelly, Terrence Kennedy, Laurenti Magesa, Karl Wilhelm Merks, Enda McDonagh, Antonio Moser, Anne Nasimiyu, Anne Patrick, Philip Schmitz, Thomas Shannon, Paul Valadier,⁴¹ and Marciano Vidal. They all came.

Finally, the seventh group: after Padua where we received considerable support from Archbishop Mattiazzo and from the Fondazione Lanza, we realized the need to establish a “local” committee in Trento; we saw that if we were to be in Trento, we had to be with the Trentini. With Autiero’s assistance out of the Fondazione Bruno Kessler, we began in 2007 to meet annually with a group of church, civic, and academic leaders. This bridge-building opened doors we never anticipated.

First, Archbishop Bressan rallied to our needs. He gave us the seminary for all our concurrent sessions and housed there more than 20 senior theologians who were hindered in their walking. He offered us several churches and chapels for daily liturgies. As my assistants, Toni Ross, Vicini, and Chan were trying to secure visas for nearly 300 of our participants, the

³⁹ See Sergio Bastianel, *Morality in Social Life*, trans. Liam Kelly (Miami: Convivium, 2010); and with Donatella Abigente, *La vie del bene: Oggettività, storicità, intersoggettività* (Trapani: Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, 2009).

⁴⁰ See Klaus Demmer, *Living the Truth: A Theory of Action*, trans. Brian McNeil (Washington: Georgetown University, 2010).

⁴¹ Paul Valadier, *La part des choses: Compromis et intransigence* (Paris: Lethielleux, 2010).

archbishop facilitated the process by writing to nuncios in the Philippines, India, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. He hosted a dinner for the hierarchy and benefactors. And above all, he led us in the eucharistic liturgy at the Cathedral.⁴²

Second, from the Autonomous Province of Trento, Lia Beltrami and her assistant, Marilena DeFrancesco, hosted an opening buffet reception for 600 people at the Castle of Bernardo Clesio, the archbishop who opened the Council of Trent. They also funded our coffee breaks during which participants could meet and talk in a relaxed atmosphere. They helped us secure state-of-the-art auditoriums and split the costs for providing simultaneous translation in English, French, Italian, and Spanish for each plenary session. They greatly facilitated our contacts within the city and province.

Another local committee member was Flavio Zuelli, the former president of the University of Trento. He heard of our offer to support participants from the developing world as well as the new scholars, and on behalf of the University he gave us outright 220 individual rooms in a new dormitory, each with bath and balcony.

At one meeting the head of the Trentini industrialist society said that he would cover all the expenses for our closing supper. At another meeting the head of the provincial tourist office offered guided tours of the historic city. Through the generosity of ATISM and Bishop Golser, we were provided free bus transportation to and from the airport of Verona, some 70 miles away. And finally, the students of the University of Trento, learning that so many of their heroes in ethics were coming, offered hospitality at the airport, on the buses, and at the conference. The conference became an event for participants and residents alike.

This event-character was especially in evidence on July 25 at the regularly scheduled Sunday evening Eucharist, where Archbishop Bressan remarked that not since the Council of Trent had so many theologians gathered together in the cathedral. Then, with about 400 regular Trentini worshipping with us, I had the occasion to tell them a little bit about us. Italy has more than 100 trained theological ethicists, but few are laypersons and fewer still are women. I invited the people of Trent to see that in our group, the face of moral theology was changing. Though nearly half of us were priests, there were at least 200 ethicists who were religious sisters and laywomen. I noted that 40 years ago, there were no women theological ethicists. Then I added, "Do you notice all the children here? The young men and women holding them are their parents, and these parents too are among the new generation of moral theologians." The Trentini broke out in warm and sustained applause.

⁴² See his comments in *Revista diocesana tridentina* 136.7–8 (2010) 1–10; and in *From Trento to the Future*.

THE CONFERENCE

We now know about who was at the conference, its opening and closing sessions, its walking tours, its dinners, and coffee breaks, its liturgies, its planners, and its sponsors. Still, there was much more about the conference, like what was presented, what was learned, and what was resolved.⁴³

At Trento, we had 30 plenary presenters and 240 concurrent presenters.⁴⁴ Among the latter were four sessions where one could choose from 20 different panels of three presenters. Let me describe some panels within just one session. On one panel entitled “Refugees, Immigration, and National Sovereignty,” David Hollenbach (United States) spoke on the responsibility to protect;⁴⁵ Gemma Cruz (the Philippines) spoke on a Catholic ethics of risk for immigration reform;⁴⁶ and Anna Rowlands (United Kingdom) addressed the issue of subsidiarity and asylum. On another panel, three U.S. professors, Patricia Beattie Jung, Susan Ross, and John McCarthy, spoke on what evolutionary biology is bringing to sexual diversity.⁴⁷ Since the panels were differentiated by language (English, French, Italian, and Spanish), one of the Italian panels featured Italy’s Giovanni Del Missier, Brazil’s Rogerio Gomes, and Argentina’s Maria Martha Cuneo discussing vulnerability and bioethics, a topic that French scholar Vincent Leclerq had already developed.⁴⁸

During another session three speakers spoke on HIV/AIDS: Mary Jo Iozzio (United States), Lillian Dube (Zimbabwe), and Uzochukwu Jude Njoku (Nigeria). During that session, there were panels on economics, the right to food, the common good, dying, human rights, bioethics, global sustainability and the personal life, children as moral agents,⁴⁹ and teaching casuistry and truth-telling. Sixteen presentations were on virtue ethics (pace, Christopher Steck), and though all were in English, the presenters

⁴³ About 40 different published reports on the conference, from the *National Catholic Reporter*, the *Tablet*, *America*, *Radio Vaticana*, *Avvenire*, and *La Croix*, can be downloaded at http://www.fbk.eu/from_trento_to_the_future.

⁴⁴ Bibliographical information on the roughly 80 concurrent papers that will be published can be found at <http://www.catholicethics.com>.

⁴⁵ David Hollenbach, “Human Intervention: Why, When, and How,” *Commonweal* 137.19 (November 5, 2010) 9–11.

⁴⁶ Gemma Cruz, “Toward an Ethic of Risk: Catholic Ethics and Immigration Reform,” *Studies in Christian Ethics* (forthcoming).

⁴⁷ See Patricia Beattie Jung and Anna Maria Vigen, eds., *God, Science, Sex, and Gender: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Christian Sexual Ethics* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 2010).

⁴⁸ Vincent Leclerq, A.A., *Blessed Are the Vulnerable: Reaching Out to Those with AIDS* (New London, Conn.: Twenty-Third Publications, 2010).

⁴⁹ On this panel was Mary M. Doyle Roche; see her *Children, Consumerism, and the Common Good* (New York: Lexington, 2009).

came from Belgium, Germany, Nigeria, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.⁵⁰

Among the plenary sessions, besides the opening one on interreligious dialogue, all were organized as follows: the first day considered the past; the second the present; and the third the future. Here I describe only the first day. Concerning the past, Italy's Paolo Prodi enunciated twelve compelling points on the Council of Trent. Kenya's Laurenti Magesa gave one of the conference's most stirring talks, arguing that the Council of Trent had formed the African church to remain first and foremost a tridentine church. Regina Ammicht-Quinn (Germany) spoke on the experience of loss and shame in the church. While Diego Alonso-Lasheras (Spain) spoke on the relationship between history and moral theology,⁵¹ Roger Burggraeve (Belgium) saw personal history as foundational for building a sexual ethics. Anne Nasimiyu (Kenya) discussed the account of history and missing women's voices in Africa, and Bryan Massingale (United States) delivered a memorable lecture entitled "The Systemic Erasure of the Black/Dark Body in Catholic Ethics."⁵²

⁵⁰ While this note is not reviewing other works of this year, I would be negligent not to highlight the following significant works on virtue in the past 18 months: Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2008); Maureen H. O'Connell, *Compassion: Loving Our Neighbor in an Age of Globalization* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2009); Lisa Fullam, *The Virtue of Humility: A Thomistic Apologetic* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2009); Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, *Receptive Human Virtues: A New Reading of Jonathan Edwards's Ethics* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania, 2010); Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., and James F. Keenan, S.J., *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010); M. Cathleen Kaveny, "Imagination, Virtue, and Human Rights: Lessons from Australian and U.S. Law," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) 109–39; Daniel Daly, "The Relationship of Virtues and Norms in the *Summa Theologiae*," *Heythrop Journal* 51 (2010) 214–29; Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, "Virtuous Assent and Christian Faith: Retrieving Stoic Virtue Theory for Christian Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 30 (2010) 117–40; Patrick Clark, "Is Martyrdom Virtuous? An Occasion for Rethinking the Relation of Christ and Virtue in Aquinas," *ibid.* 141–60; Edward Collins Vacek, S.J., "Vices and Virtues of Old age Retirement," *ibid.* 161–82; James F. Keenan, S.J., "Virtue, Grace, and the Early Revisionists of the Twentieth Century," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23 (2010) 365–80; Angela McKay Knobel, "Can Aquinas's Infused and Acquired Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?," *ibid.* 381–96; Paul J. Wadell, "An Itinerary to Glory: How Grace Is Embodied in the *Communio* of Charity," *ibid.* 431–47. See also Patricia Lamoureux and Paul J. Wadell, *The Christian Moral Life: Faithful Discipleship for a Global Society* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2010).

⁵¹ See Diego Alonso-Lasheras, *Justice as Virtue in an Economic Context: De Iustitiae et Iure from Luis de Molina* (Brill, forthcoming).

⁵² Elsewhere see Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2010); "Vox Victimarum, Vox Dei: Malcolm X as

My favorite paper was a closing presentation by Julie Clague (United Kingdom). Her first section was a little play entitled, “Gender and Moral Theology: A Love Story.” She began by setting up the scene:

Location: A bar somewhere in Trento.

Gender and Moral Theology are coming up to their 50th anniversary. For their friends it was an unlikely relationship. And like many that began back in the heady days of the 1960s, it was a tempestuous affair when they first met—but they do say, opposites attract!

I ran into them soaking up the sun in Trento and, over a spritz, decided to find out how they were getting along these days. They looked happier than I had ever seen them. Moral Theology was certainly larger than he was back then. He had lost the awkward arrogance of youth, and was looking older and wiser. Gender had retained her good looks and waspish sense of humour, but something about her had changed too. She'd had it tough back then. Now she seemed more centred and content than I had seen her in a long time.

“Look at you two! You look great! It is so good to see you both thriving after all these years. Who could have predicted that you two oddballs would stick together!” . . .

The paper was extraordinarily well received—by almost all; a few felt that it ridiculed the earlier work of moral theologians in the field. And here I close.

I think we learned many lessons at Trento, above all something about our vocation. We theological ethicists are by nature critical: our vocation is based on the premise that we are needed because things are not as they should and could be. As the critics and reformers of society and church, we seek to practically bridge the gulf between who we are and who we can be. We always begin, then, with the premise that there is a deficit in our location, and, therefore, we need together to find a way of improving.

Often when church leaders or church laity hear presentations by ethicists, they wonder why we are not more positive. We cannot be: by nature we are teleologists: we aim at a better future. Not surprisingly, then, at our final session complaints were raised—above all: “why did not Archbishop Marx stay for questions?!” Others responded, “It was about time ethicists sat and listened to archbishops!” It took Linda Hogan, Antonio Autiero, and me nearly 30 minutes to insist that the decision to not take questions was ours, not his, a decision mandated by time constraints. Later, at the closing dinner, in the farewell address, Charles Curran admonished all of us for not being more critical!⁵³

We ethicists believe that we must find the truth, and in part that means naming what is lacking, not yet seen, understood, or articulated. It also

Neglected ‘Classic’ for Catholic Theological Reflection,” *Catholic Theological Society of America: Proceedings of the Sixty-fifth Annual Convention* 65 (2010) 63–88.

⁵³ Charles E. Curran, “We Cannot Put Our Heads in the Sand,” *National Catholic Reporter*, September 7, 2010, <http://ncronline.org/print/20049>.

means being aware of those not heard, rejected, oppressed, or abandoned. We are called to read the signs of the times as they actually are. Still, we are not an unhappy lot of nay sayers. On the contrary, to do what we do, we need to listen, dream, imagine, cajole, and laugh at ourselves; anticipating discord and hoping for better outcomes, we are fairly resilient, sanguine, and affable, as we were throughout the conference.

What I found on my way to, and at, Trento,⁵⁴ is precisely what the young women scholars from Africa said to me as the conference closed. “Jim, we are so surprised that we actually belong to something so big, so dedicated, and so dynamic.” At Trento, we discovered our catholic vocation.

⁵⁴ James F. Keenan, S.J. “Impasse and Solidarity in Theological Ethics,” *Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings* 64 (2009) 47–60.