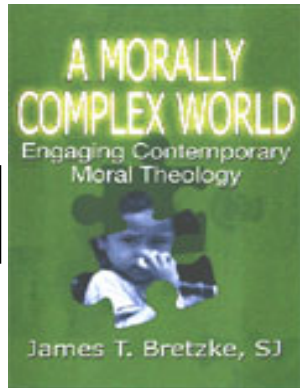
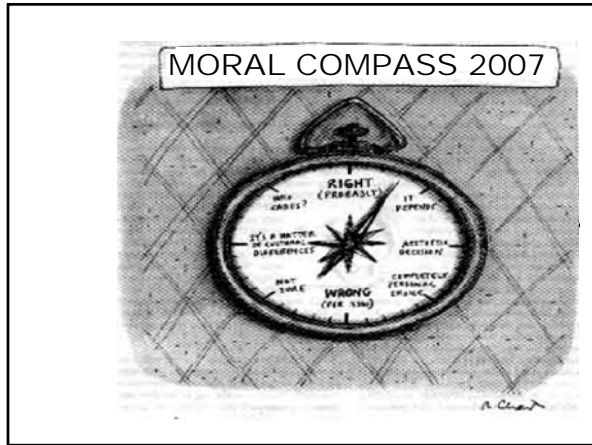
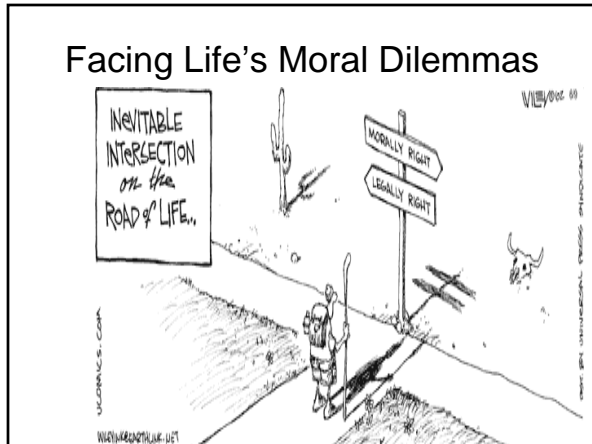


Discipleship & Discernment
In a →

Presented by
Rev. James T.
Bretzke, S.J., S.T.D.





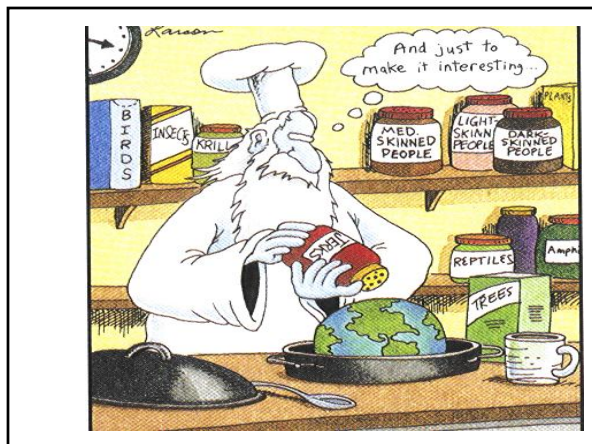


Some Starting Questions

- Who Do We See Ourselves To Be?
- How Do We Look Upon God?
- How Do We Consider Right & Wrong?
- How Do We Consider Sin?
- What Should Our Response To Sin Be?
- How Do We Live In The World?

Community of Disciples

- We are all called, individually, to enter into this community of followers of Jesus Christ
- Look at the picture of the disciples in the Gospels
 - Not the “best and the brightest”
 - But chosen by the Lord, and those who in the last analysis remain with him,
 - And who are called to be fishers of persons and entrusted by Jesus with the Church’s mission to make disciples of all nations



Fishers of Persons

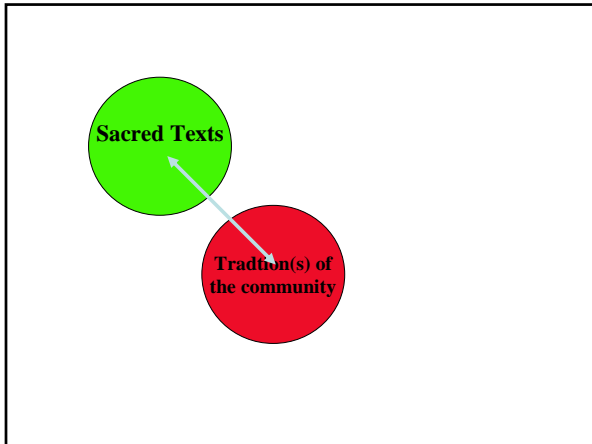
- What does it mean to “catch” someone?
- Not in the web of sin, but in the net of God's grace
- Thus, the primary Gospel response to sin and injury is *not* punishment and retaliation, but forgiveness and reconciliation.
- St. Paul speaks of this as being a “ministry” of the Church, and in this spiritual ministry we are all “ambassadors of Christ” (cf. 2 Cor 5: 18-21).

The Early Christian Community

- Early Tensions
- Christian Identity and the Moral Life
 - New Creation in Christ
 - Discipleship Community
- Efforts of the Church to Live a Gospel-Grounded Spirituality

Sources & Methodology for Moral Theology

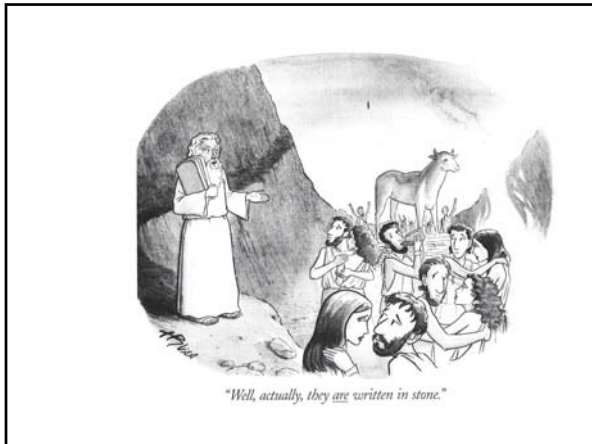
- Scripture: The Sacred Text
- Tradition: The wisdom of the community
- Human Experience
- Rational Reflection on the Truly Human

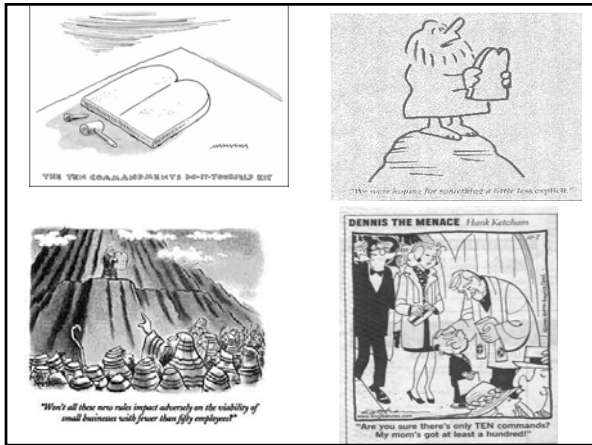


Sacred Claim Axis

- Scripture, as the revealed Word of God, must exercise a normative "sacred" claim on individual Christians and the whole Christian community
- However, this claim is grounded in the tradition of the community, and must also be in essential harmony with reason and human nature.







Scriptural Axis Cuts Both Ways

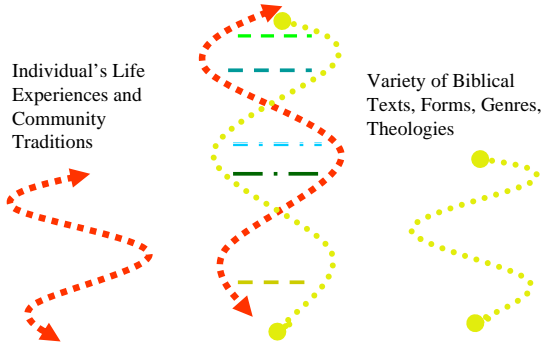
- Scripture comes out of the Tradition of the community, but it acts as the “norming norm” *norma normans* on both the individual and the community. No one stands above the Scripture (cf. ***Dei verbum*** #10)
- Both the individual and the community must seek and follow God
- This does *not* demand “perfection” of us, but rather ongoing conversion; We are all members of a Church always in need of and being reformed (*ecclesia semper reformanda*), or as Vatican II stressed, the Pilgrim People of God.

Attend to the Sacred Claim with True Discernment of Spirits



Multi-Strand Double Helix Model of Scripture and Ethics

Individual's Life
Experiences and
Community
Traditions



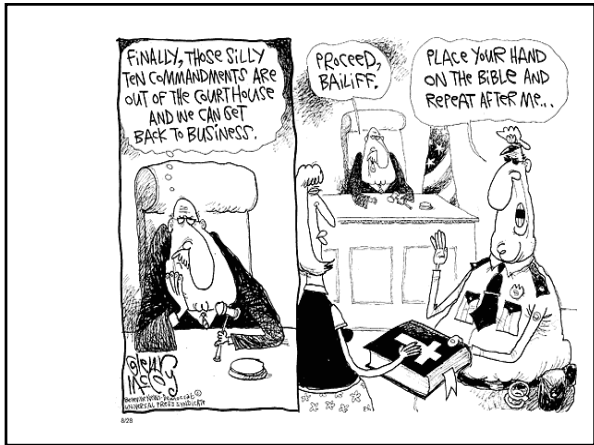
Variety of Biblical
Texts, Forms, Genres,
Theologies

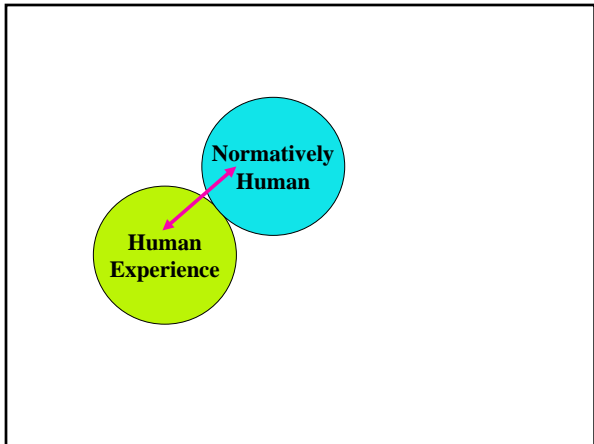
Intersections Between Scripture and Experience

Sacred Claim vs. Sacred Cow

- The Scriptures are not “stand alone” sources
- If they purport to reveal God's will for humankind, then what they reveal must stand in harmony with true human flourishing
- Some examples...
- Need to attend to the ultimate reference point of Scripture, which is God-with-us







Rational Claim Axis

- Since the Roman Catholic view of moral agency is grounded *primarily* in an understanding of the natural law we begin our consideration along the “Rational Claim” axis
- However, keep in mind that both poles of this axis *must* figure in the discussion, and that the starting point is in human experience

The Rational Axis Also Cuts Both Ways

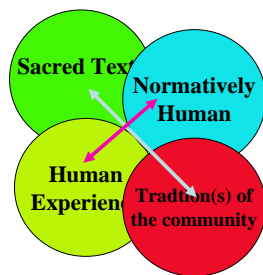
- Our reflection often *begins* based on human experience; but once we can establish a principle as being normatively human it does bind on us as a *norma normans [non] normata* moral norm
- However, given that key aspects of human nature include culture and historicity, any moral principle must be tested, verified, retested, and refined according to human experience, which may change according to time and/or place

The Rational Claim Takes Effort



And Community Dialogue

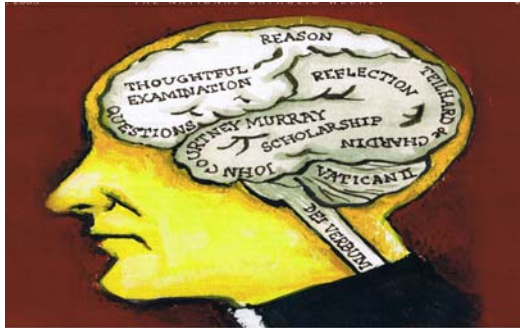




Summary of the Moral Sources

- The Sacred Claim Axis
 - Scripture
 - Tradition
- The Reason Claim Axis
 - Data from Human Experience
 - Understanding of Normatively Human
- Both Axes Operate in Each Person

But Are The Sources So Neat?!



Source Content Questions

- What is *used*, and why?
- What is *ignored*, and why?
- What is *rejected*, and why?
- What is *reinterpreted*, and why?
- Which source(s) is (are) **decisive** when there is a conflict, and why?

Discipleship & Discernment

- In moral conflict situations:
 - i.e., in cases when one is confronted with the dilemma of having two or more "evils,"
 - one must always choose the lesser evil, or when faced with two or more options which seem to be good, then one must choose the better one.
- Ignatius of Loyola would call this the *Magis*:
what gives *greater* glory to God

A Last Reminder

- The foregoing discussion has been situated largely along the “Rational Claim” axis, moving from human experience to an understanding of the normatively human
- Both poles of this axis (human experience and reason) are indispensable
- However, for Christians, the Sacred Claim axis of Scripture and Tradition must also play a role in our moral reasoning.

Recall Our Methodology of Moral Theology



What Might Shift?

- If we move to integrate the Sacred Claim Axis, what might change?
- Different emphases?
- Different insights?
- Different pastoral responses?



Neither the Answers Nor the Processes Are Simple....

- Need for genuine search for the truth
- Need for openness to the Spirit *wherever* it moves
- Need for prayer
- Need for dialogue

