Axioms for Moral Theology

Chapter One: The Walk From the Font

- Intro story
- The Baptismal Question
- Baptism and the Moral Life
- Moral Theology and Pastoral Care
- The City of God

1. Moral theology is about a life of holiness. After baptism, we seek to walk "in holiness and righteousness all our days." In moral theology we seek to describe and commend a life worthy of our calling. (chapter 1)
2. Moral theology is properly considered under the heading of sanctification, not justification. It is part of our walk from the font. Doing good will not save us; we do the good because we have been saved. (chapter 1)
3. Moral theology is not the same thing as, but is intimately related to, pastoral care. Moral theology begins with the consideration of generic principles; pastoral care begins with the consideration of a particular situation. (chapter 1)
4. Church conventions and other legislative gatherings do not "make" the church's moral theology. Instead, they face the challenge of applying its moral principles to community legislation and discipline. (chapter 1)

Chapter Two: Seeking to Live a Good Life

- Words from an Advent hymn
- What are Ethics?
- Two Views of Ethics
- Where Do We Find the Good?
- Applying the Three Approaches
- The Role of Salvation History
- Four Ways of Responding Pastorally and Theologically

5. Moral theology has two primary reference points: creation and scripture. Moral theology looks both to the world and our experience of life together within it, and to scripture and our tradition of reasoned reflection based upon it, as sources of moral principles. (chapter 2)
6. Moral theology works in light of an understanding of the four principal phases of salvation history: creation, fall, redemption, and the end of all things in Christ. (chapter 2)
7. In coming to agreement concerning the pattern of life that is worthy of the calling, Anglicans have looked for consensus. We have the greatest degree of assurance for what has been most widely received. (chapter 2)
8. Anglicans have looked for consensus in several interrelated spheres: the praying community of the church throughout the world; the wider community of the Body of Christ through history; and the academic community, when its work is founded upon Christian principles. (chapter 2)

Chapter Three: The Book of Nature

- An experience on the rim of the Grand Canyon
    - Where do Christians find their moral principles?
- Reading the Book of Nature
- A Glorious Gospel
- Interpreting the Book of Nature
- Morality and the Book of Nature

9. All people, whether they are Christian or not, can receive moral knowledge through the "general revelation" of the Book of Nature. This is not to say that all people will do so, or that they will choose to act on such knowledge. (chapter 3)

Chapter Four: The Book of Scripture

- A film image from the original movie, *Jumangi*
    - Bible as 'object' and as 'subject;' literalism and relativism; private reading and public reading of Scripture
- The distinctiveness of Christian Ethics
- The Jesus We Meet in Scripture
- Following the Jesus We Meet in Scripture
- Being in Christ in the Church

10. Anglicans distinguish between moral knowledge, which is revealed to everyone through the Book of Nature, and saving knowledge, which is mediated through the "special revelation" of the Book of Scripture . Saving knowledge shapes life after baptism in such a way as to leave both continuity and discontinuity between the moral knowledge possessed by Christians and that of other people and traditions. (chapter 4)

Chapter Five: Laws, Manners, and Moral Principles

- A film image from the movie, *The Fugitive*
    - A conflict (?) between three different ways of determining right conduct
- The Will of God and the Will of Human Communities
- Describing and Telling
- Moral Accountability—To Whom?
- Principles and Policies
- Discerning our Moral Principles

11. The church may adopt one of two postures concerning the relationship between the gospel and the world: it may hold the world up to judgment, or it may witness to the gospel under whose judgment it also stands. (chapter 5)
12. The church speaks best to moral principles when it speaks about them descriptively rather than prescriptively . Describing the moral good invites others to discover its beauty; prescribing the moral good may cause others to feel defensive and suspect us of hypocrisy. (chapter 5)
13. Commonly held principles may nevertheless give rise to differing implementations in terms of policy and practice. Just because we agree on our principles does not mean we will agree on how we should live them. (chapter 5)

Chapter Six: Sin, Character, and Conscience

- Two troubling examples: Columbine and a Liverpool mall
- Act and Character
- Life East of Eden
- Acts, Character, and Virtue
- Maps of the Soul
- The Question of Conscience [Pinocchio and other metaphors]
- Freedom in Christ

14. Acts shape character, and character shapes acts. Character is the disposition to act in particular ways. Individual acts are the building blocks of habits, and habits are the material of dispositions to act in particular ways. (chapter 6)
15. As a gift of creation, all people share a basic disposition to seek the good, but as a result of the fall we seek to rule ourselves . These basic dispositions give rise to the specific dispositions we call the natural moral virtues and the vices that shape moral action. (chapter 6)
16. Moral conscience involves the whole person, both thinking and feeling. It also involves the interrelated acts of reflection upon, and deliberation toward, moral action. Conscience must be followed, but conscience must also be educated. (chapter 6)

Chapter Seven: Love in Acts, Rules, and Principles

- The example of the food bank: love and rules
- The Exercise of Conscience
- The Gap Between Principles and Practice [Casuistry & the Four Ways]
- Love, Discernment, and Judgment
- The Meanings of an Act

17. Conscience both discerns generic moral principles, and applies them to particular circumstances. The act of applying generic principles to particular situations is called casuistry. (chapter 7)
18. Moral principles, norms, or rules are always generic, even when they become more and more specific; they must still be individually applied to particular situations. No matter how specific moral principles or rules become, we must still engage in a personal exercise of conscience. (chapter 7)
19. Anglican moral theology has tended to take the approach of an idealist or a purist at the level of principle, and a gradualist approach at the level of policy and practice in the church's pastoral life. We should not water down the claims of the gospel upon us, while we should remember that Christian life involves stages of growth. (chapter 7)
20. Principles of moral theology that are received from the tradition enjoy the benefit of the doubt when challenged by new interpretations or proposals. This does not preclude change; it only guides how change must come about if we are to honor the good of public order in our communities. (chapter 7)
21. If the articulation of Christian ethics is limited to particular situations, it risks being based on something less than a full range of moral principles. When we focus on particular situations, we must remember to ask what kinds of circumstances these situations exemplify. (chapter 7)

Chapter Eight: Building a Case in Christian Ethics

- An observation about how we tend to proceed: heated debate about issues
- Offer a method for further conversation, and deliberation
- Step One: Identifying and Clarifying the Topic
- Step Two: Analyzing and Reflecting on Resources and Materials
- Step Three: Generalizing and Coming to Some Conclusions
- Conclusion

22. Anglican moral theology is most compelling when it seeks to build a case for a particular approach to an ethical question or issue. We can seek to commend an existing consensus for an approach to an issue or, through reasoned persuasion, we can seek to establish such a consensus where one does not yet exist. (chapter 8)

Holmgren, Stephen (2000-01-25). Ethics After Easter (New Church's Teaching Series). Cowley Publications. Kindle Edition.

ETHICS AFTER EASTER ~ SUPPLEMENTAL DISCUSSION POINTS

- ETHICS ~ How to think about how to act / Christian Ethics ~ How to think about how to act as a person baptized into the Death and Resurrection of Jesus
- Natural Birth (or Biological) Identity, with our focus on individuation and personal distinctiveness, and, Ecclesial (or Baptismal) Identity, with our focus on what is shared and common (One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One Spirit ~ and, hence, One Common Life shaped toward our Common End)
- Consensus is to be distinguished from numerical majority, legislative process, etc
- The Book of Nature ~ a conviction that, in some fundamental way, 'morality' is rooted in 'reality' / 'reality' transcends 'actuality;' that is, reality transcends what is immediately apparent to us, especially as individuals
- Laws, Manners and Moral Principles have facets that allow us to receive some overlap between them, and some clear differences between them, in terms of how they function, their source of 'authority,' and the way they are 'enforced'
- Principles may be shared between people of differing theological views, and of differing political orientations or affiliations. Principles may give rise to, and be expressed within various policy initiatives and enactments ~> shared principles do not always or even often give rise to shared policies
- Chapter Two, on the Book of Nature, and Chapter Six, on Sin, Character and Conscience, highlight two of the most important areas in the Church's tradition of moral reflection. The terms, Natural Law, as well as that of Conscience, have the strength of widespread recognition, but also have the limitation of having at least sometimes been employed in polemical and or partisan ways; alternative terms referring to the same or related ideas may often be beneficial
- 'Rules,' 'Casuistry' and 'Judgement,' as formal terms, share some of the limitations noted in the bullet point above
- Be sure to try to understand what issues were/are involved in so-called "Situational Ethics"

- The "that" / "what" distinction: parallel to the distinction between what is true 'in principle' as compared with what is true 'in practice.' ~> *That* we know moral principles are latent with the structure of Creation does not mean that necessarily agree *what* they are; and, the latter does not count agains the truth of the former