
WALKING WITH JESUS CHRIST

Catholic *and* Evangelical Visions
of the Moral Life



edited by
Steven Hoskins *and* Christian D. Washburn



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Dedicated to Bonn Clayton and Bishop Arthur Kennedy

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Foreword

IN THE FOREWORD of the first book published by the national Evangelical-Catholic dialogue, *Justified in Jesus Christ*, my predecessor as Catholic chair of the dialogue, Bishop John Gaydos, and the Evangelical chair, Mr. Bonn Clayton, began by recalling “In the early 1980s, several Christian groups were promoting moral and ethical issues in the Minneapolis, MN area. Interestingly, almost all the participants in these groups were either Evangelicals and Catholics.” Subsequent to a thorough reflection upon the nature of soteriology and justification in its first formal round, the second round of conversations brought the group of Catholic and Evangelical scholars back to those same issues which gathered them together in the first place. The volume you hold in your hand is the product of prayerful reflection, scholarly research, and rigorous dialogue about Christian ethics between Evangelical and Catholic theologians who are committed to being of service to Christians across denominational boundaries here in the United States.

We read in the first letter of John, “Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth” (3:18). This text is an invitation from some of the brightest minds in Catholic and Evangelical communities to walk with Jesus Christ. It was an abundant blessing to witness their commitment to the Lord Jesus as they shared the wisdom of their faith traditions with each other. All of them share a common concern for the good of our society, fidelity to the Lord, and the salvation of souls. Despite those moments when there were clear differences of opinion expressed, a spirit of deep respect and fraternity prevailed over all of the dialogue meetings. Each session was an experience of Christian community that included prayer, laughter, and serious study. It was a sheer joy to participate in the meetings.

The authors of this book wrote with the hope that our Christian communities might come closer together so that more of us might be able to experience the joy of walking together with Jesus Christ. In a society which seems to be moving away from what we hold in common in regard to morals and ethical values, the work of Christian unity has become more urgent than ever.

The concerns addressed in this volume will not only aid the reader in understanding the ways of thinking that inform Evangelical and Catholic moral principles, but also touch on some of the most discussed issues of our age, including social responsibility, human sexuality, and the implications of our moral living for our eternal destiny. Undoubtedly, an engaging reading experience awaits anyone fortunate enough to pick it up.

While reading the text itself will give one a deeper understanding of Evangelical and Catholic views on these matters, I would urge you to go a step further. The convergences described were formulated as a result of serious dialogue and at times intense discussions. This book is an opportunity to continue the conversation. It can be used as a tool to facilitate further dialogue in a variety of contexts. Should you find it useful, perhaps you would consider introducing it to your congregation? Perhaps an inspired reader might start a book discussion group, deliberately seeking out both Catholics and Evangelicals to join. This book could also be shared with local ecumenical clergy associations for discussion. There are many ways in which one could continue the conversations that were begun during the dialogue and culminated in this book.

Just as with the last volume, this text gains its authority exclusively from the knowledge, experience, and reputations of the authors themselves. None of them intended to speak in an official capacity for their churches/faith communities/institutions, nor have their churches given any type of public endorsement of this book. These pastors, theologians, and scholars speak for themselves. Nevertheless, the wisdom they bring to these conversations speaks for itself and is undoubtedly most valuable.

There were many hands that went into the completion of this text who should be recognized and thanked. We are grateful to Archbishop

Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis for his encouragement and hospitality. Msgr. James P. Shea and the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, kindly offered space and support for many of the meetings of the dialogue. The generosity of St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity in St. Paul, Minnesota, and its Rector Rev. Joseph Taphorn, provided a space and support for our last meeting and also the gifts of its publishing house for this text. We are also indebted to Erika Zabinski, Maggee Hangge, Judy Gilats, and Gretchen K. Washburn for their patience and skill as editors of the final text.

May the good Lord bless all of those who contributed to the dialogue and this text so that we might witness a deepening of unity between Christians and a society that embraces the call of Christ for us to love one another as He has loved us.

Bishop David D. Kagan

Bishop of Bismarck

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Rev. Bruce N. G. Cromwell, PhD

Superintendent

Great Plains and Mid-America Conferences

Free Methodist Church USA

Dialogue in Pursuit of the Moral Life: A Testimony of Ecumenical Friendship

“CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE, especially ecumenical dialogue, is a testament to friendship.”¹ So began the first book that published the efforts of the National Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue sponsored by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (2004–present). That book, *Justified in Jesus Christ*, served to give a short history of the dialogue and its proceedings, underscored by the intellectual friendship—in spirit and structure—that emerged in its meetings.

The dialogue began with informal meetings in the mid-1990s and took on official status with the USCCB in 2004. *Justified in Jesus Christ* reflected the gains of the dialogue that had been achieved through a series of preliminary meetings on matters doctrinal from 2003–2013 (Scripture, Atonement, the Church, etc.) that led to a four-year round of dialogues on the topic of Justification (2014–2017). This topic was completed as the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation was observed.

This book, *Walking with Jesus Christ: Catholic and Evangelical Visions of the Moral Life*, is composed in the same format as its predecessor and offers the work of the National Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue during its round on the moral life (2017–2021), completed in 2021 at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, MN. Sessions were held each year on the following topics. In 2017, the dialogue discussed the norms governing the moral life. In 2018, the dialogue discussed sexual ethics. In 2019, the dialogue discussed social ethics. Finally,

1. Steven Hoskins, “A Dialogue in Testament to Friendship,” 5–10 in *Justified in Jesus Christ: Evangelicals and Catholics in Dialogue*, eds. Steven Hoskins and David Fleischacker (Bismarck, ND: University of Mary Press, 2017), 5.

in 2021 the dialogue discussed the relationship of the moral life to eschatology. At each of the annual meetings, members presented background papers that formed the basis of that meeting's discussion and served as starting points for constructing a common statement. These common statements and background papers from dialogue participants on both sides make up this book.

The Catholic essays offered during the round of the dialogue begin with the contributions of Catholic theologians Daniel Keating, William Stevenson, and Christian D. Washburn, who examine the various norms for Catholic moral theology, including the role of Scripture, tradition, magisterium, and natural law (2017). David Fleischacker, Daniel Keating, and Christian D. Washburn then examine the morality of marriage, contraception, abortion, and homosexual acts (2018). Daniel Keating and William Stevenson next discuss social ethics, including Catholic social teaching and socialism (2019). Finally, David Fleischacker and Christian D. Washburn discuss the relationship of the moral life to our final beatific end (2021).

The Evangelical essays presented to the group begin with the contribution of Evangelical theologians Bruce Cromwell and Dennis Jowers, who explore the norms of Protestant ethics (2017). Luke Geraty discusses sexual ethics from the pastoral perspective of the Vineyard USA Church (2018). Glen Menzies and Steve Hoskins then evaluate approaches to Evangelical social ethics from Pentecostal and Wesleyan points of view (2019). Finally, Bruce Cromwell and Steve Hoskins discuss the notions of eschatology and ethics from a Wesleyan viewpoint (2021).

A few notes about the book are in order. The book includes the listing of those who participated in the dialogue sessions during 2017–2021. The Catholic participants were chaired by The Most Reverend David Kagan, Bishop of the Diocese of Bismarck, North Dakota. The Evangelicals were chaired by Bonn Clayton, a representative of the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference, with participants coming from a variety of churches and communions throughout the United States.

The meetings during this round of the dialogue also saw some necessary internal reorganizing of matters related to presentation

and leadership. Some of those changes included the creation of best practices for the dialogue agreed upon by both sides and the selection of Co-Chairs to assist the Chairs and the dialogue in its meetings. Father Walter Kedjierski, Executive Director of the Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the USCCB and The Reverend Bruce Cromwell, PhD, Superintendent of the Great Plains Conference for the Free Methodist Church, were chosen as Co-Chairs for the respective sides of the dialogue. This round of the dialogue also held its first virtual meeting in 2021 during the days of the Covid-19 pandemic, a difficult time for all of our churches, that brought with it significant challenges to the dialogue.

This book, and the changes noted above, are indicative of the dialogue's maturation as it has pursued the ideal inherent in its efforts since its genesis: a growing together of the mind and spirit that reaches toward understanding. The papers and common statements are indicative of ecumenical friendship. They do not spend much time on polemics or doctrinal triumphalism, the enemies of ecumenical work. Rather, they represent the highest ideals of an "ecumenical consciousness" that moves beyond polemics and into a respectful dialogue of shared beliefs, teachings, and confessions based on the pursuit and love of truth and signified by genuine friendship.² In doing so, this account of the dialogue is a testimony of the moral life required of all Christians, explored through a range of schools of thought in the Christian tradition, and it fulfills the charge of the Apostle Paul to "encourage one another and build one another up" as we live together in Christ (1 Thess 5:10-11).

This kind of friendship, and the moral life it demands, exists for those whose lives are oriented toward to the highest good. That good is God and God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It is in the pursuit of that good that we are met by God and grow in understanding of him and one another. Love for the truth that is God, the demands of witness

2. Albert Outler, "The Idea of 'Development' in the History of Christian Doctrine: A Comment," 7-14 in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Patrick Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 11; Cardinal Avery Dulles, "The Travails of Dialogue," 221-33 in *Church and Society: The Laurence J. McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 221.

and imitation of God's action in Christ, and the pursuit of the Christian moral life together are all necessary components of true dialogue. The members of the dialogue offer this book in that spirit and hope this book will provide a fruitful starting point for future conversations between Evangelicals and Catholics.

In this, we are indebted to those who began the work of this dialogue. The roots of the National Evangelical Dialogue reach back to meetings of ecumenical friends in Minneapolis-Saint Paul, MN sometime during the mid-1990s around a table where food and doctrine were shared by friends. The friends who chaired those earliest meetings and gathered their friends for the conversations were The Most Reverend Arthur Kennedy, now Retired Auxiliary Bishop of Boston, Massachusetts, and Bonn Clayton. It is to them that we dedicate this work.

Steven Hoskins, PhD

Trevecca Nazarene University

Christian D. Washburn, PhD

*Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity
University of St. Thomas*