result of this ever-mounting tide of cyber-data is an increasingly shallow and moodless engagement with reality. A distant and disengaged knowing about replaces more intimate forms of knowing; we neglect the personal, participatory kinds of knowledge that require more of us than the click of a mouse as we sit, in mass isolation, at our computer screens. “Surfing the Web,” Schultze avers, “becomes one of the most relevant metaphors for conducting our everyday lives.”

To counter the threat of informationism, Schultze proposes the virtue of moral discernment. We must cultivate the habit of discernment if we are to evaluate cyberculture truthfully, recover our moral telos, and recognize the proper subordination of instrumental technique to authentically human ends.

Schultze goes on to identify five other problem areas in cyberculture and the specific habits of the heart that they call for. We need moderation to temper our insatiable desire for information; humility—especially the wisdom of Jewish and Christian religious traditions—to counteract the shallow, cacophonous confusion of the cyberworld. Finally, we need to cultivate authenticity and “cosmic diversity,” to offset the disingenuousness and elitism of cyberculture.

Schultze concludes by asserting the utter necessity of organic—as distinct from cyber—communities. Cyberculture, Schultze argues, tends toward individualism, libertinism, and commercialism. It allows us to enter and exit online communities at will, with no tie to bind us but the sheer power of our own interests.

Instead, true community requires geographic proximity, where bonds of place supersede individual interest, and face-to-face communication engenders communion. Like de Tocqueville, Schultze regards local religious associations as one of the most important institutions in American society, where genuine community develops and virtuous habits are nurtured and passed on.

The habits of the heart that Schultze commends are certainly worth cultivating, and readers who have been pulled into the cyber-undertow that he describes may find the book a prophetic wake-up call. But what “we” actually believe, as he describes in detail what “we”—the undifferentiated and undiscriminating—think and do.

Schultze’s argument about real community may be compared profitably with The City of God (the text of which is available on-line), where Augustine writes: “A people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love … in order to discover the character of any people, we have only to observe what they love.”

Here we find intimations of a deeper problem in Schultze’s work. If people agree to the objects of their love, it is not the objects (cybertechnologies) that determine their
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Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges Between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology

Daniel Harrington, S.J. and James Keenan, S.J.

Lanham, Maryland: Sheed & Ward, 2002 (216 pages)

As a moral theologian who believes that Scripture is “the soul of theology,” I am familiar with the following problem: Moral theologians would like to draw from the ethical wellsprings of the Bible, but they think either that they are not competent to do so, or that the Bible itself is incapable of giving concrete guidance. In turn, many biblical scholars want to illuminate contemporary ethical problems but do not think that they are competent to do so because their historical-critical training ill-suits them to the task.

This book—co-authored by Scripture scholar Harrington and moral theologian Keenan—responds to the Second Vatican Council’s call for a biblically rooted moral theology, one which further integrates the two disciplines and moves away from the moral manuals’ emphasis on (natural) law and its inattention to Scripture (except as a “proof-text”). The book’s focus is to explore the ways that these two disciplines can be mutually beneficial to one another.

The authors approach their topic in each of the thirteen chapters (except the first) by discussing “Biblical Perspectives,” with particular attention to a key text in the Synoptics (context, content, significance), and then to the possibilities and problems that the various biblical perspectives might contribute to moral theology. Keenan’s contributions (“Moral Theological Reflections”) try to “build bridges” between his discipline and New Testament ethics. The authors claim that their approach is unique in its use of virtue ethics as a tool for conveying the content of the New Testament’s moral teaching. However, they caution that their book is simply a first step toward stimulating research, not the final word (see Introduction).

It is clear that the authors intend their work to be used by pastors, laity, and students in the classroom. Thus, we find helpful chapter summaries, questions for discussion, endnotes, and select bibliographies at the end of each chapter, as well as a glossary and an index (unfortunately, minus the scriptural texts). My review will give an overview and critique of the book’s contents, chapter by chapter.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of moral theology through seven periods and of more recent work in New Testament ethics. Although this chapter is valuable, especially in its call for “interdisciplinary cooperation” (13), it is marred by such statements that many bishops and popes of the late twentieth century “identified their moral teachings with the manualist method” (7). Pope John Paul II’s Veritatis Splendor (1993), for example, is far from a manualist approach in its use of Scripture and in its “personalist” concept of natural law. (The authors also display a slight bias in favor of focusing on character/virtue over against specific actions—which form character—in their understandable reaction against the manualists).

Chapter 2 treats questions of method both in biblical exegesis and moral theology. Harrington begins with Matthew 6:24 and Luke 16:13 (“You cannot serve God and wealth”) to illustrate the process of textual interpretation. The task of describing the significance of a biblical text is called “hermeneutics.” He notes that there is a debate about where the emphasis should lie: “with the horizon of the text or with the horizon of the interpreter?” (20). Harrington also describes the various approaches taken by recent New Testament scholars from whom he will draw. Keenan follows with his presentation of virtue ethics as the best method for building bridges between moral theology and the following: ascetical theology, liturgy, church life, and Scripture.

Chapter 3 answers the question: “Who are we called to become?” Hence, the kingdom of God is presented as the horizon and goal of Jesus’ ethics. It is well-taken by a vigilant Christian, as “the horizon should be the goal” (39). Drawing especially on the virtue thought of Aquinas, Keenan relates the kingdom of God with the idea of end (goal). He suggests the notion of “Christian idealism” as the best framework for describing the type of people that the kingdom of God calls us to become. Significant is Keenan’s affirmation that the kingdom is not simply motivational, as was common to say in moral theology in the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, he believes that Christian ethics is distinctive, because, “As morality’s end,” the kingdom “gives shape to the contents of Christian ethics” (43). He does not specify further, however, what is meant by this distinctiveness.

Chapter 4 answers the question: “Who are we?” The author’s answer: Disciples of Jesus. Although Harrington argues that it is difficult to “transfer” the first-century ideas