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## **SALVATION AND WELL-BEING**

### **TOWARDS A THEOLOGICALLY SOUND RELATION BETWEEN THE TWO CONCEPTS**

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#### **Summary**

The article attempts to draw attention to a theologically unjustified reduction of the concept of (human) well-being to the concept of salvation. Starting from the three premises – (1) the existence of relation between the concept of salvation and the concept of human well-being; (2) the situatedness of the concept of human well-being within the moral-ethical discourse and the situatedness of the concept of salvation within the religious-dogmatic discourse; (3) the claim that grace does not destroy (or that it presupposes) nature – the article first tries to elaborate on the difference between the concept of salvation and the concept of human well-being. After that, the author utilises three examples in order to demonstrate a real danger of reducing the concept of human well-being to the concept of salvation. Finally, the extended conclusion sketches a theologically more adequate relation between the two concepts.

*Key words:* Salvation, (human) well-being, moral theology, Covid-19, homosexuality, intrinsic evil.

#### **Introduction**

It is, undoubtedly, with a certain hesitation that any moral theologian would attempt to write about salvation and thereby risk encroaching on the domain of dogmatics, where he or she would quickly feel out of his or her depths. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there is a relation between the concept of

salvation and the concept of well-being – with which most moral theologians would be familiarised – although neither of them should be reduced to the other. That there is such a relation is one of the premises of this article. The second premise is that the concept of well-being is primarily associated with morality and reflection on morality (i.e., ethics) which means that it has to be necessarily conceptualised in reference to human well-being. As opposed to that, the concept of salvation is primarily a religious truth claim that only secondarily and analogously refers to human well-being, including goodness and/or rightness of acts. Finally, my third premise addresses the relation between salvation and well-being, which might perhaps best be conceived according to the well-known dictum of Aquinas that grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it or, simply put, that grace presupposes nature.<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that salvation should be exclusively associated with grace and well-being with nature, but instead points to the insight that both grace and nature, as well as salvation and well-being, have their own dynamics and are not to be understood only from the perspective of the other concept.

Taken together and under the condition that they are seriously adhered to, these three premises guard theological reflection and magisterial teaching from reducing the concept of well-being to the concept of salvation. Exploring the threat of that kind of reduction is the sole aim of this article, which, of course, is not to deny that the opposite reduction of salvation to well-being is also possible and, perhaps, quite wide-spread in the contemporary Western culture.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in the rest of the article, I will, first, try to explain what differentiates the discourse on well-being from the discourse on salvation. This will be followed by a brief exploration of the threat of reducing well-being to salvation through three examples of Covid-19 pandemics, homosexuality, and the adherence to the notion of intrinsic evil, whereby the first example will attempt to illustrate one of the forms that the aforementioned reduction can take, the second will show some of its effects, and the third will probe into one of its causes. I will then use insights based on these three examples

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas AQUINAS, *Summa theologiae*, at: <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.I.Q1.A8.C.3> (30. 10. 2023), pars. I, q. 1, a. 8, ad. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Reducing the notion of well-being to the notion of salvation fails to appreciate epistemologically that the world has its own autonomy and dynamics and, thus, risks either spiritualising the world or fostering a dualistic understanding of the world. On the other hand, reducing the notion of salvation to the notion of well-being refuses to acknowledge the epistemological and existential importance of any reality beyond the immanent reality of this world and, thus, risks understanding both salvation and human well-being as wellness, prosperity or some such notion. Both reductions exemplify an inadequate (theological) anthropology.

to sketch a way in which the concepts of salvation and well-being can be held within theology in a healthy tension.

## 1. Differentiation between the Concept of Human Well-Being and the Concept of Salvation

Admittedly, the concept of human well-being is not easy to define. Furthermore, there is a whole spectrum of often opposing ethical approaches, both theological and philosophical,<sup>3</sup> that attempt(ed) to offer a coherent notion of human well-being. What is, however, less controversial is that placing the notion of human well-being at the centre of ethical reflection aligns well with the realisation in both, contemporary philosophical ethics and moral theology, that insisting exclusively on normative ethics, focused primarily or exclusively on (behavioural) norms, offers a distortive and reductive view of morality.<sup>4</sup> That realisation was followed by re-discovery of virtue-ethics approaches in which the notions of happiness, human flourishing and well-being take the central stage.

While surveying various philosophical approaches to defining human well-being would prove challenging in terms of even their rudimentary categorisation, Catholic moral theology faces perhaps a somewhat easier task in developing a notion of human well-being, due to the fact that this discipline can count on the shared tradition of its proponents. Nevertheless, in terms of developing (further) the notion of human well-being, moral theology is charged with the task of continuous reflection on an adequate anthropology and an appropriate moral method. In looking for a basis or a fundamental starting point in developing such an anthropology, Catholic moral theologians do not have to look further than to the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*; that manifesto for contemporary moral theology, as Joseph Selling calls it.<sup>5</sup> In that document, theologians are taught that the »moral aspects of any

<sup>3</sup> For a number of examples, see Mauro ROSSI – Christine TAPPOLET, Virtue, Happiness, and Well-Being, in: *The Monist*, 99 (2016) 1, 112-127; Richard KRAUT, *What Is Good and Why. The Ethics of Well-Being*, Cambridge, 2007; William C. SPOHN, The Return of Virtue Ethics, *Theological Studies*, 53 (1992) 1, 60–75.

<sup>4</sup> See Elisabeth G. M. ANSCOMBE, Modern Moral Philosophy, in: *Philosophy*, 33 (1958) 1, 1-19; Michael G. LAWLER – Todd A. SALZMAN, *Catholic Theological Ethics. Ancient Questions, Contemporary Responses*, Lanham/Boulder/New York/Toronto/Plymouth, 2016, 159-188.

<sup>5</sup> See Joseph A. SELLING, *Gaudium et spes. A Manifesto for Contemporary Moral Theology*, in: Mathijs LAMBERIGTS – Leo KENIS (eds), *Vatican II and Its Legacy*, Leuven, 2002, 149.

procedure [...] must be determined by objective standards« and that these are »based on the nature of the human person and his [*sic*] acts.«<sup>6</sup> Taking this text and its official commentary as the starting point, some moral theologians adopted the criterion of 'the human person, adequately and integrally considered' as the measuring stick of any ethical approach or judgement, while offering a more developed accounts of personalism that the criterion implies.<sup>7</sup>

Although adopting personalism as the starting point of Catholic ethics is certainly not without its critics,<sup>8</sup> a more difficult challenge that the discipline has been facing since the Second Vatican Council is the question of method, i.e., of a legitimate way of bridging the gap between the presumed or accepted anthropology (including the notion of human well-being) and concrete ethical judgments and decision-making.<sup>9</sup> Reaching some sort of consensus on that issue is certainly beyond the task of this article and might plague the whole discipline for decades to come. However, what one can already show – which will be the task of the second part of this article – is that there are still widely-used approaches in the area of moral reflection within the Church that are difficult to reconcile with the previously mentioned course of development of this discipline, set by the Second Vatican Council.

Similarly to the discourse on human well-being, the discourse on salvation or soteriology also relies on an adequate anthropology. However, the latter is not overly interested in methodologically mediated judgements of practical reason that play a central role in the reflection on morality and are, therefore, co-determinative when it comes to defining moral goodness and rightness. This becomes quite evident as one ponders over the most important soteriological questions such as, »What is salvation?«, »How is one saved?«, and »From what is one saved?« – especially what is perhaps the most common answer the Christian tradition gives to the third question; namely, that we are saved from sin.<sup>10</sup> Although that answer reveals yet another point where the discourse on human well-being and the discourse on salvation share a com-

<sup>6</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes*, at: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) (30. 10. 2023), no. 51.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Louis JANSSENS, *Artificial Insemination. Ethical Considerations*, in: *Louvain Studies*, 8 (1980) 1, 4.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Brian JOHNSTONE, *From Physicalism to Personalism*, in: *Studia Moralia*, 30 (1992) 1, 71-96.

<sup>9</sup> See Paulinus I. ODOZOR, *Moral Theology in an Age of Renewal. A Study of the Catholic Tradition since Vatican II*, Notre Dame, 2003, 271-303.

<sup>10</sup> See Justin S. HOLCOMB, *Introduction*, in: Justin S. Holcomb (ed.), *Christian Theologies of Salvation. A Comparative Introduction*, New York, 2017, 1-7.

mon notion, the latter has to rely largely on the former when it comes to defining that notion. In other words, when the discourse on salvation utilises the notion of sin, it already presumes that it is known what constitutes a sin and that the issue of what is good or bad for a human being and what is right or wrong has already been settled, which then allows for that notion to be taken up into a more comprehensive soteriological account of what is God doing in the world.

## 2. Three Examples of Reducing the Concept of Well-Being to the Concept of Salvation

The first part of the article tried to show the inadvisability of merging the discourse on well-being and the discourse on salvation. In this part, I will proceed to demonstrate on the basis of three examples, where such merging seemed to have taken place to the detriment of both of these discourses.

### 2.1. Covid-19 Pandemics

It is commendable to see how quickly the universal Church and a good number of particular Churches reacted to Covid-19 pandemics that held the world in its grip for a number of years.<sup>11</sup> By recognising the urgency of the need to protect health in the general population and in the situation in which much was unknown about the virus, the Church issued statements supporting the vaccination efforts, called the faithful to respect general epidemiological measures and even limited or completely cancelled its own religious services in the physical form. There was, however, throughout this whole period a strong opposition within the Church towards, among other things, any kind of limiting of religious gatherings. One of the stated reasons for that opposition was that the good of salvation of souls is higher than the good of life and health and that, therefore, any measures aimed at the protection of the latter

<sup>11</sup> See THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines, at: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20201221\\_notavaccini-anticovid\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_notavaccini-anticovid_en.html) (31. 10. 2023); VATICAN COVID-19 COMMISSION – PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LIFE, Note of the Vatican Covid-19 Commission in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Life »Vaccine for all. 20 points for a fairer and healthier world«, 29.12.2020, at: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/12/29/201229c.html> (31. 10. 2023).

cannot be at the expense of the former.<sup>12</sup> On the basis of that, further practical and somewhat naïve conclusions were often drawn, according to which some expected or felt entitled to a special kind of God's protection, if they attended, for instance, a mass during the pandemics.

That kind of thinking is, of course, nothing new within the Church. Peter Brown, a Church historian, argues that in various periods of the Church history, the vertical often suppressed or completely replaced the horizontal.<sup>13</sup> By the vertical, Brown refers to a kind of understanding according to which the good of health, as well as any other good, is asked from above, as it were; that is, exclusively through prayer, intercession of saints, and perhaps even expectation of a miracle. In other words, through religious means that are primarily associated with spirituality or salvation. Related to that, the vertical, as it relates to health, often presupposed a strong link between illness and sin or God's punishment.<sup>14</sup> By the horizontal, as it relates to health, Brown has in mind the more common methods of both losing and restoring one's health, which are today primarily within the domain of medicine.

Coming back to the aforementioned link between illness and sin or God's punishment, on one hand, and Covid-19 pandemics, on the other, one might object that it was rarely, if ever, seriously argued during the last three years that the Covid-19 pandemics is God's punishment. Nevertheless, much was made of that link between illness and God's punishment during another fairly recent pandemics of AIDS, especially in its initial phase at the beginning of eighties of the last century.<sup>15</sup> This fairly recent example should make us hesitant to jump to conclusion that a major shift in that kind of religious mentality took place in the meantime or that the affirmation of the link between

<sup>12</sup> See Nedim BEGOVIĆ, Restrictions on Religions Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, in: *Journal of Law, Religion and State*, 8 (2020) 1, 228-250; Tudor-Cosmin CIOCAN – Christoph STUECKELBERGER, Religious Controversies in COVID-19 Restrictions, State, Science, Conspiracies: Four Topics with Theological-Ethical Responses, in: *Dialogo*, 6 (2020) 2, 168-185; Marian ELEGANTI, Kirche & Corona – Wie können wir hier nur vor der übernatürlichen Wirklichkeit kapitulieren?, at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpojupcS-2U&t=395s> (31. 10. 2023).

<sup>13</sup> See Peter BROWN, *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago, 1981; Peter BROWN, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1982.

<sup>14</sup> For more details on how that connection has been established and maintained in a particular time period, see Stephanie HÖLLINGER – Stephan GOERTZ, *Sebastian. Märtyrer, Pestheiliger, Queere Ikone*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien, 2023, 45-74.

<sup>15</sup> See Volker EID, »Strafe Gottes« und »Chance für eine bessere Lebenskultur?« AIDS aus der Sicht theologischer Ethik, in: Torsten KRUSE – Harald WAGNER (eds), *Anstöße für Unterricht und Gemeindegemeinschaft*, München, 1988, 31-41; Frank SANDERS, *AIDS als Herausforderung für die Theologie. Eine Problematik zwischen Medizin, Moral und Recht*, Essen, 2005, 107-126.

illness and God's punishment was exclusively related to that particular pandemics in the eighties. Instead, the link, it seems to me, is very much tied to the aforementioned vertical, as it relates to health, which means that it is never far away when that understanding is held by either an individual or groups. It can, however, take *other forms* and this is precisely what one saw also during the Covid-19 pandemics, when some held that nothing could happen to them health-wise as they attend to their religious duties. In other words, instead of being expressed in the form of affirming the link between illness and punishment of God, the same belief was affirmed in the form of linking health and God's blessing. In both cases, however, the vertical understanding of salvation largely overshadowed the horizontal understanding of health and well-being.

## 2.2. *Homosexuality in the Perspective of the Church's Magisterium*

My second example comes from the area of sexual ethics and strikes much closer to home, insofar as it demonstrates the overshadowing of well-being by salvation in the very teaching of the Church's magisterium. The example concerns homosexuality, while the aforementioned overshadowing manifests itself most clearly at two points in the document *Homosexualitatis problema*. The document was issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1986 and still represents the official position of the Church on homosexuality.

In number 2 of that document, its authors refer to the position of the magisterium on homosexuality and state: »It is a perspective which finds support in the more secure findings of the natural sciences, which have their own legitimate and proper methodology and field of inquiry.«<sup>16</sup> Put this way, it seems that the first part of that statement contradicts not only the second part, but also the teaching of the Vatican II (GS 36) on the autonomy of earthly affairs, including sciences.<sup>17</sup> Namely, the impression is left by that first part of the statement that »the more secure findings of the natural sciences« are deemed to be »more secure« not on the basis of scientific methodology that led to their discovery, but on the basis of whether they confirm the teaching of the magisterium.<sup>18</sup> Thus, one might suspect that in this area of sexual ethics the

<sup>16</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Homosexualitatis problema*, at: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19861001\\_homosexual-persons\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html) (30. 10. 2023), no. 2.

<sup>17</sup> See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Gaudium et spes*, no. 36.

<sup>18</sup> An alternative explanation of this particular statement of the document is that its authors were referring to older psychological studies on homosexuality that regularly held it to be an outcome of a pathological development. The scientific merit of such

vertical also overshadows the horizontal by dictating to the latter its own conclusions or pronouncing what its »more secure findings« are. Does this also mean that the concept of well-being, at least as far as scientific findings should be taken into account in the discourse on well-being, is overshadowed by the concept of salvation in this area of ethics as well?

In order to confirm that suspicion, one has to read further through the document until the number 12, where the question is posed: »What, then, are homosexual persons to do who seek to follow the Lord?« The question is then answered in the following way: »Fundamentally, they are called to enact the will of God in their life by joining whatever sufferings and difficulties they experience in virtue of their condition to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross.«<sup>19</sup>

It is important to notice that the so-called counsel of the cross that is offered in this place as the only viable way to both salvation and well-being is not simply forbidding homosexual persons to engage in sexual acts. Although this is in itself problematic, insofar as it would make homosexuals the only substantially large group in the world whose every member is born with an ability for a lifelong sexual abstinence, the main problem lies elsewhere. Namely, if the sexual orientation has to do with sexuality, and sexuality is a fundamental dimension of one's personality,<sup>20</sup> then how well a person is integrated and how well he or she can relate to others, depends not the least on the integration of one's own sexual orientation into one's own personality. That integration, one might imagine, is substantially hindered if not complete-

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studies was, however, already brought into question in the eighties of the twentieth century, when the document was published. This particular fact was, nevertheless, ignored by the authors of the document either because the newer studies were deemed not to be in congruence with the magisterial position on homosexuality or because the authors of the document believed that the older studies are more reliable than newer ones, thereby applying a principle that is perhaps valid when it comes to the magisterial teaching (i.e., all things being equal, what is tested by tradition has a higher value than what is an innovation or novelty) to an area (i.e., science), where usually the opposite is the case (i.e., newer studies are generally considered more reliable, more scientifically true than the older studies). In either case, even this alternative explanation seriously undermines the conciliar acknowledged of autonomy of science and earthly affairs.

<sup>19</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Homosexualitatis problema*, no. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Although it might seem out of place to refer to a magisterial document (as opposed to scientific studies) in order to substantiate this claim, I will do so at this place nevertheless – not because the Magisterium is the/an authority on this matter, but because it is important to remember that the Magisterium acknowledged that claim a decade before *Homosexualitatis problema* was issued. See CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Persona humana*, at: [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19751229\\_persona-humana\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html) (30.10.2023), no. 1.



ly halted by labelling homosexual orientation as »an objective disorder«<sup>21</sup>. In a less technical language than the document uses, one might say that persons with homosexual orientation are, according to the Magisterium, »moral disasters waiting to happen« as soon as they act upon what the Magisterium itself recognises as a fundamental dimension of one's personality – namely, one's sexuality. Thus, in my view, it would be difficult to find a more obvious example of a belief that grace destroys or cancels out nature after all, insofar as the two do not seem to be reconcilable when it comes to homosexuality.

### 2.3. *The Notion of Intrinsic Evil*

Finally, my last example shifts the attention from applied to fundamental moral theology, where one can begin to search for the causes of reduction of the concept of well-being to the concept of salvation. This particular cause that I have in mind consists of a widespread usage of the notion of intrinsic evil in some segments of post-conciliar moral theology and, even more so, in the magisterial documents. Provisionally defined as referring to those acts that are always and everywhere morally evil, at first sight, the notion of intrinsic evil actually establishes a very tight and harmonious relation between the concepts of salvation and well-being. Namely, insofar as it identifies what is morally evil, no matter the circumstances or intentions, the notion of intrinsic evil establishes clear boundaries of human action. Through that, it implicitly states that human well-being can only lie in the opposite direction of where the identified intrinsically evil acts lead. In that sense and taking into account that some magisterial documents argue that the notion of intrinsic evil is (or is based on) a Scriptural teaching,<sup>22</sup> working towards one's well-being is identical with being receptive to grace and to salvation, insofar as these can be manifested in a life lived according to God's will.

Nevertheless, the notion of intrinsic evil has also fallen in disfavour among majority of moral theologians for a number of reasons. One of these reasons is its strong reliance on Neo-Scholastic moral theology that presupposes a static notion of human nature and a possibility to derive from it ab-

<sup>21</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Homosexualitatis problema*, no. 3.

<sup>22</sup> See JOHN PAUL II, *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html) (31. 10. 2023), no. 17; JOHN PAUL II, *Veritatis splendor*, at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html) (31. 10. 2023), no. 81.

solute concrete moral norms.<sup>23</sup> This, in turn, is precisely why it can align together so perfectly the concepts of salvation and well-being, since, the way of thinking in which the notion of intrinsic evil is embedded, both salvation and well-being designate unchangeable realities that one is free only either to accept or to reject. The disturbance in that harmonious marriage has been, however, already introduced by the Second Vatican Council's insistence on a more dynamic view of the world and the subsequent renewal of moral theology. Within that development, the whole Neo-Scholastic moral theology, as well as its »flagship« – the notion of intrinsic evil – were seen as not being able to keep up when it comes to consideration of all sources that should inform theological reflection on the human well-being.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the notion of intrinsic evil is rightly seen as a hindrance to a continuous theological-ethical reflection or as a conversation-stopper that offers conclusions and judgements at the point in the discourse when one is not even entirely certain what the questions are.

Insisting on it, therefore, makes it next to impossible to distinguish between the vertical and the horizontal, between the concept of salvation and the concept of well-being. Consequently, the notion of intrinsic evil and its usage ends up hijacking both the concept of salvation and the concept of well-being, insofar as it collapses them into one, thereby preventing both of them to develop in accordance with their own dynamics and in their proper mutual relation within the theological-ethical discourse.

### **Conclusion – Towards a Healthy Tension between the Concept of Salvation and the Concept of Well-Being**

Insofar as both moral theology and dogmatics rely on a good number of shared notions or larger theoretical constructs when they engage with in the discourse on well-being and the discourse on salvation, respectively, there is little need to substantiate further the first premise of this article; namely, that there is a relation between the notion of well-being and the notion of salvation. This relation, so the first part of the article argued, should not be hastily understood as an identification, since such an identification would reduce the no-

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<sup>23</sup> See Nenad POLGAR – Joseph A. SELLING (eds), *The Concept of Intrinsic Evil and Catholic Theological Ethics*, Lanham/Boulder/New York/London, 2019.

<sup>24</sup> None of the documents of the Second Vatican Council utilises the notion of intrinsic evil, despite its prevalence in the manuals of moral theology that were the standard way of dealing with issues in moral theology up until the Council.

tion of well-being to the notion of salvation or vice-versa. There are good reasons, therefore, to maintain a distinction (not a separation!) between the two discourses by clearly keeping in mind specific tasks of moral theology and dogmatics within theology. In this way, the two discourses can support and profit from each other. For instance, moral theology would do well to remain attentive to the transcendental or vertical dimension of the human being and to learn from dogmatics in this regard, especially as it labours to overcome its own reductive focus on normative ethics and develop a more comprehensive notion of human well-being. On the other hand, dogmatics, so as not to end in dogmatism, also needs moral theology and its constructively disruptive influence brought about by the latter's primary focus on concrete ethical issues that are always steeped in the horizontal.

One of the indicators of whether a healthy distinction has been held between dogmatics and moral theology or, in this case, between the notion of salvation and the notion of well-being is the kind of examples presented in the second part of this article. These examples demonstrate quite clearly the ever-present threat of reducing the notion of well-being to the notion of salvation and the danger of forgetting the third premise specified at the beginning of this article; namely, that grace presupposes nature. More concretely, one of the ways in which such a reduction can take place is when a theological-dogmatic solution or an answer is offered at the point when a theological-ethical reflection is needed, especially if the latter is perceived as too uncertain or as unable to offer definitive answers.

The nature of theological-ethical reflection as practical, tentative in its judgements, and dependent on insights from other disciplines thus indicates that to establish a healthy tension between the dogmatic notion of salvation and the moral-theological notion of human well-being necessitates a consideration of what characterises the latter. In other words, the dogmatic discourse cannot simply short-circuit the moral discourse by filling in what is perceived to be missing in the latter (i.e., the certainty of judgement), since that would also negate the practical nature of the moral discourse and deprive theology of any insights that it might generate, as well as of an awareness of where, at least at the moment, more study and reflection is warranted.

**Sažetak**

**SPASENJE I DOBROBIT.**

**PRILOG TEOLOŠKI OPRAVDANOM RAZUMIJEVANJU**

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*Članak nastoji ukazati na teološki neopravdanu redukciju pojma (ljudske) dobrobiti na pojam spasenja. Polazeći od tri premise – (1) postojanja odnosa između pojma spasenja i pojma ljudskog blagostanja; (2) smještenosti pojma ljudske dobrobiti unutar moralno-etičkog diskursa i smještenosti pojma spasenja unutar religijsko-dogmatskog diskursa; (3) tvrdnje da milost ne uništava (ili da pretpostavlja) narav – članak najprije pokušava elaborirati razliku između pojma spasenja i pojma ljudskog blagostanja. Nakon toga autor na tri primjera pokazuje stvarnu opasnost redukcije pojma ljudskog blagostanja na pojam spasenja. Naposljetku, prošireni zaključak skicira teološki primjereniji odnos između ta dva pojma.*

*Ključne riječi: Spasenje, (ljudska) dobrobit, moralna teologija, Covid-19, homoseksualnost, intrinzično zlo.*