

The Ethics of Protection: Reimagining Child Welfare in an Anti-Black Society. By Lincoln Rice. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2023. viii + 197 pages. \$34.00.

The Ethics of Protection joins a sparse yet growing body of literature in Catholic moral theology that addresses anti-Black racism. While Rice notes that Catholic theology has historically failed to address anti-Black racism and at times enabled it, he demonstrates how Catholic theology may be a resource for addressing anti-Black racism (125). In this book, Rice confronts the anti-Black racism engrained in the practices of Child Protective Services (CPS) by employing a liberation ethics “to promote authentic freedom for the Black family” (184).

Rice begins with a thorough history of child welfare in the United States followed by a description of contemporary child welfare practices. He examines legal, economic, and sociological aspects of child welfare while being attentive to the interplay of racism, classism, and sexism undergirding child welfare policies and practices. Rice’s analysis uniquely centers itself on child welfare in Wisconsin. This is a major strength of the book. Rather than narrowing his analysis, the particularity of his description captures the precise anti-Black dynamics animating child welfare in America. Additionally, focusing on the example of Wisconsin allows Rice to share both his own experience as member of the Casa Maria Catholic Worker in Milwaukee and the experiences of families who have been disrupted by and resisted the anti-Black practices of CPS. From Rice’s multi-disciplinary and intersectional analysis, readers gain insight into the cultural attitudes that motivate CPS. Throughout the book, Rice demonstrates that the current policies and practices of CPS prioritize and incentivize the removal of children. Operating in a society still immersed in anti-Black ideology, the vagueness and lack of uniformity in the standards for identifying child abuse and neglect have resulted in the disproportionate disruption of Black family life by CPS. It is this anti-Black ideology that Rice finds animating CPS and argues that Catholic theology is especially equipped to address it. In the third chapter, Rice employs the methodology of Catholic social teaching and its description of parental rights. Ultimately, Rice deems this approach to be limited because of its inability to account for the insights and involvement of those who are oppressed and instead turns to liberation ethics. In the fourth chapter, Rice relies on the image of the Black Holy Family and the wisdom of Black liberation theologians to provide a counternarrative to contemporary anti-Blackness.

From this theological inquiry, Rice suggests a path forward that involves a combination of survival responses, short-term strategies, and long-term strategies. In sum, Rice calls for a counternarrative that

recognizes the dignity of Black families, redirection of financial resources to systems that promote and protect Black families, and the abolition of CPS (175–176). Those interested in resisting the anti-Black practices of CPS will find the appendix especially helpful. This appendix, which contains Rice’s own “Quick CPS Guide for Parents,” empowers parents with knowledge of their parental rights and practical strategies when in conversation with CPS.

Often, conversations about child welfare prioritize the wellbeing of children. In this sense, Rice’s focus on the vulnerabilities of parents may surprise readers. Yet, focusing on this perspective allows Rice to identify systemic issues that plague contemporary policies and practices of child welfare and sometimes unnecessarily disrupt family life. In this regard, *The Ethics of Protection* offers an innovative trajectory for conversations in the ethics of child welfare. This book stands alongside books like *Children of the Storm: Black Children and American Child Welfare* and authors like Dorothy Roberts in its analysis of the ethics of social work and confrontation of anti-Black racism. At the same time, it stands apart and adds something new to the conversation by its use of Catholic theology to address anti-Black racism. Scholars interested in the ethics of social work, public policy, and child welfare or in resisting anti-Black racism will benefit from this book’s unique perspective and comprehensive analysis of child welfare policies and practices.

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Recovering Christian Character: The Psychological Wisdom of Søren Kierkegaard. By Robert C. Roberts. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2022. xix + 379 pages. \$49.00.

Robert Roberts’s provocative thesis argues that rather than serving as forerunner of Christian existentialism, Kierkegaard is best understood within the tradition of virtue ethics, particularly the Aristotelian strain of that tradition. For Kierkegaard, the best way for Christianity to be introduced into Christendom “would be for the single individuals in Christendom to begin to exemplify the Christian virtues, that is, for those individuals to have the passions and emotions, the patterns of thought, and the dispositions of action characteristic of genuine Christians” (16). To that end, Roberts organizes the book into two principal parts. First, he provides the details of the psychological framework of classical virtue ethics themes (e.g., character, human nature, passions, virtues) as well as more classically Christian themes (e.g., sin). In the second part of the book, Roberts explicates what he