

defense of nontraditional moralities, and innovative forms of heresy” (57–58). Such an academic climate means that “moral theology has lost its grounding in God” (77), and without God, there is only relativity, not normativity.

The second provocative source of moral relativity is some modern pontificates. The author says that both Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis, in varying ways, have deflated Western Christianity “into a moral project to support progressive political objectives and liberal religious reform” (62), a project that has contributed to “a subtle but significant change in Roman Catholic bioethics” (67). This change (not development) is supposedly destructive to normative ethics.

As a whole, the central claim within this book is not so much convincingly defended as it is dogmatically repeated (at least forty times, by my count), making it more of an unflinching slogan rather than a developed conclusion. Such dogmatism appears throughout the text, such as the abrupt assertion that “a female Methodist minister wearing a pink shirt with a white collar will provide quite different religious moral advice than an Orthodox Christian priest, Orthodox Jewish rabbi, or traditional imam” (171). Apparently clothing, gender, and denomination are thoroughly sufficient grounds for discriminating the moral viewpoint of a Christian theologian. Dogmatism also emerges in the frequent use of partisan language that is exclusively critical of “left-leaning” (69), “progressive” (78), and “liberal” (79) perspectives, raising suspicion that one is reading more of a rhetorical rather than academic account of the issues.

One dogmatic assertion this book does prove convincingly is that “It is not unusual for bioethicists to operate as partisans of specific moral agendas and ideological perspectives” (108). There is no apparent effort to shield this book from such a tendency, and thus many readers are likely to heed the author’s own advice: such bioethicists “ought to be approached with a healthy dose of skepticism” (108). The moral questions raised by this text do demand answers, and this book succeeds in convincing the reader that ideological perspectives are incapable of answering them.

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Christology and Global Ethics: Encountering the Poor in a Pluralist Reality. By Alexandre Andrade Martins. Paulist Press, 2023. vii + 256 pages. \$34.95 paperback, 27.96 e-book.

It is the rare occasion that one discovers a true “gem” amid the prolific overflow of books from the academy of theological ethicists. However, such is the descriptor fitting for our present title. This work

brings to bear the best biblical exegesis, ethnographic analysis, systematic work of liberation Christology, and healthcare ethics to frame a rich set of mutually critical and renewed understandings for our time. Though it was intended as a textbook for faith communities, reading groups, and introductory theological studies in Churches and Catholic schools, this Catholic theologian and biologist also gifts the academy with updated and enriched sources for reflection and tools for teaching.

This work begins with four chapters that draw on Luke 4:16–30 as foundational for a liberation Christology. There Martins brings to bear the nuanced understanding of that text, illustrated through exposing the nuances visible from the original languages of the text, placing it in dialogue with wisdom learned from conversations with persons who are poor—“securing knowledge from the forgotten” (1–28). Surely, the poor are also instruments of the Holy Spirit in directing Christ’s mission in the Church. Indeed, Jesus’s message is good news for the poor. Certainly, salvation passes through the poor and, in a reality like ours, this encounter with the poor is essential for salvation” (87).

The centrality of healing in Jesus’s ministry opens the discussion of the significance of liberation Christology for global healthcare issues. The Gospels are full of healing stories, yet most pointed in those narratives is active agency of the poor ones in the process of their being healed. The approach to healing that Jesus takes in Luke provides a template for a more just and effective model of bioethics and for healthcare systems that produce genuine healing.

Indeed, Martins asserts, “The main cause of health issues, diseases, and premature death is poverty” (130). Liberation theology thus strongly asserts that only by taking seriously the preferential option for hearing and heeding the cries of the poor, and treating them as active agents, will their plight ultimately be changed.

Jesus’s healings consistently engaged the ill or injured person’s participation in the process. That is clearly contrary to the top-down approaches of contemporary, financially competitive mega-systems. By contrast the Gospel requires that the poor must be “active agents in the process that leads them to be healed” (144–145).

Throughout Martins weaves strong scripture supports together with the early Christological work of Jon Sobrino and Leonardo Boff. Further grounding of his claims comes from numerous references to the wealth and depth of Vatican Council II documents and citations from Latin American bishops at Medellín, Puebla, and Aparecida, as well as the writings of Pope Francis.

More than purely an academic work, this text is visibly the fruit of Martin’s ten years of engagement with groups of people living in poverty in Latin America, especially Brazil. The personal impacts of that experience shine through this work. As he explained in a March

4, 2024, Marquette University Bookshelf Interview: “*Christology and Global Ethics* is a part of an existential commitment to serve impoverished communities grounded in the Catholic social principle of the option for the poor.” It is this personal inspiration, along with its scholarly excellence that shines through this work, making it most convincing.

This timely contribution is certainly welcome in a world that seems increasingly poised toward authoritarianism and progressively neglectful of our sisters and brothers who are poor, and amid poverty, striving to simply live.

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Wonder as a New Starting Point for Theological Anthropology: Opened by the World. By José Francisco Morales Torres. Lexington, 2023. x + 213 pages. \$100.00 hardcover, \$35.00 e-book.

Torres’s project is both diagnostic and prescriptive: alienated humans, living in a modern, data-driven, techno-capitalist world, need to be re-attuned to the fundamental generosity which constitutes and saturates existence itself. If theology is to respond compellingly to the human situation today, Torres argues, it must develop a more robust conception of wonder. The book is organized with great care and clarity and proceeds in four movements: from phenomenology, to metaphysics, to theology, and finally to ethics. As such, this book is wide in its scope—but, since Torres keeps his argument so tight and reiterates the book’s overarching line of thought regularly, he moves from one discipline to the next seamlessly (and the reader along with him).

Chapter 1 inverts the way we normally discuss the experience of wonder. The main claim here hinges on the distinctions between subject-object and activity-receptivity. We typically think about wonder as an emotion, i.e., something the rational subject experiences in the self. Torres, however, contends that “the subject as agent . . . is opened by the world” (30). In the event of wonder, the object gains a certain subjective agency because it is the thing itself which “‘grasps’ one” (31). Torres gives great emphasis to enfleshment, an integral aspect of being-in-the-world which places us, as Marcel says, “in sympathy [and in communion] with things,” things which not only are perceived but which grasp us (29). This radical intersubjectivity sometimes seems to go too far, and Torres often comes dangerously close to collapsing the distinction between the subject caught in wonder and the object doing the grasping. However, he never falls into this trap, always maintaining the distinction between subjects (this is