

social reality” (112). Ott instead appeals to the work of Protestant theologians Ellen Ott Marshall and John Paul Lederach, who have developed theological accounts of conflict as a pervasive reality. Lederach, in particular, argues that conflict is rooted in creation, through human diversity and free will, and not in sin, even if, in our postlapsarian world, conflict is marked by sin. In the fifth chapter, Ott develops a “conflict hermeneutic,” a set of questions for analyzing conflict which can be incorporated into theological social ethics. In the final two chapters, Ott applies this conflict hermeneutic to two different case studies: that over the unionization of adjunct instructors at Catholic universities, and the dispute over the ordination of women in the Catholic Church. Both case studies illustrate the nuance of the model of conflict developed in prior chapters.

There are areas where the volume could have been further developed. For one, it could have acknowledged the contribution of Latin American liberation theologians in developing a theological account of conflict, particularly in their analysis of how conflict is inherent to the global economic system. Second, and more importantly, the constructive theological arguments in chapters 4 and 5 could be further developed, providing a more ample theological anthropology.

That being said, Ott’s work should now be a touch point for all Christian social ethicists addressing social conflict. It ably challenges faulty assumptions about conflict and broadens our horizons of understanding. The book will be of value to scholars and students of Christian social ethics, but also peace studies, conflict studies, and religious social movements.

MATTHEW A. SHADLE
Independent Scholar

Reproductive Justice and the Catholic Church: Advancing Pragmatic Solidarity with Pregnant Women. By Emily Reimer-Barry. Sheed and Ward, 2024. ix + 287. \$29.95 paperback.

In *Reproductive Justice and the Catholic Church*, Emily Reimer-Barry pursues a vital yet thankless task: carefully assessing, in deeply theological terms, the costs associated with polarized thinking about abortion in the United States. Refusing to be pigeonholed into “the pro-life/pro-choice binary” (29), the project militates against the tendency to interpret abortion through preconceived partisan priorities. Those willing to engage the book on its own terms will be richly rewarded with a text that is meticulously researched and faithful to both “the complexity and ambiguity of human reproduction” (7) and the subtleties of Catholic moral thinking.

At its core, this book argues for “considerable overlap between the normative claims of Catholic teachings and the goals of the reproductive justice movement” despite their “divergent positions on abortion” (1–2). To support this link, Chapter 1 offers a concise introduction to reproductive justice, as defined by scholars and activists, while critically assessing this vision in light of Catholic theology. The result is a non-reductionistic account that credibly presents abortion as a social *and* personal issue, a medical *and* theological concern, and a matter of legal *and* social justice that is shaped by gender, race, and class.

Building on this account, Reimer-Barry then explores the traditional framing of the pro-life cause, illustrating across two chapters how a longing for clarity and a pursuit of strategic influence have truncated the moral analysis of abortion inside and outside the church. For example, Chapter 3 laments that the U.S. bishops have matched the stridency of the pro-life political movement, articulating the church’s position with an approach “characterized less by an invitational tone and more by a politics of coercion” (105), creating a noticeable contrast with their approach to other social issues. Diagnosing the disconnect, Reimer-Barry pinpoints “the fact that popes from John Paul II to Francis have treated abortion as a social problem that should be seen through the lens of social sin” without addressing “the implications of these claims” (56).

The remainder of the book explicates the implications. Chapter 4 calls attention to “the ways in which the US economy disincentivizes pregnancy for women” (129), listing structural reforms—from just wages to investments in public education—that resonate with Catholic social teaching and which would leave fewer pregnant women feeling as though abortion is their only option. Chapter 5 centers the lived experiences of women who have endured pregnancy losses, presenting narratives of both miscarriage and abortion together to highlight the “ambiguity and complexity” of a deeply personal experience with distinct subjective significances (186). The analysis lays the foundation to assert in Chapter 6 that it is “both obvious and radical” to proclaim, “women are human persons” (194). By this Reimer-Barry means that Catholic theology must do more to fully affirm the equal dignity women enjoy as human beings endowed with their own subjectivity and autonomy. The chapter thus culminates in the declaration that prenatal life “has intrinsic, but not absolute, value” (213), a thoughtfully crafted and assiduously defended position that emerges as a logical extension of the concerns raised throughout the book.

While this response to the existential questions surrounding abortion will likely garner much attention, Chapter 7 represents the true payoff of Reimer-Barry’s scholarship. Adopting Paul Farmer’s

idea of “pragmatic solidarity” (233), this chapter urges Catholics “to create the structures of support that would enable women facing unplanned pregnancies to imagine a ‘good life’ inclusive of parenting responsibilities, while at the same time supporting pregnant women in their discernment and affirming their agency” (234–235). Achieving this goal may be hard to imagine in today’s politicized environment, but Reimer-Barry makes the compelling case that working toward it is a worthwhile initiative for those who embrace Catholicism’s theological commitments.

The book would be at home in graduate and advanced undergraduate courses on moral theology, particularly those that encourage students to grapple with human experience as a locus of moral and theological insight. The text is also an obvious partner for medical ethics courses and would be a standout resource for social ethics courses, where students might profitably put Reimer-Barry’s claims in conversation with theological analyses of the social influences on moral agency, a growing discourse that could have had a stronger impact on the book. This should not detract from the power of the book as written, though, for *Reproductive Justice and the Catholic Church* succeeds where so many other texts would falter, empowering readers to resist reductionism on a topic that deserves genuine nuance, but which all too often rewards the artifices of simplicity.

CONOR KELLY
Marquette University

The Dignity of Dependence: A Feminist Manifesto. By Leah Libresco Sargeant. Notre Dame Press, 2025. viii + 184. \$28 hardcover, \$21.99 ebook.

Leah Libresco Sargeant’s book captivates from the beginning with absorbing content and an easily digestible writing style, making it a quick and engrossing read. While the bright pink dust jacket and subtitle “A Feminist Manifesto” may lead the reader to assume this book is primarily for and about women, the author’s underlying argument transcends the limited view of secular feminism by highlighting dependence as a human characteristic: “Recognizing and honoring the differences between men and women means putting dependence at the heart of our account of what it means to be human” (19).

The embodied difference of men and women shows that women are particularly marked by dependence, but it is a false anthropology to believe any member of either sex is meant to be independent; rather, we are meant to function with mutual dependence. Libresco Sargeant provides numerous examples of how women’s dependency, rooted in their biology and involving menstrual cycles, fertility, and childbearing,