

Tragic Dilemmas in Christian Ethics. By Kate Jackson-Meyer. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2022. xi + 195 pages. \$49.95.

Consider the moral dilemmas facing medical staff with insufficient ventilators to meet the number of gravely ill COVID patients, or the anguished horror on Meryl Streep's face in *Sophie's Choice* as she confronted the Nazi officer's ultimatum. Given their nature and consequences (especially for the decision-makers), these are instances of "tragic dilemmas" where a moral agent is unable to fulfill all their moral obligations or is constrained to do something wrong with no option but to do so. These are the subject of an ethical investigation in this carefully crafted and illuminating book by Kate Jackson-Meyer.

A very helpful synopsis is presented in the Introduction together with a collection of stories and examples which anchor the study. The author first presents a literature review of philosophical approaches to moral and tragic dilemmas that includes clarifying and evaluating relevant concepts, terms, problems, and strategies (chapter one). The focus then narrows to the Christian tradition and how hard cases or moral dilemmas were viewed by Augustine and Aquinas (chapters two and three respectively). A proposal for a Christian understanding and appraisal of tragic dilemmas is next elaborated in chapter four. It revolves around Lisa Tessman's negotiable and non-negotiable moral requirements while highlighting the impact of unjust social structures and harmful social conditions but also how a tragic dilemma can "mar" a person's life (129).

On this foundation, the author develops a framework for healing in a Christian community setting in the wake of tragic dilemmas, situations where "nonnegotiable moral obligations [that] arise from the sanctity of life and human vulnerabilities ... are not upheld" (133). Drawing on ten modes of healing from various life settings and practices of dealing with suffering and moral trauma, the author offers ten considerations for faith communities to foster healing after tragic dilemmas. The conclusion weaves the threads of the book together, with particular reference to stories, historical examples, and case studies outlined earlier in the book.

By a rigorous engagement with philosophical and ethical studies about tragic dilemmas (for instance, Bernard Williams, Lisa Tessman, Martha Nussbaum, Paul Ramsey, Lisa Sowle Cahill, Rosalind Hursthouse, and others), the author provides a needed foundation and depth to this project. This enables her to then interweave and develop a Christian perspective and, hence, offer what seems to be most distinctive about this book—a framework for a practical theology in dealing constructively with tragic dilemmas.

Given the central place of intention and freedom in moral judgment and action, Jackson-Meyer draws on a concept from Aquinas—namely, “repugnance of the will”—in two ways. First, she uses the phrase as a bridge between the tradition and contemporary thinking about tragic dilemmas. Second, an expanded account of intention (and mixed actions) through careful use of texts in Aquinas enables the author to offer a revised interpretation of the principle of the double effect to include “the foreseeable wanted and the foreseeable unwanted effects of an action” (102).

Implied in the above is an approach to the will that balances its capacity for choice (*electio*) but also for its orientation to the good through desire and affection (*dilectio*). Again, in probing feelings of regret, distress, and lament, Jackson-Meyer underlines the need to take human experience seriously, especially our emotions, in particular those distressing and painful. They can offer a source of moral insight and thus are integral to moral living and ethical appraisal—a view consistent with the work of Aquinas.

The publication has a very accessible index, endnotes for each chapter, and an extensive bibliography plus a striking cover that reflects the tone and theme of the contents. This is a thoughtful book, in three senses: it is insightful, well argued, and finally—and importantly—the author is attentive to her readers in her presentation of the material. For those reasons, while aimed mainly at professionals and researchers in the field of Christian ethics, the book could be of interest more generally, especially through the author’s use of stories and historical events to anchor her discussion. This work is a fine piece of scholarship, but also, it should be noted, its pastoral implications are both helpful and hopeful.

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Confronting a Church in Controversy. By Bradford E. Hinze. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2022. xvii + 190 pages. \$27.95.

In this book, as the title suggests, Bradford Hinze confronts a church strongly criticized for its response to the clergy abuse crisis. Hinze undertakes this endeavor rigorously considering a variety of historical, psychological, statistical, and journalistic sources, yet never losing the distinctively theological significance of his work, solidly founded on an engagement with Scripture and recent theological publications. In six chapters, Hinze’s book successfully delivers a picture of the extent of the crisis and its causes while simultaneously imagining pathways forward. The book’s originality can be captured by its beginning, the core of its argument, and its closing. The book’s