

Virtue and the Moral Life: Theological and Philosophical Perspectives. Edited by William Werpehowski and Kathryn Getek Soltis. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2014. Pp. ix + 209. \$85.

This welcome volume is a collection of ten papers by both seasoned and younger scholars on “The Intersection of Virtue and Ethics” that grew out of a lecture series sponsored by Villanova University. After two introductory essays (part I), the topics covered are set in the contexts of the public sphere (part II), the family (part III), and personal interior life (part IV) and reflect a pattern found in the discussion of the nature of virtue by contemporary virtue ethicists. These contexts form concentric circles of human relationship in which corresponding virtues are cultivated in order to maintain the relationships within these spheres.

The volume is carefully organized and well balanced. Each part features both theological and philosophical perspectives on particular areas of life experience. The conversation might have been enriched had the authors engaged one another’s contributions prior to publication. Thomas Aquinas was among the first to synthesize systematically the philosophical and theological perspectives on virtue, but in recent centuries, with declining interest in virtue theory, interactions between the two disciplines in the field of virtue ethics has waned. In the 20th century, Joseph Kotva pioneered the attempt to make sense of philosophical virtue theory in a theological context. The chief contribution of this volume thus lies in creating a much-needed space for reengaging philosophical and theological perspectives on virtues. Werpehowski and Getek Soltis, however, invite us to go beyond such a standard intersection by engaging other faith traditions and the secular world as well. The two essays by Jamie Schillinger and Edmund Santurri in part V demonstrate such engagement by discussing the virtues of humility, justice, and forgiveness from a philosophical-theological perspective. Finally, Santurri’s chapter is distinctive in that it reflects his long-time involvement in dialogue between theological and philosophical ethics.

The editors and contributing authors should be commended for advocating a return to virtue in various modes of doing ethics, whether philosophical, theological, interfaith, or crosscultural. The collection shows that it is both desirable and possible to nurture virtue ethicists who are capable of engaging in interdisciplinary discussion.

Lúcás Chan, S.J. (d. May 19, 2015)
Marquette University, Milwaukee

A Case for Character: Towards a Lutheran Virtue Ethics. By Joel D. Biermann. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. vii + 204. \$29.

Biermann perceives an urgent need for Christian churches to provide preaching that shapes character and teaches morality (5), but he finds many fellow Lutherans unwilling to take up that challenge because they misunderstand character formation as a form of works righteousness, or they focus on the importance of preaching justification by

faith alone to the exclusion of other legitimate priorities. B.'s well-written book presents a strong case for the importance and theological legitimacy of character formation as a task for churches today.

The book's most significant contribution is its third chapter where B. offers considerable evidence from key 16th-century texts (the Augsburg Confession, the Large and Small Catechisms, among others) that Luther and Melancthon both saw character formation and pursuit of a moral life to be important tasks for the church and all individual Christians, arguing that the law served a purpose broader than simply exposing human sinfulness and our need for God's mercy: the law could also give shape and content to the life of discipleship to which those justified by grace are called.

In two subsequent chapters, B. draws from historical analysis and some contemporary theologians to describe three forms of righteousness (governing, justifying, and conforming) that align with God's action as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. B.'s framework helps explain the importance and legitimacy of cultivating virtue, but it leaves many questions unanswered, especially regarding the precise relationship among the three forms of righteousness. Likewise, the relationship between what we can know by revelation and what we come to know according to "the laws of nature" is underdeveloped. The book's historical argument is well sourced, but the discussion of "contemporary Lutheran voices" and B.'s constructive proposal ("An Ethic for the Church") are not fully up to date, with only a handful of sources published after the year 2000. Nevertheless this book makes a valuable contribution on which Lutheran scholars interested in virtue ethics can build.

Christopher P. Vogt
St. John's University, New York

Distant Markets, Distant Harms: Economic Complicity and Christian Ethics. Edited by Daniel K. Finn. New York: Oxford University, 2014. Pp. xvii + 268. \$35.

This fine work is the outcome of a conference in June 2012 organized by the True Wealth of Nations Project of the Institute of Advanced Catholic Studies. As editor Finn emphasizes in his introduction, this volume focuses on an issue "posed dramatically in a globalized economy: how can we account for a causally rooted moral responsibility of consumers for harms that markets cause to distant others" (xi). The book is thoroughly multidisciplinary, especially with a view to enriching Christian economic ethics with sociological perspectives. Its four parts include ten contributions: (1) Sociological Resources (Douglas Porpora, Margaret Archer, Pierpaolo Donati, and John Coleman); (2) Historical Resources (Brian Matz and Mary Hirschfeld); (3) Analytical Resources (Cristina Traina, Paul Asante, and Albino Barrera, O.P.); and (4) Implications, a concluding essay by the editor. The contributors to this very well-integrated collection explore these urgent questions from a wide range of perspectives, including sociological analysis based in critical realism and personal reflexivity studies, the ethics of global warming, African traditions, feminist perspectives of care, patristic and Thomistic insights, and the ethics of individual responsibility.