



Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins

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From Reader Review Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins for online ebook

Margie Dorn says

This is not just an ethics book for Christians. It is a book for all Americans. The information in it is well-researched and mind-blowing. It's time for us to wake up.

Joan DeArtemis says

This was my first introduction into Liberation Theology. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in the subject, and, also, anyone believes that Christianity is only a religion for people interested in maintaining the status quo. Liberation Theology ROCKS! And these same principals can be applied in any religious context.

"The imago Dei (the image of God) in every person created by God establishes the infinite worth of each human being. To ignore this imago Dei violates the inherited rights of all human beings... How is the imago Dei denied?... To ignore the imago Dei of the least among us is to reject the God of Life... Such apparent contradictions between God's law and how those chosen by God fell short of that law, yet were greatly used by God, can be understood through the affirmation of the basic principle of the sacredness of human life due to its reflection of the imago Dei... The imago Dei finds its fullest expression in the personhood of Jesus as he turned many 'rules' upside down."

Tracy says

I attend a seminary that has been deemed liberal and read this for an ethics class. Having it assigned may or may not have influenced my feelings because you know it felt like homework (because it was). I enjoy the challenges de la Torre lays out for people. I particularly liked watching the more conservative students in class squirm a bit when pushed out of their privileged comfort zone. It's good for them. It's good for all of us. I heard what they didn't like about the book and could appreciate their honesty.

One of their biggest complaints had to do with de la Torre's tone. It is brash and in your face. Instead of feeling up to the exploring the issues, a lot of people shut down in the discussion. They just couldn't get past that tone. Something to think about if you're trying to open the door to deeper theological and ethical discussions about privilege. I hate to say it but I think they would have been more open to a white theologian asking the same things in a more academic tone. I have to remind myself people need baby steps...so many baby steps before I can start handing them James Cone or Miguel de la Torre.

For the rest of us, this book allowed us to have some great discussions and debates. I probably would have said 5 stars if it hadn't been homework.

John Lussier says

Contextual ethics done with and by the poor, with a number of very interesting case studies.

Roger Green says

While I agree with De La Torre's view on many of the issues present in this book, in my reading Christianity itself is too entrenched within empire, race, and colonialism to provide by its theology (or faith) alone any coherence in addressing them. De La Torre admirably speaks up for Native Americans but does little to address what a specifically Christian ethics - even from the margins - does to confront the problem. He admirably speaks to misogyny in scripture, but leaves out the action element of his own hermeneutic. Same-sex marriages and non-binary gender issues are hardly present. For the issues that are present in the book, De La Torre is undoubtedly excellent, though a bit heavy on citations from the New York Times, which is a mouth-piece for liberal empire more than justice. The book is readable and the case study questions useful for students, whether they identify as Christian or not. And the general dismantling it calls for is indeed necessary for justice, whether conceived as Christian, or not.

Alwen says

I found this book remarkably helpful in thinking through what it means to bring faith, a desire for social justice, biblical and theological knowledge, and liberation theology into real work for change.

Bjørn Peterson, PhD says

One of the best normative ethics books you'll read.

Chris says

I found this book incredibly challenging and, except for a few issues (described below), I would have given it 5 stars. Miguel de la Torre takes a liberation theology perspective and applies it to the various questions of Christian ethics. I loved the insightful ways de la Torre evaluates American society, insisting on seeing them from the perspective of the marginalized as opposed to those in power (i.e. the usual approach). His critiques are often scathing, and so well-founded as to be deeply convicting. For those of us coming from more privileged perspectives, this book deserves a place among other great works that can broaden our perspective. Those coming from less-represented positions may find also find this book illuminating, as well as a strong call supporting the value of their voices. De la Torre supplements his insights with a great deal of evidence and personal story. While I cannot fully buy into liberation theology (as appealing as it is), I find the perspective of many liberation theologians an incredibly helpful perspective for counteracting the over-represented voices in the theological tradition. This book of ethics does that well.

My issues with the book: first, as in much liberation theology, de la Torre does little to support his

assumptions. He begins by making a Biblical argument for seeking justice, then builds the rest of his arguments on that, often ignoring scripture even when it directly addresses an issue. Secondly, I have a big problem with de la Torre's chapter on women, where he addresses sexism in the Bible. My issue is not that he thinks there's sexism in scripture, but that he deals so poorly with the text in coming to that conclusion. He cherry-picks passages to make his point, ignoring obviously contradictory ones, and he fails to address any of the well-argued contradictory and less-extreme perspectives, even those offered by feminist critics coming from a similar liberationist perspective. Seeing de la Torre's excessively one-sided arguments in this chapter damaged my overall opinion for this book. Even so, I was glad to have read this book, and would still highly recommend it to others.

Robert Williams says

His underlying philosophical model is based not on any absolute truth, but as he says a, absolute truth cannot be found. He bases it on a "preference" for the poor based on a line of reason not universally found in the Bible by his own admission. Therefore his argument is self-defeating. If what I perceive is true is different from his, who is right? He claims he is based on Jesus, but has already defeated his argument by essentially saying the is no absolute truth. He denies the very reason he uses to mefane his argument. Insult is added to injury because I was forced to buy this book (and in doing so, support him financially) for school

Phillip says

This book is disturbing, frustrating, and challenging. It's kind of hard to give a book like this a rating. The way that ethics is typically taught is from a theoretical/abstract approach divorced from the reality of the majority of people (i.e. such hypothetical questions as "Is it better to switch a railroad track to avoid a train from hitting five people, knowing that in doing so it will kill one person?")

I don't agree with all of de la Torre's conclusions (mainly some of his conclusions using Biblical hermeneutics), but there is still plenty of value I got from this book. The big take away for me was that our academic tradition of ethics (historically dominated by male Europeans), has not adequately equipped and challenged the dominant forms of Christianity to ask the right kinds of ethical questions. By not paying attention to the worlds majority, those who are most marginalized and victimized by dehumanizing factors, we are missing out on both valuable ethical perspectives and solutions to the problems affecting humanity the most. The key here (for me) was to humbly listen to what our suffering brothers and sisters have to say about how we want to be as people who act ethically and justly.

De la Torre developed the idea rather weakly at the beginning, but it seems to me that de la Torre is grounding his particular presentation of ethical issues on the Bible's view (particularly the Torah and prophets) of peace/shalom: The degree to which the very poorest/weakest person is treated by a society is reflective of how far God's shalom/peace for the ENTIRE society is realized.

Morgan Bell says

Challenging Read

De la Torre offers a challenging appraisal of Euroamerican theoethics, pushing Christians to find their centre on the periphery. While his biblical reflections are often thin, this book is not to be missed.

Ferrell says

For those of us who are white males living in the United States, this book can be a real eye-opener. It helps us see blind spots in our thinking. De La Torre has provided a real service to the church even though he does adequately explore issues from a more holistic perspective. Just as ethics done from the center of a culture can blind a person to other realities, ethics done from the margins can blind a person to others. This book is an important part of the discussion, but it is not all of the discussion. Of course, no book is. I would recommend it to anyone interested in Christian ethics. It will enrich your thinking.
