

Book Reviews

Abuse and Cover-Up: Refounding the Catholic Church in Trauma. By Gerald A. Arbuckle. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2019. 226 pages. \$28.00 (paper).
doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.90

Gerard Arbuckle has written more than twenty books, many around the theme of refounding or reforming Catholic institution: religious orders, health care, education, and the church itself. This present volume continues with this theme, with a focus on the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church and the trauma, both individual and institutional, that this crisis has engendered. Arbuckle draws extensively from anthropological, sociological, and business studies to analyze both the nature of the problems facing the church and to provide constructive strategies for moving forward out of the current malaise. The first chapter spells out fifteen “axioms” concerning the ways in which power is abused in institutions to cover up their moral failures. Many of the examples he considers are of secular institutions, but they apply equally well to the church. These axioms provide a framework for the work as it progresses. This initial chapter leads into chapters on the church’s culture of cover-up and clericalism, the problem of grief in the church as people have their illusions about the church stripped away, the inadequacy of the church’s leadership, and the levels of structural reform so badly needed in the church. The final chapter, the longest chapter at nearly a quarter of the book, spells out detailed action plans and strategies for “refounding” the church. The sentence that really struck me with a force was the author’s comment on church leaders: “Incompetent leadership fosters dysfunctional cultures and obstructs appropriate cultural changes” (118). I am constantly struck by the incompetence demonstrated by our church leaders in handling the abuse crisis and their inability to learn from their mistakes.

This is a very well-organized text. Each chapter begins with a brief summary of what the chapter aims to do. There are tables, models, stages, bullet points, and brief summaries strategically placed within each chapter. The reader is never in doubt about what the author is seeking to communicate. The interdisciplinary nature of the work is impressive in the range of disciplines represented. Most of all this is meant to be a practical or “praxis-oriented”

book (xvi), and it fits neatly into the discipline of practical theology. It would be a valuable resource for those engaged in the more practical aspects of ecclesiology, those training for ministry, and even for parish groups looking for ways to move forward as they grapple with the impact of abuse in their communities. Arbuckle is a gifted communicator, and this work is a welcome contribution to a difficult issue.

NEIL ORMEROD

Sydney College of Divinity

The Catholic Ethicist in the Local Church. Edited by Antonio Autiero and Laurenti Magesa. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018. v + 341 pages. \$48.00 (paper).

doi: 10.1017/hor.2021.75

This book, the last in the Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church series, focuses on the vocation of Catholic ethicists in particular contexts and the challenges they encounter. After an introduction by the editors, the book is divided into three parts: (1) “Foundational Aspects,” (2) “Contexts and Perspectives,” and (3) “Fields of Conflicts.” The twenty-five individual contributions provide a wealth of perspectives in a very wide range of contexts, emphatically fulfilling its aim of speaking to and from local churches in the context of the world church. It concludes with reflection on “The Emerging Vocation of a Moral Theologian: Commonalities across Contexts” (Marcellus).

“Foundational Aspects” are not only discussed in the first part but also emerge from the discussion of local churches later in the volume. A key foundational theme is the role of the local in relation to the universal magisterium, in particular the teaching authority of local bishops’ conferences. The articles by Himes (“Catholic Social Teaching in a Church that Is Both Local and Universal”) and Tirimanna (“Context and Moral Teaching: The Crucial Importance of the Magisterium of the Local Church”), for example, focus on this as a foundational question, but it is also central to Hilker Andolsen’s article (“Moral Deafness and Social Sin: Feminist Theologians and the Bishops from a US Perspective,” part 3) on the failed attempt by the US bishops’ conference to finalize the pastoral letter on women’s concerns. The sources of moral theology in pastoral life, particularly the experience of the poor, is emphasized in part 1 (e.g., Gasda, “Theological Ethics and the People of God: Profile, Tensions, and Perspectives” and Blanco “‘The Theology of the End of the World’: Rethinking Theological Ethics from the Existential Peripheries”), highlighting the importance of CELAM Medellin 1968, and also in Catta’s “Giving the Floor to the Poor: New