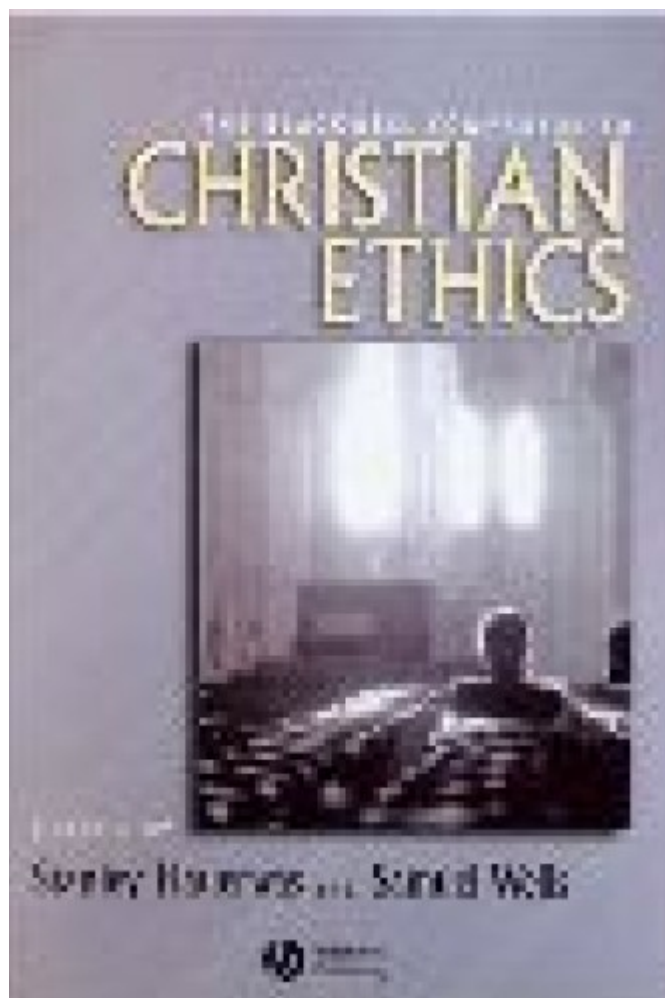


# Take and read

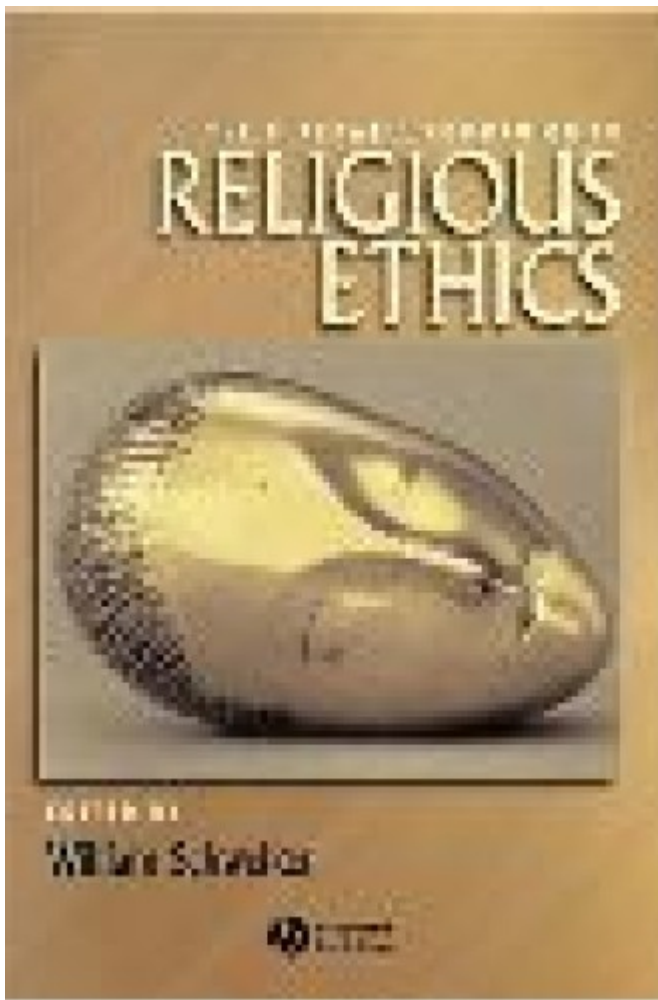
Books in the [May 17, 2005](#) issue

## In Review



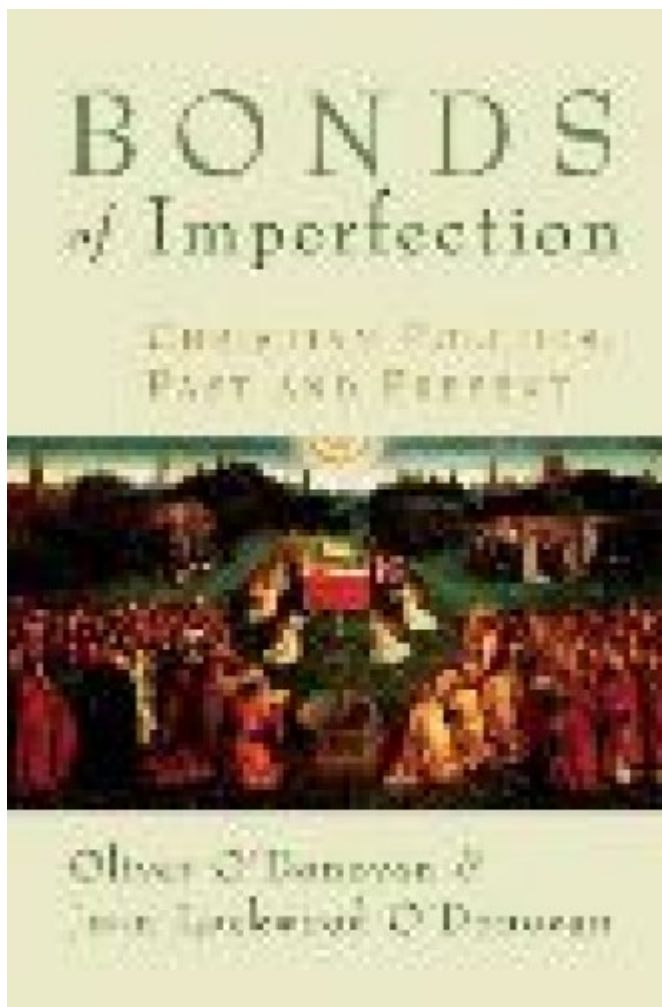
## The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics

Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, eds.  
Blackwell



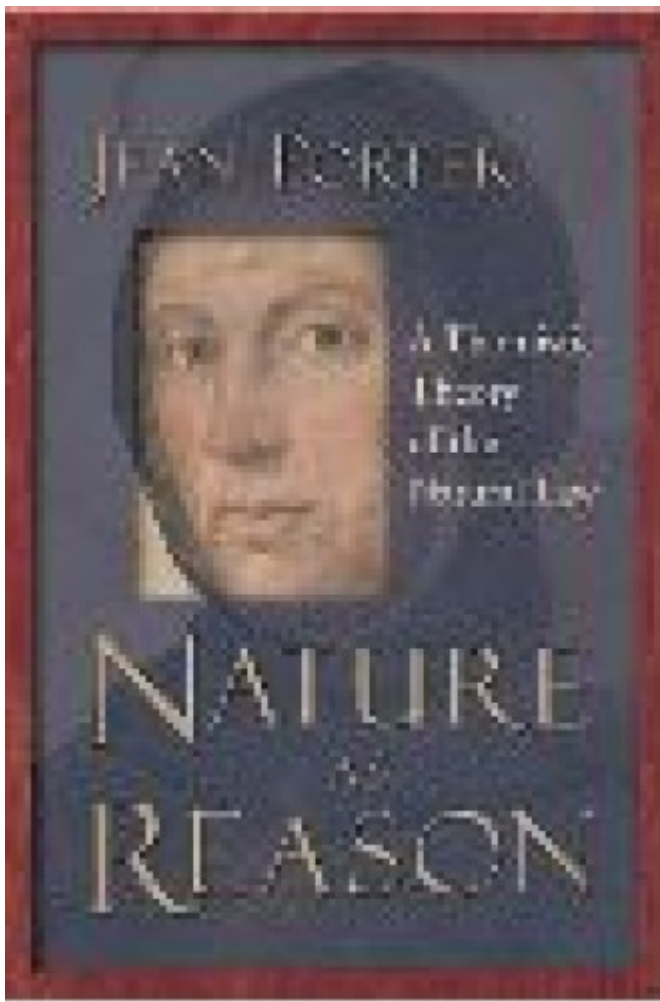
## **The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics**

William K. Schweiker, ed.  
Blackwell



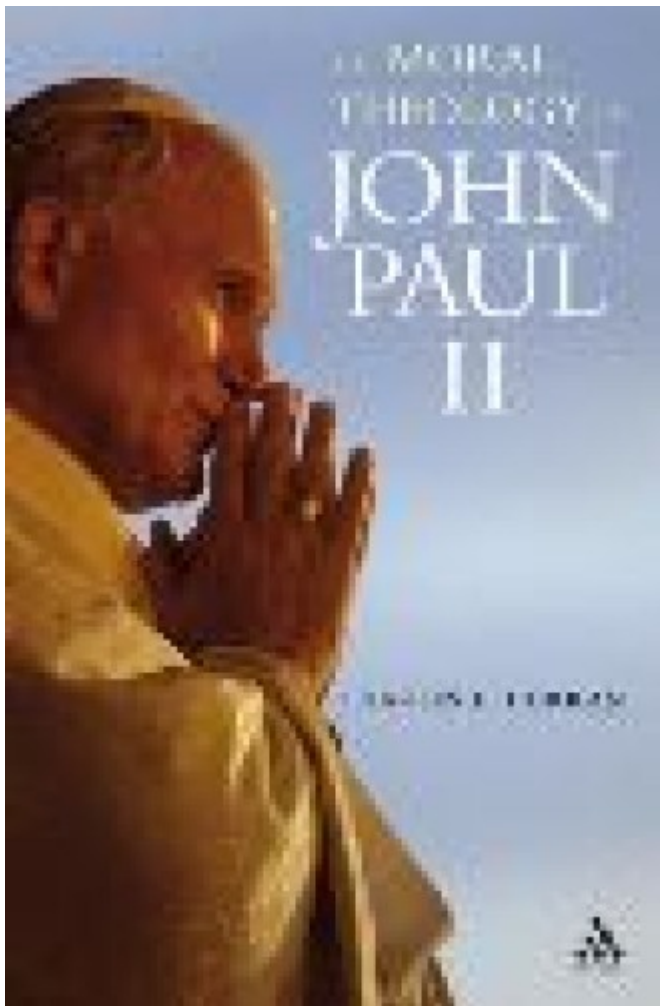
## **Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present**

Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan  
Eerdmans



## **Nature as Reason: A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law**

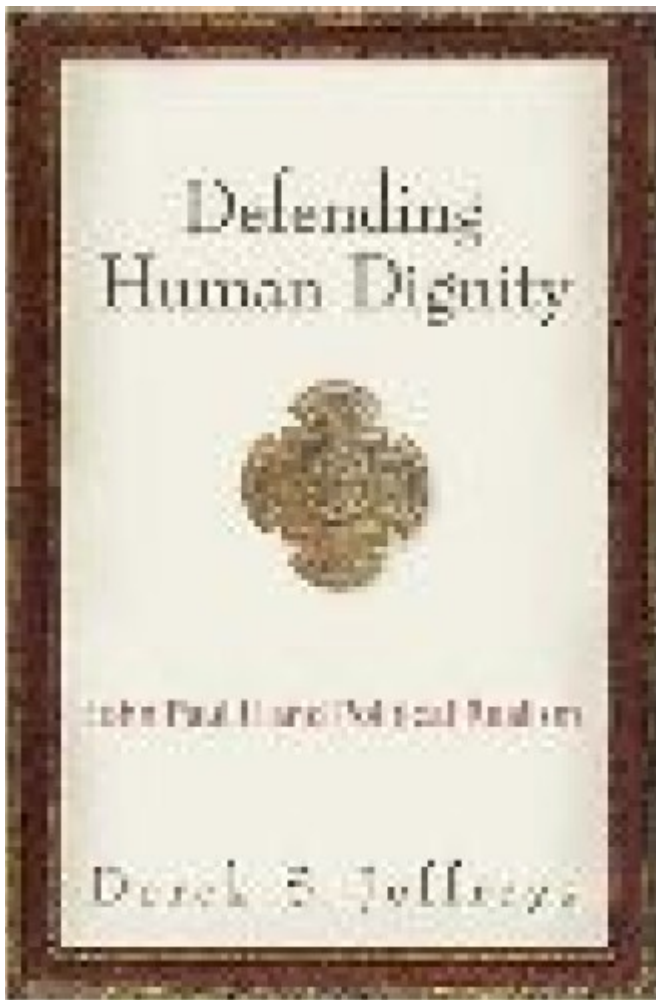
Jean Porter  
Eerdmans



## **The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II**

Charles E. Curran

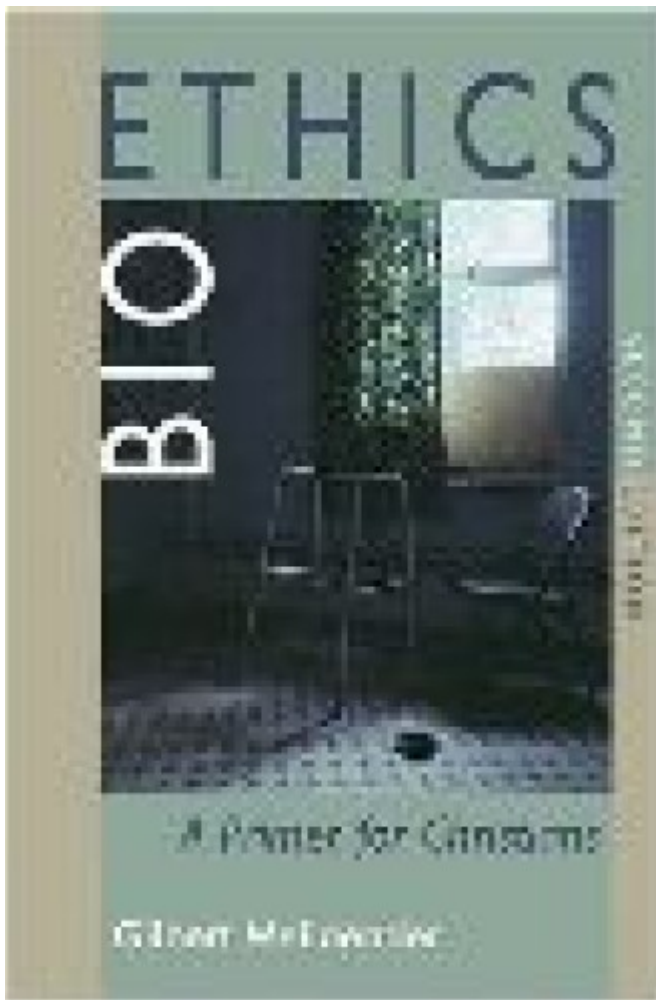
Georgetown University Press



## **Defending Human Dignity: John Paul II and Political Realism**

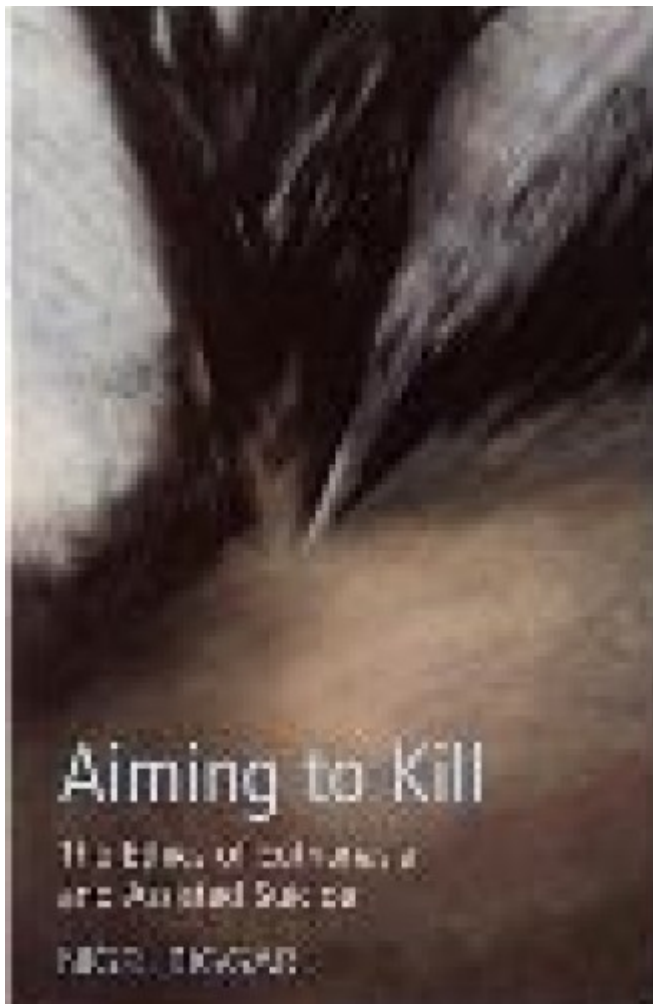
Derek S. Jeffreys

Brazos



## **Bioethics: A Primer for Christians**

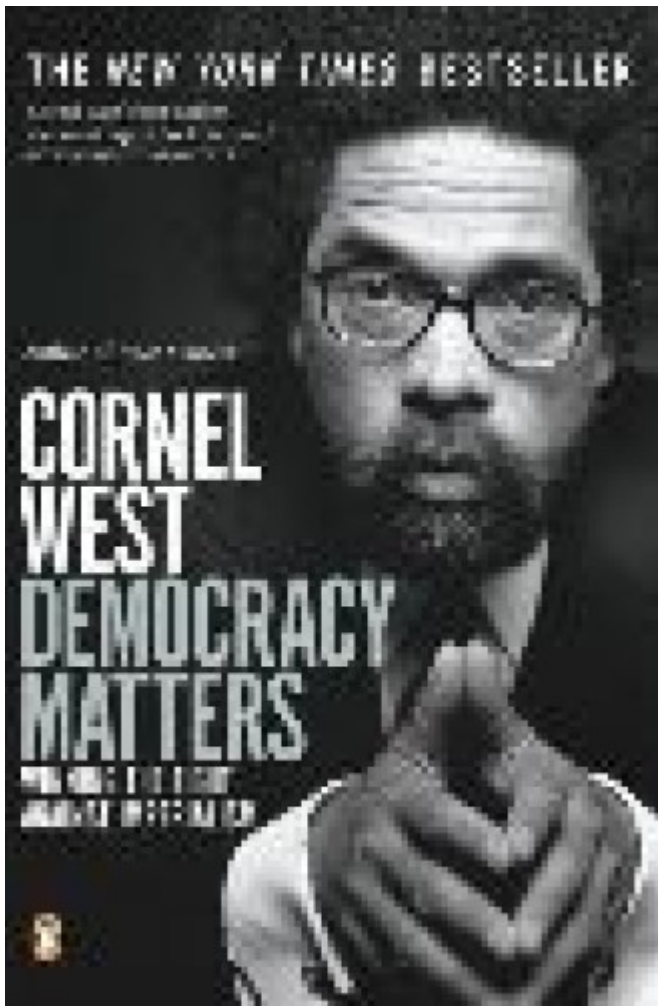
Gilbert Meilaender  
Eerdmans



## **Aiming to Kill: The Ethics of Suicide and Euthanasia**

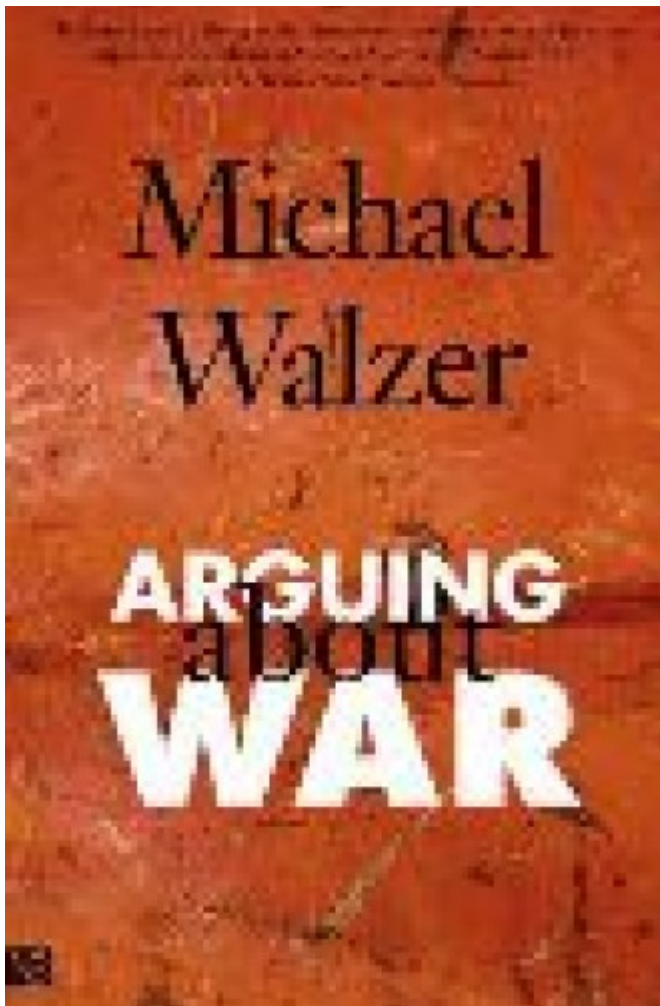
Nigel Biggar  
Pilgrim





## **Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism**

Cornel West  
Penguin



## **Arguing About War**

Michael Walzer  
Yale University Press

These two important new reference works provide comprehensive guides to the field of ethics. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* focuses on worship as the key to understanding Christian ethics and forming the Christian life, and *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics* takes a broader look at seven major world traditions and their approach to moral issues. Both follow a trend in recent reference works by providing a series of extended articles on major questions rather than short entries on specific topics. Thus they are good background reading as well as ready sources of information. These major volumes are made and priced for long-term reference. Consider them for your church library or recommend them to your local public librarian if the price puts them out of reach.

The O'Donovans cover the history of Christian ethics from the Bible and Augustine to Karl Barth and Paul Ramsey, with studies of less familiar figures like Hugo Grotius and Erasmus in between. Porter provides a fresh look at the intellectual project that still most comprehensively elucidates the relationship between Christian theology and other ways of seeking truth.

Pope John Paul II was a theologian whose ideas may have as profound an impact on the future as did his leadership of the church. These two works assess the implications of his thought for Christian ethics. *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* is a comprehensive study by a critic of the late pope who nonetheless has high respect for John Paul II's integrity and intellectual rigor. Jeffrey's book provides a more focused look at John Paul II's principled approach to politics.

The Terri Schiavo case required pastors and teachers to think again about the relationship between faith and medicine. Theologians were among the early leaders in shaping bioethics, but the field has grown to a such a level of maturity and autonomy that it now requires theological reconsideration. Meilaender's volume has been one important source for that reflection, and this new, revised edition keeps the discussion up-to-date. Biggar provides a more general view of issues at the end of life and includes a discussion of the extent to which government should be involved in these decisions.

The relationship between religion and politics has drawn many commentaries in recent months. One of the most original and least reactive is *Democracy Matters*. West begins by asserting that democracy is at risk both because of economic forces and because of ideas that threaten to take decision-making power away from the people who are most affected by public policies. He contends that there is a strong democratic identity available in Christianity despite the rise of an authoritarian religious right, and he points to the possibility of coalitions with new forms of Jewish and Islamic democracy as well. Walzer, one of the most important interpreters of the idea of just war for the past two decades, takes up the many questions about the just war tradition that have been raised by the increase in international terrorism and the new policy of preemptive military action.