

love through material actions within salvation history. Part of this involves the public processing of pain through public practices and political action (92–93). For theologians, this means attending to places where women have disappeared from Catholic theology: “What understandings of the cross and crucifixion support misogyny? What understandings of the cross and crucifixion dismantle it?” (97). Most important, what ways of doing theology are most conducive to mediating a new social reality that recognizes the God-given dignity of Black, Brown, and Indigenous women?

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*Postcolonial Politics and Theology: Unraveling Empire for a Global World.*

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If I were teaching a class on contemporary theology, Kwok Pui-Lan’s *Postcolonial Politics and Theology: Unraveling Empire for a Global World* would be at the top of my bibliography. It is a clear analysis of the current scene, an accessibly written volume that includes a comprehensive overview of liberation currents in religious studies.

The author studied in Hong Kong, where she read feminist scholars Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, as well as liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez. Feminist scholar activist Mary John Mananzan from the Philippines and the journal *In God’s Image* were Asian resources from which she began to theologize. She asked herself how she could contribute to this line of theological work, trained at Harvard, then taught for many years at Episcopal Divinity School before joining the faculty at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

Kwok Pui-Lan’s goal for this work is to use religious analysis to bring about global social change. Eurocentric political theology is simply outmoded. Postcolonial and comparative approaches are needed to assess the dynamic situations, especially in Asia where the competition between China and the United States sets up a dangerous situation. “Postcolonial theology functions as a training of the imagination and an attempt to construct a religious worldview that promotes justice, radical plurality, democratic practices, and planetary solidarity” (15). So she sets out to demonstrate just how it is done.

Her combination of critical political studies and global religious influences offers the reader a compelling look at how postcolonial analysis of both politics and religion can be useful in efforts at world peace. Her agenda is ambitious, her scholarship impeccable, and her tone at once insistent and inviting.

The book is divided into three parts. First, in “Contesting Empire” she shows the importance of a postcolonial approach to political theology. She urges Western scholars to learn about the East, especially China, if they are to teach about anything global. She concludes the section with a look at sexual theologies, especially the work of Argentine theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid, whose challenging work on “indecenty” was not just about sex but also about poverty.

The second section, “Political Theologies from Asia Pacific,” is focused on postcolonial theology in East Asia, where few theologians have dared to tread. Sexual crimes against women, especially rape by US soldiers in wars, are matters crying out for deep theological attention. Postcolonial feminist biblical scholarship helps to spotlight the views of outsiders, including women, as part of the preferential option for the marginalized. Contemporary fundamentalist Christianity and the renewed interest in Confucianism in Asia undergird conservative values that lead to the repression of women and LGBTIQ+ people. The Hong Kong protests of 2019 offer a concrete example of oppression, suffering, and, importantly, “a community of common destiny” (137). Despite the unfinished nature of the work, there is a spark of hope in the air.

The final section, “Practices,” focuses on teaching theology and preaching from global perspectives, a real need especially among Western scholars whose cultural myopia is legend. Kwok Pui-Lan takes a clear-eyed view of interreligious solidarity, cautioning that it is all tainted by colonialism but can be reimagined into strategies for world peace. She observes: “Christians have often put their hope in the eschaton—the end time. But post-colonial hope is more like a process, for we cannot defer hope till eternity” (203). That imperative gives this scholarly volume a distinctly activist flair.

Kwok Pui-Lan’s essays are crisp and clear. Her approach is accessible and pragmatic. Whether assessing Black Lives Matter or the waves of anti-Asian violence in the United States, she presents a postcolonial political vision and a theological method that will make religion, like the author, a trustworthy partner on a changing world stage.

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