

Kwok Pui-Lan. *Postcolonial Politics and Theology*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2021. 261. \$ 24.21 (paperback).

We are currently living in an era of irony. On the one hand, the world is more connected than ever before, yet on the other hand, we are witnessing the emergence of a new Cold War between global superpowers, as well as political polarization and division within our own nation and society. National and international politics now have an influential role in shaping and reshaping people's lives, for better or worse. Kwok Pui-Lan, a renowned Asian American postcolonial feminist theologian, responds to the changing geopolitical situation, particularly in the Global South, by bringing her postcolonial wisdom to the intersection between politics and theology. She offers a way to develop a political theology that embraces postcoloniality.

This book is divided into three parts. Part 1 delineates the contours of Kwok's political theology of postcoloniality. In chapter 1, Kwok unearths the genealogy of political theology and points out that central concepts such as secularism, sovereignty, and governmentality have been based on a Christianity-focused and Eurocentric bias. She argues the need for an alternative approach by locating political theology in close proximity with non-western religious traditions. In chapter 2, Kwok traces the construction and development of the concept of religion and reveals its entanglement with empire and its colonial project. The notion of religions itself has been loaded with racial and economic ideologies, and thus, the study of religion needs to be interdisciplinary and cross-cultural, attending to multiple intersections of religions and larger contemporary political issues. Chapter 3 examines how the understanding of sexuality in colonial discourse was imbued with racial obsession and affects the understanding of the sexuality of Jesus through the lens of postcolonial queer theology. To dismantle and subvert the symbol of the one phallic God, postcolonial sexual theology needs to overcome binary thinking or "thinking bisexually" and reexamine the body and sexuality from diverse religious and cultural traditions. In chapter 4, Kwok gives particular attention to the relationship between Christianity and empire in the American context. She sheds light on how the notion of Manifest Destiny and American exceptionalism has its roots in Christianity and how Christian churches and leaders have influenced Americans' attitudes toward China. Kwok urges Christian theologians and ethicists to challenge empires and churches to reclaim their prophetic stance.

Part 2 elucidates the postcolonial reality of the Asia Pacific, shifting geopolitical relations in the region due to the rise of China, and the development of diverse postcolonial theologies in the Asia Pacific as examples of resisting and intervening in neocolonial and imperialist politics in the region. Chapter 5 explores contextual theologies (such as minjung theology in Korea, Homeland Theology in Taiwan, and Asian American feminist theology) as ways of doing postcolonial theology in East Asia. Kwok points out deimperialization, decolonization, de-Cold War thinking, reconciliation, and peace as critical themes for postcolonial theology in the region and beyond (107). In Chapter 6, Kwok discusses how transnational globalization has reshaped the Asia Pacific and particularly the lives of Asian women. Due to the development of immense transnational networks and increasing movement of people and capital across borders, a binary construction of identity, such as the West and the Others or identity construction by essentializing one particular trait, is no longer possible. Kwok highlights the need for transnational feminist theology that fosters fluid and hybrid identities of Asian and Asian American people to resist and disrupt colonizing and imperialist discourse. In chapter 7, Kwok provides and critically examines a concrete account of the Hong Kong Protests as a case study for articulating postcolonial political theology.

Part 3 of this book explores postcolonial practices related to theological pedagogy, preaching, interreligious peacebuilding, and ecojustice. In chapter 8, Kwok critiques the Eurocentric nature of teaching theology, which she argues persists despite the demographic shift of Christianity from the global North to the global South. She proposes reclaiming the public nature of doing theology and suggests that teaching theology in a global world should aim to educate students to become global citizens and leaders. Chapter 9 offers implications of postcolonial theory for preaching and provides practical methodology for postcolonial preaching. Kwok defines the purpose of postcolonial preaching as creating a Third Space that enables "both preacher and listener to imagine new ways of being in the world and to discern God's grace for the victims of history and for the marginalized" (158). In chapter 10, Kwok debunks dominant myths about religion that hinder peacebuilding and shows how these myths are rooted in colonialism. Religious traditions have diverse and rich theological, symbolic, and ritualistic resources for peacebuilding, and a postcolonial approach helps to promote interreligious dialogue without drawing a binary line between "us" and "them." In chapter 11, Kwok engages with the issue of ecological justice and examines how the anthropocentric views in Western Christian theology and mission have supported and perpetuated ecological imperialism. She argues that in the age of the Anthropocene, Christian mission needs to expand its focus from the salvation of the soul to the care of the whole creation by developing planetary consciousness and solidarity (193).

This book is a collection of revised essays that were previously published; yet Kwok's postcolonial theological insights remain relevant and timely for our current global political situation, in which Sino-American competition has intensified and many predict an inevitable clash of civilizations. The dominant framework for understanding tension between global superpowers is the "us/them" binary, as both the US and China compete for hegemony. Without an alternative approach to the situation, Christians and pastors cannot carry out their prophetic tasks in the public square, engage in peacebuilding in multireligious and multicultural contexts, and they are vulnerable to becoming agents of empires. While this book is not a homiletic book, it is an invaluable resource for preachers. It offers a critical lens for preachers to understand the complexity of postcolonial political situations of our time and the ongoing influence of colonialism in political and theological discourse. Additionally, it provides postcolonial practices that resist the threats of empire and create a space in which people can reimagine themselves towards a different possible future based on postcolonial hope.

Yohan Go, Asbury United Methodist Church and Zion Korean United Methodist Church,
Warwick, RI