



Teaching Global Theologies: Power and Praxis

Pui-lan, Kwok; González-Andrieu, Cecilia; and Hopkins, Dwight N., eds.
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Book Review

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This collection of ten essays examines globalization (the radical diversity and complex interconnections that characterize the present state of human existence in the world) and offers various methods for teaching and doing Christian theology in this context. Globalization has arisen, in large part, from the colonial expansion of western European nations, through trade and commerce, migration, travel, and mass communication, and has resulted in a crisscrossing and blurring of national and cultural boundaries (12, 40, 145). The first century Marcan imperative for Christians to “go into all the world” that was at first aspirational is now the reality of Christianity in the twenty-first century.

The collection is divided into three sections. Part I defines globalization and encourages theological educators to take seriously not only the current pluralism in the world but also the diversity within Christianity both presently and historically (14, 29, 46). Part II examines the concept and practice of theological education, inclusive of methods for encouraging seminary students’ positive engagement with persons of other faith traditions (104). Part III goes further to suggest how theological educators can enable their students to achieve a deeper understanding of being and acting as persons of faith in global community.

Just as important as the divisions of the collection are the prominent themes in this volume of essays. Some of these themes are: intentionality in seeking, welcoming, and appreciating encounters with other religions (51, 92); the role of theology in public life in addition to its functions in Christian churches and communities (12); the importance and desirability of dialogue in teaching theology as well as in the encounters between different religions and cultures (42, 54, 83, 109, 150); the enhancement of systematic theology and theological

education through comparative studies and comparative theology (47, 100, 104, 109); the interrelatedness and mutual influences between local settings and global networks (79, 146, 165-166, 173); social justice as the common good and essential feature of global community (58-59); and global citizenship as participation in global networks and responsibility for improvement of the same by exposing and challenging systems of oppression and by working for social justice (59, 67, 88, 126).

The collection represents a noteworthy start to critical reflection and modifications in teaching Christian theology in light of the diversity and pluralism resulting from globalization. The essayists describe their use of pedagogical tools such as field trips (51), sacred texts from various religions (52), roundtable discussion (152-160), service and study abroad (81-84, 169), non-western cultural sources (92-99), comparative studies in religion (52, 100), music and language arts (117-120), and autobiography for reconstructions of identity (78, 168-171).

Further work is needed in analysis of the shifts within Christianity itself. Several of the essayists acknowledge that demographic shifts are tilting the population growth of Christianity towards the Global South – Africa, Asia, and Latin America. One essayist asks the question: What new or alternative interpretations of Christian doctrines will emerge in these areas? (38). Postcolonial theologies are already taking shape. Christian theology in the future will likely be the product of mutual learning between the Global South and the Eurocentric Global North.

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