

ASIAN

HORIZONS

Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2019

BOOK REVIEW

Linda Hogan & Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, ed., *Feminist Catholic Theological Ethics: Conversations in the World Church*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2016, Pages: x+300. ISBN: 97893-84964-60-3.

The book under review, *Feminist Catholic Theological Ethics: Conversations in the World Church*, is praiseworthy. The book has twenty-one articles and an introduction and a conclusion. The authors are well experienced in their field and have academic and experiential acumen to elaborate the pathways of in feminist Catholic theological ethics. Still as stated in the introduction, “the issues they raise, the context they describe, the challenges they surface, and the strategies they propose account for a fraction of a much wider process of theological and ethical conversation in church and society” (p. 2). The introduction itself is a real boon to those who want a concise overview of the theme and it highlights that “the lure of gender reductionism lies at the root of systemic gender injustice in Church and society. It is to be avoided at all times” (p. 11).

The contributors to the volume come from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America. Anne Arabome presents the picture of African woman and her quest for “the living God.” The African woman is not merely a victim, as she is oftentimes characterized in Western scholarship. African women’s perceptions of God transcend and bridge the gender divide simultaneously; they reveal an inclusive vision of God (p. 22-23). Lilian Dube plunges into a phenomenology of contrasting images of Mary in a local Church in Zimbabwe (p. 37-39). Veronica Rop makes an appraisal of the culture, context, and scriptural hermeneutics that shape the image and experiences of women in Africa. She argues for greater access for women to education to enhance their contribution to Church and society (p. 48). As women and girls bear the brunt of HIV/AIDS on account of various kinds of gender-based structural injustice, Alison Munro in the essay raises a few crucial questions like how the Church

can guarantee sustainability of treatment programmes with limited resources and infrastructure (p. 60). In the next essay, Sharon A. Bong foregrounds the theology and praxis of the Ecclesia of Women in Asia (EWA), a forum of feminist Catholic women doing theology in Asia (p. 64). Agnes Brazal in her essay undertakes a historical and post-colonial phenomenology of power-beauty dialectic in the contemporary Filipino context (p. 73-79). Focusing on Church in the Philippines, Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas depicts the shift in feminist discourse in Asia from gender polarities to gender fluidities. Kochurani Abraham deconstructs the insidious ideological mechanisms used to construct the “ideal Indian woman” (p. 100) and that entrench class, caste, and religion as instruments of exploitation and oppression (p. 104-106). Shaji George Kochuthara categorizes the system of dowry, which blight the lives of countless women and girls in India as a structural sin (p. 115-117) that reduces the value of women to material calculation of monetary or material gain and, therefore, easily makes them subject to violence. Mee-Yin Mary Yuen analyses the Catholic social teaching in the context of Hong Kong and accuses the government’s failure to uphold the dignity of women and protect their rights. Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer retraces the historical trajectory of the theological inbreaking of women in ecclesial and public space in Latin America, and invites the readers to do fair, just and whole theology (p. 141-146). Emilce Cuda carries on Bingemer’s analysis of women doing theology in Latin America (p. 150), a historic development that reconfigures the shape of the entire region and renders audible the voice of the feminine other.

Anna Perkins argues that what the religious feminists say is important not only for the local Church but for the world Church. Gerard Mannion’s critical examination of the role and contribution of Catholic feminist theologians (p. 188) and their authority in the exercise of magisterium alerts us to the danger of the exercise of power or authority that thrives in an all-male enclave. Teresa Forcades i Vila’s essay calls for theological ethics to rethink theology in general, and sacramental theology in particular, in all its concrete and embodied expressions. Stefanie Knauss analyses the question of religious leadership of women through the lenses of film. She disproves the idea of a “natural” feminine leadership style and highlights social factors that shape positive and creative exercise of leadership by women (p. 206). James Keenan in the context of a study of a notorious child abuse case in USA, focuses the contribution of women in prosecuting child abuses in the context of North America. He proposes the presence of women at every deliberation ought to be made (p. 229). Nichole Flores

makes an analysis of the notion of justice in Latina contexts that draws on classical Thomistic tradition and engages with contemporary exponents and proponents (p. 239-241). Elizabeth Bucar appraises the consequences of rhetoric and warrants originating from patently clericalist, authoritarian, and patriarchal structures (p. 249-250). Anne E. Patrick argues that secular forms of spirituality and those associated with traditional religious faiths need to be challenged by the demands of justice (p. 263-266). Shawnee Daniels Sykes evaluates the mechanism of succession and perpetuation of patriarchal systems and attitudes (p. 274-276). Linda Hogan gives a fitting conclusion to the collection of essays providing a clear picture of feminist theology (p. 280-283).

The essays of this book offer invaluable and comprehensive guide to understanding the feminist Catholic theological ethics. It is a hand resource and a good reading for all interested in feminist theological ethics. It is a great book to be used in courses on feminist theology and ethics, for it is theologically a synthetic one. This collection is a very relevant one and is really worth engaging. It is reader friendly, for the font size chosen is apt, the format inviting and the binding excellent. The index given at the end is very useful. I confidently recommend this book. May many make use of it and benefit from this edifying work.

Naiju Jose Kalambukattu, CMI (kalambukattunaiju@gmail.com)
Samanvaya Theology College, Jagdalpur