

Religion and Power eds. Jione Havea. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books / Fortress Academic,

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By Eve Parker

Jione Havea's edited volume *Religion and Power* is the first in a five-volume series on Theology in the Age of Empire, it offers essential insights into the matrix of power and religion. The book explores the complexities of power structures apparent within empires – past and present, providing indigenous, post-colonial and liberative perspectives. The chapters engage with context specific critiques of the role of religion as a tool of both oppression and liberation, with particular attention given to Christianity.

The opening chapter by Havea sets the tone of the book, he captures the complexities of faith and religion whilst highlighting the importance of collaborative work in addressing the power structures of empire that are apparent in history, traditions, scriptures and rituals. Havea draws on the indigenous traditions of the Pasifika to capture the theological necessity for engaging with global theologies of protest and resistance as a means of decentring the dominant structures of power. The book is then separated into two parts entitled 'Dare to Discern' and 'Dare to Disturb'. The Dalit theologian Deenabandhu Manchala opens up the discernment chapters with a focus on how empire operates locally and globally, he suggests five theological tasks for churches to employ in order to resist structures of oppression. The Korean missiologist Jooseop Keum's chapter develops on the missiological theme of mission from the margins, he calls on the ecumenical movement to be more radical and transformative in discipleship and leadership in order to address divisions and suffering in a fragmented world. Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi offers a Greek Orthodox perspective on *polis* and *ekklēsia*, she draws on the devastating impact of economic inequality in her own context of Greece and notes the need for modern Orthodox theology to challenge such life-denying realities. M. P. Joseph's chapter focuses on the use of power in manipulating religious symbols for political gain, as an Indian theologian he offers fascinating insights into the ways in which nationalism and

religious identities intersect. Finally, Joerg Rieger's call for deep solidarity concludes part one. The liberationist theologian addresses the systemic corruption of neoliberal capitalism and the need for class analysis in bringing about an international solidarity of resistance.

Part two begins with Michael Jagessar's call to protest against the Babylon's of our age, where he offers fresh insights into the Book of Revelation through Anansi and Rastafarian hermeneutics. Offering a practical example of radical activism in the context of the Chicano student movement, Jacqueline M. Hidalgo's chapter situates the importance of religious heritage and identity in struggles for justice – noting that the sacred and the struggles of the oppressed are intertwined. Hidalgo, Y. T. Vinayaraj's chapter then draws on the Indian philosopher Ambedkar as a source of leadership in bringing about change, Vinayaraj engages with a political philosophy of religion that calls for a decolonising of the Christian Church. Allan Aubrey Boesak chapter is rooted in a Reformed theology of confession and protest, where the Bible is the guide. He calls out the abuse of Scripture that justified racism and exploitation and instead suggests that the Bible should be a tool of liberation where the struggles of the oppressed are used as the lens through which empire is resisted. James Perkinson's chapter offers a critical engagement with the climate crisis that looks to indigenous wisdom and Scripture in order to challenge dominant epistemologies. The final chapter by Mark G. Brett gives attention to the context of Australia and the persecution of Aboriginal and Islander groups, Brett highlights the importance of indigenous spirituality and praxis for the future of the Church.

The main strength of the book is the radical perspectives that Havea has brought together to offer critical and contextual challenges to power. As a collective, the writers leave the reader feeling called to act in resistance against the evils of empire or to quote Jagessar, the 'shitstem' (p.87). However, the power of patriarchy must not be overlooked in calling out empire and yet the voices of women are lacking from the book. Alongside the contributions offered by Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi and Hidalgo, the book would have benefitted from the perspectives of more women who could have further exposed the gendered dynamics of power in religion.