

“As an evangélica constructive theologian, I always welcome efforts from colleagues who critically reexamine traditional doctrinal positions, posing questions that can provide relevant answers for a suffering world that cries out for justice. Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jenny Dagers’ *Reimagining with Christian Doctrines: Responding to Global Gender Injustices* does precisely that. This collection of essays from a diverse group of respected feminist theologians ‘reimagines’ the doctrines of creation, Trinity, resurrection, incarnation, church, and sin in creative and always embodied ways. In particular, they seek to hear and to respond to the cries of the suffering and voiceless of the world. It is my hope that others who read this book will be equally inspired to be as honest and sensitive as its authors, and also dare to constructively reimagine new ways of doing theology, that we may truly embody God’s vision for justice in the world.”

—Dr Loida I. Martell-Otero, *Professor of Constructive Theology,
Palmer Theological Seminary, USA*

“Will you join us? Written with scholarly lucidity and prophetic creativity, *Reimagining with Christian Doctrines* calls and challenges us to join in the continuing work of naming and exposing Christian doctrines that perpetuate the oppression of women and in articulating alternative theologies that promote gender justice and radical hospitality. Our answer should be an unequivocal yes. You can count on us to walk and struggle with you in promoting gender equality until justice becomes the destiny of all!”

—Eleazar S. Fernandez, *author of Burning Center, Porous Borders*

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Reimagining with Christian Doctrines: Responding to Global Gender Injustices



Edited by

Grace Ji-Sun Kim

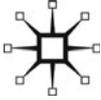
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REIMAGINING WITH CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

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Foreword © Wendy Farley, 2014.

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-349-48210-8

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First published in 2014 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®

in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,

175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN: 978-1-137-38298-6 PDF

ISBN: 978-1-349-48210-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

First edition: 2014

www.palgrave.com/pivot

DOI: 10.1057/9781137382986



*Dedicated to our spouses Perry Y.C. Lee and Alan Dagers, for
living with our reimaginings*

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Foreword

Wendy Farley

Feminist theology defends a simple idea: women are human beings and those things that undermine this humanity are assaults on the divine image. Degradation of women is not only unethical, it is, in a literal sense, blasphemy. And yet, since the writer of the *Gospel of Mary* portrayed a conflict among the disciples provoked by Mary of Magdala's teaching, the church has consistently degraded women. The peace made available through the Savior is regularly maimed by patriarchal and misogynistic attitudes, structures, and actions. The extent and severity of this violence becomes increasingly clear to American feminists as we engage in dialogue across the range of humanity: our sisters in the United States with different racial or ethnic experience and our sisters around the world who bring to awareness something of the beauty and suffering of our infinitely plural human race.

It is my view that our awakening to the inconceivable depths of the divine goodness is correlated to our exposure to the inconceivable depths of human suffering. The essays in this volume make significant headway in stretching our minds toward the suffering of others who may be largely invisible to mainstream theologies: black women whose bodies are regularly defiled and humiliated, Korean women who are subject to shockingly high rates of sexual violence and social marginalization, and Latina women who urge us simply to remember them. These

meditations on Christ's passion, continued in the suffering of women around the globe, challenge us to connect the experiences of women with our understanding of the fundamental teachings and doctrines of the church.

As important as the dialogue across the globe is, this volume is perhaps equally significant because it casts this dialogue in the context of Christian doctrine. Because Christian thought and practice are so radically shaped by patriarchy and misogyny, it can be easy for women to accept both the authority and the distortions of the doctrine passively, unthinkingly, resignedly—trapped by the “bondage of the eye/I” which makes diminishment so natural. It can be easy to turn away, to place our hearts elsewhere—in compassionate action, in song, in preaching—where the fluidity of understanding and the intimacy of divine nearness might be more available. And for many, it has been necessary to turn away altogether when Christian teachings and liturgy seem only to reinflame the wounds one desperately seeks to heal. But we are, as Eboni Marshall Turman so powerfully reminds us, *homoousious* with Christ. We are bearers of the divine image; we are Christ-bearers and something more is asked of us, something more is available to us in the wonderful news of God with us. “With us,” yes, us, too: in our beautiful bodies, our astounding spirits, our hope, our intelligence, our suffering. We are the body of Christ and our insights into the meaning of the Christian gospel, translated into doctrines, is incomplete and maimed without the voices and perspectives of women from every corner of the globe.

It is in taking-up this challenge that this volume serves the church so well. The very fine introduction contrasts the “rock” of doctrine with the “hard places” of diversity. Following Sharon Welch and Peter Heltzel, I would propose another metaphor. Like jazz, doctrine provides a basic structure that binds Christians together in a shared symbolic world. And like jazz, doctrine is constantly revisited by generations of Christians appropriating their faith in the wildly diverse contexts in which human beings find themselves. The riffs on doctrine in this book reminds us that the chord structure of our faith: Incarnation, creation, Trinity, and sin are played by women in different settings in ways that open-up new dimensions of meaning and depths of experience. The truth of doctrine is both stable and living. The wonderful theologians gathered in this volume illuminate the truth of doctrine, retaining its stability while engaging its living and life-giving power. By reengaging our traditional

doctrines, they integrate the ancient simplicity of Christ's promise, that when we dwell in love we dwell in God, with a feminist attention to theology of embodiment, mutuality, and care (as Pamela Brubaker summarizes it). I hope you share my pleasure in entering into their profound and compassionate song.

Acknowledgments

This book began its life as a proposal for a panel session at the American Academy of Religion. The proposal was initiated and co-ordinated by Jenny Dagers with the title now shared by this book: *Reimagining with Christian Doctrines: Responding to Global Gender Injustices*. Happily the proposal was accepted and the panel included in the program for the 2013 meeting held in Baltimore, Maryland. Serene Jones deserves appreciation for having described reimagining with received Christian doctrines as a “subfield” within feminist theology. For Dagers, this raised the question explored in both panel and book: how effective is this form of reimagining in the global struggle for gender justice? The issues at stake are explored more fully in the Introduction.

Jones played a key role in suggesting potential panel members. Invitations to participate received an enthusiastic response from Eboni Marshall Turman, Joy Ann MacDougall, and Cynthia Rigby. Jones agreed to preside at the session, and Grace Ji-Sun Kim was an obvious choice when seeking a respondent. Kim suggested this related book project, and successfully steered the book proposal through the Palgrave Macmillan adjudication procedures. We are grateful to Theresa Yugar for accepting our invitation to contribute a chapter from her Latina perspective, and to Pamela K. Brubaker for offering her chapter from the viewpoint of her work with the World Council of Churches; the book has a better balance as a result. Neither panel nor book would have been realized without each

contributor's dedication and perseverance. As its editors, we are truly and heartily grateful.

We are deeply appreciative of the professional and encouraging support from the staff at Palgrave Macmillan Press. Our special thanks go to our editor, Burke Gerstenschlager, for sharing our enthusiasm for this venture. He caught our vision for the project early on and continuously gave us supportive responses as we overcame obstacles in our way. We are indebted to his kindness, dedication, and guidance as we worked together to make this book a reality. We also thank Madeleine Crum and then Caroline Kracunas for their efficiency in dealing with the practical matters involved in producing a finished book. Thanks are due as well to Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Loida Martell-Otero, Eleazar Fernandez, and Catherine Keller for finding time in their busy schedules to read our manuscript and add their endorsements. Their help in recommending this book to you is welcome. We are also grateful to our research assistant, Bruce Marold, for sharing his comments and recommendations for wording in our chapter drafts. His hard work and commitment to this project is much appreciated.

We want to give special thanks to our families for their unqualified support, love, and encouragement. Without their sustenance, this book would never have been completed. To Grace's husband, Perry, for standing by her with lots of patience, kindness, and encouragement. To Grace's three children, Theodore, Elisabeth, and Joshua who were a wonderful source of joy and comfort during the time of writing and editing. They know exactly how to cheer mom up when she needs it most and also make her the right cup of tea to sustain her. Thanks go to Jenny's husband, Alan, for his frontline role in a busy household while Jenny was absorbed in her work. Also to Jenny's son, Tom, who graduated in the summer when this book was written, and who has embarked on his career in Landscape Architecture. May his reimaginings also play their part in making the world a better place.

Much of the writing and editing happened during the summer months, the time for family vacations and travel. We are deeply indebted to our families for understanding the importance of writing and completing this book. They supported us and allowed us to "work" during family breaks and time away. In so many ways they journeyed with us in our reimaginings and for that we are grateful.

In the usual way, as editors we shoulder the responsibility for any remaining shortcomings in the final text.

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suffering, evil, healing, and redemption that are attentive to the radical compassion of God for all of humanity. Most recently she has described the Doctrine of the Incarnation using marginalized texts and experiences. She is involved in establishing a contemplative community that combines non-patriarchal worship with Christian meditation.

Grace Ji-Sun Kim received her MDiv from Knox College (University of Toronto) and her PhD from the University of St. Michael's College (University of Toronto) in Systematic Theology. She is presently Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University. She is the author of three books, *Colonialism, Han and the Transformative Spirit*, *The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other*, and *The Grace of Sophia*. She is the Book Series co-editor with Dr. Joseph Cheah of *Asian Christianity in Diaspora*. Most of her research centers on racism, sexism, theology, and eco-justice. Kim is an ordained minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

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Theresa Yugar received her PhD from Claremont Graduate University. She was raised in familial contexts that fully embraced the spirit of Vatican II that strived to be ecumenical across Christian traditions, was committed to interfaith dialogue and affirmed the powerful role of the laity in the formation of the church. Currently, Yugar worships in marginal spaces in the church and is a Church reformer who desires a Church beyond sexism. The metaphor that both empowers and disempowers her in the Church is the image of all being welcome at the Eucharistic table. Yugar's forthcoming book *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Feminist Reconstruction of Biography and Text* continues a systematic reflection on this theme in light of a long legacy of women and Church reform in Latina American history.