

spreading the message of Christianity, women used the opportunity to speak and preach unapologetically and uncensored, and from church pulpits. When the notion of separate spheres for men and women was enforced, women insisted that formal education was a necessity. Schools were equipped to teach the delicate arts of morality, manners, and homemaking and paved the way for deeper educational pursuits. When Evangelicalism demanded female silence and subservience, women's groups flourished inside and outside of church walls, and they created networks and events for themselves, without the presence of men. Often these circles focused on meeting charity needs. The intimacy of these activities and spaces allowed women to open up, share ideas, and strategize. When the price and social consequences of alcohol drained families of financial resources, women worked together to spearhead the temperance movement, applying social pressure to their husbands in order to ensure economic stability within the home. This is just one of many examples provided of the power of women working together.

In depicting the history of female education in America, Welch and Ruelas make clear that not all benefited from this movement. White women who already held some degree of social privilege benefitted the most, while those who were socially and racially marginalized continued to be denied much. These divisions ran so deep that distinct movements were required. The authors devote three chapters to the efforts and progression of the Indigenous and African American education movements. This volume shows us one example of the dark side of social justice work. Social justice movements, in the United States as well as around the world, hold their own hierarchies and internal injustices. In order to be both effective and ethical, movements toward equity must encounter and take seriously identity politics as well as intersectionalities of experiences. Feminism is only worth pursuing if it benefits all.

To know our history is to know our future. The struggle for women's educational and economic equality is far from over. Racism, oppression, and social barriers persist, but so do women, who continue to find ways to strategize, subvert, and organize. We have done this since the beginning. We women find a way.

*BRE WOLIGROSKI finds her way within ecumenical and social justice circles. Her seminary studies were scandalously co-ed, involving neither needlework nor manners. Bre's family settled on and holds responsibilities within Treaty 1 territory (Canada).*

**Frances S. Adeney, *Women and Christian Mission: Ways of Knowing and Doing Theology*, Pickwick, Eugene, OR, 2015. 300 pp. \$29. ISBN: 9781498217194.**

“The church has been like a bird with one wing. That is not right. But we cannot stop the power of God. Women will be empowered.” —Evelyn Parkin, Australian

## Indigenous theologian (14)

Frances Adeney is Professor Emerita of Evangelism and Global Mission at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. In her volume *Women and Christian Mission: Ways of Knowing and Doing Theology*, she draws from her experience as a professor in Java, Indonesia, and the United States, and also on interviews with ninety women to delineate women's ways of practicing "mission theology." Her research is broad in scope—tracing women's roles in mission from the early church to the present postmodern context—due to the dearth of conventional, written sources available, since "Christian women...have practiced the *Missio Dei*, usually *without* the privilege of time and resources or the status of authority to speak and write about those matters" (254, emphasis original). Thus, despite their considerable experiences and contributions to mission theology, many of the women interviewed did not identify as theologians. "They were modest about their influence—sometimes too modest," Adeney concludes (xiii–xiv).

Adeney's study counteracts that modesty, examining women's experiences of God calling them to leadership roles traditionally reserved for men, such as preaching and teaching. The women's experiences often involved a struggle for acceptance, as in the striking story of late nineteenth-century African American preacher Jarena Lee. When Lee approached her bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church to discuss her calling to preach, the bishop upheld the tradition's stance against women in "public ministry."

But Lee's spirit could not rest. She tried for eight years to suppress her calling from God. At length, in agony of soul, she returned to Bishop Allen's church to plead again her cause. Again she was refused. But the next Sunday, Jarena Lee stood up in the congregation and began to preach. So powerful was her preaching that Allen...relented, becoming one of her greatest supporters...Bishop Allen even cared for Lee's children when she was away on preaching trips (41).

In highlighting the obstacles women face in responding to God's call in their lives—whether it be an unsupportive or gender-discriminatory church community, family or spouse, or a reticence to accept one's own leadership gifts due to gender—Adeney affirms these women's "perseverance, creativity, and flexibility" in finding ways to live out their callings to be "theology-makers" rather than only "theology-followers" (184–86, 40). Adeney also affirms women "leading from the margins" (179), finding less formal ways of practicing mission theology as spouses of mission workers, beginning mission work later in life, or supporting others' mission work (3–4, 24, 185).

Adeney's discussion of the turn to spirituality within "third wave" feminism is particularly helpful as she identifies concerns that characterize women's theologies, including embodiment; "the *sacredness of everyday life*"; choice and agency; "self-

*trust*” in the face of what Virginia Woolf dubbed the “gentle violence” of systemic sexism; empowerment; relationality; and “*celebrating difference*” (28–34, emphases original). Another strength lies in her nuanced examination of the double-edged nature of sacrificial ethics for women doing “mission theology.” While recognizing the centrality of self-sacrifice in the Christian tradition—which warrants her only mention of Anabaptism (150)—she explains that sacrifice involves “much ambiguity for women.” Exhortations to self-sacrifice “can be used in oppressive ways” as women are “coerced into” sacrificing themselves in ways that benefit men in authority, or “‘choose’ self-sacrifice because they have internalized cultural expectations in their context.” Adeney rightly argues that self-sacrifice “then becomes not a source of holy living but an obstacle to be overcome” (151–52, cf. 260). As Anabaptists, we should note the strong association between our tradition and this potentially oppressive notion of self-sacrifice.

Due to the informal or unofficial ways in which women have practiced mission theology, Adeney’s understanding of mission is necessarily broad, if not vague. For her, mission encompasses everything from evangelism, interfaith dialogue, and friendship building to teaching, academia, providing health care, and engaging politics (255, 3–4, 96, 169). Her chapter on Dorothy Day’s contributions to the Catholic Worker Movement in the United States blurs the lines even further, since she labels Day, who worked for social justice in her own context, an exemplary “missionary” (115–33). Does “mission theology” for Adeney include any and all ways in which Christian women practice their faith? She seems to assert as much, claiming, “Today Christian mission is from everywhere to everywhere” (172). But in identifying these various women’s lived theologies in many historical and socio-cultural-political contexts as “Christian mission,” Adeney privileges a loaded term that is not necessarily embraced by these diverse women and/or communities.

Adeney also underemphasizes the legacy of colonialism, in which the “mission theology” of white Western women is also complicit. She admittedly distinguishes between the “Imperial Mood” of theology “from above” (as hierarchical, rationalistic, dualistic, abstract-philosophical)—which presupposes the superiority or “orthodoxy” of the “traditional Western European” worldview—and the “Contextual Mood” of theology “from below,” based on experience, community, solidarity, and cultural memories and narratives (38–39, 56, 61–62, cf. 77). Crucially, Adeney acknowledges in passing that women can also theologize in the “Imperial Mood” (57). She is careful to include many contextual, liberation, and feminist theological voices from the two-thirds world and to call for a degree of mutuality in intercultural relationships (243, 250). Still, it is lamentable that Adeney does not engage postcolonial feminist theologians like Musa Dube or Kwok Pui-lan. Women such as these might help complicate her claim that women have been marginalized in mission, by raising the ways in which white Western women’s mission engagement *has also marginalized others* or at least benefitted from racist and colonialist ideolo-

gies. According to Kwok, even feminist theologians have not sufficiently grappled with “how white women ha[ve] colluded in colonialism and slavery” as well as in the neocolonialism of globalized capitalism and “development.”<sup>1</sup> This critique certainly applies to Adeney’s work. To name but one example, she describes a worship service into which Indonesian women incorporated “traditional Indonesian dress” and used rice and Indonesian wine as the elements of Communion. Instead of recognizing this as a powerful act of decolonizing worship, Adeney reduces it to an aesthetic choice to incorporate “beauty” into worship (46).

Such an oversight reveals that while Adeney’s work valuably recovers the underemphasized voices and contributions of women to Christian mission theology, it does not sufficiently critique the underlying triumphalism that continues to characterize most Christian understandings of mission. Ultimately, her work needs the “other wing” of postcolonial theologies in order to present a more complete and complex portrait of women’s mission theology.

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**Tim Otto, *Oriented to Faith: Transforming the Conflict over Gay Relationships*, Cascade, Eugene, OR, 2014. 154 pp. \$17.00. ISBN: 9781625649768.**

I am well acquainted with the “conflict over gay relationships,” at least within Mennonite Church USA. The “at variance” notation on my Ministerial Leadership Information form is a testament to my personal engagement with questions of marriage and inclusion in the church. I am frustrated with the current state of denominational conversation and would love to find a resource that could truly transform the conflict. And that is why I was interested in reviewing Tim Otto’s *Oriented to Faith: Transforming the Conflict over Gay Relationships*.

Otto’s discussion of economics and family are insightful; according to him, the capitalist ethos tells us that we are “a bundle of needs” and that our romantic partner’s primary purpose is to meet those needs (28). The Christian perspective, he argues, must oppose this idea of marriage as just another means of consuming a product. Otto clearly shows how consumerism can lead to unhealthy relationships—platonic and romantic, straight and gay.

I also appreciate the author’s encouragement for churches to provide theological

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<sup>1</sup> Kwok Pui-Lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 18–19.