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Berkeley Journal of  
Religion and Theology

**Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology**

**Volume 8, Issue 1**

ISSN 2380-7458

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*Book Review*

**Decolonial Love: Salvation in Colonial Modernity**

by Joseph Drexler-Dreis

Author(s): Javney Mohr

Source: *Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology* 8, no. 1 (2023): 111-115.

Published by: Graduate Theological Union © 2023

Online article published on: March 5, 2023

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concept of instruction more deeply and broadly and the concept of truth more profoundly.

Clooney then includes an excursus chapter that gives insights into his hermeneutical methodology before moving to his last pair of texts that showcase the importance of praxis: *The Admirable Secret of the Most Holy Rosary (Le Secret Admirable du Très Saint Rosaire)* a French text by Louis Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716) and *One Hundred Linked Verses on the Holy Word of Mouth (Tiruvāymoḷi Nur̥rantāti)*, a Tamil piece by Maṇavāḷamānui (1370-1450). In this section, Clooney demonstrates how the transformative work of slow and deep reading is enhanced by embodied practice through means like praying the rosary and textual recitation.

The book engages deep dialogue throughout—within and between texts. The studying of each text, consecutively, opens key learnings from each tradition that foster a dialogical, bridge-building approach between faith traditions with the power to change relationships between diverse religious communities. Clooney’s well-written book embodies his distinctive dialogical text-based approach to comparative theology inviting us to notice when studying outside our own faith tradition inspires us to think more deeply and broadly about our own.

*Charissa Jaeger-Sanders is a Ph.D. student in the Theology and Ethics Department at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. As an eco-feminist, dialogic comparative theologian ordained in the United Methodist Church, she works at the intersection of Christianity and Hinduism with an underpinning of philosophy of science.*

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**Decolonial Love:**  
*Salvation in Colonial Modernity*  
By: **Joseph Drexler-Dreis**

*Publisher: Fordham University Press (New York, New York, U.S.A.)*

Year: 2019, Pages: 218 pp.

ISBN: 9780823281879

Price: \$25.00

Reviewed by: **Javney Mohr**, *Graduate Theological Union*

*Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology*, Vol. 8, No. 1

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How can a posture of love abolish hierarchy and oppressive relations of every formulation? And what does it mean for the theologian today that the loci of such a radical orientation is not confined to the discipline of theology but, rather, occurs in the historical particularity of any context, most powerfully and legitimately from those on the undersides of Western modernity? In a new and vital analysis that brings together liberationist theologies and decolonial thought, Joseph Drexler-Dreis turns to James Baldwin and Franz Fanon to discern a hermeneutics of “decolonial love” as epistemic framework and theological pedagogy from the margins of colonial modernity. Oriented by a hermeneutics of “decolonial love,” Drexler-Dreis contends that their lives and works make a claim about the divine reality: the sacred is present in the human and in the force of historical motion. On sovereign epistemic terms that exist in the cracks of the colonial/modern world-system, decolonial love reveals the eschatological reality of history, the *real* site of salvation. Thus, today, as the reach of colonial modernity breaches planetary scope—human life on Earth already hung and hanging in the balance—Drexler-Dreis’s treatise emerges into this moment of precipice, clarifying, articulating, and affirming the sacred location of the liberative force that can transcend it.

Drexler-Dreis commences his three-part text drawing on decolonial thought and Quijano’s concept of “coloniality of power” to frame the contemporary. The hierarchies established through European political expansion did not end upon the postcolonial turn in the mid-twentieth century but naturalized within the labor relations and categorizations of the human, the foundation upon which the modern world-system operates. In the privileging of Eurocentric intellections of being and knowledge, Drexler-Dreis examines how those outside the Western epistemic center thereby enter into being and rationality insofar as they

assimilate into modernity's trajectory. In coloniality's reification, one particular set of geohistorical loci, epistemic sources and human identities have been and are deemed capable of informing eschatological claims. This is the present historical context, avers Drexler-Dreis. Therefore, coloniality is the context to which all theological reflection must respond, and the possibility to be, think, and imagine in ways un beholden to the confines of the modern/colonial matrix *is* the decolonial project.

Christian theology is entangled in coloniality, however. The discipline therefore faces a threshold question: Can members of communities who have been rendered nonpersons through coloniality think and speak theologically on their own terms? Can the ways of loving and orientations of love among those who have been relegated to positions of nonbeing inform theology? In absence of positive response, theology as critical reflection and active response to the human condition in light of the divine remains mired in the manifestations of coloniality. Though liberation theology has moved towards decoloniality by proclaiming "the preferential option" (Gutierrez), Drexler-Dreis compellingly contends that "the world of the poor" (Ellacuría) must be recognized as the epistemic locus from which any and all theological reflection takes place. Immediate claims about lived experience under the theo/ideological structures of oppression are inherently theological claims. They are the spheres of reality, the starting locality, and fundamental theological criterion.

Consequently, Drexler-Dreis employs the decolonial method he documents, turning precisely and singularly to the cries, claims, and de/reconstructions of "the crucified people" to evidence his proposals (65). This transgressive hermeneutic reclaims the integrity of the Christian theological tradition by employing its decolonial dialectic. In part II, Drexler-Dreis turns outward from the discipline to the work of Fanon and Baldwin as epistemic foundations that inform theology, discerning that the commitments from which they engage reality are orientated by decolonial love. In different historical contexts, their orientation exposes the idolatry of Western modernity, situates the human person in relation to a reality that exceeds modern significations, and catalyzes historical movement towards liberation. In this radical activity, Drexler-Dreis interprets their lives and works as eschatologically significant. The political-intellective

praxis of decolonial love exemplified by Fanon and Baldwin opens alternative possibilities, making space for encounter with the mystery of reality's eschatological dimensions.

Here, Drexler-Dreis offers a critical contribution to the dialectic tradition of liberation theology and decolonial thought. Drexler-Dreis redefines love as decolonial, emphasizing that *authentic* orientations of love introduce conflict, stimulate the end of coloniality, and build relationships anathema to market forces and white supremacist ideologies within the European intellectual tradition. In the "violence of irruption" against the coloniality of power, divinity incarnate becomes manifest (155). "Encounter with the sacred happens in the violence that opens space for the divine and in the encounter with the divine," writes Drexler-Dreis, "Both elements are the process of love" (155). When, therefore, theology emerges from decolonial love as a historical instance of encounter with divinity and an epistemically generative site, theology becomes a form of border-thinking that transcends the limits of the modern world-system. From this statement, embodied in the political lives of Fanon and Baldwin, Drexler-Dreis draws to a profound and impelling conclusion: Liberation theology and decolonial thought are brought together.

In this solidaric joining, Drexler-Dreis's contribution is essential and advances the actualization of liberation. Throughout every stage of the thesis's development, Drexler-Dreis grounds analyses in reference to the intellectual works and praxis of those before him, extensive fields in which he demonstrates comprehensive acuity. Thus, in conclusion, Drexler-Dreis draws in Ellacuría, Gebara, and Althaus-Reid, illustrating liberationist theologies of mutuality with Fanon and Baldwin. From diverse historical contexts, they collectively gesture to the deeper structure of reality—the "theological" structure of Creation—wherein humanity and the transcendent, salvation and history, are one (145).

*Decolonial Love* is a vital text for all those situated in the traditions of decolonial thought and liberationist theologies. However, Drexler-Dreis' thesis transcends disciplinary boundaries. His ultimate conclusion implicates and calls to the entire collective of scholars, pedagogues, and activists: "Liberation does not entail moving to the 'great beyond.'" It implies a posture of radical attention and steadfastness in *reality*. This

*necessitates* relationship with those who struggle under injustice” (119). Decolonial love as a political posture of liberative praxis offers theologians of every locality a foothold within colonial modernity from which to commit to the sacred, and to the struggle to transform reality. It is the option of love and liberation before us all.

*Javney Mohr is a scholar and organizer pursuing Ph.D. studies as a Presidential Scholar in the Department of Ethics at the Graduate Theological Union. Grounded in the traditions of decolonial feminist thought and liberationist praxis, her research inquires the pedagogic character of radical social movements and Third World liberation struggles, and the networks of inter/nationalist solidarities that constitute its praxis. Her current work proposes the emancipatory motion of decoloniality and abolitionism as the radical political activity of militant love and as the inherent orientation of the Land.*

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## **White Evangelicals and Right-Wing Populism:**

*How Did We Get Here?*

By: **Marcia Pally**

**Publisher: Routledge (New York, New York, U.S.A.)**

**Year: 2022, Pages: 148 pp.**

**ISBN: 9781032134826**

**Price: \$47.96**

*Reviewed by: Matthew R. Hartman, Graduate Theological Union*

*Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology, Vol. 8, No. 1*

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How did we get here? The subtitle of Marcia Pally’s *White Evangelicals and Right-Wing Populism* echoes a familiar refrain heard in American political and religious discourse over the past few years. From media pundits to the political elite class, to even many (most?) in academia, questions such as