

Walking with the Mud Flower Collective: God's Fierce Whimsy and Dialogic Theological Method. By Stina Busman Jost. Emerging Scholars. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014. Pp. viii + 265. \$49.

In this volume Jost highlights how interpersonal rapport of women theologians contributes to contemporary methodological discussion. Based on an earlier book edited by Kate Cannon about seven feminist theologians, *God's Fierce Whimsy* (1985), and using the work of these women as models, she compellingly argues that theological method is living theology in dialogue with oneself, others, and God, and that it is not merely an academic exercise triangulating revelation, doctrine, and culture (82). Looking at the work of these women theologians over several years reveals how they negotiated personal differences by underscoring and attending directly to their own individual context, and by realizing that differences build—rather than weaken—authentic, transforming relationships (179). Dialogic theological method thus becomes for this author a prescription for building human society.

Especially helpful is chapter 3 in which J. employs the work of Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin to provide a foundation for analyzing the project in Cannon's work. Acknowledging the significant differences in the theorists' approaches, she nevertheless teases out their common affirmation of interpersonal encounter and "life as fundamentally dialogic" (88). She formulates four characteristics for method as dialogue: (1) a discerned posture of openness leaving one vulnerable; (2) sensitively prioritizing the stories that partners bring to the dialogue; (3) investing in others' well-being to build solidarity through "agapic orientation" and "epistemic humility"; and (4) communicative amenability wherein partners are open to authentic transformation.

Instead of directly engaging other theorists' work in theological method (for example, Stephen Bevans's work), J. concludes by challenging the notion of an "all theology is contextual" learning model that does not actually demand dialogue with people from different cultural perspectives. She writes with refreshing directness: "[T]o do theology with an acontextual orientation perpetuates a privileged body of academic literature, which often lacks concrete effectiveness and fails to be open to critique beyond academia" (183). Thus she offers a prescription for an authentic interpersonal encounter that, if embraced, may lead to change within oneself and in the world—which, arguably, is the point of theology.

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The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology. Edited by Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn. New York: Oxford University, 2014. Pp. 516. \$150.

As part of a new initiative by Oxford University Press to offer state-of-the-art surveys in a particular subject area from leading international figures in the discipline, this volume meets that purpose and offers much more. It is also timely in the recent US