Foreword

I write this foreword having just returned from China. Thirty-three members of my extended family had attended the seventieth anniversary of the liberation of the Weihsien Internment Camp, where two thousand expatriates—including my mother's missionary family—were interned by the Japanese during the Second World War. As I read the proofs of Paul Chung's *Postcolonial Public Theology* while on the plane coming back to the United States, my mind was fresh with images not only of the camp and the no-longer-existing colonial world it represented but also of the myriad ways in which the Chinese cities we had visited during our trip—Beijing, Yantai, and Weifang—were now clearly being marked by the expansive forces of global capitalism and rapid technological innovation.

Reflecting on these images, I found myself drawing parallels between Chung's postcolonial proposal for public theology and Langdon Gilkey's account of his experience at Weihsien. Gilkey, a young English teacher during his internment, would later become a theology professor who—like Chung—would bring classic Reformation insights about creation, sin, and grace to bear on contemporary analyses of society and history. In addition, he would—again like Chung—attend to the relationship between science and religion, on the one hand, and interreligious and pluralist dialogue, on the other. However, Gilkey is probably best known for his book *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women under Pressure* (1966), an account of how the prisoners at Weihsien had created a civil society of sorts within the internment camp. Addressing not only the indifference, injustice, prejudice, and even cruelty that can surface when people live together in such close quarters and extreme circumstances, *Shantung Compound* also discusses the resilience of the human spirit and the way the grace and forgiveness of God create a space for healthy relationships and a creative concern for the world around us and for our neighbors.

Like the internees in the Weihsien camp, we too face the question of how we will organize our lives together in a world that is rapidly becoming even more interconnected. And although the colonial world represented by the camp's motley group of expatriates no longer exists, it continues to affect our lives together, emerging in ever new "neo-colonial" and "post-colonial" permutations in which the powerful who have access to knowledge, power, wealth, and technological resources continue to exclude and take advantage of the weak and dispossessed.

Chung is uniquely equipped to address this world in which we find ourselves. A true cultural and intellectual hybrid, Chung has throughout his theological career consistently sought to bring together domains of theory and practice we often keep separate. Yet if his hybridity leads him to be a deeply *analogical* thinker who notes similarities across diverse worlds, then it also leads him to be incorrigibly *dialectical*, identifying points of dissonance and dissimilarity we tend to gloss over or ignore. True to form, his *Postcolonial Public Theology* sets in conversation European, American, and Asian voices from both the past and the present. Linking not only Christian theology, hermeneutics, and ethics, but also issues and themes related to scientific rationality and interreligious dialogue, Chung seeks throughout this book to articulate a truly "public" Christian theology in a world increasingly affected by economic globalization. Nonetheless, he does this from a distinctive "postcolonial" stance: grounded in the subversive memory of Jesus, he stands in solidarity with those who are victimized and marginalized by that world.

Chung's public theology has been deeply influenced by David Tracy, who was a colleague of Gilkey's at the University of Chicago Divinity School. Reinterpreting Christian symbols in relation to philosophical hermeneutics and critical social theory, Tracy's proposal for public theology seeks a mutually critical correlation of the Christian confession of faith and analyses of our contemporary situation; deeply analogical, it seeks similarities in difference even as it appropriates, critiques, and reconstructs worlds of meaning. Although Chung locates his proposal in relation to Tracy's public theology, he revises it by placing more emphasis on difference and dissimilarity. With his focus on what is "irregular" in our shared life together, Chung articulates a distinctive voice that brings together a confluence of Reformation and Asian themes.

At the heart of Chung's theology are two classic Reformation themes: the *viva vox evangelii* (the living voice of the gospel that embodies God's living discourse) and the *theologia crucis* (the theology of the cross). Nonetheless, Chung radicalizes and contextualizes these themes in relation to a Korean minjung theology rooted in Jesus' solidarity with the *massa*

perditionis—the public sinners and tax collectors—which Chung also calls the *ochlos* (meaning "crowd" in Greek) or *minjung* (meaning "masses" in Korean). In his solidarity with the *ochlos-minjung*, Jesus not only suffers with others but also embodies—through his social relations and personal biography—the disclosure of the gospel of God's coming kingdom of justice and mercy in their midst. For Chung, Jesus is neither merely an exemplar for social change (as in some earlier versions of minjung theology) nor merely one whose vicarious death is expunged of its deeply prophetic and social-critical import (as in Kazoh Kitamori's theology of the cross). Rather, what Chung seeks to highlight is the way Jesus' embrace of all who are vulnerable, broken, and victimized discloses God's creative and reconciling discourse—precisely within the radical plurality of our social and natural worlds.

Emmanual Levinas' distinction between "saying" (living discourse) and "said" (written text) provides Chung with an important conceptual resource for depicting how God's infinite "saying" speaks through the "face" that discloses the otherness of the Other. If God's living Word in Jesus embraces and addresses all suffering, sin, and injustice with a creative and reconciling word, then it is possible to discern how this Word speaks a critical and emancipatory address from, through, and for those who have been victimized by history. In his interpretation of the fusion of multiple horizons that emerges when intra-textual biblical narratives are juxtaposed against the extra-biblical narratives of our social worlds, Chung seeks to incorporate an "irregular" moment into public theology. Focusing on the "irregular" that emerges in this fusion of horizons, Chung attempts an "archeological" rewriting of the "otherness" of the vulnerable, fragile, and victimized because it is precisely there, he argues—in Jesus' solidarity with the *massa perditionis* or *ochlos-minjung*—that we can perceive and anticipate God's just and merciful eschatology, the reign of God, in our midst. Thus, even though Chung appropriates Tracy's "analogical" approach to public theology, he revises it in terms of what he calls an "analectical" method that replaces the "logos" in the word "ana*logy*" with a "dia*lectics*" that seeks to bring to the fore the *dissimilarity* in the social discourse of those on the margins through whose "face" God continues to address.

In this way, Chung's "analectical" method incorporates into public theology a postcolonial archeological strategy that seeks to unearth the narratives of those marginalized by the double effects of the legacy of colonialism and the rapid expansion of economic globalization. Two thinkers aid him in developing this archeological strategy: Edward Said, who seeks to demystify Western representations of the "Orient" based on binary contrasts between the "superior" West and the "inferior" East, and Michel Foucault, who seeks

to uncover the complex interplay of power and knowledge deeply embedded in religious, political, and cultural institutions.

Yet if Chung seeks to incorporate an irregular ("postcolonial") moment into public theology, then—true to his own analogical and dialectical method—he also seeks to incorporate a constructive ("public") moment into postcolonial discourse. Against Said, he argues that victims need not merely remain passive as they rewrite their history of suffering: their archeological rewriting of history can be done in a spirit of *metanoia* (repentance) and responsible agency grounded in God's creative justice and promise of new creation. Against Foucault, he argues that the critique of *parrhesia* (truth-telling) so identified with his approach need not merely be epistemic, solely rooted in the interplay of language, knowledge, and power: it can be rooted in a social ontology open to the irruption of God's kingdom in our midst. In this way, Chung seeks to develop a postcolonial public theology grounded in a theological humanism that attends to basic needs, distributive justice, and the integrity of life. Like William Schweiker, who also makes a case for theological humanism in our time, Chung seeks to counter both a postmodern *anti-humanism* that negates the human capacity to make claims about truth and justice and a modern *over-humanization* that fails to grasp, especially in the face of environmental degradation, the limits of human finitude.

Chung, therefore, takes very seriously the need to relate his postcolonial public theology to an account of scientific rationality. Unlike some liberation theologians, who have a primarily negative view of science and technology, Chung seeks to cultivate what he describes as a "transmodern"—as opposed to a "modern"—approach for developing an "integral" rationality that can enter into dialogue with science and technology even as it attends to the poor in both society and nature (what he calls the "new poor"). Such an integral rationality would address the limit questions raised by science and technological progress. These include, on the one hand, ethical questions that emerge in the face of such things as war, poverty, and environmental sustainability and, on the other hand, epistemological questions that emerge once we take seriously the social worlds of those who construct or are affected by scientific and technological development. Although Ted Peters does not explicitly address postcolonial discourse in his work, his proleptic theology provides Chung with a platform for cultivating such a transmodern and integral rationality. Deeply rooted in a Lutheran theology of promise, Peters develops an eschatological theology centered in the promise of new creation embodied in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection that establishes points of contact with contemporary science even as it seeks

to establish the grounds for perceiving and creating a just and sustainable global community in our time.

Finally, Chung locates his proposal for a postcolonial public theology in the practical task of interreligious dialogue where representatives and practitioners of the world's major religions engage one another in conversation about the moral and ethical issues facing our shared world. In order to develop a conceptual framework for approaching this task, Chung rethinks Ernst Troeltsch's relativistic approach to the historical study of religions by critically revising it in view of Hans-Georg Gadamer's ontologically grounded hermeneutics and Jürgen Habermas' critical social theory. Such revision, Chung argues, enables public theology to shift away from a Eurocentric modern rationality that tends to presuppose, in Max Weber's words, the "disenchantment" of nature. Instead, this kind of interreligious dialogue can enable public theology to cultivate a "transmodern" rationality that can enable us to become more aware of our coexistence with other creatures and of our responsibility in that coexistence for sustaining the natural and social worlds in which we find ourselves. As an exemplification of the kind of "transmodern" rationality that can emerge from such dialogue, Chung discusses Christian and Buddhist approaches to economic justice and ecological sustainability, drawing on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's poems on the *theologia crucis* and Buddhist texts on compassion and wisdom.

Given this reframing of the practical task of public theology, Chung critically engages Max Stackhouse's framework for relating a biblical and theological vision of economic stewardship to the forces of economic globalization affecting our shared public life. Although Chung shares much of the theological vision that informs Stackhouse's public theology, he nonetheless seeks to sharpen its critique of global capitalism from a postcolonial perspective. Informed by Ulrich Duchrow's reflections on the church's responsibility to stand for economic justice in the face of economic globalization, Chung seeks to relate God's justifying grace to a prophetic *diakonia* that witnesses to God's economy (i.e., *oikonomia*, which entails both *oikos*, household, *and nomos*, law or management) in the midst of market forces that degrade human dignity and harm the natural world. In a similar vein, he turns in his epilogue to yet another major concern: ecological sustainability. Engaging Confucian and Christian sources he seeks to deepen our sense, from a Christian perspective, of God's presence as the *topos* of the world that sustains our commitment to ecological justice and the healing of creation.

Although we are not interned in a camp (like the prisoners of Weihsien), we nonetheless find ourselves in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected. We cannot ignore the reality of economic globalization. We

also cannot be oblivious to the ongoing effects of the history of colonialism, which are often intertwined with the effects of globalization on the most vulnerable in our world. Chung's proposal for a postcolonial public theology addresses these challenges in ways that neither simply acquiesce to market forces nor merely criticize them without inspiring repentance and responsible action. Saturated in the biblical witness to God's creative and reconciling Word in Jesus Christ and the new creation it ushers in amidst our suffering, sin, and injustice, Chung calls us to engage others—especially those with the least power—so that within the fecundity and fullness of God's pluriform creation we can together not only perceive God's merciful solidarity and creative justice in our midst but also embody it in the face of forces and powers that threaten human dignity and the integrity of our natural world.

Lois Malcolm
Luther Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota
August 23, 2015