

Christine J. Hong. *Decolonial Futures Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education*. Lexington Books: Lanham, MD, 2021. 226 pages. \$100.00 (hardcover). ISBN-10: 1498579361

The primary purpose of this book is clear: First, it deconstructs western theological education that identifies intellectual competence and Christianity as the norm; then, it reconstructs traditional terrain from intercultural and interreligious intelligence – defined as “a specific posture and expectation towards listening and understanding across difference” (Hong 2022, 25). Christine J. Hong fulfilled this purpose by carefully investigating the current theological educational milieu, boldly exposing some of the distorted narratives by sharing her personal experience as an academic, and fearlessly suggesting how transformative pedagogy can aim for intercultural and interreligious intelligence.

Hong starts the book by exposing how theological education is inherently colonial, is “white-framework” centered, and is heavily under Christian hegemony. Then throughout the first part of the book, she unpacks the complexity of the lived experiences of the minoritized people and reveals how their experiences have been flattened and ignored in theological education. Next, she tackles the traditional binary and white centric understanding of liberation and purity narratives. Then Hong invites her readers to imagine an “anticolonial concept of uncivilizing spaces of teaching and learning” (79). By arguing that “uncivilizing is related to the practice of cultivating anticolonial spaces where knowledge is produced” (96), she brings our attention to various power dynamics in the classroom among minoritized people and teachers and learners. After carefully taking the context and harmful practices in theological education apart, Hong pivots to intercultural and interreligious intelligence, which will enable all people involved in theological education to thrive.

The second part of the book is comprised of four Rs: (1) reclaiming, (2) retelling, (3) reframing, and (4) restoring. First, Hong introduces *woori*, a Korean concept of oneness, as a formative framework within which to reclaim epistemologies. She then argues the importance and value of retelling stories of origin as an anticolonial practice, particularly the histories of displacement that are often part of the immigration experience. Hong further reframes traditional religious practices by incorporating the concepts of transspirituality and transnationality. She wraps up this book by urging readers to restore and name “many genealogies,” especially those that have been lost.

This book engages timely issues related to how theological education can change its terrain from being informed by the privileged white Christian supremacy to being more diverse and inclusive. Out of many, three of the most distinct contributions this book is making are to the fields of religious education, academic activism, and theological education communities. First, she weaves her personal and communal narratives that resonate with many minoritized experiences. The way she lifts out the invisibilized experiences of minoritized people that have existed in academic spaces makes this volume extraordinary. Second, as she calls for the need for “humble modesty” in theological education, she models this argument through her narrative analytical writing style. Hong acknowledges that she also was educated by and formed in the traditional theological education landscape, yet she invites her readers to dream together “for movement toward decolonial and anticolonial teaching” (3). Third, Hong not only unpacks decolonial educational theories with excellence, but she also invites the readers to praxis. She lays out practical questions that theologians need to ask, and she offers hands-on suggestions on how co-teachers and co-learners can mutually flourish.

This inaugural book is for anyone who wants to successfully unlearn destructive pedagogies that have been impacting theological education and to learn to navigate through theological academia with an anti-colonial posture. Anyone who has ever felt the need for a change in theological education, will be enriched by her extensive experience in theological education, theoretical overview, and practical reflection. Over lunch, I would raise questions: What would be a way not to get lost in rage while persistently pushing against destructive structure but to march with hope towards anti-colonial daily practices? How can we dismantle oppressive structures and rebuild them while refusing to romanticize anti-colonial work? What theological concepts and narratives would help to promote intercultural and interreligious intelligence? This book will generate diverse conversations, and we need much more of this type of transformative work in this world.

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