

Review Related to Pedagogy for Teachers of Homiletics

Christine J. Hong. *Decolonial Futures: Intercultural and Interreligious Intelligence for Theological Education*. Maryland: Lexington Books, 2021. 226 pages. \$39.99.

At the outset of *Decolonial Futures*, Dr. Christine Hong states that the book does *not* provide a map for theological educators, nor does it offer best practices for classroom teachers and learners. Rather, Hong offers this book as a “posture” or “approach” to theological education. She writes, “This book emphasizes a posture of humble modesty, the reframing of classrooms, lives, and livelihoods for a free and liberative future.” Hong weaves together personal narrative, thoughtful research, and dreams for the future of theological education.

The book is divided into two parts: deconstruction and reconstruction. Both the deconstruction and reconstruction are guided by three questions: “What makes education intercultural and interreligious?” “How might we rethink and redesign spaces of learning as hospitable to cultural and religious differences and dismantle the coloniality of theological education?” “How might we subvert traditionally colonial spaces to model the engaged intercultural and interreligious world we seek?” (pg. 6). As the landscape of theological education and religious identity changes, these questions become especially pertinent.

Guided by these questions, Hong lays out a vision for theological education that is de-colonizing and anti-colonial. The first step to realizing this vision is the deconstruction of our inherited, colonizing modes of operation. Hong describes the ways that white, Christian, patriarchal ways of doing theological education bind us. These systems limit us as they emphasize concepts like mastery, binaries, and American exceptionalism. In contrast, Hong reconstructs a framework for theological education that emphasizes intelligence—a posture of humility, deep listening, and understanding. A *Decolonial Future* is one that is embodied and connectional; it honors various epistemologies, stories, and histories; and it values diversity, justice, compassion, formation, and service.

This is a book that names the hard realities of contemporary theological education, challenges the reader to create interreligious and intercultural spaces of teaching and learning, and dares to dream about how we can flourish in theological education. Hong does not shy away from calling out the real harm that our current systems of colonial education inflict on students, especially students in marginalized communities. At times the book conveys hope and conviction that things can be different and at times the reader may feel overwhelmed and hopeless. This reflects the reality many of us experience in our day-to-day work in theological education.

As our seminaries shift and change, attempting to meet the needs of today’s students, books like this are needed to stir us from complacency and challenge us to re-examine our classroom practices. For the teacher of preaching, this book is especially helpful. It offers language to describe what many in the practical disciplines sense but may not be able to articulate. There is a nuance and depth to the way Hong describes education that enriches and challenges the reader.

The most challenging aspect of Hong’s work may be her commitment to interreligious education. The idea is strong and convincing. Interreligious education lives into shared values like dialogue, community, and humility. However, these kinds of communities (especially if there are multiple languages spoken) create some practical problems for some of our institutions. This tension between good ideas and practical realities may come up for the reader throughout the book. This tension proves the pervasiveness of colonization and the difficult work that lies ahead

as we decolonize our classrooms and institutions. This is not a book about preaching or teaching but it may radically change the way you do both.

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