

Maria Liu Wong. *On Becoming Wise Together: Learning and Leading in the City*. William B. Eerdmans, 2023. 158 pages. \$19.99.

Contributing to the *Theological Education Between the Times* (TEBT) series, Maria Liu Wong's *Becoming Wise Together: Learning and Leading in the City* seeks to engage in critical discourse on the purpose of theological education. Wong, the provost of City Seminary of New York, brings a fresh and dynamic perspective that challenges traditional Euro-North American paradigms of theological formation. Through an integrative approach, Wong incorporates her own lived experiences, pedagogical expertise, and praxis-oriented scholarship to advocate for a more holistic, communal, and contextually relevant model of theological education and a preaching class.

Wong claims that theological education must transcend rigid institutional frameworks and instead embrace a lifelong, relational, and contextually diverse process of learning. Wong's narrative is constructed through the lens of autoethnography, interweaving personal vignettes with critical reflections on education, leadership, and faith formation. Wong's immigrant background as a British-Chinese woman, her experiences as a missionary kid, and her life as a wife and mother inform learning as an ongoing, embodied, and communal act. Wong argues that theological education should not be confined to classrooms but should unfold within the interstitial spaces of life—on city streets, within friendships, and across generations.

A recurring motif throughout the book is the importance of lifelong and communal learning. Wong builds on the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5–9) to assert that theological education is not merely an academic pursuit for a select few, but a shared endeavor that involves the entire faith community (17). She underscores the significance of relationships in shaping theological understanding, emphasizing that true learning occurs in community. This perspective challenges the dominant individualistic and hierarchical models of theological training, advocating instead for an approach that values collaboration, diversity, and mutual accountability.

To be specific, Wong structures the book around six key themes, each forming a chapter: waiting, family, friends, learning, leading, and becoming. The first chapter explores waiting as the initial step in theological education, emphasizing the communal journey toward wisdom (5). Chapter two presents family as a foundational learning community (24), while chapter three highlights the role of friends as theological educators (53). Chapter four underscores the significance of shared learning as a holistic, interdisciplinary, and continuous process (79). Chapter five examines leadership as a dynamic, collaborative practice (100). Finally, chapter six concludes with a reflection on the process of becoming wise within a community (118). Wong enriches each chapter with artifacts and images from her personal history using them as symbolic entry points into the book's themes. These artifacts serve as prompts for reflection, encouraging readers to engage with their own formative experiences and explore the intersections of faith and learning in their lives.

Especially, in her discussion on leadership, Wong draws from her own experiences as an Asian woman in positions of influence and her research on global leadership styles among women. She presents leadership as a dynamic, relational process rather than a top-down exercise of authority. Her model of leadership is one of accompaniment rather than direction, reflecting Pope Francis's vision of a field hospital approach to ministry. Wong's insights challenge traditional notions of ministerial leadership, calling for a reimagining of theological formation that prioritizes listening, presence, and communal discernment over rigid institutional structures.

One of the book's most insightful contributions to preaching education is Wong's use of the metaphors of theological education as a pilgrim journey and the communion table (118–123). Those metaphors may frame preaching education as an inclusive, participatory, and transformative practice, fostering responsiveness to systemic injustice while cultivating wisdom deeply rooted in communal discernment. In this light, preaching education can be understood as a communal act that actively engages with evolving concerns and advocates for a process-oriented approach—one that prioritizes continuous engagement over static solutions.

In sum, *Becoming Wise Together* is a highly recommended resource for those interested in theological education, ministry leadership, and urban faith formation. Wong's innovative approach to theological education offers an inclusive, communal, and lifelong learning process. Wong's vision is relevant in a diverse and interconnected world, where theological education must adapt to the complexities of contemporary ministry. *Becoming Wise Together* is an essential addition to seminary and urban academic libraries, as well as a valuable resource for anyone committed to reimagining the future of Christian formation and preaching pedagogy.

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