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The Future of Asian/North American Theological Education

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The *Journal of Asian/North American Theological Educators* (JANATE) seeks to reflect and promote the Mission Statement of the Association of Asian/North American Theological Educators (AANATE). The overall purpose of the journal is to develop and promote Asian/North American scholarship and leadership in theological education, in collaboration with Asian counterparts. As a peer-reviewed journal, it addresses topics or issues dealing with the religious views and experiences of Asian/North Americans, educational and leadership models that seek to transform Asian/North American theological education, pedagogical and pastoral experiences from Asian-North American religious and cultural contexts, interdisciplinary analysis of sociopolitical and economic issues in our globalized world, and interfaith and interreligious hermeneutics and dialogues in Asian-North American contexts. JANATE encourages contributions from scholars of Asian/North American heritage. For more information, see <http://janate.org>.

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The Future of Asian/North American Theological Education

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Welcome to Our New Journal!

We are pleased to announce the launch of the first issue of the *Journal of Asian/North American Theological Educators (JANATE)*. This new journal, the official journal of the Association of Asian/North American Theological Educators (AANATE), is dedicated to publishing a wide range of topics or issues in today's theological education. The Journal encourages contributions from scholars of Asian/North American heritage. For more information, see <http://janate.org>.

JANATE is an online journal published through the Open Journal Systems (OJS) that allows open access and comprehensive indexing to increase the Journal's readership and global significance.

This modest inaugural issue contains the proceedings of the conference at Princeton Theological Seminary and articles addressing the theme: "The Future of Asian/North American Theological Education." It also has notable reviews of books edited or written by Asian scholars.

On a personal note, I am honored and thrilled to serve as the first managing editor of this new journal and invite you to join me in making *JANATE* a useful resource for Asian/North American theological educators. Along with the editorial board and advisory board, I have enjoyed taking on the challenge of developing this new journal, and I hope that the Journal will continue to evolve and respond to the changing needs of our field and, most importantly, our world.

Sincerely,

vanThanh Nguyen, SVD

Associate Professor of New Testament Studies

Catholic Theological Union



A Message from Nantawan Lewis

The Association of Asian/North American Theological Educators (AANATE) held its first continental conference at Princeton Theological Seminary on October 3-5, 2014. The theme of the conference was “Embodying Our Voices: Asian/North Americans in Theological Education.” There were fifty-two faculty members, church leaders, seminary administrators and students in attendance. It was indeed a historical moment!

It is appropriate and not accidental that we wish to publish the proceedings of the Conference in this inaugural issue of the *Journal of Asian/North American Theological Educators* (JANATE). The proceedings were talks delivered at the plenary sessions on the theme: “The Future of Asian/North American Education.” The three panelists were: Tat-siong Benny Liew, Mai-Anh Le Tran, and Arun Jones. As the respondent, Wonhee Anne Joh gave insightful perspectives on the topic including their views of promises and challenges towards this viable and exciting future. Young Lee Hertig’s paper on theological education at the well suggests a possibility of envisioning a new model of theological education. Together these voices inspired us to move forward, providing us with a vision to build a viable future for Asian/North American theological educators.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the members of the editorial board of the Journal: Angela Wong, Charles Amjad-Ali, Eleazar Fernandez, Lester Ruiz and Russell Jeung. Thanks also to Kwok Pui-Lan and Arun Jones for serving on the advisory board. Most importantly, I am deeply grateful to vanThanh Nguyen who serves as the managing editor of the Journal.

Yours truly,

Nantawan Lewis

Chair of the Steering Committee

Association of Asian/North American Theological Educators



Reading Ambiguous Signs and Sharing Ambitious Hopes: Future of Asian/North American Theological Education

—Tat-siong Benny Liew

Being neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, I have no particular insight into the future of Asian/North American theological education. Had I been able to predict the future, I would not have accepted this invitation to speak about the future, since I would have known the difficulty that this topic would present to me when Nantawan Lewis contacted me several months ago.

Let me nevertheless start by suggesting that what one says about the future of Asian/North American theological education depends on what one means by Asian/North American theological education. If that phrase is read demographically—that is, it is about people who are of Asian descent being present in and contributing to theological education—there seem to be rather encouraging signs about its future on this side of the Pacific. People of Asian heritage have been making up a larger and larger percentage of both the total faculty population and the total student body of accredited theological schools in the USA and Canada. Unlike the time when I started teaching fulltime, many more theological schools now have at least one faculty member who is of Asian ancestry, and the Luce-funded Asian Theological Summer Institute has been able to gather close to twenty doctoral students of Asian descent in theological education every year for almost a decade, largely by word of mouth and without doing much advertising. Presumably, at least some of these participants would join the faculty rank of some theological schools as they complete their studies and further increase our presence in the coming years. In addition, those of Asian heritage are beginning to crack the glass ceiling and assume positions as theological school deans and presidents. There are also encouraging signs in Asia. Many of the theological schools across the Pacific are showing strong enrollment numbers, and most are now able to have a faculty that is no longer dependent on foreign missionary teachers or administrators.

Another encouraging sign for the future is how Asian/North American theological educators seem to understand and value the importance of networks and collaboration. This is evident in the formation of AANATE and this conference, but we can see this also in organizations like ATESEA or FTE Southeast Asia. While we are all limited in resources like time, energy, and money, so no one can say “yes” to everything that comes our way, most of us seem to know that the journey of theological education is not to be walked alone; we need partners and collaborators along the way as well as across oceans and national boundaries for support if we are going to make headway and positive changes.

Alongside these encouraging phenomena, however, there are also discouraging signs. Too many theological schools in North America are still operating by the “one-is-enough” principle, so most of our Asian North American colleagues continue to work in isolation, unless they come to a gathering like this. Colleagues



heading up academic programs or entire institutions are often given this responsibility only in burdensome situations: they are often given the hard task to save or restore a financially struggling institution with fewer faculty members, students, and other kinds of resources. Of course, institutions become more willing to take a risk when they are desperate; sadly, if our pioneering colleagues, because of overwhelmingly difficult situations that they inherit from others, are unable to turn things around, those of the dominant culture might be more than ready to make a pronouncement—“See, they cannot do the job. We should have known”—and reestablish the glass ceiling that keeps people like us from running or “ruining” their schools. Talking about money, those of us in North America are all aware of the financial crisis that theological education in general is facing at the moment. As we know, people in cash strapped seminaries can do some rather crazy things. This crisis will inevitably imply challenges for the future of Asian/North Americans in this business. After all, what James Clifford says about his discipline of anthropology is applicable to not only theological disciplines but also theological schools and theological education; they are all “systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them.”¹ Just as an illustration from my own discipline, people of Asian descent are completely absent in a national survey and then a national conference recently funded by Lilly on the Bible and American Life.² We have remained invisible for many who hold power within and over theological education.

Likewise, worrisome signs are there across the Pacific. Faculty are, first of all, difficult to retain and hard to replace if they decide to go, especially since they are more likely to be tapped in Asia for denominational offices outside of the academy. Even harder to replace are heads of theological schools in Asia. Many of us could tell stories of a colleague who was, or still is, unable to retire as the head of a school in Asia because, for whatever reason, search committees were not finding suitable successors to lead their institutions. I have argued elsewhere for the need to invent and establish a tradition of Asian American biblical hermeneutics;³ if we look at Asian/North American theological education as a, for now, demographic tradition, that tradition looks strong at times but rather fragile at others.

The future looks even murkier for me if we read Asian/North American theological education in terms of not only demographic but also disciplinary and curricular difference. In other words, the adjective “Asian/North American” may refer to a different paradigm or practice for theological education, so we are not only talking about people of Asian ancestry doing and pursuing the same theological education alongside people of other ancestries in the same way, but an Asian/North American way of doing and pursuing theological education, whatever that means. There is a difference between talking about Asian/North Americans in theological education and what is Asian/North American about theological education. I have not been in touch with C. S. Song for a while, but when I was suffering as an academic dean at the Pacific School of Religion, Song, though retired from PSR by then but was—and, I think, is—still active in theological education in Taiwan, told me a couple of times of his wish to get a think tank of scholars on both sides of the Pacific to really think and talk about a different paradigm for doing theology and theological education, since he thought theological education among Asians and Asian North Americans had largely been operating under a single white, western paradigm. He was also rather adamant, though these are my words rather than his, that contextualization at times meant only white-sanctioned attempts to repackage white theological understanding and practice in a different cultural garb and not really rethinking theology and theological education from different cultures.

1 James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 7.

2 See http://www.raac.iupui.edu/files/2713/9413/8354/Bible_in_American_Life_Report_March_6_2014.pdf

3 Tat-siong Benny Liew, *What Is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics? Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

Let me be clear here. I frankly do not know enough about Asian/North American theological education overall to make any kind of meaningful evaluation of Song's views. I am also not suggesting that things must be completely different from, let's say, theological education in historically white dominant theological schools, or that there should be one uniform way for theological education to be worthy of the moniker, Asian/North American. Nor am I trying to devalue the efforts of Asian/North American colleagues who have done much in and contributed much to theological education, especially since I know their presence and persistent work have helped pave the way for many to enter into theological education, including myself, first as an interested if not exactly informed teenage theological reader in Asia and then as both a student and a faculty member in North America. I do, however, think that it is important for us to think about if there are ways and if there should be ways that would mark theological education as Asian/North American. I do not have answers; I only know that (1) we will never have any answers if we do not ask the question; and (2) the future of Asian/North American theological education will be shaped differently by whether we have the courage and commitment to ask and address this question.

I may be wrong about this, but my hunch is that with all the talks and works for contextualization and indigenization within various theological disciplines in the last few decades, Song's warning notwithstanding, many if not most of us would think that the same should be happening on a broader curricular and a deeper paradigm level. I also think many would agree that offering a single course or even several courses on contextual studies is not enough to transform the underlying paradigm and practice of theological education.

While I cannot predict the future, I do want to share at least some of my own hopes for Asian/North American theological education. First, I hope that Asian/North American theological education in both demographic and disciplinary terms would not be only about Asians and Asian North Americans. Put differently, I hope Asian/North American theological education will contribute to everyone's and every way of doing theological education. Let me point to one potential example. In North America, many theological schools, especially after 9/11, have become concerned with moving theological education from being ecumenical to being multi-religious. This is true of not only schools on the west coast, like Claremont and the GTU, but also those on the east coast, like Hartford. Asia has long been known as a continent of religious diversity. While we cannot claim that we, as a people, have overcome all religious prejudices and conflicts, our history and experience might provide resources for how religious pluralism might be practiced on the ground that goes beyond offering and requiring courses on various religions.

Since I do not want to ghettoize Asian/North American theological education and I alone am not able to answer the question about what makes theological education Asian/North American, my next two hopes are really applicable to theological education in general. I mentioned earlier that theological education is also a system of economy, power, and history. Both Asia and North America at this moment in history are economically stratified and full of conflicts. Education, we must not forget, is supposed to contribute to the common good, but what constitutes the common good is debatable. Asian/North American theological education, I hope, will not shy away from wrestling with the question about whose and what interests this education is actually serving. Samuel Rayan, the Indian Jesuit theologian says it well, when he asks, "Have not entire theological systems emerged in the past, in the context of capitalism, colonialism and slave-trade, without Christian thinkers [and I would add, educators] feeling the need to call their practice, principles and pre-suppositions into question?"⁴ In fact, wrestling with this interesting question about interest is not only necessary but also advantageous. It will help us clarify in this time of internet and information oversaturation that education

4 Cited in Felix Wilfred, *Margins: Site of Asian Theologies* (Delhi: Indian Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, 2008), 284.



is really not only about the gathering and acquiring of information but also about making connections and bringing about transformation. The question of whose and what interest may also connect theological educators and students with various people or political movements, which often have a way to refresh academic pursuits and keep those pursuits from becoming set and stale.

Finally, I hope Asian/North American theological education will become accessible and understandable to all people, so what we do is not only for those who are interested in so-called fulltime ministry. Since religious pluralism also exists in most societies alongside secular humanism and the question of interest engages larger social issues that are not confinable to a narrowly defined realm people like to call “religious,” I hope Asian/North American theological education will help us think and know our religious traditions so well that we can translate and discuss our convictions and understandings not only across academic disciplines but also in secular terms. This is not a plea to give up on religions to convert to other fields or to secularism, but a realistic realization that people of all faiths can no longer speak only in terms of their respective religious language if they want to communicate and be heard. The issue here is not conversion but communication. Doing so is also a deeper push to live out one age-old explanation of theology as “faith seeking understanding.” As the book *Is Critique Secular?* shows, many scholars who are not a part of theological education would welcome this, as they are ready to dispute “the premise that critique is always secular and secularism is always critical.”⁵ Similarly, we must not insist that theology is only theology and secular is merely secular.



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⁵ Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, “Preface,” in *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, eds. Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

The Future of Asian/North American Theological Education: Architectural Reflections

—Mai-Anh Le Tran

In 2011, Executive Director Dan Aleshire of the Association of Theological Schools declared that “the future has arrived.”¹ Echoing what just about everyone in theological education had learned to say by then, Aleshire reminded citizens of theological schools that “the times they are a changing” for religion in North America—from obsolescence of denominational identities and affiliation, to growing and often “stormy”² religious pluralism, to technological re-ordering of human knowing and learning, to shifting economic formulas for calculating the cost-benefits of clergy training, to the ironic world-wide character of Christianity (particularly of the charismatic and fundamentalist variety).

Of the set of bedazzling statistics that Aleshire offered, one might be of relevance to our conversation here this weekend—though not with the same effect that Mr. Aleshire may have intended. Assuring that ATS schools have *not* been “asleep at the switch,” Aleshire pointed out that while in 1990 only 13% of students in ATS schools were persons of color, there is in the 2000s a whopping 24%. Faculty of color used to be only at 8%; they are now at a formidable 15%. “[T]his is a great deal of change.”³

Yes, we have been at enough of these gatherings to know how to put on our thinking caps to interpret and respond to these statistical realities. We know that these numbers are both *good* and *not so good*, and that they do constitute a present reality that is in fact changing—incrementally perhaps, but paradigmatically and with seismic consequences. But underneath our ability to analyze and strategize, there lie deep, visceral sighs when we are overcome by what premier theologian Fumitaka Matsuoka, borrowing the words of Donald Shriver, Jr., refers to as “profound...despair caused by the chaotic present”⁴—a not-yet reality that threatens even the best of what critical pedagogist Henry Giroux calls “educated hope.”⁵

1 Daniel O. Aleshire, “The Future Has Arrived: Changing Theological Education in a Changed World,” *Theological Education* 46, no. 2 (2011): 69-80.

2 *Ibid.*, 72.

3 *Ibid.*, 73. US colleges and universities reported 17% full-time faculty of color in 2007. See Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, et al., eds., *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia* (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 2.

4 Donald W. Shriver, Jr., “The Pain and Promise of Pluralism,” *Christian Century* 97, no. 11 (1980): 345-50. Cited by Fumitaka Matsuoka, “Theological Education of the Not Yet,” in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar S. Fernandez (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 30.

5 Henry A. Giroux, *The Violence of Organized Forgetting: Thinking Beyond America’s Disimagination Machine*, City Lights Open Media (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2014), 83.



What is this “profound despair” for today’s racial/ethnic minoritized academics in theological education? To follow the metaphors employed by Willie James Jennings in the recent anthology edited by Eleazar Fernandez, *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*: it is the pain of recognition that “[a]t heart, we [racially ‘marked’ academic Subjects] are still confronted with living in a house we did not build.”⁶ Describing theological curricular design as analogous to “an architectural structuring of intellectual desire,” propelled by particularly configured white, male, hetero-normative “historical inertia,” Jennings describes a “love/hate psychical condition”⁷ suffered by “otherly” marked academics who love what they do with passionate desire, despite being told every now and then, one way or another, that they are not quite “right” for the job. Jennings puts it bluntly: we live in a house/empire built by the Master⁸ for his sons, and we have been trained to employ—with skill and artistry—disciplinary tools created within historic moments in which we were never imagined as likely inheritors. More disconcerting is the reminder from scholars in fields such as the natural and social sciences that a number of academic disciplines, of which theological scholars are contemporary borrowers, were “from their inception” used to master us—e.g., geology, tropical medicine, anthropology were born “in service of Europe’s colonial enterprise.”⁹

This “love/hate psychic condition” has been translated into a vast array of dialectics by racial/ethnic and women scholars of color in the U.S. and Canada—we need not rehearse them here. A helpful example from Eleazar Fernandez’s important anthology for theological education is the essay by Mary Dana Hinton, recently inaugurated 15th President of the College of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota. Addressing the “weight of race”¹⁰ for administrators of color, Hinton identified the following tensions of bureaucratized racial performativity: 1) “unrealistic power vs. powerlessness;” 2) “underutilization/low expectations vs. being overworked;” 3) “engaging authentically” vs. doing whatever it takes to “attain and maintain a place at the leadership table.”¹¹

Perhaps, to amplify my own imaginings about the adaptive challenges of Asian/North American theological developments, I need to learn more about the adaptive challenges of *Asian* theological contexts—especially given the emergence of works like *Asia as Method*,¹² a book and a hermeneutic that has challenged Asian/North American scholars’ continuous reproductions of “Asia” and “Asian North America.” Having had the opportunity to teach and learn in 12 countries (and counting, I hope), I have sensed at least four tensions for *Asian* theological education—and I hope Asian colleagues would extend to this 1.5-generation refugee-turned-diasporic Subject the privilege of claiming both emic and etic perspectives:

6 Willie James Jennings, “What Shall We Teach? The Content of Theological Education,” in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar S. Fernandez (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 110.

7 *Ibid.*, 111.

8 A reference to Audre Lorde’s ground-breaking metaphoric essay in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press Feminist Series (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1984).

9 Angela P. Harris and Carmen G. González, “Introduction,” in *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*, ed. Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs, et al. (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2012), 5.

10 David Theo Goldberg and Susan Searls Giroux, *Sites of Race: Conversations with Susan Searls Goroux* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2014), 58. Here, South African-born social theorist Goldberg discusses his earlier critiques of neoliberalism’s facilitation of the privatization and “invisibilization” of race, the effect of which is the palpable “heaviness of the racial... [as] it weighs on and weights down its targeted population.” *Ibid.* See David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

11 Mary Hinton, “The Vocational Cycle to Support Institutional Justice: A Pathway for Scholars of Color to Transform Institutional Life and Governance,” in *Teaching for a Culturally Diverse and Racially Just World*, ed. Eleazar S. Fernandez (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 189.

12 Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

1. the tension with curricular designs and disciplinary tools inherited from “the West;”
2. the tension with ongoing Western orientaling impulses;
3. the tension with diasporic caricatures of “the East”;
4. the tension with the disimagination of Asian subjects within their own shifting landscapes—for instance, the “organized forgetting” of Asia’s internal colonial histories and contemporary geopolitical gestures/postures.

So, between optimistic statistics, complicated dialectics, and deep sighs, we remember that all composites change over time. And so with every effort to look into the future, we do well to look at the deeper currents that drive the change. We have been reminded that over the years, even the Master and his Empire have changed¹³--meaning the house which the Master built is in fact standing on shifting sand, as the entire enterprise (or empire) of theological education is undergoing tectonic shifts, inevitably with new forms and technologies for “Master-speak.” *In other wor(l)ds*—to invoke Gayatri Spivak—do we know yet what kind of new “house” we want to build to replace the “old Master’s House”?

AANATE as a network and its participating members are not without bold visions. AANATE’s Mission Statement alone looks impressive: cultivate collaboration and exchange; advance Asian/North American theological legacy and heritage; develop new leadership and programs; provide resources to institutions; and generate new scholarship.¹⁴ But the question remains, *What for?*

Put differently, if we were “successful” at implementing all of these programmatic initiatives, then what would the new state of theological education for North America and Asia look like? To continue with Jennings’ architectural metaphor, do we know if we are constructing new “domiciles” for theological inquiry and praxis—or simply just building around/atop the old foundations? Or perhaps we’re just busy fighting for management of the Master’s household? Or, better yet, are we bending over backwards trying to make the Master’s house more “hospitable” to the Master’s guests, thereby domesticating the tasks of theological inquiry to only acceptable sites and spaces—the classroom, scholarly publications, academic guilds—and only with acceptable grammars and syntax?

I am mindful of my statement earlier about the *shape-shifting* nature of this so-called “Master” within theological education. The Master may have once been the Bible-and-bullwhip-wielding master, or the missionary-explorer-translator-civilizer of foreign lands and cultures. For today’s transnational theological schools, however, the Master may very well be the globalized Market, with its lexicon of “success, expediency, performance, profit.”¹⁵ Perhaps another Master is the repressive tolerance of neoliberalism, which claims that statistical diversity is proof of equal rights, equal power, and equal opportunity. Perhaps there are mini-Masters to be found in the methodological paucity and rigidity of theological fields, or implicit tensions among disciplinary hierarchies, resulting in the siloed existence of theology, biblical studies, history, and practical theology. Perhaps even the former edge space of liminality or interstitiality—the betwixt-and-between discursive space for Asian North American scholars—has become too comfortable and safe within the Master’s house.

13 R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), 31-32.

14 Association of Asian/North American Theological Educators, “Mission Statement,” <http://aanate.org/about-us/aanate-charter/>.

15 Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Configurations*, 32.



I do not mean to undermine the incredible genius and generativity of existing currents of Asian/North American developments across theological disciplines—breath-takingly polydoxic, polymorphic, polyphonic, to use the now-quaint descriptors. Nor do I give in to the false divide between theory and practice, anxious about theology’s contextual practicality. Rather, I am restless about the future architectural designs of Asian North American theology’s intellectual desire. I live and teach in a suburb 15 miles southwest of Ferguson, Missouri, where race has become an overwrought leitmotif for tenuous civil religious discourse. Less than five miles from my professional and personal domicile is a small Vietnamese-J’Rai congregation the members of which were boat refugees in the ‘70s and ‘80s. The freestanding seminary where I teach traces its heritage back to German Reformed and Evangelical roots. We constantly wonder whether the theological “house” which we occupy is large enough for the “world house” which Martin Luther King, Jr., once imagined.¹⁶ Every travel opportunity to venture abroad—to such destinations as Kenya, Turkey, Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia—has been a mind-altering opportunity for me to “see Christianity again for the first time,” to invoke Philip Jenkins’s challenge.¹⁷ If by 2050, a new “Christendom” will exist with centers in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, and in the U.S. Christian predominance will continue to exist, but no longer represented by a non-Hispanic White majority,¹⁸ then how shall we continent-leaping, border-crossing theological educators prepare ourselves for such a future?

Theological education for global Christianities today needs new architects, and I wonder how Asian North American scholars will step up to that challenge.



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¹⁶ See Martin Luther King, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

¹⁷ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 271.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3, 16, 125-33.



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Claiming the Hyphens and Slashes

—Arun W. Jones

Asking a historian to speak authoritatively about any kind of future is a potential recipe for disaster, at least as far as the audience is concerned. For the historian however, the occasion may actually be welcome: I can speak my mind without having to bear the burden of being academically responsible for the substance of my remarks. Perhaps the one obvious point about the future that the historian can make with some degree of confidence is that the future rarely turns out the way we imagine it. Just one century ago, the Christian civilization of Europe, which had been touted by western missionaries for almost a century as God's greatest blessing to humankind, burst into an unimaginable and horrific fratricidal conflict, a war that was so devastating that when it was over the common consensus was that it was the war to end all wars. Neither World War I, nor its aftermath, were predicted by the seers of the age. So what I offer this evening is less a prediction of the future than my hope of how *some* theological educators of Asian heritage will develop their vocation in the next quarter century or so, assuming that life on our planet does not devolve into total chaos—which I grant is a very real possibility.

In thinking about the future of theological education, I am going to make two fundamental assumptions. The first is that scholarship is done generationally. A generation can last for any number of decades, and then usually there is a significant paradigm shift, a phrase made popular by Thomas Kuhn.¹ The shift may be more revolutionary, as happened in biblical studies at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, or it may be more evolutionary, as in the move from modernity to postmodernity in more recent years.² Sometimes cataclysmic events, like wars or collapse of cultures, mark the ends and beginnings of scholarly approaches. New scholarship affected by World War II, for example, emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

As far as scholarship of previous generations is concerned, one of the favorite sports in North American academic circles is “Blame That Generation.” Scholars at all levels—and I include myself—somehow feel the need to delegitimize the work of our forebears in order to trumpet our own accomplishments and insights. It increasingly seems to me that this attitude is not simply short-sighted and self-serving, but allows us to pretend with a good dose of hubris that we *finally* have gotten it right—whatever the “it” may be in our work. This proclivity of academic work in North America is in direct contrast to the Indian philosophic tradition, where brilliant new ideas were introduced through appreciative and profound commentaries on the work of previous generations.

A second assumption I am going to make about the foreseeable future is that the twin forces of globalization and localization are going to continue to manifest themselves in various ways. In the 1970s, when the nation

1 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970).

2 Kuhn thought of paradigm shifts as revolutionary changes in thinking. For a theological use of the concept of paradigm shifts, see David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 183-89.



states of Asia were still emerging, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted that in response to nationalism there was an intensification of local identity and rootedness.³ Back then, one of the ways that peoples in Asia were reacting to the growing claims and power of the relatively new nation states was to identify more strongly with their linguistic, ethnic, regional, religious and kinship groups. The same dynamic is happening around the world today: as nationalism has expanded to become internationalism, one of the reactions has been the strengthening of local and national allegiances. Even the pragmatic Scots were seriously considering reestablishing their own country in the face of incredible obstacles, and it seems that one reason they chose to stay in the union was that the union promised to give them more national autonomy. Globalization and localization are both intensifying.

Now for some thoughts on the future of Asian/North American theological education. First of all, obviously, a new generation will have to carry this on. It seems to me that the previous generations have bequeathed us four movements in Asian and Asian-American theological work. The first movement is the rooting and rethinking of the Christian gospel in Asian thought worlds and experiences. Kosuke Koyama's collection in *Water Buffalo Theology* is a good example.⁴ In those essays Koyama listens to the Thai peasant trying to make sense of the gospel, both intellectually and experientially, in the Thai context. The second movement is bringing western theological systems and categories to bear upon the Asian Christian experience. This would include Asian liberation and feminist theologies, such as Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro's *The Jesus of Asian Women*, and sociological studies such as those included in the volume *Korean Americans and Their Religions*.⁵ A third movement has been for Asians to bring Asian worldviews and experiences to bear upon western scholarship. I am thinking of works like R. S. Sugirtharajah's *Voices from the Margin*, or Peter C. Phan's *Mission and Catechesis*.⁶ Finally, some Asian and Asian-American scholars bracket their Asian experience completely, and enter into western theological discourse completely on its own terms. A good example would be Choon Leong Seow's *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*.⁷

I wish to make clear that I am not suggesting that these different ways of approaching theological work are in any way sequential in the history of Asian and Asian-American Christianity. Nor do I want to suggest that any one approach will define a particular theological educator: many of us mix and match. I might very well be teaching a traditional North American seminary course on the history of Christianity in Europe and North America, and an elective on the history of Christianity in South Asia. Finally, I do not want to deem one approach to the broad theological task as any better than the others. There has been excellent work done by those of us here and by many of our Asian and Asian-American colleagues and teachers with these approaches. And the future will no doubt yield more excellent work in these veins.

What more can we ask of the future? It seems to me that the intensification of globalization calls for a further development in theological education, a development which Asian and Asian American theological scholars and teachers are well poised to engage. Globalization has meant that on the one hand, conventional distinctions (which we always recognized are not overly neat) such as Asian/western, missionary/indigenous, liberal/conservative, Christian/non-Christian, traditional/modern are being increasingly blurred and confound-

3 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 255-310.

4 Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 25th anniversary ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

5 Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, *Korean Americans and their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

6 R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, 3rd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Peter C. Phan, *Mission and Catechesis: Alexandre de Rhodes & Inculturation in Seventeenth-Century Vietnam* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998).

7 Choon Leong Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995).



ed.⁸ On the other hand, tensions and cleavages between Asia and the west, between Christians and followers of other religious traditions, between conservatives and progressives are intensifying. So in the secular world, we have the election by overwhelming margins of a Hindu nationalist party in an increasingly westernizing (at least by some measures) Indian nation. And in the religious domain, the most rapidly growing form of Christianity is Pentecostalism, which is often both markedly Americanized and also highly indigenous. Such contradictory and paradoxical phenomena, as I mentioned earlier, are the result of growing globalization which of necessity calls forth its “other,” localization. And I don’t think it does us any good to try and stuff people into the ideological boxes (such as progressive/conservative) that were created for the 19th and 20th centuries, but are now bursting at the seams.

At least some Asian/North American theological educators are well poised, it seems to me, to grapple with the complexities of simultaneous and intensifying globalization and localization. The reason is that many of us have been given the gift and burden of bilocality, even polylocality (if you will excuse terms which immediately engender red squiggly lines on my Microsoft document). What I simply mean is this. Many of us have been given the gift and burden, either in reality or in potential, of being able to inhabit more than one world: the world of some part of the vast continent of Asia, and the world of some part of the vast continent of North America. This multiple habitation gives us a privileged position from which to interpret the strengthening forces of both globalization and localization of which the whole Christian *oikumené* is increasingly a part. The Church needs Asian/North Americans and Asian-Americans to reflect theologically on our unfolding, promising and threatening condition. And I am speaking not merely of first or second generation Asian Americans, or of Asians who teach in North America, but of third, fourth, fifth, tenth, fifteenth and twentieth generation theological scholars and educators of Asian origin, who carry within ourselves the marks and memories of far distant yet simultaneously ever closer origins. We look to the future to reflect theologically on what it means to be a Christian rooted in North America, and rooted in Asia, and rooted in both, and rooted in neither. Such theological reflection will certainly be necessary for a Church and a world that is increasingly rooted in many places, and increasingly rootless. Such theological work and teaching is far too complex for any one of us alone—it will need to be a collective effort of the emerging generation.



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⁸ See Arun W. Jones, “(Re)writing the History of World Christianity,” *Theology Today* 71, no. 2 (July 2014): 221-32.



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The Task of Asian/Asian North American Theologies

—Wonhee Anne Joh

Thank you for inviting me to offer a response to these three presentations. Given that we each have 7-10 minutes I want to simply share some of my own thoughts generated by these three presentations. These are not in any particular order and not directed to a specific paper but rather a response in relation to all three.

1. It is certain that globalization and localization have dramatically intensified in the past several decades. It is also true that this intensification challenges binary ways of understanding our world. While many today inhabit multiple worlds and fluidly live a cosmopolitan life and thus provide a privilege or vantage point in critical-reflexivity, we need to be mindful that *not* all people, especially women, experience mobility in the same way. Aihwa Ong notes that certain theoretical frameworks valorize the figure of the migrants as cosmopolitan “progressive political figures” who are able to “resist the pillaging of global capitalism.”¹ However, what is not accounted for, as Ong argues, is how migrants forge new ways of living through “flexible citizenship” that embody all the complex constellation of negotiation, resistance and transformation. While binary thinking is questionable given the rapidly hybridized world in which many worlds are coterminous, we still inhabit worlds structured on binary worldviews that contribute to an uneven world. Globalization and localization bring about reterritorialized subjects who are also translocal subjects in the globalized networks of cultures, economies and politics.

2. While the numbers of Asian and Asian North American faculty have increased over the past few decades as noted by both Benny and Mai-Anh, we all know that increase in numbers often does not correlate with change and especially the kinds of change we want to see on meta levels like institutional structure, curriculum, hiring, retention, etc. Additionally many women have learned that just because one is a woman does not make an automatic ally, so too is it the case that we cannot presume any feminist or anti-racist commitments simply because one is a woman or a racial/ethnic person. I say this because not all Asian or Asian North American faculty want to or feel there’s a need for a structural or paradigm shift nor do they feel they need to limit themselves to only ‘Asian’ or Asian American ‘stuff.’ This is where we are not simply playing identity politics, identity politics play us in ambiguous yet insidious ways within structures of racism. Whether we want to or not we are often ‘marked’ by racialization. How do we build solidarity across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class in order to build larger movements that generate collective power that can be leveraged for a paradigm shift in theological education? Might it be possible to look beyond our own navel-gazing and envision solidarity across myriad of differences rather than assuming that our allies are limited only to those who are ‘marked’ like us?

1 Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 14.



3. We mentioned the master's house, master's tools and the need for new architects. While that may be appealing, I wonder if perhaps we just need to get independent and move out of the house. It does not mean we need to destroy or rebuild that house. It means we might leave it and build other places of belonging and find new neighbors. One also does not have to cut ties as one can always visit. Recall Derrida's observation that "contrary to what one is most often tempted to believe, the master is nothing. And he does not have exclusive possession of anything." There's only so much one can do with something whose foundation is already structured in a particular way and in this case what Asian Americans in particular are challenged to interrogate goes beyond our experience of racialization alone but to what extent we leave unattended our own experience of being beneficiaries of settler colonialism. While Asian/Asian North American theological education cannot sever its ties with dominant theological traditions and methods, perhaps we can and have already begun to shift.

Our theological task is simply not only about regenerating and even resuscitating the dominant paradigm by constantly feeding it through our contributions (politics of inclusion/exclusion) but to create other paradigms. In order to do this, I too agree with Benny that we must persistently question the systems of economy, power and history of theological education. We know in our bones that it's a huge problem when we teach 'normal' survey courses and get to teach on elective course on Asian American theology every other year. What will transform and destabilize a Eurocentric presumption of presumed universality? What does it mean, for example, to recognize that theological education so far is also coterminous with colonialism and even with neocolonialism? For Asian/Asian North American theologians who have been trained within the western paradigm when, how and what will it take for us to shift our points of reference away from dominant systems of reference? What does it mean when in the face of economic crunch in the U.S. many theological institutions are turning to Asia (only to particular parts of Asia!) for recruitment and thus refinancialization of theological education/institutions in the U.S.?

We might wonder to what extent we are giving birth to a transnational version of Asians as model-minority? Just as diversity done 'bad' only reproduces racism, we need to ask if what we continue to do only reproduces the master's house and in fact is shoring it up even more?

4. I refer here to Kuan-Hsing Chen's *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* for assistance in overcoming the present conditions of knowledge production. As theological educators our task is to generate and foster theological knowledge. However, at this time we are bringing up issues that point to the limits of current conditions of possibility for such knowledge production. We acknowledge these structural limitations. Chen offers some insights. He writes, "critical intellectual work on deimperialization first and foremost has to transform these problematic conditions, transcend the structural limitations and uncover alternative possibilities."² *Asia As Method* argues that while transforming existing knowledge structures we also transform ourselves. For Chen, *Asia As Method* uses Asia as an imaginary anchoring point in which all those communities, practices and structures of knowledge become our points of reference. Here it involves our own task of decolonizing much of what we have learned and have learned to even desire. For many of us engaged within the U.S. academy it certainly is not and will not be easy to shift gears as our points of reference for recognition, intelligibility, what counts as intellectual production and even inclusion most often have been through the dominant point of reference or even in forms of "third-world nativism" rather than through a method of 'inter-referencing' that 'respects tradition without essentializing it, and will not mobilize the resources of tradition simply for the sake of opposing the West.'³

² Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Asia As Method: Toward Deimperialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 211.

³ *Ibid.*, 223.



Conclusion

In her new book, *Not Like A Native Speaker*, Rey Chow observes “acquisition of language becomes the acquisition of whiteness.”⁴ Asian North American theology is about translations and being translators. In translation, translators often betray. We betray all sides so that we cannot even really “go native.” The very foundation of translation is that one gives up identity/identification even as one seeks equivalence. But equivalence is not something that can be presupposed or even reached. Chow cites Ricoeur, “a good translation can come only at a supposed equivalence . . . an equivalence without identity.” Equivalence is not acquisition of more discourse, culture, or language but rather something that is produced in and through translation that is rooted in hospitality. Even as we are attentive to structures of difference, unevenness and inequity we hope in a kind of ‘interlinguistic hospitality’ so that while equivalence cannot be assumed, still a production of equivalence is forged between memory and mourning. Searching and opening our reflexivity to a multiplicity of points of references and searching and not giving up on equivalence in theological education seems to be the theological task that we cannot not want.



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⁴ Rey Chow, *Not Like A Native Speaker: On Languaging As a Postcolonial Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 3.



A Yinist Pedagogy:

Theological Education at the Well

—Young Lee Hertig

In an era of accelerating global change, the survival of human institutions depends upon prompt adaptation in the forms of collaboration, partnership and networking. No institution survives as an island any more. In this environment, institutions of all types are restructuring; the field of theological education is no exception.

In this rapidly changing world, scholars in North America continue to carry on a debate over the field of theological education. The very identity of the theological institution has been the target of these debates. The core questions are: What is the role of today's seminary? Is the traditional identity and goal of theological education relevant for today's context? Is seminary graduate school or vocational school?

The answers to these queries are seldom simple. The fact is seminary is neither a graduate school nor a vocational school. It can be argued that divinity schools within universities are more effective graduate schools than specialized seminaries. Yet stand alone seminaries very often focus on academic preparation over ministerial equipping. This can be a disservice to those who come to the seminary to learn how to be practicing ministers. Many seminarians are thus left underprepared for their vocation. Standing on the academic side of the gulf between theological education and practical ministry, these gifted and inspired men and women toil through cognitive exercises and large, impersonal classroom settings.

We have fallen into the trap that Richard Shaull cautions against, where “our advanced technological society is rapidly making objects of most of us and subtly programming us into conformity to the logic of its system.”¹

An answer to this quandary is the development of a holistic approach, based on a prayerful and reconciling frame. This kind of encounter oriented process bridges the gulf and provides a path to synthesis in this otherwise binary environment. As Parker Palmer writes, “The mind immersed in prayer no longer thinks in order to divide and conquer, to manipulate and control. Now, thinking becomes an act of love, a way of acknowledging our common bonds and assuming our rightful role in the created community.”² With Palmer's ideas in mind, this paper approaches theological education holistically, advocating the integration of both the knowledge and the knower as the purpose of theological education.

1 Richard Shaull, “Forward,” in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1970), 14.

2 Parker Palmer, *To Know Whom We Are Known* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 11-12.



While the information superhighway promotes large-scale data dissemination, it is a process of high touch but low contact. People are left alienated, having acquired an infinite web of knowledge, but at the cost of a shrunken experience of community. The existential psychologist, Rollo May, expresses this concern in his conceptualization of the paradox between technological advancement and the human condition:

We in our age are faced with a strange paradox. Never before have we had so much information in bits and pieces flooded upon us by radio and television and satellite, yet never before have we had so little inner certainty about our own being.³

May asserts the importance of the encounter as the balm to the malady of alienation. There is no better example of the authentic encounter than that described in the fourth chapter of the Gospel of John. Here, Jesus models the process of encounter through which a downtrodden woman rediscovers herself through God's given grace. Through loving dialogue, Jesus demonstrates a theological education that is engaging and thus transformational. This encounter is at once deeply personal and yet also theologically and intellectually complex. Theological education today could do well to take this example more seriously. We are in need of encountering our prophet at the well.

Despite debates about the applicability of the Bible in a contemporary context, there are some fundamental principles of Jesus that can function as meta-narratives for all humanity. Among these meta-narratives are the core Christian doctrines that: 1) the world is broken and full of wounded people; and 2) the power of loving contact cannot be substituted by anything else. This essay seeks to explore how Jesus embodies a theology of encounter.

The Power of Vulnerability

Jesus' curriculum is both open and contextual, taking place in the world of human contact. His teaching takes place in synagogues, fields, homes, in the places that people live their lives. This includes, of course, the well. This setting finds Jesus exhausted and thirsty. It is of great relevance for theological education that Jesus is vulnerable in this situation. It is not power that thaws the icy walls of gender, race, class, and religion. It is through the position of weakness. Too frequently empowerment is imposed from the top down, which merely perpetuates a circle of injustice. As Jesus sits down by the well, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. From his position of weakness, without a bucket, Jesus approaches the woman, in her position of strength, and asks, "Will you give me a drink?" (John 1:6-7).

Without formal greetings or meaningless pleasantries, Jesus engages in the reality of the present moment: he is thirsty and she is someone who can help him quench his thirst. This simple yet multifaceted request transcends the human prejudices of their time. By asking a favor from a Samaritan woman, Jesus redefines who she truly is and can be. He repositions her from her disposition.

How does the Samaritan woman respond to this unfamiliar encounter with Jesus? The woman's response reveals the unconventional nature of Jesus. In a state of surprise, she turns the question back to Jesus, "How can you ask me for a drink?" (4:9). Her question discloses both surprise and anxiety. Being treated by Jesus as a subject rather than an object likely surprises the woman. Stepping out of her secure boundaries, no matter how oppressive they may be, demands an adjustment and thus induces the discomfort of uncertainty. In her anxious moment of discourse, she actively uncovers the deep-seated issues of their encounter.

3 Rollo May, *The Discovery of Being* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1983), 9.



It is this radical movement of the Samaritan woman from object to subject that transforms this encounter. A basic assumption on which Paulo Freire operates is that a person's ontological vocation should be as a subject who takes action and transforms the subject's own world, and in the process "moves towards ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively."⁴ Likewise, the Samaritan woman ceases to be an object of oppression in her dialogical encounter with Jesus.

Jesus said, "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (4:14, NRSV). Freire asserts that no matter how a person has been silenced, she may be renewed by dialogical encounter.⁵

The more the woman engages in the dialogue, the closer her encounter with Jesus becomes. Jesus brilliantly thaws the woman's frozen self-perception, which has been shaped by conventional prescriptions. Even her deep interior fixations surface as she discovers herself in a subject-to-subject encounter. The barriers between Jews and Samaritans, males and females, previous and present prophets, no longer matter. Jesus understands the woman's readiness to deal with her well within.

Jesus' model embodies the unity of yin and yang in contrast to the disproportionately *yangish* model of theological education. The term *yangish* refers to the Taoist concept of masculine energy, which is based on principles of competition, development, and causality. Modernistic, yang-oriented theological education compartmentalizes the church and mission by chronically favoring the ideology of the masculine over that of the feminine. When theological education turns to a holistic approach it flows freely from the seminary to the church and back. This flow results in faithful witness as manifested by the Samaritan woman.

However, the process of wholeness is not simplistically the reversal of the current state of theological education, replacing one binary opposite for the other. A truly transformative process requires a fusion of yin with yang. It is the model of Jesus and the Samaritan woman that demonstrates the reconciliation of *yinish* vulnerability and *yangish* confrontation. Jesus' radical breaking down of the walls of racism, sexism, classism, regionalism, and religion is done in a *yinish* manner of vulnerability. His vulnerability comes not from the ego but from the depth of a living well within. Meanwhile, his willingness to be direct and confrontational demonstrates the yang principle of externalized force. This holistic encounter is what produces the woman's transformation.

Moving from exterior to interior

Once Jesus progresses the dialogue to the subject level, he moves the woman to a journey inward. At this time it is she, not Jesus, who asks for the water. "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water," she asks (4:15). By confronting Jesus with questions, the Samaritan woman's request leads to deeper challenges. Jesus uncovers her soft spots by asking her to "go, call your husband and come back" (v. 16).

An important aspect of the Samaritan woman's liberation process is seen in how Jesus deals with her response, "I have no husband" (v. 17). Unlike in his confrontational question, Jesus affirms her reply. He says, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true" (v. 18).

4 Richard Shaull, "Forward," 12-13.

5 *Ibid.*, 13.



Why does Jesus affirm her twice when he assumes that she already has a husband? Perhaps Jesus is revealing to her that since her present “husband” is not truly her husband, she needs to move forward. Responding to Jesus’ double affirmation, the woman also affirms Jesus as prophetic by admitting to the truthfulness of Jesus’ words (v. 19).

At this point, the interplay of their dialogue is striking. What could have succumbed to resistance instead manifests the authenticity of truth-speaking and transformation. Jesus models his vulnerability allowing the woman to encounter him from her vulnerability. In response to Jesus’ acceptance and affirmation she also affirms Jesus. In her most vulnerable moment of self-disclosure, her eyes are open and she understands that Jesus is the Messiah (v. 27).

Here what could be a distant and exterior theological discourse transforms into an interior theological encounter. It is at this moment that the woman discovers her true self; she taps into her interior well. The external, utilitarian well becomes a fountain within. The journey of an amazing transformation begins. She no longer shies away from her community but turns the whole village upside down as she herself is turned inside and out. Theology no longer functions at the cerebral level but is now embodied.

The entire dialogical encounter portrays a most beautiful dance of reciprocity initiated by Jesus and followed by the woman, poetry in motion reaching the peak of human potential. Their back-and-forth point to the beauty and power of human dialogue. Dynamically interwoven, this encounter shows the realization of hope in the midst of despair.

Theological education today is in need of softening its power through vulnerable service to humanity in crisis. Seminarians, reflecting the population at large, are broken and hungry for wholeness. The response to their brokenness and hunger is found in the model of Jesus affirming and challenging the Samaritan woman. Through this she becomes whole. People today thirst for such an encounter.

A startling irony is that the very encounter people hunger for is beyond their reach as higher education confronts tsunami-like change. As this institutional confrontation rages, theological education needs to seek deeper levels of encountering, even questioning its deep-seated orthodoxy. For such an engagement to be possible, theological waters need to be reexamined and revised. It demands the plunge into an intimate transforming process as demonstrated by the woman who rediscovers herself and thus discovers her mission in life.

True spirituality sends us down a road toward truth, wherever that may lead. In the words of Parker Palmer, “true spirituality will understand that fear, not ignorance, is the enemy of learning, and that fear is what gives ignorance its power. It will try to root out our fear of having our ignorance exposed and our orthodoxies challenged . . .”⁶ The road to educational renewal demands a willingness to be remolded like clay in the potter’s hands. It demands a turn from mere intellectual rigor towards the integration of interior and communal processes.

The unfortunate reality is that educational values and their praxis continue to favor monologue rather than dialogue. Even when introducing the importance of dialogue it is done in monologue, ultimately reinforcing the status quo. In a one-sided educational setting, a communal encounter between teacher and learner and between learner and learner is not feasible.

6 Palmer, *To Know Whom We Are Known*, xi.



The Power of Denial

While the transformed woman is engaged in her new mission, the disciples are literally out to lunch. Even when they return they choose disengagement. Shocked by their teacher's forbidden interaction with the Samaritan woman, the disciples resort to denial. They deny themselves the transforming moment that leads to true action. Meanwhile the formerly imprisoned woman is freed from social, racial, and theological taboos. Her theology no longer serves as a boundary keeper but a liberating tool.

Like the woman at the well, I have been blessed in my encounters with theological mentors who saw my potential when I could not. That is why I am able to testify to the power of education when it embodies the whole person. Theological educators need to stop by the well and rediscover a refreshing and life-generating fountain in the midst of academic life in the fast lane.

In our classes and churches there are many Samaritan women and men who need fresh and living water in their spiritual wells within, just as Jesus ignites the spirit of a prophet within the woman. Immediately she is activated and turns her village upside down. Like the disciples in the narrative, theological education in general lacks an understanding of its inherent power of transformation. It is focused on the head-trips of theological debates, which rarely move people's hearts and surely not their feet.

Having served in both church and seminary settings, I discovered the power of transformational learning when it touches the heart of the people. Yet false beliefs within institutions continually bred fragmentation and deprivation. This transformation only occurs when these false beliefs are broken down, allowing dialogical encounters to act as occasions of change.

A Rationale for Developing a 3rd Space for Encounter

A nuts and bolts model of networking and partnership is needed to recast theological education into a new framework. This framework should take both experiential and theoretical approaches and treat them as two sides of one coin. The reflection of the former stems from my experience of running a nonprofit organization, ISAAC (Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity) and the latter from my theological journey since 1981, which runs parallel with an ongoing postcolonial dialogue.

Positioning in a 3rd space often accompanies unpredictability, uncertainty and confusion. However, it is this very unpredictability that allows for the opportunity to go into the wilderness, as the people of God, relying on manna and faith, with no reserves. In the intellectual and highly strategic "INTJ" world of academic culture, unpredictability and uncertainty are deemed undesirable. Nevertheless, it can be both challenging and rewarding depending on one's perspective.

As a nonprofit organization, ISAAC is positioned in a 3rd space as free-standing, interdependent, intersectional, and interdisciplinary. It is both the academy and the church; it is both yin and yang. Forging partnerships from this 3rd space presents challenges as well as opportunities. In transforming a network into potential partnerships, ISAAC confronts a myriad of power variables, including those of money, time, and fame.

The first challenge involves issues of and around fame. Although no groups are impervious to the effects of celebrity, it has been my experience that Asian Americans gravitate strongly to individuals and institutions that carry name-recognition, popular appeal and establishment credibility. When an entity such as ISAAC does not embody these features, it becomes challenging to attract the attention of Asian Americans outside of



the ISAAC's immediate community. Yet, when ISAAC works under a mainstream institutional umbrella, it is susceptible to being directed by institutional agendas and interests.

The second challenge is a *perceived* power imbalance between the knowledge of specialty versus hybridity. In the academy specialty typically equals prestige. As postcolonial scholars (Bhabha, Dommelen, etc.,) elucidate, hybridity is not a simple fusion of new and old elements of ideology or practice but rather an ongoing development in relation to micro and macro contexts.

The third challenge is one of capital, both social and financial. As Sallie McFague⁷ and Kwok Pui-lan⁸ describe, the neoliberal economic take-over has virtually reduced human interactions and institutional survival to capital. The call for an alternative theological education to neoliberal education seems crucial.

The privilege of embarking on the task of theological education from a 3rd space involves freedom to partner with diverse institutions creatively in and out of theological palaces. There are many theologians in palaces resistant to the Kingdom and Queendom of knowledge production. Yet many are also unable or unwilling to champion significant change. Needless to say, for the insiders of the palace, change carries with it high stakes: politically, financially and socially. Meanwhile, for the outsiders in the wilderness of the 3rd space, the stakes are much more fluid.

The story of the woman at the well elucidates the 3rd space encounter. Here we see the initial back-and-forth of trial and error give way to a dance of reciprocity between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. In contrast to neoliberal theological institutions and curriculum, Jesus' pedagogy invites us to an organic dialogue without overhead costs. An epistemological lens in approaching the texts is from a *yinist*⁹ perspective, which I coined in early '90s, taken from Taoism. *Yinist* refers to an interdependent yin/yang gestalt that covers both gender and nature.

Positioning one's mission in a 3rd space requires sacrifice and faith because there is no blueprint except reliance on God's evolving intervention and daily manna. In the binary "J" culture of the academy where strategic details of blueprint, planning, and outcome hold high priority, working from the wilderness of a 3rd space takes persistence. To become a bridging leader requires wisdom and learning through life's trials and errors. It takes, indeed, experiential learning beyond cognitive knowledge.

The Characteristics of a 3rd Space

As discussed earlier, the development of a 3rd space that is conducive to the encounter is not simply exchanging the current status quo for its binary opposite. It requires an unusually deft openness to the totality of both divine and human experience. This effort begins with the establishing of a liminal space, an in-between state where the threshold of yin and yang are allowed to interact freely, where the interplay of structure and organicity are given room to creatively generate novel experiences and relationships. I consider this the merging of divine encounters with institutional structure.

⁷ See Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy For A Planet In Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 75-97.

⁸ Pui-lan Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster Knox Press, 2005), 3.

⁹ Young Lee Hertig, "The Asian-American Alternative to Feminism: A *Yinist* Paradigm," *Missiology: An International Review* 26 no. 1 (1998), 15-22.



Within this 3rd space, there is the inevitability of clashing worldviews. One such clash is between community and individualism, which can be characterized as between philanthropy and the culture of “winner takes all.” This example is a classic variation of the yin versus yang framework. One is receptive and vulnerable while the other is aggressive and confrontational. As Jesus models in his encounter with the Samaritan woman, this need not be an either/or proposition. Both the community and the individual can exist simultaneously. Jesus’ approach dealt with the reality and necessity of both yin and yang energies. Jesus confronts the woman’s truth while honestly engaging her in her experience. Jesus himself proceeds with openness and vulnerability, leading with his inferiority and weakness at the well. It was, after all, he who initially requested her help.

The benefits of working from a 3rd space are rich and varied. From the most basic level, encounters in the wilderness embody a freedom, creativity and adaptability that is difficult to materialize in structured environments. As new challenges arise, the 3rd space is able to respond quickly to those needs. This is especially valuable in time-limited and urgent matters. From the other side of the coin, when new opportunities are presented, working from the 3rd space allows us to seize these prospects without being bogged down by institutional channels. The result can be unprecedented grassroots coalition building and social movements. In ISAAC’s case, we have been blessed with the capacity to develop bridges with the financial sector in our 5th Symposium and between the Asian American and African American church in our upcoming 6th Symposium.

Conclusion

For some time now, theological education has stood at the crossroads between the practical application of theology and its academic study. This tension has, unfortunately, led generally to an over-emphasis on the intellectual over the experiential. It is my hope that Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well can serve as a profound model for the synthesis of these two positions, leaving neither behind, but instead allowing both to harmoniously integrate into a holistic framework, impacting both the academy and the church in deep and meaningful ways.



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From Multiculturalism to Interculturality:

The Aim of Theological Education in the Global Context

—vanThanh Nguyen, S.V.D.

“What exactly is interculturality?” It is important to acknowledge at the outset that this recently-coined terminology is still very unclear for many people. First and foremost, interculturality is *not* merely “internationality” or “multiculturalism” whereby a community, which is comprised of people from different nationalities or cultures, can *co-exist* side by side with each other.¹ Rather, the ideal intercultural community, which consists of members from different cultures, can *interact* with each other and thereby mutually enrich the individual members and the community as a whole.² In a nutshell, interculturality may be defined as *mutual multi-directional exchange and enrichment*.³ It might be helpful to note that interculturality differs significantly from cross-cultural encounter. Interculturality is a multi-directional exchange whereby both parties are enriched in the encounter; cross-cultural encounter however is one-directional communication that does not necessarily involve in mutual exchange and enrichment. Consequently, these terms—interculturality and cross-culture—are not synonymous.

I propose that theological education today must be framed by the importance of interculturality and serve interculturality within the scope of its broader aims, especially as its faculty and students become more ethnically diverse. Interestingly, the Bible contains many illustrations or stories of ideal intercultural encounter, interaction, mutuality or exchange.⁴ Due to the limited length of this paper, I could only explore two paradigmatic examples that demonstrate genuine intercultural sensitivity and conciliatory interaction across cultural boundaries.⁵ I will begin by examining the ancestral figures of Abraham and Sarah, and then explore Jesus of Nazareth as the representative figure of the New Testament. I will conclude by offering some pedagogical

1 Robert Kisala noted that “our understanding has moved from assimilation to multiculturalism to interculturality.” See Kisala, “From Every Nation, People, and Language,” *Verbum SVD* 53, no. 1 (2012): 37.

2 Likewise, Kisala says that “Interculturality emphasizes the mutuality of the contact between cultures, that all cultures are appreciated for the gifts they bring to humanity. It promotes the active sharing of these gifts and evaluates positively the consequent changes such sharing causes in all the cultures involved” (“From Every Nation,” 37). See also his previous article entitled, “Formation for Intercultural Life and Mission,” *Verbum SVD* 50 (2009): 331-35. The clarification of the term “interculturality” by Kisala is similar to other scholars’ definition; for example see Hans de Wit, “Through the Eyes of Another: Objectives and Backgrounds,” in *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*, edited by Hans de Wit, et al. (Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004), 3-48.

3 I owe this excellent definition to my friend Roger Schroeder who co-authored with Stephen B. Bevans: *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

4 While the Bible has examples of the failure of cross-cultural communication and intercultural mutuality, in this article I shall highlight the good examples and the biblical foundations for cross-cultural and intercultural interaction.

5 For a fuller exposition, see vanThanh Nguyen, “Biblical Foundations of Interculturality,” in *Interculturality*, ed. Martin Ueffing (Roscommon 25; Sankt Augustin: Steyler Missionswissenschaftliches Institut, 2013), 37-48.



implications for teaching the Bible and doing theology in a global church and context. The overall aim of this article is to show that Biblical intercultural hermeneutics can provide a model for reading, living, and ministering in an intercultural context.

Abraham and Sarah as Mediators of Blessings

Israel's ancestral history begins with Abraham and Sarah when they responded to God's vague invitation to leave their familiar surroundings in Mesopotamia and sojourn to the unknown land of Canaan (Gn 12:9). Abraham and Sarah moved about in Canaan searching for food and pasture for their livestock. They traveled without constraint through the length and breadth of the land. While Memre, near Hebron, became their principal place of residence (Gn 13:18), they settled in Shechem (12:8-9), Bethel and Ai (13:3), in the Negev between Kadesh and Shur (20:1-2), at Moriah (22:2), at Beersheba (21:33; 22:19), and for a time in Egypt (12:10; 13:1).⁶ They are clearly portrayed as immigrants, but what amazes me about the story of their migration is that the land they enter is not empty, for there were already present the Hittites, the Jesubites, the Perizzites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Jebusites, just to name a few (Gn 15:19-21). Noticeably however, Israel's ancestors were not treated with hostility. Canaan is depicted as a peaceful place and a welcoming host country for immigrants and settlers. Consequently, Abraham and Sarah were not unwelcome strangers or considered as hostile passing travelers. They were allowed to freely survey the friendly territory that belonged to the people of the land. No one seemed to object to their coming and going.

Throughout the whole narrative cycle, Abraham and Sarah are portrayed as "a model of how to live at peace with the host peoples of the land and share ownership of the land."⁷ There is no explicit indication from the author of Genesis that the people of the land should be expelled or destroyed.⁸ Contrary to what is portrayed by some scholars who appear to have a politically motivated agenda, the immigrant couple acted in exemplary ways by showing deep respect for the entitlement of the people of the land and to their local rituals and practices. According to Carroll Stuhlmueller, Israel's ancestors accepted and interacted with Canaanite forms of worship and lifestyle and even worshiped at traditional Canaanite shrines.⁹ Because of their intercultural mutuality and exchange, Abraham and Sarah were able to share the benefits of the land, overcome conflict and crises, and even mediate blessings to the inhabitants of the land.¹⁰

The story of Abraham encountering and interacting with Melchizekek, the king and priest of Salem or Jerusalem, is a good illustration of an ideal intercultural encounter. In this short intercalated vignette about the rescuing of his nephew Lot (Gn 14:18-20), Melchizedek met Abraham on his return from the mission and offered him bread and wine. Abraham clearly participated in table fellowship with Melchizedek, the Canaanite king and also a priest from a different religious tradition and culture. The intercultural exchange reveals that

6 See vanThanh Nguyen, "Asia in Motion: A Biblical Reflection on Migration," *Asian Christian Review* 4, no. 2 (2010): 22-24.

7 Norman C. Habel, *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 125.

8 Contrary to Genesis' peaceful ideology of co-existence with the inhabitants of the land, violent repudiation of the foreigners and their expulsion are found in other Old Testament texts. The book of Joshua and Judges contain many violent scenes. Perhaps the most alarming text comes from Deuteronomy, stating, "In the cities of those nations which the LORD, your God, is giving you as your heritage, you shall not leave a single soul alive. You must doom them all—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD, your God, has commanded you" (20:16-17). See also similar passages found in Dt 7:1-2, 6-8. Many prophets also denounced foreign idols and called for a destruction of cultic sites. Ezra even forced the men to divorce their foreign wives. A militant and anti-foreign ideology was viewed as being faithful to Israel's God, and thus some biblical writers demanded a complete separation from foreign practices. To understand why these violent passages were recorded and retained, one has to understand the historical context of the literature. For more information, see Lucien Legrand, *The Bible on Culture: Belonging or Dissenting?* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

9 Donald Senior, C.P., and Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 17.

10 For a detailed and comprehensive treatment of land as the central theme of biblical faith and theology, see Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Second Edition; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002).



Abraham respected Melchizedek's custom by openly accepting his hospitality. The king then blessed Abraham with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand" (vv. 19-20). By gladly receiving a blessing from Melchizedek, Abraham acknowledged the power and legitimacy of the Canaanite "God Most High" (in Hebrew El 'Elyon). Norman Habel correctly noted that, "For Abraham to accept a blessing from Melchizedek is to acknowledge his power, his authority as rightful priest of a sacred site in Canaan, and his right to rule the territory of the Jebusites."¹¹ Abraham's cultural adaptation and sensitivity are startling to say the least. But that is not all. Abraham even responded with a gesture of mutuality by offering a generous tithe, presumably from his looted treasures (v. 20). Abraham's intercultural interaction obviously led to the promotion of peaceful relations with the settled inhabitants, and consequently he was welcomed as a friend in the new host country and culture.¹²

Abraham always recognized himself as a *ger* or "resident alien" and identified himself as such.¹³ At the end of his life, he pleaded with the Hittites saying, "Although I am a resident alien among you, sell me from your holdings a piece of property for a burial ground, that I may bury my dead wife" (Gn 23:4). This is a clear indication that even until the very end of his days, Abraham never ceased being a stranger in the land of promise. In this episode, Abraham is shown as one who respects the law of the land and is willing to purchase a piece of property according to the terms dictated by the local residents.

In summary, Abraham and Sarah interacted amicably with the inhabitants from diverse cultures and tribes. Moreover, wherever they moved and lived, the immigrant couple fostered a way of life that mediated blessing. They did not simply co-exist but became ambassadors of good will to all the people they encountered, seeking to transform their own lives and the lives of others around them. As bridge-builders, they shared their resources and followed the appropriate local protocol and laws. Assessing their behavior and attitude, Abraham and Sarah clearly fulfill the three criteria or characteristics of real interculturality, namely: a) a recognition of other cultures; b) a respect for cultural difference; and c) a promotion of healthy interaction between cultures. Since they sought to create an atmosphere whereby each culture allows itself to be transformed or enriched by the other, Abraham and Sarah are considered paradigmatic figures of interculturality. Furthermore, from a theological-missiological perspective, one can see here the biblical foundations for the intercultural exchange and mutual enrichment of all nations in response to God's mission, who is calling all of them back to God.

Jesus an Intercultural Jew

Jesus of Nazareth was born and brought up in a specific culture. He was a Jew who spoke a Palestinian Aramaic and was conditioned by a Semitic way of speaking and thinking. One must realize that Jesus dressed like a Jew, prayed like a Jew, taught and argued like a Jewish Rabbi. His life, mission, and teaching were totally rooted in the Jewish culture and identity. The Evangelist John puts it very plainly, "the Word was made flesh" (1:14). This simple yet profound statement indicates that the Word found human expression in a Jewish

¹¹ Habel, *The Land is Mine*, 126.

¹² *Ibid.*, 126-27.

¹³ Abraham (Gn 12:10; 17:8; 20:1; 21:23, 34; 23:4), Lot (19:9), Isaac (26:3; 35:27; 37:1), Jacob (28:4; 32:5), and Esau and Jacob (36:7), Joseph (47:4, 9) are designated as *gerim* (cf. also Ex 6:4). Abraham even described himself as a *ger* (Gn 23:4). In Exodus 6:4 the patriarchs are referred to collectively as *gerim* when YHWH declares to Moses that he had promised to give the fathers the land in which they were dwelling as outsiders. Even the psalmist refers to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as *gerim* who wandered about Canaan before their descendants took possession of the land at a later time (Ps 105:8-13). And in two other instances, Ps 39:13 and 1 Chr 29:15, Israel's fathers are called *gerim*. While in Egypt, the Israelites were also identified as *gerim* (Ex 22:20; 23:9; Dt 10:19; 23:8). See Reinhard Feldmeier, "The 'Nation' of Strangers: Social Contempt and Its Theological Interpretation in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity," in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 241-70.



culture.¹⁴ Jesus was a Jew, and it is within his Jewishness that he found his identity and belonging. Over the past several decades, New Testament scholars have correctly stressed that an understanding of first century Judaism is crucial to the reconstruction of the historical Jesus and the origins of early Christianity. Likewise, if we wish to understand and appreciate the intercultural dialogue or interculturality of Jesus, we must first recognize his deep Jewishness.

Jesus' mission was primarily to his people and normally took place within the Jewish territory (Mk 6:7-13). He clearly said that he "was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). Even so, he healed both Jews and Gentiles (Mk 5:1-8; 7:31-37). The story of Jesus healing the daughter of the Syrophenician (Mk 8:24-30) or Canaanite (Mt 15:21-28) woman is a very good example of mutual inter-cultural exchange. The belief and strength of this poor and widowed foreigner impressed Jesus to the point of acknowledging her "great faith" and granting her whatever she wished. Many commentators have noticed that Jesus' attitude toward Gentiles in general became more favorable after this crucial encounter and eventually led Jesus to commission his disciples to inaugurate a universal mission (Mt 28:18-20). In addition to healing those of other races, Jesus also proclaimed the gospel to them. Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:4-42) is a fine example of cross-cultural exchange, whereby the woman and her people were enriched and transformed in the cross-cultural experience. When Jesus asked her for a drink, her first reaction was disbelief that he, a Jew, would even talk to her, a Samaritan. The disciples' shocking discovery of Jesus conversing with the woman at the well is a clear indication that his behavior was unusual. Nevertheless, Jesus took the initiative and broke the cultural barriers of race, gender, and religion. Despite her seemingly tarnished past, Jesus accepted her as she was without judgment and condemnation. I believe that it was through open dialogue and respectful exchange that Jesus was able to transform this ordinary Samaritan woman to become a missionary and an evangelist (4:39, 42). The story ended with the whole town coming to know Christ and believing in him. I believe that Jesus too was enriched and transformed in this unique cross-cultural encounter, for he no longer remained at the edge of town but accepted their hospitality and stayed with them for two days (4:40).

Jesus also demonstrated cross-cultural sensitivity in his teaching, especially in his parables. The central message of Jesus' ministry was "the coming of the Kingdom of God" (Mk 1:14-15). One of the ways to get this message across was through story telling. Like a good teacher, Jesus loved to tell stories and was very good at it. Jesus' stories however are unique for they usually have unexpected twists and are often subversive. More than just telling stories, Jesus spoke often in parables, particularly in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The simplest definition of parable is a short story, metaphor, or simile usually drawn from everyday experiences to communicate a certain lesson or truth that intends to shock the listener by its vividness or strangeness. Jesus often begins by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like" While parables are down to earth with high verisimilitude and are easy to remember, they are not always obvious and easy to understand. Jesus' parables have the power to grab attention for those who hear them. They have the potential to transcend space and time as well as the culture of the original speaker and listener to speak even to us today messages that are still pertinent and images that are still powerful. To farmers he spoke in images of fields and wheat, to housewives in images of bread making and housecleaning, to builders in images of stone and mortar, to fishermen in images of net and fishes, to merchants in images of pearls and treasures. Jesus' parables of the kingdom can be appreciated by listeners of diverse background and profession.¹⁵ The most famous example is the Good Samaritan, who helped a man who had been robbed and beaten nearly to death (Lk 10:29-37). While religious Jews avoided the injured man in the ditch, the Samaritan showed compassion to the stranger who was probably a Jew and a potential enemy.

14 Legrand, *Bible on Culture*, 75.

15 vanThanh Nguyen, "Speaking in Parables," *Give Us This Day* (July 2012): 240-41.



Although being steeped in his Jewishness, Jesus was a different kind of Jew. Jesus touched the lepers, befriended sinners and outcasts, and liberated those who were possessed by impure spirits. Jesus recognized the dignity in the people he met and restored them to their rightful place. More than simply associating with them, he participated in table fellowship with them. This was a radical move, for people in Jesus' time did not just eat with anyone. To sit at table with someone was a sign of respect, trust, and friendship. Jesus surprised everyone by sitting down to eat with anyone. Jesus excluded no one at the dinner table. Moreover, Jesus offered his very self as food and drink for those who hunger and thirst for the Kingdom of God. Many who came in contact with Jesus were transformed, for example, Zacheus the tax collector (Lk 19:1-10), the woman who anointed Jesus (Mk 14:3-9), Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-42), and the two distressed disciples from Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).¹⁶ Noticeably, Jesus did not simply interact with people; rather he and those he encountered were mutually enriched. In short, I have shown that Jesus was a very cross-cultural Jew and on various occasions can be considered an intercultural Jew. In any case, Jesus is ideal in showing that God's mission includes all peoples, and this lays the biblical foundation for intercultural exchange and mutual enrichment of all nations in response to God's mission.

Pedagogical and Theological Implications

This article began by clarifying that real "interculturality" is more than just *co-existing* side by side with people from different nationalities or cultures. Rather, the ideal intercultural setting for interculturality provides a space or opportunity for people from different cultures to *interact* with each other and thereby mutually *enrich* and *transform* each other and those around them. With this understanding, I have turned to the Bible by exploring the stories of Abraham-Sarah and Jesus of Nazareth as paradigmatic examples that illustrate ideal intercultural encounter or interaction. What follows are some pedagogical implications of teaching the Bible and doing theology interculturally in a global church and context. But first, let us look at the inevitable demographic and theological shifts on the horizon.

According to projections of the US Census Bureau in 2008, the US population will change drastically by race and ethnicity in the near future. By 2050, the white population of 201 million is expected to reach 215 million; African Americans will grow from 40 to 59 million, Asians from 16 to 38 million, and Hispanics from 50 to 133 million. What this means is that, by midcentury, the ethnic minorities in the US will become the majority, while the whites will be a minority, consisting of only 48 percent of the total 450 million population.¹⁷ As for Christianity worldwide, it is estimated that by the year 2025, the majority of the 2.6 billion Christians will be found in the "global South," namely Africa, Central and Latin America, and much of Asia.¹⁸ With Christianity growing at a phenomenal pace in the global South, it is believed that in the near future most Christian scholars will be concentrated there. Consequently, the shift in Christianity's center of gravity from the global North to the global South will not only be demographic but also theological.¹⁹ This shift will have a seismic affect on

16 What Jesus did in the Gospel of Luke, the disciples imitated in the Acts of the Apostles. A very good example of such a parallel is found in the story of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1—11:18). Peter's table-fellowship with Cornelius and his household caused no small confrontation with the Jerusalem church. However, it was through this watershed encounter that the way was opened for Paul to evangelize in Gentile territory and among Gentile folks. See vanThanh Nguyen, "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries: Missiological Implications of Acts 10:1—11:18," *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 4 (2012): 455-66.

17 Lester Edwin J. Ruiz and Eleazar S. Fernandez, "What Do We Do with the Diversity that We Already Are?" *Theological Education* 45 (1, 2009): 45. The 2010 population projected at 312 million will reach approximately 452 million. By midcentury, whites will be approximately 48 percent of the population; African Americans, 12 percent; Asians, 8 percent; Hispanics, 30 percent; and others, 2 percent.

18 According to Philip Jenkins, 595 million would live in Africa; 623 million in Central and Latin America; and 498 million in Asia. Europe might still be in third place with 513 million. See Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Revised and Expanded Edition; England: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2. Jenkins predicts that by 2050 only about one-fifth of the world's three billion Christians will be non-Hispanic whites (*Next Christendom*, 3).

19 Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison, *Jesus in Global Contexts*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 12.



doing theology as it is moving away from the “center” to the “periphery.” The demographic and theological shifts will significantly alter the theological landscape.

How should theological educators in the US prepare for this monumental change when the minority will become the majority? I suggest that we need to begin to move from a multicultural model to an intercultural model of theological education whereby people from different cultures and backgrounds do not simply co-exist but rather *interact* with each other and thereby mutually *enrich* and *transform* each other both in the classrooms and beyond. From a pedagogical viewpoint, this model requires from teachers active, sensitive, and respectful listening skills to hear the diverse voices represented in the classroom and to humbly acknowledge that such wisdom and insight can be tapped in that context.

Moreover, by applying the intercultural model of education educators recognize and affirm that there is not a single dominant perspective for doing theology or reading the Bible, but rather there are multiple or polycentric perspectives. Furthermore, by listening to the voices of all people in the church, especially to those on the periphery, for example, women and people of color, the model recognizes that everyone has something to offer to the theological endeavor and can be mutually enriched. In addition, this model not only acknowledges but also addresses the global issues of culture, class, ethnicity and race, leading to a truly global intercultural theology.



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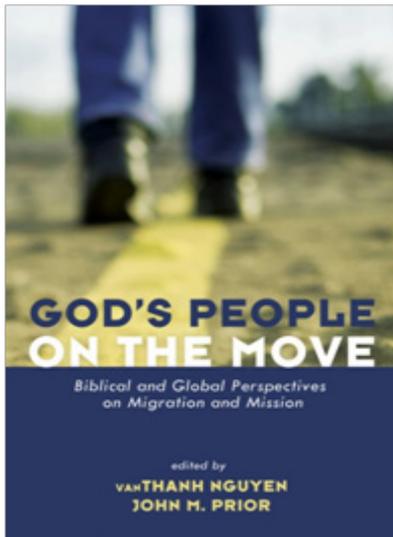


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Book Reviews

If you are interested in reviewing any of the books found below, please contact Russell M. Jeung at rjeung@sfsu.edu.



God's People on the Move: Biblical and Global Perspectives on Migration and Mission, edited by vanThanh Nguyen and John M. Prior (Pickwick Publications, 2014). The book seeks to develop appropriate biblical and missiological responses to the issue of human migration and dislocation. The book is divided into two major sections. Part one, "Biblical Perspectives on Migration and Mission," contains six essays that focus on various biblical themes or texts that deal with migration and mission. Part two, "Contemporary Issues of Migration and Mission," contains six essays that address different immigration issues around the world.

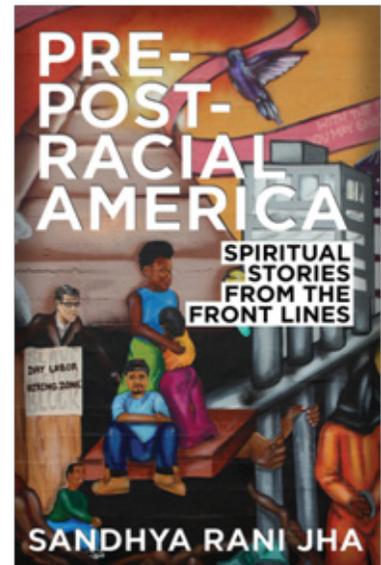
The reviews and endorsements of this book are noteworthy to highlight. Donald Senior writes, "Global in scope and ecumenical in spirit, this biblical and theological study on migration makes a genuine contribution to the church's reflection on the meaning of migration." "This book is a magnificent addition to the burgeoning literature on

the theology of migration," says Peter Phan. Daniel Groody comments that the book is "not just a reflection about theology and migration but about what it means to be human before God." And M. Daniel C. Rodas acknowledges that this book is "a wonderful resource for our time: experienced missiologists from various traditions, steeped in the Scriptures and committed to their particular contexts, demonstrate the relevance of the word of the God who loves the immigrant."

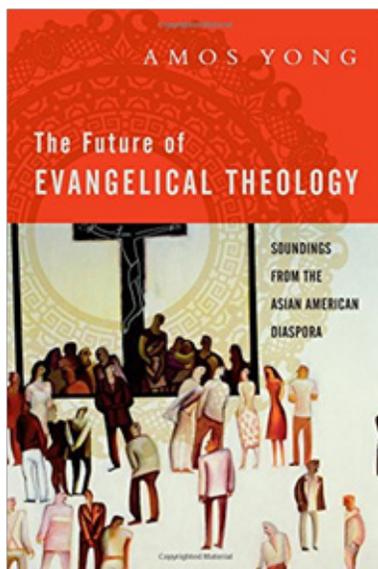
For more information about or an excerpt of the book please go to: <http://wipfandstock.com/god-s-people-on-the-move.html>. For kindle edition, go to: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00SIAIU9M>. For review, examination or desk copies, please write to: toni@wipfandstock.com.



Pre-Post-Racial America: Spiritual Stories from the Front Lines by Rev. Sandhya Rani Jha (Chalice Press 2015). *Those people. Their issues.* The day's news and the ways we treat each other, overtly or subliminally, prove we are not yet living in post-racial America. It's hard to talk about race in America without everyone very quickly becoming defensive and shutting down Sandhya Jha addresses the hot topic in a way that is grounded in real people's stories and that offers solid biblical grounding for thinking about race relations in America, reminding us that God calls us to build the Beloved Community.



“This book uses the powerful tool of storytelling to speak prophetic truth in the most disarming way. It is an excellent resource for pastors, leaders and lay people who want to help their communities journey across the complex terrain of race. Sandhya Rani Jha is a wise thinker who understands that race is best comprehended by those who are brave enough to listen to multiple perspectives. And she invites readers to lend an ear to a diverse collection of wonderfully rich and pointed stories that illuminate the various complex issues from immigration to black stereotypes to privilege that impact individuals and racial groups in our far-from-post-racial society. This book will make you want to pray, cry, laugh, reevaluate and act all in the service of true racial healing.—Cristena Cleveland, author, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart*



No longer does world Christianity converge in the Euro-American West—there has been a dramatic shift to the Global South, providing the occasion for a fresh consideration of the future of evangelical theology. Drawing on the day of Pentecost narrative, Amos Yong (IVP Academic 2014) puts forward a bold proposal for a pentecostal-evangelical theology informed by the particular experiences and perspectives of Asian Americans. The outpouring of Christ's Spirit upon all flesh means that the evangelical church has to attend to the multiplicity of voices and contexts that shape the global theological conversation.

Evangelical theology, Yong argues, is necessarily contextual theology, though in a way that does not sacrifice the gospel's universality. *The Future of Evangelical Theology* is a programmatic vision for theology that pays attention to the realities of gender, race, migration, economics, justice and politics. What emerges is a theology situated within a pentecostal Asian American context that bears on the future of the *whole* church.

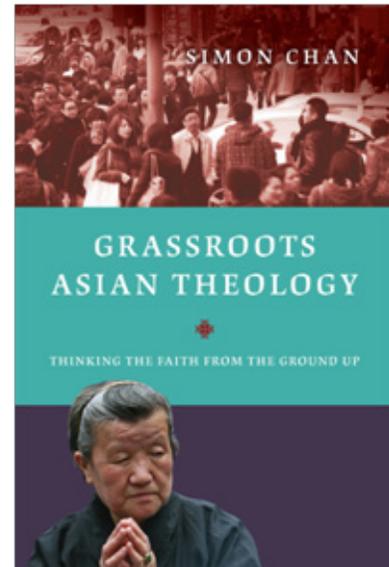
“In this book Amos Yong, surely one of the most prolific and imaginative theologians working today, dares the American church to consider Asian Americans and their storied journeys as critical for its future. The quality of his impressively informed argument requires we take his dare seriously, as it recounts how evangeli



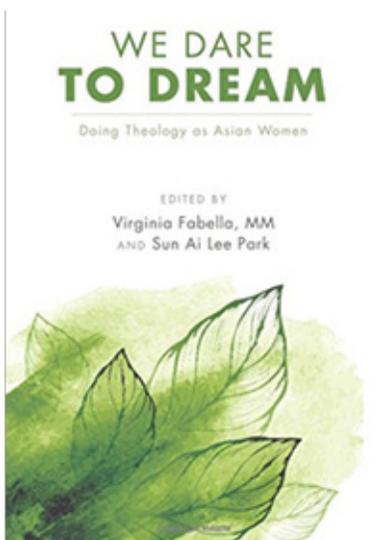
cal Christianity has become dispirited and how a quickening of Asian American ‘pent-evangelicalism,’ as this inspired book is wont to do, just may save it.” (Jonathan Tran, Baylor University)

A dynamic chapter of church history is now being written in Asia. Now, in *Grassroots Asian Theology*, Simon Chan (IVP Academic 2014) examines Asian Christianity at its daily, sustaining level. There he uncovers a vibrant theology that is authentically Asian and truly engaging.

More than a mere survey, *Grassroots Asian Theology* makes a serious and constructive contribution to Asian theology. Organizing his discussion under leading themes of Christian theology, Chan looks at how Christians have grappled with their living faith in the context of Asian cultures and societies. Then, drawing on the church’s broader tradition, he points the way forward. Chan not only probes and informs, he leads and challenges readers across cultures to receive, live and communicate an authentic Christian faith. This is a significant book for both outsiders and insiders to Asian Christianity, as well as those interested in the broader horizons of global theology. Chan reminds us that authentic theologies are grounded in particular peoples, places and cultures.



“That many readers will want to keep the arguments going on this or that issue speaks well for this book. I came away with new topics to wrestle with in my own theological reflections. Chan is a wise evangelical thinker who points to spiritual concerns that require creative engagement not only with traditional Asian religions, but also with Catholic and Orthodox insights that can enrich our evangelical efforts, especially in drawing on the spiritual strengths of grassroots Pentecostalism. *Grassroots Asian Theology* informs us that the Lord is doing some wonderful things in local communities in Asia. But Chan does more than inform. He also teaches some important lessons from Asian Christians about how to faithfully serve the cause of the gospel in our own cultural contexts.” (Richard J. Mouw, *Christianity Today*, August 2014)



The phenomenon of Asian women doing theology is recent. Christian women in Asia increasingly insist that unless their distinctive voices as Asians and as women are heard, the emerging theologies cannot be liberating, relevant, or complete.

Editors Virginia Fabella and Sun Park in *We Dare to Dream* (Wipf & Stock 2015) first rework some basic theological themes of Christology, ecclesiology, and the Holy Spirit from an Asian feminist perspective. Part II explores the realities of the Asian context through issues of peace, politics, sexuality, and culture. Part III presents and explicates what doing theology as Asian women means. These writings are vital to theology throughout the world today. Not only do their authors take their own history and context seriously, but they relate their experience to the experience of women throughout the world, forging common bonds and venturing toward a

world of justice and reciprocity. As the editors state, “Unless our thoughts as women are known and our voices heard, the work toward rearticulating Christian theology in Asia will remain truncated. God’s face will be only half seen and God’s voice only half heard.”

“One of the most important developments in feminist theology is its increasing globalization by Third World women. *We Dare to Dream* is an exciting example of this contextualization of feminist thought by Asian Christian women.”—Rosemary Radford Ruether

Grace Ji-Sun Kim’s project (Judson Press 2015) is a unique compilation of theological reflections and stories of faith from Korean American women in various forms of ministry in the church. The main goal is to share their stories to provide a window of understanding into the trials of Korean American women in ministry—a window that may serve as a mirror for other women who know what it is to be marginalized, overlooked, or prejudged based on their gender, ethnicity, culture, or appearance. The book’s uniqueness is found in its various genres of writing—from sermons and theological reflections, to poetry and stories of personal journey—from women of various generations. Readers will be encouraged, inspired, as it affirms other Asian American women called to Christian ministry. Their stories and voices add clarity, wisdom, and hope, enriching the overall landscape of writings in this field.—See more at: http://www.judsonpress.com/product.cfm?product_id=18888#sthash.NWtXb3Hf.dpuf

