

BOOK REVIEW

YONG, Amos. *Renewing the Church by the Spirit: Theological Education after Pentecost*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020. 151pp. Pbk. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7840-3. £15.00.

Reviewed by: Mark J. Cartledge, London School of Theology, UK. Email: mark.cartledge@lst.ac.uk

This book comes from a Pentecostal theologian who has produced a vast array of contributions in philosophical and systematic theology, religious studies, disabilities studies and mission studies. It also comes from someone who has been involved in theological education for many years. Currently, he is the chief academic officer and professor of theology and mission at Fuller Seminary, CA. For those of us familiar with his work, it is another classic text from Amos Yong, full of insight and wisdom yet also provocative and challenging. Building on his past work, this book is an expression of the “pneumatological imagination” informed by his commitment to the Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions. It is dedicated to former colleagues from his time at Regent University School of Divinity (the late Vinson H. Synan and Estrelida Y. Alexander, both very influential in their own right), which signals something of the relational ties that theological education establishes among colleagues.

After a brief introduction, in which the author gives an overview of theological education and the content of the book, Yong launches into part 1. In this part, entitled “Church amid World Christianities: The Heart and Soul of Theological Education”, he explores a number of themes. These include education and the western church, especially the “evangelicalizing” and the “flattening” nature of ecclesial networks before discussing the impact of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, under the banner of “Charismatizing”. This is followed by a discussion of the expansion of theological education around the world, the “browning” and global nature of the church and especially the role that Pentecostalism plays. Finally in this section, Yong discusses the church via the lenses of cultural and digital analysis, spirituality and educational practices.

Part 2 is entitled “Witness in Glocal Contexts: The Hands and Works of Theological Education” and contains a chapter on mission, “Publicizing the Coming Age”, which includes a discussion of global citizenship, cosmic renewal and apostolic witness. A chapter on the economics of education uses the jubilee metaphor to coordinate ideas around capitalism, vocation and apostolicity. Finally, in this section, there is a chapter on the subject of participation in the triune community, including themes such as the affections, ethnicity and ethical justice. Yong’s argument shows how theological education can inform and shape

“discipleship-citizenship.” This is a theme that is especially relevant to the public nature of both education and theology.

The final part 3 is entitled “Academy in Glocal Contexts: The Mind and Task of Theological Exploration”. It addresses the theological curriculum through ecclesial hermeneutics, mission and transdisciplinarity. A chapter considers the nature of theological pedagogy as wisdom through constructivist and dialogical learning, inclusive and embodied learning, and justice and performative learning. Finally, this section closes with a discussion of theological scholarship, the role of research, the relationship between scholarship and the church, as well as an engagement with the wider world of academia.

This book is a programmatic text that outlines an approach to theological education and it has much to commend it. It builds on and develops Yong’s existing work and provides a clear trajectory for analysis and discussion. It is lucid and well-structured in its argumentation. I can see it being used for faculty study days and for ongoing curriculum discussions especially at Pentecostal seminars. It provides an important sketch of key issues, indicating how theological education might develop within the sector. The only main drawback that I can detect from this book is that some of the ideas are perhaps undeveloped since it is a limited study at 131 pages of text (151 including notes). However, the length of a book does not guarantee either quality or impact. In this publication there is high quality of thought and expression and its brevity might actually be a virtue when busy faculty are being asked to read it. The book’s impact on the sector will be ascertained in due course. In the meantime, I look forward to listening to the conversations it provokes and using it in my own reflections.