



Interreligious Learning and Teaching: A Christian Rationale for a Transformative Praxis

Largen, Kristin Johnston
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Book Review

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Reviewed by: Alison Downie, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

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Published in the Fortress Press series, “Seminarium: The Elements of Great Teaching,” this affordable, concise volume is targeted for Protestant seminary professors in particular but will also be of value to those working in Christian higher education and ministry, more generally.

The teacher-friendly format features three chapters of text by K. Johnston Largen, punctuated by sequentially numbered, stand-alone text boxes of “Praxis Points” by C. Lohr Sapp, and responses to each chapter and an epilogue by M. E. Hess. The text offers many useful resource references including texts, websites, and video clips. Quick Response codes intersperse the text and the relevant URLs are also provided in footnotes.

The first chapter presents four specific examples of interreligious experience relating to Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism, in order to demonstrate the urgent and practical importance of interreligious education and dialogue. The second chapter offers a theological rationale for such learning drawing upon insights of comparative theology. The third chapter suggests expected outcomes and pitfalls, strategies for including interreligious learning within a theological curriculum, and considerations for assessing transformative praxis for students, faculty, and institutions.

The format highlights the richness of collaborative work that coheres well throughout the volume yet offers distinct contributions by each authorial voice, modeling the value of dialogue in its overall presentation. Theological references are primarily Lutheran and Roman Catholic but also model dialogue within Christian diversity. A further dialogue which informs all aspects of this text involves pedagogical scholarship, particularly literature associated with adult

learners. Each author demonstrates pedagogical depth and writes in a personal, accessible, and occasionally humorous tone.

Since the authors emphasize the importance of meeting students where they are and structuring learning opportunities with this in mind, a great deal of attention is paid to resistance and fears some Christian students continue to have toward learning about other religious ways and practices.

Readers who are not actively involved in communities or educational settings that reflect this tension and ambivalence may be impatient with the introductory nature of the volume. The authors write to convince and inform those who are beginning or seeking to encourage others to begin this type of transformative praxis.

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