**Book Reviews**


**Reviewer: Andreas HAUW**

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This book is the third in the series Foundations in Asian Christian Thought (series editor Stephen T. Purdue) by Asia Theological Association and Langham Global Library. The series seeks to offer introductions to key topics that are biblically rooted, contextually engaged, and theologically rich for Asian theological education and ministry. The book, according to Hwang and Rotokha, aims to advance theological education that is rooted in Asia, which has seen the rapid growth of Evangelicals who lack theological teaching resources (1). In particular, OT was chosen because topics from it are suitable for Asian communities (2).

Topics covered are diverse: OT as The Hebrew Bible and Translation as Scripture (chapter 1), Yahweh and Other Gods (chapters 2–3), Israel, the Nations, and the Missio Dei (chapter 4), Leadership, Power, and Authority (chapter 5), Old Testament Law and Ethics (chapter 6), Taiwanese Christian Li (chapters 7–8), Old Testament Narratives and Exodus and Liberation (chapters 9 and 10, respectively), Kinship, Patronage, and Corruption (chapter 11), and Prosperity Theology in Asia (chapter 12). Although not all problems in OT and Asia are discussed, such as disaster, war, or the transnational ideology of Islam, which is rampant today, the topics included reflect the struggles of Christians in Asia. The breadth, importance, and relationship of the topics can be seen in the subject index and scripture index. The major religious contexts in Asia (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Shinto, Jainism, Sikhism, and especially Confucianism) are directly

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discussed by Shirley Ho and Elaine Wei-Fun Goh, subject matters (such as worldviews and the ancient Near East), and Scripture references are scattered throughout this book (eight pages of Scripture index). Footnotes and bibliography provide up-to-date and important sources (for example, The Analects), and are clearly written, making it a useful learning resource.

The importance of this book is that, first, according to Ria Kassis, books relating OT interpretation to the Asian context are rare, although there are many articles about it in various journals. Therefore, this book will make it easier for Asian students to find models and ways to situate the OT message within their particular contexts. The Asian characteristic of uniting religion with culture is concerned with holistic perspectives (politevulgar, patriarchalism-matriarchism, violence-nonviolence, oppression-liberation, poor-rich, and so on), which makes OT interpretation difficult and even contradictory for the Asian theological students who are trained in Western-style theological education. This book helps Asian Christians to address beliefs and practices in the Bible from their own cultural perspectives (xv-xvi, 2).

Second, all the authors are from Asia and are evangelical OT and Langham scholars. However, the relationship with Western OT scholars (such as Walter Brueggemann) is obvious, and some articles are even indebted to Western methodologies or just adopt their approaches, such as historical criticism and Religionsgeschichte (Kim and Rotokha’s articles). There are also connections with Asian thinkers such as C.S. Song, Seow Choon Leong, Hwa Yung, and Kosuke Koyama. Even Hwang’s article uses the perspectives of Koyama and Kazoh Kitamori as significant support. It appears that evangelical Asian writers are well able to utilize existing perspectives and methodologies and to interweave them with the Asian context.

While this book is not intended to evaluate non-evangelical perspectives (cf. 73), although it acknowledges the contributions of non-evangelical scholars, students are nonetheless offered an evangelical alternative to the interpretations of Asian theologians, as seen in Jerry Hwang’s essay, “Israel, the Nations, and the Missio Dei” (esp. 72-77). Without alluding to the views that have emerged, this book serves as an example of creative analyses and models in applying an evangelical perspective of the OT to Asian challenges.
The arguments of all the essays in this book are based on an approach that juxtaposes texts and topics. OT texts related to the idea or topic of Asian endeavors are interpreted, then creatively linked to the Asian context for analysis. Conceptual similarities and differences (OT and Asia) are taken into consideration for application, correction, or simply as examples of similar issues. However, the approach to and similarity of topics is not followed by a uniform methodology. What is clear is the common assumption of the OT as authoritative Scripture.

Articles by Shirley Ho (“Taiwanese Christian Li: The Embodied Worship of the Lord”) and Elaine Wei-Fun Goh (“Education, Learning, and Wisdom: Lady Wisdom Invites Us!”), for example, juxtapose OT concepts and the Asian context, but they differ in their evaluation of the role of the OT in Asian endeavors.

Ho shows that the OT concept of worship is parallel to the Li concept of worship. The Li concept of harmony (transcendent and nontranscendent) provides relevant knowledge for understanding OT worship (123). OT worship, which often appears ritualistic and complicated, is seen as impractical by some Taiwanese Christians. But the author argues that the worship requirements in the OT and in Li are not contradictory. In both, worship is tangible, holistic, and ritualized. Ho is self-critical about Taiwanese churches’ worship from both the Li and the OT perspectives. Ho believes that the OT and Li concepts are not contradictory to Christian worship.

Elaine Wei-Fun Goh’s article “Education, Learning, and Wisdom” juxtaposes the Chinese concept of wisdom (Confucius) with the OT (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job). Goh shows that biblical wisdom can be the motive and power for the vision of change in Confucian wisdom. She brings into dialogue Confucian wisdom and biblical wisdom on the subjects of “benevolence/humanness” (ren) and “trustworthiness/trust” (xin). From these two, Goh concludes that biblical wisdom that emphasizes the “fear of God” becomes the motivational force for wisdom in the Chinese and Asian context that is centered on humanity (161). In other words, the OT serves to direct Asians who are still closely related to the wisdom of Confucianism.

Not only do both articles significantly regard OT as the main vision for articulating the concept of tradition in Asia within the evangelical
tradition, but the twelve articles in this book also provide examples of how to research cultural/religious topics in Asia and present them well. Thus, this book could well serve as a textbook for Asian contextualization of the OT.

Perhaps one minor defect of this book, if it is to serve as a model for students in Asia, is the absence of clearly stated principles of an Asian evangelical hermeneutic.

**About Reviewer**

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