

**Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue, editors, *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives* (Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library and Asian Theological Association, 2019). xv + 334 pp. \$43.99 hardcover; \$21.99 paperback; \$14.99 Kindle.**

Years ago, the idea of articulating an *Asian Christian Theology* seemed implausible due to the broadness and diversity of Asia. The term *Asia* covers the five major regions of Central Asia, Eastern Asia, Southern Asia, Southeastern Asia, and Western Asia. The broadness of these geographic landmarks, the diversity of cultures and histories, and the multifariousness of the theological tensions within these regions were too daunting for scholars to even contemplate the idea of an *Asian* theology. Yet, now, the Asian Theological Association, in partnership with Langham Partners, considered it high time to offer a first attempt towards theologizing in the Asian Evangelical perspective. The aim is to provide a theological approach that is “biblically-rooted, historically aware, contextually engaged, and broadly evangelical” (2). In a large continent rife with popular—even folk—belief systems, the book’s collaborators faced the challenge of self-reflection and contextualization to provide much needed guidance for the growing number of Asian Christians.

Two premises undergird the book, *Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical Perspectives*. First is the knowledge that Christianity is still seen as a foreign religion in Asia, and therefore, many doctrinal statements are considered a “white-man’s” belief system. Second is that many different theologies and popular beliefs can confuse Asians on what true Christianity is all about. With these premises in mind, the book, which is composed of 16 essays, is divided into two parts. The first part is made up of eight essays on doctrinal themes ranging from Divine Revelation to Eschatology. The second part is made up of eight essays on contemporary concerns like suffering, Christians’ role in the public square, Jesus and other gods, cultural identity, and diaspora. In both parts, the book’s editors and authors ensured that the essays were theologies made by Asians for Asians. That is, pressing questions were answered in a way that would make sense to the locals, using local concepts or imageries that speak clearly to the immediate community without losing the ability to impact the global body of Christ. All essays were written academically well and aimed at enriching ecclesial engagement in the Asian setting.

A case in point would be Timoteo D. Gener’s essay on Divine Revelation and the practice of Asian Theology. After briefly surveying the Doctrine of Divine Revelation’s development globally, he puts forward a proposition for Asian theologians to use not just doctrinal

orthodoxy but also their lived experience as a theological resource, so that “the *reality* of the risen Lord is known in a localizing and directional way” (30). Basically, what makes this approach Asian is its use of context as a secondary source; recognizing that “Asia’s ‘gifts’ of spirituality, meditative prayer, the religions, and a strong family orientation are resources that could enrich the universal body of Christ, when appropriated discerningly” (32).

Lalsangkima Pachuau, in writing about cultural identity and theology in Asia, highlighted the missionary endeavors and cultural adaptation of notable people in Asian Church history like Francis Xavier of the Society of Jesus, William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and John Sung. Yisu Das Tiwari’s story was particularly interesting. Yisu Das, a Hindu Brahmin who converted into Christianity, experienced the conflict between his allegiance to Christ and his local culture (201). Because his Hindu Brahmin community rejected him, he had no choice but to exchange his community for the Christian community (201). At the end of his life, Yisu Das wished he could have remained in his previous community to witness to them (202). On the other hand, John Sung, a Chinese who was converted to Christianity, was at home with his Chinese folk culture and was able to reach many Chinese laity. However, he was often shunned by some pastors and church leaders for his style. His style though represented an “indigenous evangelism of grassroots-level Chinese Christianity” (203). From these stories one can see that in Asia there is a conflict between Christian faith and local culture, as well as a need to reconcile that Christian faith with the local culture. Pachuau proposes that it is possible to hold on to both of the tensions by submitting one’s culture to Christ’s transformative work; one can retain distinctive cultural traits, as long as one submits their community’s culture towards God-likeness (218).

Also, in his essay, Kang-San Tan used Hans Frei’s typology of theology for religious encounters in the Asian context to assist mission practitioners in interacting with non-Christian religious worldviews (279). Recognizing the multi-religiosity of Asia, Tan proposes that Christian theologians can take advantage of the differing religions and spiritualities, as an avenue to strengthen faith articulations while interacting with adherents of different religions. His proposition agrees with Ivan Satyavatra’s assertion in chapter eleven that Asian Christian theologians and practitioners have no choice but to participate in interfaith relationships because of the existence of religious pluralism. Satyavrata encourages theologians and practitioners to recognize the seriousness of these diversities, while proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus and his gospel with courage, humility and sensitivity (229).

The above mentioned are just a few examples of how the book endeavored to theologically engage with the Asian church in mind. All in all, each authors' attempt to articulate a truly contextual Asian Christian theology is admirable. Each author dealt with the most pressing questions of their topic. There was also critical engagement between the Christian faith and the realities of diverse cultures all over Asia. Most importantly, each author proposes a way forward, giving readers, missionary practitioners, and future theologians a model for theologizing in a contextually-relevant manner.

There is no doubt that the editors, Timoteo D. Gener and Stephen T. Pardue, excelled in forging a pioneer academic literature not just for Asian Christians, but for global Christianity. It provides a much-needed tool and framework for Asian scholars. This book fills one's heart with hope that soon Asians can firmly say, "Christianity is every man's religion."

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