

Tat-Siong Benny Liew. *What Is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?* Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2006. 258 pages. \$29.00.

In this first single-authored book on Asian American biblical hermeneutics, Liew answers the inquiry of those who wish to learn what Asian American biblical hermeneutics *is*. When they pick up this book and begin to read it, however, they might be disappointed, because he does not give a definitive answer of *what* it is to read and interpret biblical text in Asian American perspective. They will be perplexed, at the first glance, and be challenged later, as they flip through the subsequent chapters. They will ask for themselves what Asian American biblical hermeneutics is in their own reading of Liew's book and hopefully in their reading of the biblical text. This experience is what Liew intends for his readers, as he defines Asian American biblical hermeneutics in the following manner:

“Against the demands and desires for a putative referentiality that reveals an “authentic” Asian American identity or culture, I want to explore a different way. I want to legitimize Asian American biblical hermeneutics through an inventive tradition of creation, or of reference without referentiality.” (p. 7)

What, then, is an inventive tradition of reference without referentiality? Liew continues:

“If there is a recognizable trail of publications where we find a Bundang, an Iwamura, a Kim, a Kuan, a Sano, a Seow, a Yee, or a Yieh going back and forth in dialogue and exchange with each other, there will before long surface a tradition, even a canon, of Asian American biblical hermeneutics that is not so easily dismissible.” (p. 7)

In other words, “how” of Asian American biblical hermeneutics is grasped, rather than “what” is given, in one's reading of the works of fellow Asian American biblical scholars. Asian American hermeneutics like other academic disciplines is in the process of *becoming*, not just being.

Liew achieves this new adventure of exploring Asian American hermeneutics not only by employing literary, social, and cultural theories in his reading of the biblical text but also by reading the Bible itself *as theory*. He says “Biblical hermeneutics...is less about what meaning one can read in a biblical text, and more about how one can use the biblical text to understand the very making of meaning, or the working of power in the world.” (p. 10)

For this enterprise, Liew employs three major theoretic approaches to the biblical text – (1) Asian American studies; (2) Postcolonial theory and studies; (3) Other minority communities and scholarships – as he writes subsequent chapters.

- Preface
- Chapter 1: **What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?** Meditations on and for a Conversation
- Chapter 2: **Reading with Yin Yang Eyes:** Negotiating the Ideological Dilemma of a Chinese American Biblical Hermeneutics
- Chapter 3: **Ambiguous Admittance:** Consent and Descent in John's Community of “Upward” Mobility
- Chapter 4: **Overlapping (His)Stories:** Reading Acts in Chinese America

- Chapter 5: **Redressing Bodies in Corinth**: Racial/Ethnic Politics and Religious Difference in the Context of Empire
- Chapter 6: **Melancholia in Diaspora**: Reading Paul's Psycho-Political Operatives in 1 Corinthians
- Chapter 7: **Immigrants and Intertexts**: Biblical In(ter)ventions in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee*
- Chapter 8: **Telling Times in (Asian) America**: Extraordinary Poetics, Everyday Politics, and Endless Paradoxes

It is not only (Asian American) biblical scholars but also Asians who will be benefited by Liew's venture for Asian American biblical hermeneutics. These Asian Americans in their new exile, their loss of home country, and their experience of post-colonialism, discrimination, and marginalization, they will find Liew's book intriguing and even heart moving, because they may find much in common with knowledge and experiences that Liew offers in his book.

Hyun Ho Park