

Gale A. Yee. *Towards an Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics: An Intersectional Anthology*. Eugene, OR: CASCADE Books, 2021. 214 pages. \$27.00. ISBN-10: 1725263408

After the 2021 Cal-Nevada Annual Conference (of the United Methodist Church) session ended, I drove to California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento in order to please my little children and fulfill my familial duty. Having grudgingly paid the parking fee (\$15 flat rate for it was Halloween!) and hungrily entered the museum (for my son wanted to skip lunch to visit the museum right away), I bumped into a famous picture of “white men posing at the completion of the transcontinental railroad with not a Chinese face in sight” (p. 113). I was looking for signs of life of those who shed sweat, blood, and tears. Not far from my sight, I found a plaque, “SILENT SPIKE,” that states:

In 1865, the Central Pacific Railroad recruited workers directly from China. These workers built the Western portion of the nation’s first Transcontinental Railroad. Chinese laborers comprised 90% of the workforce. They performed the most dangerous work under the most difficult conditions. Many lost their lives to avalanches, explosions and other deadly accidents. The Central Pacific Railroad could not have succeeded without the hard work and dedication of the Chinese workers.

My thought process quickly moves to honorable but horrendous stereotypes for Asian Americans: “model minority” and “perpetual foreigner.” I asked myself, ‘Aren’t Asian Americans called model minority as long as they serve the wellbeing and prosperity of White America?’ ‘Aren’t Asian Americans viewed as perpetual foreigners because they were, are, and will be not part of White America?’ The disappearance of Chinese workers in the picture was a sign of dis (e.g., negation or dislike) + appearance of Chinese labor in American history. I felt like the picture tells me, ‘Asian Americans can live in the United States as long as they don’t take leadership and readership in American society and as long as they disappear behind the scene.’

I was delighted to read and review Gale A. Yee’s recent book, “*Towards an Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics: An Intersectional Anthology*” because it refuses to accept the myth of model minority that can easily silence spikes of Asian Americans in the United States. It also challenges the sign, if not stigma, of Asian-ness due to one’s appearance, language, culture, etc.

The title of Yee’s book sums up its content. First, it is an *anthology*, a collection of essays that Yee previously published (8 chapters) and newly published (3 chapters). Those who look for a manual on Asian American biblical hermeneutics may wonder where its A to Z is at first. Then, they will be invited to the ways in which readers bring their own identities, lived-experiences, and interpretive lenses in their reading of the Biblical texts. Second, it is *intersectional* in nature. Yee employs various methodologies in her reading—feminist, postmodern, Marxist/materialist, cultural as well as historical and literary. Third, it is a book on *biblical hermeneutics*. Readers with the conservative or evangelical backgrounds may find Yee’s interpretation sometimes challenging. For example, Ruth is a model minority but still remains a perpetual foreigner like Chinese Americans whose “efforts went acknowledged” (p. 105) at the end. Whether readers consider Bible sacred or not, Yee’s hermeneutical effort brings to the fore how biblical text can be (mis)used to exclude the foreign Other. Fourth, it is an *Asian American* endeavor. Yee shares

her struggle to read the Naboth vineyard story in 1 Kings 21 from an Asian American perspective and states, “Whatever analysis I do will be an Asian American, feminist, middle-class, sociohistorical, literary-critical, and so forth reading” (p. 143). I deeply appreciate Yee’s last essay, “Jerusalem, Samaria, and Sodom: A Sisterly Urban Triad in Ezekiel 16:44-63,” because her essay seems not distinctively Asian American or hybrid at first but, when looking closely, it is extricable from her multi-layered identities. Fifth, it is a *working-toward*. Yee makes clear in the first page of her book, “An Asian American biblical hermeneutics is still in process, not only for myself, but also for the field” (p. 1). As a learner and pioneer in the field, her book inspires and aspires its readers to join together wherever that journey leads us to.

I recommend this book to those who study and are interested in theology and Bible because it will open a new horizon in understanding “the scripture” in new ways. If we can make our reading of the Bible “about us,” “by us,” “for us,” and “near us” (p. 81), why not read it? If you find more questions than answers when reading the Bible and like to have a “Bible Talk” on issues like immigration, racism, and gender identity, this is a book for you. I also encourage general readers to read this book and learn how to make one’s story relevant and compelling in conjunction with their (con)texts. As an editor of Asian American Theological Forum, whenever I read and review submitted articles and reviews, I asked, ‘What makes it uniquely Asian American?’ I think I found an answer and I hope you find yours as well in this book.

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