

## Book Reviews

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**Amos Yong, *The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora* (IVP Academic, 2014), 252 pages, \$25.**

In his latest work, Amos Yong inspires us to dream of a revitalized future for evangelical theology, enriched by Asian American diasporic perspectives. Yong contributes to this renewal project by offering his own Asian American Pent-evangelical theology of migration.

In surveying emerging Asian American voices today, Yong observes that while Asian American scholarship is rising within the general study of religion, Asian American evangelical contributions are weak by comparison. Why is this?

Yong suggests that a significant factor is the tendency of dominant North American evangelical theology to emphasize orthodoxy and regard its subject and task as ahistorical. Thus a false dichotomy results between “doctrine” and “context”—a dichotomy many Asian American evangelicals have come to accept. Consequently, their work conforms to this dominant view, and Asian American evangelical theologians fail to produce theology rooted in the fertile soil of their life experiences. The latter they regard as subsidiary rather than central to the task of theology.

Yong submits that a more robust evangelical theology will come when Asian American approaches are integrated. Not only will this more adequately reflect the pluralism within evangelicalism, it will also reform and renew it. To this end, Yong introduces an “Asian American Pent-evangelical” treatment of the Acts narrative with attention to the category

of migration. Just as the Holy Spirit “immigrated,” transgressing borders and spaces of marginalization, so too the apostolic community was called to live as an immigrant people, pursuing God’s mission of transformation. With this context in mind, Yong offers a pneumatological theology of economics and migration, through reflection on the experience of undocumented Fuzhounese immigrants in New York City’s Chinatown. In this he demonstrates the power of Jesus’s jubilee ethics to challenge the organizing logics of a global capitalist economy. Yong concludes that just as early church ecclesiology challenged surrounding economic structures, our increasingly transnational world calls the church today to a new “calculus” of migration theology.

Yong’s work is a reminder that the future of global evangelical theological scholarship is shifting, and contributions from the Asian diaspora are already coming to the fore. One only has to look so far as the umbrella movement in Hong Kong and Justin Tse’s work on evangelicalism and the public sphere, or domestically at Paul Lim’s work on global evangelical attitudes toward human trafficking.

In spite of these marked shifts, it is not certain that widespread institutional transformation of evangelicalism is practically achievable. Moreover, gaining traction at a local level is surely replete with challenges. How does one explore interfaith dialogue with a congregation that considers the traditions of their ancestors anathema? How does one preach a pneumatological economics to a congregation committed to economic neoliberalism? It also remains to be seen what particular role an Asian American Pent-evangelical perspective will have in the project of evangelical renewal. How will it differentiate itself from Asian American post-liberal and post-conservative migration theologies?

In envisioning a different future for evangelical theology, Yong directs us to witness the work of the Holy Spirit in our own time. In considering the migrations of the Spirit, Yong calls us to a migration of our own: *emigrating away from* conventional notions of evangelicalism and *immigrating to* new horizons by extending our sight to the Asian American diaspora. May this call fall on open ears as we look ahead to a new future.

MARK TAO

**Roger E. Olson and Christian T. Collins Winn, *Reclaiming Pietism: Retrieving an Evangelical Tradition* (Eerdmans, 2015), 204 pages, \$18.**

The title of this volume by Roger Olson and Christian Collins Winn tells the reader it is “more” than a history. To read this work is to engage in *apologia* via the discipline of historical research. So, this opening to chapter 6:

A major thesis of this book is that Pietism, as described here, the movement launched in Germany by Philipp Jakob Spener and carried forward by August Hermann Francke, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, and others, and its ethos, is a largely neglected root of contemporary evangelicalism worthy of being rediscovered and embraced by evangelicals. Scholars of Pietism often point out a bias in the literature about American religious history in favor of New England Puritanism that has tended to obscure other equally important impulses, including especially Pietism. (p. 108)

In order to give this thesis historical trajectory and substantiated structural support, the book begins by showing “How a Good Word Got a Bad Reputation.” It is followed by a chapter on Pietism’s antecedents, two on its classical beginnings, and a kind of interlude, “A Portrait of Pietism: Its Authentic Hallmarks.” There follow chapters on “Pietism on the New Soil of Great Britain and America” and on its reinvention in the nineteenth century. The final chapter features three American thinkers (Donald Bloesch, Richard Foster, and Stanley Grenz) and one European (Jürgen Moltmann) who make intentional references to Pietism and its shaping influence. The conclusion, “Pietism as a Way of Doing Theology,” contains *in nuce* a critique and constructive trajectory for the theological task. As the authors propose, “What Pietism opposes is not right belief but dead orthodoxy—right belief without right affections” (p. 182). The tradition Olson and Winn seek to reclaim and retrieve does not want for complexity as to its sources and legacies. Readers will be introduced to the diverse antecedents and the subsequent outgrowth of Pietism through history, some quite far from its classical sources.

Pietism is often dismissed as too subjective, mired in experience, ingrown, lacking in intellectual rigor, and oblivious to social concern. Olson and Winn have this stereotype in mind as they craft this histori-

cally based *apologia*. Take the theme of neighbor love. The authors begin with Johann Arndt, for whom love of neighbor was nearly equivalent to love of God, and proceed through the immense social service institutions under Francke at Halle, the work of Johann Wichern among disenfranchised youth, and the Blumhardts' work in healing that came to America through persons such as Cullis and A.J. Gordon.

Nor should it be overlooked that in America the Lutheran Pietist H.M. Muhlenberg continued the Halle tradition, and under the Schmuckers the love of neighbor produced some new things in synodical ministry: the formation of the Franckean Synod (the name gives its Halle roots away!) in upper New York was anti-slavery, pro-temperance, pro-women's rights, and the "first mainline American denomination to ordain a black man" (p. 121). This is not the story of an ingrown, self-possessed movement. This is not to say that some Pietists did not live out this history. But its founders, as Spener said, found hope in God's promised better times.

I will offer one point of critical reflection. The authors argue that "the Pietists were synergists with regard to salvation—believing that human cooperation with God's grace was necessary . . ." (p. 95, n. 53). Synergism of course is a complex issue, notoriously difficult to adjudicate. Where I want to enter the conversation is to indicate that for Spener and Bengel the issue may require more nuancing, since they encountered the issue of synergism on more fronts than soteriology.

In Part II of the *Pia Desideria*, Spener develops a paragraph on the theology of promise that undergirds his idea of "God's promised better times" to come. But behind this is the Lutheran theology of promise. When the conventicle is born together with the study of God's word as an act of service to the world, it is also an act of faith in this promise. In the German text of the *Pia* Spener names this an *occasion* (*Verlassung*, a word no longer used) for God to work but not a *cause*. Spener and especially Bengel's later defense of an earthly eschatological kingdom also serves my inquiry. Both were accused of violating article 17 of the Augsburg Confession, which had been interpreted to identify any interpretation of an earthly kingdom as either Jewish or Anabaptist. Spener and Bengel in particular argued in protest, using a Lutheran methodological principle that just as God was the sole actor in the design and process of salvation, so will he be in the eschatological kingdom. I think there lurks here a kind of rebuttal of synergism, especially in relation to Anabaptism.

My point is that in Pietists like Spener and Bengel there was, in

my view, an awareness of the danger of synergism and a preparedness to answer it on Lutheran terms. When it came to the origin of faith, Spener used the term the “ignition [*Entzündung*] of faith,” not unlike Werner Elert’s expression in his *The Structure of Lutheranism* that the origin of faith is a pure mathematical point. Francke’s intense emphasis on repentance differed from Spener’s more passive “new birth.” This is not without outcomes in Covenant history. J. M. Sanngren and E. August Skogsbergh had conflicts over this very issue, Sanngren being more influenced by C. O. Rosenius and Skogsbergh by the American revivalism of Moody. For Sanngren as for Elert, the Word will do its work of fruit-bearing in its own way and in its own time. So as Pietism left its classical moorings and found itself in new ecclesiastical environments, it underwent a Schmucker version of Lutheranism, a Wesleyan reception of Bengel, and so on. But my point is that the issue of synergism is one of intricate complexity.

Do read this remarkable book. Pietism is a story worth telling. Olson and Winn put us in their debt and show us that studied ignorance of an influential tradition is not a virtue. Thank them for demonstrating that evangelicalism has sources in Wittenberg as well as in Geneva, in Halle as well as in Princeton, and that these twin cities need a long conversation.

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