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# BOOK REVIEW

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***Kosuke Koyama: A Model for Intercultural Theology* by Merrill Morse, *Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity*, No. 17. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991. Pp. xiv + 317.**

***Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* by Hwa Yung, *Regnum Studies in Mission*. Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1997. Pp. xi + 273. \$16.00.**

These two volumes can be read together profitably. Both are revised Doctor of Missiology dissertations focused on the development of an Asian Christian theology. The differences are the contrasting methods and results that emerge from comparing the Lutheran Morse's presentation of the United Church of Christ theologian, Kosuke Koyama, and the Methodist-Evangelical Hwa Yung's development of a viable Asian Christian theology of mission.

For those interested in one of the earliest and most sustained efforts to construct an Asian Christian theology, Morse's book on Koyama is necessary preliminary reading. Admittedly, Morse does not attempt to present a complete treatment of Koyama's theology, nor is this a full-length intellectual or theological biography. Rather, Morse's objective is far more selective in that he focuses on themes related to what he calls Koyama's "theology of encounter"—a theology that has emerged from Koyama's experiences as a child born and raised in Japan and as an adult learning, teaching and ministering in Thailand, New Zealand, and the United States.

To accomplish his limited goal, Morse divides his book into three parts. The first treats Koyama's biographical, cultural, and theological context, including discussions of his experiences of World War II and its aftermath, the influences of his theological predecessors in Japan (Kagawa, Uchimura, and Kitamori), and his studies at Drew and Princeton. The second highlights aspects of Koyama's "theology of encounter": his worldview and understanding of theology, contextualization, and history; his hermeneutical method; his christology, "neighborology" (the importance of neighborly relations not only to Christian existence but also to Christian thinking—i.e., Christian theology in the Asian context), and theology of the "crucified mind" (developed from Luther's "theology of the cross"); and his theology of other religions. These last two aspects of Koyama's theology are evaluated in light of their ethical, theoretical, and anthropological implications. In the final part, the theological genre (narrative rather than systematic), method (experiential rather than dogmatic), and language (story-oriented, symbolic, and paradoxical rather than logocentric) employed by Koyama are examined, and some conclusions are suggested about Koyama's theology as a missionary theology.

The reader is left with the very distinct impression that Koyama's contribution to Asian Christian theology is thoroughly biblical, fundamentally christological, contextually relevant, and decidedly ecumenical, in both the inter-Christian and in the interreligious senses of the term. Those who are previously acquainted with Koyama's work, or who are led by Morse to read him for themselves will find that to be the case. Particularly admirable is Koyama's ability to bring together the biblical tradition with the historical, existential, and religio-cultural experiences of Asians. Yet it is also the case that Koyama's theology is still a theology *in via*. Morse underscores the sense that even at this juncture, Koyama is "perhaps a forerunner to future Asian theology" (p. 263).

Hwa Yung's *Mangoes or Bananas?* also suggests that even with Koyama's contributions, Asian theology as a whole is still on its way. His reasoning, however, is not that of Morse's. Hwa's thesis is that a truly indigenous Asian Christian theology has yet to emerge insofar as previous Asian Christian theological contributions have been held captive by western presuppositions, concerns and methods. Thus, for example, he concurs with missiologists like Charles Kraft and anthropologists like Paul Hiebert that Enlightenment rationality has bequeathed to the contemporary mind what Hiebert calls the "flaw of the excluded middle": the arbitrary reduction of reality to two tiers—phenomenal and noumenal, to use Kantian language—that contemptuously dismisses or purposefully ignores the middle realm of spiritual and demonic beings. This has resulted in less than fully contextualized theologies that have only superficially engaged Asian cultures and mentalities which include ancestors and complex layers of cosmological spirits. Asian Christian theologies have therefore to date been more akin to bananas (Asian-yellow on the outside, but Western-white on the inside) than mangoes (the quintessential Asian fruit representing an authentic homegrown theological product).

More adequate contextual Asian Christian theologies, Hwa suggests, must therefore be theologies of mission or missiological theologies. With this in mind, he develops four criteria by which to assess Asian Christian theologies: (A) their ability to address the diverse socio-political Asian contexts in which the Churches find themselves; (B) the empowerment they bring to the evangelistic and pastoral tasks of the Churches; (C) the means by which they facilitate the inculturation of the Gospel; and (D) their faithfulness to the Christian tradition. Thus, he demonstrates how pre-World War II Asian theologies were defective on at least one or more of these criteria—i.e., how Mateo Ricci was overly accommodative, thus failing (D); how Sadhu Sundar Singh was not much concerned with (A); and how Kagawa's secularized mentality prevented him from placing a more central emphasis on evangelism (B).

Hwa proceeds to argue that more recent Asian Christian theologies have also heretofore been less than adequate when measured by the criteria proposed—a failure attributable in large part to their being infected with Enlightenment dualistic thinking. Evaluated and found wanting are ecumenical thinkers like D. T. Miles, who neglects the "excluded middle" and tends toward universalism; M. M. Thomas, whose weak ecclesiology negatively affects evangelism; C. S. Song, whose theology is missiologically weak as a result of going too far in accommodating the Gospel to Asia; Koyama, who also falls prey to the "excluded middle" and whose faithfulness to the Christian tradition is

compromised by his stance toward other religions; Minjung theologians in Korea, who are much more western in their thinking than Korean; conservatives like evangelicals in the Asian Theological Association, who are weakest in socio-political engagement and still too captive to western categories for successful inculturation; Vinay Samuel, who relativizes biblical truths and themes as a concession to dualistic modes of thinking; and Cho Yong-gi, who is weakest in developing the socio-political implications of the Gospel due to a dualism between Church and society, Gospel and culture. Hwa concludes his final chapter—"Toward an Asian Christian Theology"—with some suggestions about what such a theology should look like in light of the successes and failures of these other efforts, and in light of the criteria developed in this book.

A number of questions are sure to surface in any careful reading of Hwa's book. First, Hwa faults previous attempts to develop an Asian Christian theology for their being too "western"; yet, the facts that approximately one-third of the more than 360 bibliographic entries are from Asian sources and all the mentors of this dissertation are westerners (faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary), raises the question of whether Hwa's own emerging theology is similarly tainted.

Secondly, Hwa's assessment of the weaknesses of conservative theologies seems to be right on the mark. His own constructive proposals for the future direction of Asian Christian theology are designed in part to push conservatives beyond the boundaries that they have thus far been reluctant to explore. By so doing, Hwa seems to be conscious of the fact that evangelicals have been hindered as much by dualistic categories as ecumenists, and that evangelicals need to break through their own cultural captivity to the West in order to develop an authentic Asian Christian theology. But Hwa does not seem to realize that his own proposals may push conservatives in the direction of ecumenists like Koyama. Hwa in fact draws positively from Koyama's work at a number of places in his book, even if his own extended assessment of Koyama was mainly negative. It is clear that Hwa is familiar with Koyama's work. But, it is equally clear that only elements of Koyama were presented that fit Hwa's thesis, resulting in an overall distortion of Koyama's theological contributions.

Thirdly, Hwa expends much energy exposing the inadequacy of the western theological paradigm, based as it is on Enlightenment dualistic categories. His argument that Christian theology has yet to achieve emancipation from the West and genuine contextualization and inculturation in Asia, is surely successful. Yet, Hwa does not in turn suggest what kind of worldview would be superior for the emergence of a genuine Asian Christian theology. If "dualism" is to be discarded, is "monism" now favored? Hwa never comes out and says that an Eastern worldview is to be preferred to that of the Enlightenment West. On the one hand, this may be what is implied by his suggestion that a fully contextualized Asian Christian theology must be presented and comprehensible in Asian categories. On the other hand, his treatment of theologians like Thomas, Song, and Koyama would seem to suggest that the Asian worldview is the object toward which inculturation is directed rather than the framework within which theologizing occurs. It would seem that Hwa advocates a "biblical" worldview. Does this refer to a Hebraic-Semitic, a classical-Hellenistic or an Eastern Orthodox paradigm? Hwa does discuss the

classical worldview, and suggests that Asian Christian theologians would benefit from an encounter with the patristic fathers. But his reading of the fathers is itself dependent on westerners (E. L. Mascall and Thomas Oden; similarly, Hwa's rejection of theological pluralism with regard to other religious traditions seems to rely on the work of Western evangelicals like Harold Netland). What does his own constructive proposal consist of? Perhaps if Hwa had included in his analysis and assessment Catholic thinkers like Raimundo Panikkar, Bede Griffiths, and Aloysius Pieris, or other Protestants like Stanley Samartha or those affiliated with the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), he may have been forced to confront this question more straightforwardly. Rather than simply rejecting Panikkar's and Samartha's work as tainted with Advaita Vedantism, or dismissing Pieris for his recourse to Buddhist praxis and spirituality, or labeling ATESEA thinkers as Christian-Confucian syncretists—none of which he does, but which would be easy enough for any evangelical to do, Hwa would have had to more clearly identify and delimit options available to Christian theologians in arguing against these Asian-based theologies.

Finally, and most importantly for readers of this journal, one wishes that Hwa would have engaged more of the Pentecostal-Charismatic tradition than Cho Yong-gi. Hwa's treatment of Cho is fair; he even goes so far as to suggest that in the long run, Cho's advocacy of social response at the micro-level may be more effective than the strategies of Minjung theologians targeted at the macro-level. Cho also rates highly for his evangelistic emphases and his efforts at contextualizing the Gospel in Korea. Cho is challenged for elements of incoherence running through his theology. Yet, other Asian Pentecostals such as those associated with the Pentecostal Society for Theological Studies (Bangalore) and the Asia Pentecostal Theological Association (Manila) have more recently contributed to just those areas of weaknesses that Hwa discerns. Further, because of Pentecostalism's emphasis on the experiential and bodily aspect of spirituality, there may even be grounds for a Pentecostal dialogue with and critique of Asian religions and spiritualities that could contribute to the kind of missiological theology envisioned by Hwa.

With this said, however, Hwa Yung has clearly identified important elements that need to be cultivated in a "mango" theology as well as necessary aspects to be avoided in "banana" theologies. Adding a clearly conservative voice to voices like Koyama's can only serve to bring Asian Christians closer to the development of a truly indigenous Asian Christian theology. May Asian Pentecostals read both, take them to heart, and be empowered by the Spirit to contribute to this task.