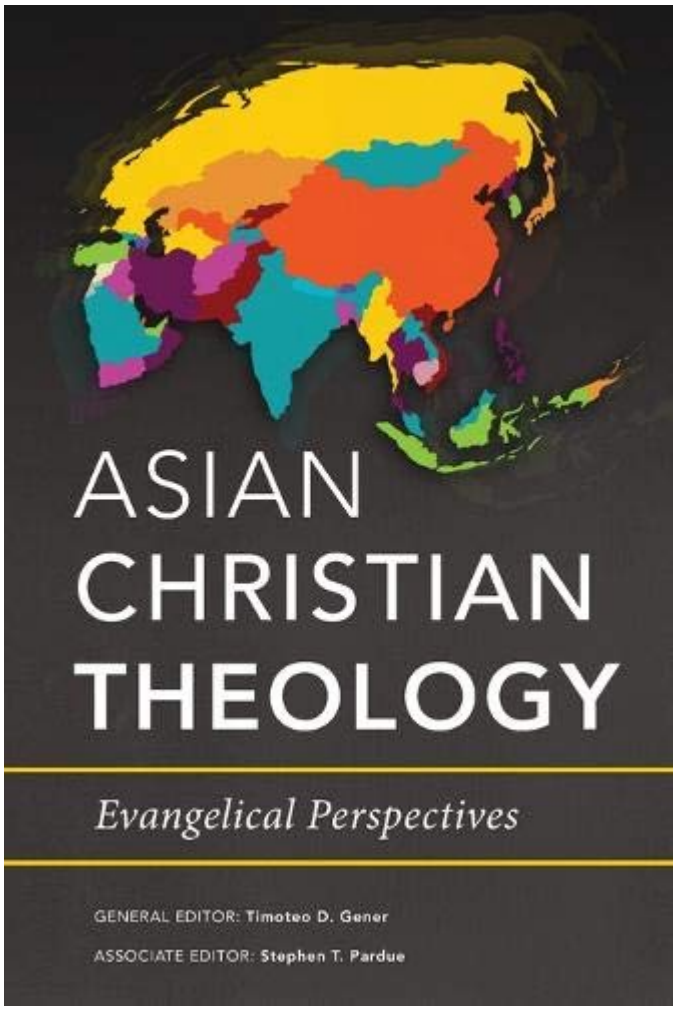
BOOKS I HAVE READ: ASIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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Category: Observations

I've recently finished Asian Christian Theology: Evangelical PerspectivesÂ and I have somewhat ambivalent feelings towards it.



I read the book in the Kindle edition (more of this later), but if you get the paperback, it is a medium format book of 372 pages. The overall level is fairly academic; it is a book to be studied rather than read. It consists of 16 chapters (distributed into two sections) each of which is written by a different author. As is usual with multi-author books the style and quality of the chapters are variable.

The first section consists of eight essays which look at traditional topics of Christian theology, including revelation and the Trinity. The second section focuses on issues which will be of particular interest to Asian Christians. Not surprisingly, I found the first section more engaging than the second.

To be honest, it is rather difficult to review a book as varied as this one, so I'm going to restrict myself to some general comments.

Firstly, the authors go out of their way to place their theology in the broader stream of Christian theology. So, although the authors are Asians, writing for Asians in an Asian context, theirÂ work is not isolated from the wider Christian world. This means that it is relevant to others outside of their context.

The size of Asia means that the book is very varied, with writers from places as varied as the Middle East, China and Indonesia. However, there are some linking themes; religious pluralism, poverty and injustice which link the contexts and provide a running theme in the book.

Despite its obvious qualities, the book does suffer from some problems. I would suggest that it needed some serious editing. Virtually every essay starts off by going into detail about the religious, political and economic situation in Asia which forms the background against which the theology is developed - to be honest, I'd got this by the second chapter and I just found it irritating when later chapters repeated much the same detail.

The Kindle edition was unhelpfully subdivided so that sections withing chapters showed up as distinct chapters. In a paper book, you can quickly look at how many pages a chapter contains and estimate how long it will take to read it. In a Kindle, you can do this by having the estimated time that it will take to read the chapter show up at the foot of the page. However, this only works if the chapters are correctly set up. It is very frustrating to be told that you only have a few minutes left in a chapter when in reality it is going to take you an hour or two to finish it. It's only a little thing, but I found it made setting aside time to read the book more complex than it should have been.

Someone writing a chapter on Trinitarian theology should know that the wordÂ *perichoresisÂ* is not related to the word "dance". When things like this slip into a book, it gives me concerns about other sections which touch on areas that I am less familiar with.

These reservations aside, I do think that this is a good and important book. Who should read it? It's hard to imagine anyone whose interest will cover all of the chapters in this book. However, any student of mission or theology should be familiar with the contents pages as it is likely to be a reference volume for years to come.