

grim can simply not afford not to consult it. The one who does will be greatly rewarded.

**Discovering the Bible in the
Non-Biblical World**

Kwok Pui-lan

Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995. xvi, 136pp.
Paper.

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It was in the summer of 1995 that I took Kwok Pui-lan's seminar on "Asian Women's Biblical Reflections and Theology," as a part of the six-week summer term for candidates for the Doctor of Ministry degree at San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo. My first impression of her in the orientation session where teachers and students gathered together, was of a soft-spoken woman, whose English had a Chinese accent and intonation, and a strong and delightful way of encouraging women's active participation in the course. She even raised her fist above her head, and everyone present (about half were women) spontaneously responded with applause and cheers. Watching all of this, I was quite fascinated and proud of her presence, expecting great wonders to happen in the class. Naturally, one of the texts for that course was this book, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World*, which had just been published.

The first three chapters deal with the unique position of Asian Christians in the history of reading the Bible. Along with the biblical tradition, Kwok treasures the religious traditions as well as the social biographies of Asian peoples. She calls for the necessity of "demythologizing" the sacred authority of the Bible, and seeks to "demystify" the ways the Bible has been used in the past. It is the Bible itself and its interpreta-

tions as well that we should examine critically with the help of other traditions. Thus, she offers an image of the Bible as a "talking book" which welcomes multicultural dialogues in Asia to liberate ourselves from a hierarchical model of truth. She uses a "correlative logic" based on Chinese philosophy as a means of bringing the pragmatic into clearer focus. Instead of seeking after absolute truth, Kwok insists on searching for wisdom in everyday living which allows for more room for dialogue, difference and multiplicity.

In chapters 4 and 5, Kwok, as an Asian woman theologian, suggests oral and multi-faith biblical hermeneutics. In the Bible, as well as in the Asian traditions, the actual voices of women did not survive in the writing process. The majority of Asian Christian women still pass on the Biblical stories orally to those they come into contact with daily. She suggests some ways in which an oral hermeneutic may give voice to the women in the Bible, help reframe the discourse and reconstruct the dialogue and blend different narratives as if weaving a tapestry.

Kwok's multifaith hermeneutic suggests an answer to the question of the relation of the Gospel and culture. Any faith tradition, including the Biblical tradition, is not monolithic and influences peoples of different races, classes and genders. "In many Asian traditions, the knower, the known, and the knowledge are not clearly separated.... Hermeneutics has to do with much more than the study of a given text; it includes the perception of truth behind the text and the relation of the text to the ethos and practice of the religious community" (p. 68). Asian women theologians are more conscious than their male colleagues of the tendency for male dominance in Asian religious traditions. Together with a critical observation of the androcentric elements in the Bible, "Multifaith hermeneutic for women, therefore, is not characterized by a hermeneutics of consent to the Biblical

story and the Asian story but rather a process of double hermeneutics of suspicion and reclamation" (p. 70).

Through chapters 6 and 7, Kwok raises some sharp issues in regard to colonial oppression. Focusing on the gentile woman's story in Mark 7:24-30, she seeks a postcolonial interpretation which might overcome anti-Semitism, sexism and colonialism. After raising these issues as an Asian woman, being in solidarity with Third World and minority women, she asks one of the most radical questions about studying the Bible with integrity: "What price have you paid in your study of the Bible?"

I was literally moved to tears by the prologue and the epilogue, both of which were sermons. In these sermons, she talked about the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, because of which she said her Bible study would never be the same.

Kwok is a compassionate preacher as well as an uplifting teacher in the classroom who enables us to transform our narrow and one-sided perspectives into multi-dimensional ones based on all the cultures and faiths of our suffering world and shared history. This is a powerful book for English-speaking readers or bilingual speakers who are interested in cross-cultural education and interfaith dialogue, as well as feminist theology.

Living Mission: Challenges in Evangelization Today

James H Kroeger

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The provenance of a book can sometimes raise one's expectations higher than is appropriate or warranted. Coming from the

hand of a member of the Maryknoll Society's General Council (Kroeger is Asia-Pacific Assistant), I had hoped for a balanced and coherent study of the themes presented. Perhaps I should have been forewarned by the foreword of the book, written by scripture scholar Eugene LaVerdiere. All in all the book is best approached as leaves taken from the author's attempts to share his own personal philosophy, or better perhaps, elements of his spirituality for mission.

Let us briefly look at the shape and contents of the book. One indicator of the nature of the book is that, though it is a relatively slim volume of just over 160 pages, one is surprised to see that it has no less than seventeen chapter headings. Longer and more substantial chapters are mixed with brief notes of no more than a couple of pages. Contrast chapter 3 with twenty pages or chapter 19 with nineteen pages and chapter 15 with less than two pages or chapter 13 also just two pages. Only two chapters (3 and 8) contain either footnotes or references, and in the case of chapter 3, five out of thirteen references are to writings of Kroeger himself.

Part 1, "Overviews of Mission," has two chapters of commentary, the first on Pope John Paul II's encyclical on mission, *Redemptoris Missio* and then on the document *Dialogue and Proclamation*, which is subtitled "Reflections and Orientations on Interreligious Dialogue and the Proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ," and was brought out by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Further comments on these two documents will be given below.

Part 2, "Theological Foundations," may prove for readers the most rewarding part of the book, and comprises four chapters. Chapter 3 concerns itself with the missionary as one sent, as one who participates in the mission of the Trinity. Chapters 5 and 6