

Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong. *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020. 208 pages. \$17.99.

In *Finding Our Voice: A Vision for Asian North American Preaching*, Matthew D. Kim and Daniel L. Wong introduce what is arguably the first preaching text casting a vision for Asian American preaching from authors who “espouse biblical inerrancy and infallibility without reservation” (53). Their unapologetic stance regarding scriptural authority may impair the ability of some readers to engage their work. Yet because biblicism also informs much of the ecclesiology and preaching in Asian American congregations in North America, any homiletician seeking to better understand the question of what constitutes Asian American preaching or expand the conversation regarding Asian American preaching would do well to see what Kim and Wong have to say.

Kim and Wong alternate in writing chapters that move from “experience,” “hermeneutics,” “theologies,” an assessment of Asian North American preaching today, and recommendations for the future. One contribution of *Finding Our Voice* is its insistence upon “Asian North American [ANA]” as a more accurate sociological term to describe U.S.- and Canadian-born Asians (12). Kim and Wong are writing for English-speaking ANA preachers who are “second- and multi-generational” (though this kind of generational counting differs across Asian American cultures where with some, for example, the American-born are considered “first-generation”). They write for readers with backgrounds similar to the authors, who are of Korean and Chinese North American heritages. The ANA distinction also separates their text from immigrant or what Kim and Wong might call first generation authors, such as Eunjoo Mary Kim and her *Preaching the Presence of God: a Homiletic from an Asian American Perspective* (Judson Press, 1999), Jung Young Lee’s *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Abingdon, 1997) and Sunggu Yang’s *Evangelical Pilgrims from the East: Faith Fundamentals of Korean American Protestant Diasporas* (2016). Lee even has advice for Korean American preachers to “learn to read and write English as proficiently as possible” (117). By beginning with the American-born experience, Kim and Wong write into a lacuna in Asian American preaching literature.

Kim and Wong also name 3 additional audiences: 1) guest preachers (who may not identify as Asian) in ANA congregations, 2) readers with interest in multicultural ministry and those with questions regarding how ethnicity influences ministry, and 3) Asian American immigrant pastors curious to figure out how to better connect with “their children and grandchildren” (17). Yet what is most powerful in the book are the biographical disclosures that often drive lines of argumentation from Kim and Wong.

Readers familiar with the impossible and multiple-vector tug-of-war of trying to be Asian enough, American enough, Asian American enough, Christian and Asian, and Asian Christian, or just yourself and so forth will understand the turmoil behind Kim admitting that sometimes he still wants to be white or feel his frustration as he sees his children treated like exotic creatures in their mostly white neighborhood. Readers will get it when Wong writes of being heckled as “Ching-Chong Chinaman” at school and then finding himself lost during the indecipherable Cantonese-language sermons of his home church (10-11). I am here sticking with introductory material so as not to give away some of the most powerful anecdotes. Noticeably absent, however, are substantive considerations of ANA female and LGBTQIA+ preaching experiences, as well as substantive consideration of ANA preachers who may not have grown up

in Christian churches. There is, however, swift discussion of bi- and multiracial ANA complexities (97).

As for the intellectual program of *Finding Our Voice*, the book has a defensive suture running through it. It seeks to legitimate ANA preaching and empower ANA preachers on the whole. Yet it also responds to the idea that “[i]n some evangelical circles, contextualization is a dirty word” (61). The precedent of their text therefore acquires its significance in large part as an attempt to fit in a particular evangelical understanding of Christianity. Hence, they double-down on commitments to biblical inerrancy and infallibility and have moments in the text where they worry that “namaste” used by Christians dilutes the faith (80).

The marketing of *Finding Our Voice* also communicates volumes. Eunjoo Mary Kim’s *Preaching the Presence of God* begins with a forward by Thomas G. Long. Wong and Kim have assembled nearly four full pages of endorsements from recognizable Asian American and evangelical voices. Amazon reviews exceed what fits on my laptop screen. Kim and Wong not only assert the place of ANA preaching in evangelical circles, they claim a particular slant of Christianity as a majority and authoritative voice in ANA preaching.

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