levels – the interpersonal level within the planning group and the institutional level, especially with regard to the three religions. A main thesis of the author is that equality between the religions involved is seen as an essential prerequisite by the actors involved, but in view of the reality of inequalities, such equality is only possible as communicatively constructed equality.

Overall, the study can be described as convincing in terms of content and methodology. As the author herself writes at the end, however, further deepening would have been conceivable – such as with regard to issues of power and postcolonial perspectives or gender. In addition to the author’s own stipulations, it would also be of interest to investigate the question of why theological topics remained in the background of the planning process of the interreligious kindergarten. Were the differences between the religions not addressed because organizational issues had to be given priority? Or were they left untouched because they appeared to be too complex to be addressed in such a process? If the kindergarten will actually be established, it will be interesting to see if, at least in hindsight, it might have been better to work on theological questions as well.

In any case, this study can stimulate various discourses – both in the field of interreligious learning and specifically on questions of the sponsorship of daycare facilities for children in increasingly multireligious societies.

Friedrich Schweitzer | ORCID: 0000-0003-1701-1147
Senior Professor of Practical Theology / Religious Education,
Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany
Friedrich.Schweitzer@uni-tuebingen.de


Employing a synthetic approach, Jerry Hwang brings some significant OT texts together with both Western and Asian understandings, particularly emphasizing Asian contexts. The author does not simply follow Western OT scholarship, but highlights new insights, which engage critically with Asian cultures. His study boldly opens a more fitting way for the Church to be in Asia.

The contentious issues discussed in the book include translation of the bible and the divine title, the retribution principle, covenant, iconography, vitalism, syncretism, and connotations of honor, shame, and guilt. In Hwang’s opinion, since the bible was contextually translated into western languages like KJV, its universal message can also be transplanted into the Chinese cultural matrix.
through Mandarin CUV. In a pluralistic context, Yahweh, the monotheistic God who can be identified with ancient Canaanite and Near East deities like El, can be translated to encompass the Arabic Allah, Korean hananim, and Chinese shen or shangdi. The retribution principle in the OT can be a bridge for Yahweh as personal deity, national deity, and deity of nature to engage critically with ideas of reward and punishment in Israelite popular religion, fatalism in Islam, the pragmatist theology of prosperity in Asian folk religion, cosmic justice in Buddhism, and ideas of self-actualization in the modern technological world. The balance between subjectivity and relationality achieved by the OT’s concepts of covenant, law, and kinship can challenge Western scholars’ reduction of the covenantal relationship to mere demands, as well as certain models of reciprocity in Asian cultures, such as the Chinese use of guanxi (relation) or the Filipino concept of endless utang na loob (debt of gratitude).

Three texts related to King Hezekiah (Isaiah 2, 2 Kings 17–20, Proverbs 25–29) can be better interpreted through the orientation of social status in Japanese culture – stressing hierarchy and interdependence – rather than the Mediterranean concept of hierarchy, which pushes people to competitively honor oneself and shame others. This new interpretation provides countercultural messages to defy one’s own culture whether or not it is Japanese, Mediterranean, or Israelite. Likewise, the divine presence can be introduced better through complementary ideas of abstract and concrete dimensions – as shown in Ezekiel and Thai theology – than by the Western/Neoplatonist dichotomy of aniconism against iconography. The OT worldview of vitalism, which personifies nature, fits Indian evangelical theology better, as it values the sacredness of creation and, in the context of Hindu pantheism, does not lose the transcendence of the Creator. Finally, Hwang points out that not all syncretism should be rejected, but just like the motif of Exodus could be recontextualized as a new exodus many times in the OT, we may read the OT contextually to seek the divine redemption in our contexts.

Hwang’s perspectives on the OT, which critically engage Asian cultures, help Christianity to be familiar rather than foreign in Asia. However, contextualization might be regarded as bending the OT to suit Asian cultures, or as camouflage or deception in order to convert. Nevertheless, his arguments aim more to aid in Christian self-reflection rather than on changing others. The present reviewer wishes that the author’s next book might include the atonement in Leviticus, a topic deeply related to redemption through Christ in the NT.

*Kong-hi Lo*
Professor of Hebrew Bible, Department of Theology, Tainan Theological College and Seminary, Tainan, Taiwan
konghilo@ttcs.edu.tw