

Book Review of Hann-Tzoo (Joey) Tan, *The Chinese Way—Contextualizing the Gospel for the Chinese* (Kindle Edition; Self Published, 2012), 74 pages.

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*The Chinese Way—Contextualizing the Gospel for the Chinese* is based on a Master of Theology thesis written by Tan Hann Tzoo, a researcher and the Director of the Malaysia Baptist Centre for Christianity and Malaysia Studies. At present, *The Chinese Way* is only available as an eBook from Amazon. This short, easy to read book is in some sense the only one of its kind. It is not a history of Chinese Christianity and history. The book goes further than many articles that simply discuss key issues related to Chinese contextualization. It uses an evangelical perspective to offer suggestions for sharing the gospel to Chinese people. As reflected in its methodology, the intended readers are not academics but rather practitioners. Instead of engaging in extensive exegesis, Tan primarily draws from interviews with Chinese pastors and teachers.

Tan argues that contextualization begins with finding common ground between Chinese culture and the Christian gospel, which he never expressly defines in the book but rather assumes it. Han and his interviewees agree that harmony and filial piety are essential concepts that should influence how one evangelizes Chinese people. He offers clarification. For example, honoring earthly parents does not mean absolute obedience but simply respect. Also, Christians should often use “we” (not “you”) when preaching. Chinese must see their need for reconciliation with God and one another. Tan says we should highlight the fatherhood of God, even over all humanity. He very briefly tries to answer possible objections against this view.

A few concerns are noteworthy. He claims that people should use the word “heaven” (*tian*) rather than “god” since “it is not easy to make [Chinese] believe there is only one true God in the universe. However, if we use the term ‘heaven’ and say that there is only one ‘heaven’ and that he is the God of the Bible, it sounds more acceptable to the Chinese” (Loc 1269–71). The statement seemingly obscures the belief that God is one. In addition, some may take issue with Tan’s words, “To lead people to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, please ask him or her to pray the following prayer,” after which he writes a “sinner’s prayer” that does not seem to reflect his previous comments about a contextualized gospel message. These issues aside, *The Chinese Way* is a good starting point for those seeking to contextualize the message of salvation in a Chinese context.

### **Related Books Related to Contextualized Theology in China and in General:**

Cook, Matthew, Rob Haskell, Ruth Julian, and Natee Tanchanpongs, eds. *Local Theology for the Global Church: Principles for an Evangelical Approach to Contextualization*. Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2010.

Cook, Richard R., and David W. Pao, eds. *After Imperialism: Christian Identity in China and the Global Evangelical Movement*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011.

Ruokanen, Mikka, and Paulos Huang, eds. *Christianity and Chinese Culture*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010.