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## Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation through Honor and Shame

**Jackson Wu**

*William Carey International University Press, 159 E. Howard St, Pasadena, CA 91104, 2012, 374 pages, \$25.00.*

—Reviewed by **Glen Osborn**, president, *China Outreach Ministries*.

Does sharing the gospel from the Roman-influenced Western legal system limit its impact in an honor and shame culture? This is the problem that Jackson Wu seeks to answer in this book.

Wu discusses and defines theological contextualization and emphasizes that culture determines how the gospel is understood; which, likewise, impacts the way it is presented. He states that missiologists must treat scripture with careful attention to the author's original meaning, while using culture to interpret scripture. He presents the perspective that the gospel traditionally has been shared from a Western law-focused understanding of justification and atonement. He states that people who hear the gospel from this perspective will need to think like westerners in order to receive the message.

Wu utilizes the Chinese honor-shame based culture to demonstrate additional elements of truth and its application in scripture. He points to various Chinese theologians' perspectives on justification, demonstrating how honor and shame are cultural elements that provide key insight as to what God in Christ accomplished on the cross. He gives an answer to an intriguing question, "What does the atonement do for God?" Wu presents that in God's covenant with Abraham, God identifies with humanity, casting his lot with "all nations." The cross saves God's "face" from the shame of his people. Christ's obedience perfectly glorifies God, satisfying the debt humanity owes God. He devotes a significant section of the book to an exposition of the first chapters of Romans from an honor-shame perspective.

The section on the writings of Chinese theologians' perspectives on the gospel is particularly interesting and informative. Three-Self theologians are cited with caution due to their liberal theology, but the reader is encouraged to learn from what is shared regarding culture and contextualization. Wu warns against Christians boasting in their cultural identity, and desires that an appreciation of contextualization will result in mobilization of Chinese in global missions.

This book helps westerners understand honor/shame and discover new personal depths of God's great plan of

grace and love. We benefit from multiple cultural perspectives of the truth of God's word and his gospel for the entire world. We are also helped in developing contextualized applications of the gospel for reaching Chinese. The book reminds me that although we never can fully understand another culture, we must try. And we need our brothers and sisters of other cultures to not only help us understand, but to lead us in effectively promoting the gospel within those cultures.

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