

S O U T H E A S T E R N

THEOLOGICAL REVIEW



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of understanding a shame-honor approach is underlined by the estimate that two-thirds of the global population was influenced by this dynamic in 2010, the vast majority of them unreached by the gospel (p. 32). Such societies place a premium on community, and the gospel must be presented to them in such a way that embracing God's everlasting honor (and being embraced by a Christian community now) "replaces false shame ('I am a worthless nobody,') and false honor ('My group is best!') with true honor from God" (p. 67). Quite simply, "The church functions as a surrogate family whose gracious welcome frees people to unmask their shame" (p. 67). All too often though, church as welcoming family is more ideal than real: Westerners are notoriously weak at doing community. So let this be a challenge to individualistic, guilt-innocence-oriented folks like myself: "Before we proclaim a 3D gospel, we must experience and represent it in our own life" (p. 74).

Challenge or no, Georges's brief volume helpfully points the way to doing ministry across a spectrum of cultures. Before concluding though, I have two quibbles. He asserts that people's cultural orientation (along the lines of guilt, shame or fear) shapes them more than their individual personalities do (p. 11). I believe this is true, but would have appreciated a reference to empirical research that demonstrates it. He also considers longstanding theories of the atonement in the light of the three dimensions. In principle, this is helpful, since he seeks to relate theology to cultural realities. However, despite its pedigree, I'm not convinced the Ransom Theory (that God paid Christ as a ransom *to Satan* to save us) captures the biblical evidence. Fortunately, Georges stresses Christ's victory over Satan in his discussion, and that legitimately addresses concerns of folks swayed by fear who seek power.

I recommend this book to anyone seeking to fulfill the Great Commission (and that should include all believers), but especially to folks working in cross-cultural contexts. However, if readers would like to do a little more research first, a good place to start is Georges's website, honorshame.com. It has a wealth of resources and expands on many of the ideas presented in *The 3D Gospel*.

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Jackson Wu. *One Gospel for All Nations: A Practical Approach to Biblical Contextualization*. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2015. xxvii + 268 pp. Paperback. ISBN 978-0878086290. \$19.99 (Paperback).

Contextualization of the gospel is as inescapable as it is necessary. In his *One Gospel for All Nations*, Jackson Wu provides a thoroughly biblical treatment of contextualization theory and a practical model for its application. Wu helpfully summarizes the contents of each section and chapter in his introduction (pp. xxii–xxvii). Each section of this work builds from a guiding premise and a related question. Wu's premise is that people often reject the "gospel" because "from their perspective, [it] lacks any significant meaning"

(p. xviii). His related, yet foundational question is, “Are we biblically faithful if our gospel message is not culturally meaningful” (p. xvii)?

Wu goes on to argue that evangelicals in particular limit contextualization to communication, thereby exposing the need for a new perspective (pp. 5, 36). In his working definition, communication is only one aspect of contextualization (p. 8). He further breaks down the big idea of contextualization into multiple perspectives which include exegetical and cultural contextualization. The former refers to “one’s personal interpretation of Scripture from a cultural perspective” (p. 13) and the latter refers to “the interpretation of culture using a scriptural perspective” (p. 13). This perspectivalism is unavoidable when one reads the Bible, since everyone has a contextual perspective.

Related to the common evangelical understanding of contextualization as communication is the pitfall of bare principalism. Wu, writing from a thoroughly evangelical position, makes the following observation: “Many people agree that Scripture must be central and decisive in contextualization. Unfortunately it has proven more difficult to move beyond this basic principle” (p. 29). While Scripture is the plumb line, contextualization is more nuanced than simply communicating the biblical message through bridges and around barriers. To combat this truncated understanding of contextualization, Wu advocates for a *firm* gospel framework with a *flexible* presentation that takes seriously the variety of cultural contexts found around the globe. With this *firm-flexible* model of contextualization, Wu delineates three themes that he argues “the Bible consistently uses” to frame the gospel (pp. 40–53). These themes are Kingdom, Covenant, and Creation. While some may quibble over the chosen themes, Wu ably demonstrates that using this three-part framework leverages the entire Bible while simultaneously ensuring the centrality of the gospel message and allowing for the flexibility of cultural presentations of the gospel message.

Section III may be the most important section of the book. In this section he proceeds to demonstrate his proposed model of contextualization through both an exegetical and a cultural perspective, bringing together all of the theoretical elements from the previous chapters. One finds in these chapters an example of a contextualized theology that Wu then uses to present a contextualized gospel focusing on key themes within a Chinese context. He adeptly employs his model to combat “false gospels” in China. It is in this section that one appreciates Wu’s deep understanding of Eastern and Western contexts.

In the concluding chapter of the book Wu addresses a prevalent question within contextualization discussions about the use of contemporary culture to interpret Scripture. He correctly observes that there is indeed a continued role for long-term missionaries if this level of contextualization is to take place (p. 189). Furthermore, he is right to call for continued development of global theologies that push humility and cooperation among theological formulations (p. 190). Wu ends the chapter and the book where he began. He

reminds the reader that while context is king, having a global perspective actually offers one richer biblical insight, since everyone reads and interprets the Bible with certain cultural blind spots (p. 197).

This book is commendable on many levels and is a valuable addition to the contextualization conversation. Wu pushes evangelicals to reconsider contextualization as more than a communication method. Contextualization is part of a broader mosaic of biblical theology, cultural contexts, interpretation, and application. His work is a fine example of that which he advocates. He demonstrates a humility throughout that invites the reader to learn from other contexts while keeping Scripture as the controlling influence in contextualization.

While especially profitable for those working in non-Western contexts, I highly recommend this book to missiologists and students for both its thoroughness and its accessibility. Let me end with this quote, “We must not fear contextualization, nor should we assume that good contextualization happens without intentional reflection” (p. 11). Not everyone will agree with Wu’s observations or conclusions, but this work is definitely intentional in its reflection on the gospel and contextualization.

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Bruce Ashford and Chris Pappalardo. *One Nation Under God: A Christian Hope for American Politics*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Academic, 2015. ix + 160 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433690693. \$14.99 (Hardback).

In the American workplace, conversation around religion and politics is considered taboo. Often, heated arguments develop, feelings are hurt, and, if people are Christians, witnesses are damaged. Challenges arise between balancing “being all things to all men” and “not being ashamed of the gospel” when discussing politics from a Christian worldview. Bruce Ashford, provost and professor of theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and Chris Pappalardo, lead researcher and writer at The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, attempt to bridge this gap with *One Nation Under God: A Christian Hope for American Politics*. Divided into two parts, with a total of thirteen chapters of around ten pages in length, the book proposes that Christians should engage politics “Christianly,” neither withdrawing from politics completely nor engaging in political activism. Rather, Christians should participate in politics in a way that glorifies their creator.

The first chapters address basic Christian issues in politics. Ashford and Pappalardo remind the reader that the Bible is the context from which Christians should interpret society (chapter 1); provide several interpretations Christians have of culture (chapter 2); explain church and state issues (chapters 3 and 4); and address challenges Christians face (chapters 5 and 6). The latter chapters then tackle key practical topics in politics, including life issues