

**Christian Theology in a Chinese Idiom**  
**A Bibliography for Continued Reading (i.e. self-education)**

Joann asked me to prepare a reading list as a follow up to the lecture. I have included here books that I relied on or directly referenced in my talk, as well as a few others to get you started reading. Many of them are “heavy,” but we do well to remember that we are not talking about a superficial topic, but one of great importance, which requires our dedicated and energetic effort.

I used an essay by Andrew Walls as the backbone of the talk. It can be found in this book:

Andrew Walls, *The Cross-cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002)

I quoted from Lamin Sanneh’s book on translating the Christian message (it wasn’t until I was putting the finishing touches on the talk that I came across Sanneh’s use of “idiom” in this book, though I have read other works by him, so the influence was undoubtedly there in my sub-conscious):

Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis Book, 1970).

To get an overview of Evangelical theology done in contexts that are not “Western,” I recommend:

Jeffrey P. Greenman and Gene L. Green, eds., *Global Theology in Evangelical Perspective: Exploring the Contextual Nature of Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012).

For a Catholic perspective on theology in non-“Western” contexts, see (though Bevans includes a full chapter on doing theology from a Catholic perspective, Bevans is well known in missiological circles, along with Roger Schroeder, for their generous observations across Christian traditions):

Stephen B. Bevans, *An Introduction to Theology in Global Perspective* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009).

Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004).

There is a rapidly growing body of literature that plants the seed of Christianity in “non-Western” soil. Below is a select list of books that, in my opinion, do a good job of accurately and fairly representing both a Christian position (the seed), as well as doing justice to the cultural material at hand (the soil). It should always be understood that a book list should be read with a critical eye, and you may not find every single point agreeable. Nevertheless, I have chosen books that I thought were of high quality, and worthy of your full attention (listed in alphabetical order by author’s last name).

Arne Redse, *‘Justification by Grace Alone’ Facing Confucian Self-Cultivation: The Christian Doctrine of Justification Contextualized to New Confucianism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

Redse, a Norwegian Lutheran scholar, does a very good job explaining both the Lutheran and New Confucian sides of the topic. In the final chapter, Redse contextualizes the Lutheran doctrine to New Confucianism, explaining it in terms that would make sense to someone well-versed in that philosophical tradition. Redse also does a good job of attempting to bridge the differences between Lutherans and Catholics, while also recognizing points where there might be disagreement.

Joshua Brown, *Balthasar in Light of Early Confucianism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020).

Brown, an American Catholic scholar, analyzes Balthasar’s emphasis on Christ’s obedience to the Father through early Confucian ideas of filial piety xiao 孝. I liked the book so much, Joann Pittman (of Chinasource) invited me to do an interview on the book. [You can find that available on the Chinasource website.](#)

The one criticism I have for these two volumes is that they both take an already established Anglo-European position as the standard or norm to be worked from. In itself, I think this approach is still legitimate. Chinese Christianity does not shed nearly 2,000 years of Christian history when it thinks in a Christian way. What I would like to see more of, however, is a Confucian question posed, and a Christian answer in response that works from and in a Confucian context.

Jackson Wu, *Reading Romans with Eastern Eyes: Honor and Shame in Paul’s Message and Mission* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2019).

Wu does a good job of starting with questions, particularly the “honor-shame lens” that is common throughout East Asian cultures, to interpret Romans. I greatly appreciate his comment at the end of his introduction: “In fact, we do not cast aside the brilliant insights of Western scholars, who are indispensable conversation partners. Yet, with a new cultural lens, we become more sensitive to portions of Romans that are sometimes overshadowed by a mountain of tradition.”

Gregg Ten Elshof, *Confucius for Christians: What an Ancient Chinese Worldview Can Teach Us About Life in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

One aspect that may be appealing to many in the audience here is the approachable voice of the book. Of everything I have mentioned today, it is the most conversational. And if you are a Christian from North America or elsewhere usually called “Western,” you may find this little book to be a great first step in to the vast ocean of the Confucian wisdom tradition. The one “drawback” is that the audience is primarily Americans, and not Chinese. What it lacks in intellectual rigor, I think it makes up for in its approach (starting with Confucian questions or perspectives), and in its readability (and perhaps length—just barely over 100 pages).

庄祖鲲 Zhuang Zukun, 契合与转化：基督教与中国传统文化之关系 [Correspondence and Transformation: The Relationship Between Christianity and Traditional Chinese Culture] (Xi'an: Shaanxi Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 2007).

庄祖鲲 Zhuang Zukun, 说禅论道：基督教与儒、释、道之对话 [Say ‘Chan’, Discuss ‘Dao’ (or The Way): A Conversation between Christianity and Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 2009)

The third author is Chinese and has published in Chinese, though he is located in the US. Zhuang begins with questions from a Chinese context, and arrives at answers that correspond to those questions.

The above list is dreadfully brief. Other authors worth your time include K. K. Yeo 杨克勤 at Garret Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, IL, Alexander Chow at the University of Edinburgh, and Enoch Wan 温以诺 at Western Seminary, all of whom have books in both English and Chinese. If you have access to it, I would also recommend the journal *Yearbook of Chinese Theology*, an annually published journal with a lot of good material.