

New Mexico Forum on Christian Faith of Chinese Intellectuals – Spirituality, Understanding and Character

Theme: “Three Streams in Unity and Theology in Culture”

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### ***Justification by Faith and the New Perspective on Paul: Western or Eastern?***

The Protestant Reformation undoubtedly has been a major turning point in church history, and it is especially significant this year as we are celebrating its 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Perhaps the greatest debate it has highlighted is the means of salvation. Does it happen by works or by faith? Martin Luther is famous for saying *sola fide* and *sola gratia*: faith alone and grace alone. However, one problem with this is that, in Luther’s attempt to redress the imbalance, he may have swung the pendulum too far in the opposite direction—or at least some of his followers have, if they take him too literally. *Sola fide* and *sola gratia* do not mean that works are irrelevant or missing. As Luther was fond of saying, “Faith alone—but the faith that saves is never alone.” It is simply a matter of not putting the cart before the horse; works do not save, but works must follow faith to show that the faith is genuine.

Luther also famously said that we must be “*Reformata et semper reformanda*” (“Reformed and always reforming”). Many times Protestants forget the second part, as if all theology stopped in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. “Always reforming” means that we have to be open to progressive codification of theology, as humans discover more of the nature of God over time. It wasn’t until the fourth century that the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Christ’s two natures were finally articulated, at the first four Ecumenical Councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon). St. Augustine of Hippo was the first to elucidate the doctrine of original sin around the same time. Martin Luther, as already mentioned, was a proponent of *sola fide* and *sola gratia* which were “new” in his time. William Carey, the “Father of Modern Missions,” shone a light on the Great Commission as a missional text—until he wrote *An Enquiry* in 1792, nobody thought of Matt. 28 as a binding command from Jesus to all Christians! Inerrancy was not a word anybody thought of until the Fundamentalists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century said it. Who knows what other vistas might be uncovered in the future, as new Augustines or Luthers or Careys are born?

But hindsight is 20/20. Martin Luther himself was not considered orthodox when he inspired the Protestant Reformation, so the Catholics excommunicated him. Ulrich Zwingli was not considered orthodox by Luther when they debated the Lord’s Supper so Luther decried his orthodoxy. And all the Magisterial Reformers thought the Anabaptists were problematic when they started doing believers’ baptism and separation of church & state, so the Anabaptists were ostracized for their lack of orthodoxy. Yet most evangelical Christians around the world today believe in separation of church & state and practice believers’ baptism and are more akin to the Anabaptists than anything else. What was once “fringe” is now standard, what was heretical once is now considered orthodox. If we modern-day evangelicals lived 500 years ago, we would be the “heretics,” and Luther or Calvin may have treated us as disparagingly as they did the Radical Reformers like the Anabaptists.

The word “heretic” is often used to describe those who do not conform to majority theology. For example, people like Origen, Pelagius, Nestorius, Arius, and Jacob Baradaeus. (I am willing to concede that some of them absolutely were wrong, but perhaps some had some grains of truth in them, or perhaps should not have been excoriated the way they were). However, what happened to these people? Some of them founded churches (like Jacob—the Syrian Orthodox Church). Some of them started missionary movements (like the Nestorians). The Ecumenical Councils did not develop theology that *everyone* agreed with (not even the first four councils)—they developed theology that only the *majority* agreed on. And the minority were called heretics and kicked out. But then these “heretics” went elsewhere to spread their faith—to the Middle East, to India, to China.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Nestorians are always credited as being the first missionaries to China and are now celebrated as such!

In fact, if orthodoxy is defined by the center rather than the edge (or the majority rather than the minority), we would be leaving out a whole lot of people who have determined the course of our theology today. Barbara Brown Taylor wrote: *...when the bishops had finished crafting a central confession of Christian faith, those who did not choose this option became known as heretics... [e.g.] Matthew Fox, Hans Küng, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Martin Luther, Menno Simons, Meister Eckhart, Joan of Arc, Francis of Assisi, Hildegard of Bingen, Galileo, Copernicus, Peter Abelard, John Scotus Erigena, Tertullian, Origen, Jesus. All of these people made unauthorized choices in their love of God. They saw things they were not supposed to see or said things they were not supposed to say. They wondered about things they were not supposed to wonder about, and when Mother Church told them to stop they did not obey her. Some of them died for their disobedience while others were locked in their rooms. Still others were sent out of the house and told to never come back. Many of them are spiritual heroes now. At least one of them is revered as the Son of God, but none of them got where they were going without passing through the wilderness first. Given their amazing comebacks, might it be time for people of good faith to allow that God's map is vast, with room on it for both a center and an edge? While the center may be the place where the stories of the faith are preserved, the edge is the place where the best of them happened.”<sup>2</sup>*

In fact, I think this is the very spirit of Protestantism.

Whenever Christians do self-theologizing, of course the great dangers lie in heresy and syncretism, and these dangers are real and must be acknowledged. However, much good theology has been birthed by the same womb as heresy. Whenever any theology is articulated which is “new” to our ears, we have to learn to separate the wheat from the chaff instead of throwing out the baby with the bathwater, to mix metaphors. Otherwise, what use is there in publishing new theology today if revelation ended in 1517?

One such “new” theology is the New Perspective on Paul. This has been a cause for contention amongst Evangelicals in the Western world, but perhaps may not be a debate heard much in the non-Western world. But I think this is a relevant discussion, especially for Eastern Christians.

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<sup>1</sup> This story is more fully explicated in Philip Jenkins’s recent book, *The Lost History of Christianity*. Also see Andrew Walls’s article “In Quest of the Father of Mission Studies” in which he makes an apologetic for Origen.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Brown Taylor, *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2006), p. 177

## **The New Perspective on Paul: An Introduction**

Although N.T. Wright, currently professor at St. Andrew's University in Scotland, is the most famous proponent of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP), the one who is credited with being its originator is E.P. Sanders, formerly professor at Oxford and then at Duke University. He wrote a book called *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) advocating this. Today, the debate has been taken up by N.T. Wright (formerly Bishop of Durham) and John Piper (pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church). These are the two titans, the two representatives of this debate today. This ought not to be confused as a debate between U.K. and U.S., or Anglican and Baptist. But it's interesting that it's two pastors—albeit intellectual pastors—that are the battlefield for this debate. Therefore it is not just a debate for the academy but for the church. Most laypeople cannot articulate what the New Perspective debate is all about, but it's the pastors, not the academics, that are concerned with this, because it will trickle down to the congregation in the preaching.

N.T. Wright formerly was the darling of evangelicals. Because evangelicals often are seen as anti-intellectual, Wright was an example of how smart evangelical Christians can be. But when he started advocating for the New Perspective, he began to be ostracized by the evangelical community. Now, the evangelical community is divided over him; half think that he's a heretic, and the other half think that he is a revolutionary in the same way that Augustine, Luther, and Carey brought new theology to the masses.

The main person to take on Wright, holding to the traditional Protestant perspective (TPP), is John Piper. At the 2010 national conference for the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), the two keynote speakers invited to debate the conference theme (Justification by Faith) were, unsurprisingly, N.T. Wright and John Piper. However, at the last minute, Piper withdrew due to an 8-month sabbatical from ministry assignments. So instead, Thomas Schreiner (professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) was selected to take Piper's place. The debate was not quite as electric as if Piper had been there, but it shows how much this issue has dominated the intellectual scene in the Western evangelical world.

Wright began exploration into this issue with his initial book, *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (1997). His first foray was a small one, but he began developing his thought a lot more critically over the intervening decade. Finally, Piper responded with his 2007 book, *The Future of Justification: A Response to N.T. Wright*. And Wright wrote back with a fuller book two years later, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (2009).

So, what exactly is the New Perspective on Paul? Basically, it is that the traditional Protestant perspective of Jews and justification is wrong. The TPP sees the first-century Jews as trying to justify themselves with works of the Law. The NPP, however, says: the Jews in Jesus's day did not see the Law as about salvation, they saw it as about maintaining their relationship with God. Jews were trying to stay in the Covenant with the Law, they were not trying to justify themselves with works of the Law. The Law also functions as an ethnic identity marker for the Covenant people. So the NPP is more about ecclesiology than soteriology.

## **The New Perspective on Paul: An Analysis**

What are the main issues we ought to be concerned about?

1) Is Paul more Greek or Hebrew?

-He was a Jewish rabbi, trained by the famous Rabbi Gamaliel. But he was also the Apostle to the Gentiles.

-He was the most zealous persecutor of the Christians before his conversion, but he was the greatest advocate of Gentiles after his conversion.

-He wrote in Greek and thus used Greek categories to express himself, such as putting faith over and against the Law. But he stressed that Christ did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it, so in a sense he was advocating that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah—an apocalyptic Judaism. And, Paul as a Jew could be the most effective at critiquing the Jews.

2) Why is it important whether Paul is more Greek or Hebrew?

-What is at the heart of Paul's theology? Justification by faith (Rom 1-4), or being in Christ (Rom 5-8)? If he's more Greek, then of course he'd be criticizing the Jews. If he's more Hebrew, then the people of God are now incorporated into Christ.

-This helps to determine if he is criticizing Judaism from within, or from without.

-Is Paul continuing what Jesus taught (i.e. a Jewish faith), or did he recreate Christianity in a new Greek form? i.e. is Christianity the continuation/fulfillment of Judaism, or the reformation/revolution?

(very fine line between reformation and revolution: is it something new, or bringing it back to something old?)

-Ultimately, the TPP vs. the NPP is a question about what the Gospel is.

3) But I think the most important insight is the impetus of E.P. Sanders to come up with the NPP in the first place:

-We're looking at the Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup> century the same way that Protestants looked at the Catholics during the Reformation. This is a false interpolation, and we should not "map" a 16<sup>th</sup> century theological debate onto the New Testament. Jews were not the Catholics of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Protestants maybe read too much of their own Reformation situation into the Pauline epistles.

-Look, instead, at the Law within a covenantal scheme.

-Instead of the Jew keeping the Law out of an effort to get into God's grace, the point of keeping the Law was to stay in. (This is called covenantal nomism).

In other words, the Jews are not the bad guys! We're accusing them of something they're not guilty of. (Critics would say that this is mixed up in politics. After World War II, nobody wanted to be a critic of Jews, and in fact there was a huge support of the nation of Israel, so this is post-war theology, when the U.S. supported Israel over and against all the Muslim nations.) Therefore, there was much of the same driving force behind dispensationalism, where the fate of the state of Israel was a critical matter.

### **Differences between the TPP and the NPP**

The basic solution to sin:

TPP: The cross, atonement, and justification by faith.

NPP: The Covenant.

Purpose of the Law:

TPP: Revelation of God, shows us how sinful we are, how far we fall short, how much we need a Savior. Points toward Christ. Christ is its fulfillment.

NPP: A promise, a covenant, to train & instruct us, a temporary placeholder until the Messiah comes.

God's character:

TPP: Holiness. He is absolutely right and true in everything He does, and humanity has impinged on this.

NPP: Covenant keeper. This is His primary attribute which points to His faithfulness, even despite our unfaithfulness in breaking our half of the Covenant.

First-century Jews:

TPP: Works righteousness for the sake of justification. The Pharisees. Relied on moral actions to be right with God. Paul criticized them for trying to justify themselves by the Law.

NPP: Works for the sake of keeping the Covenant. Already considered themselves right with God, the Law (Sabbath, circumcision, kosher, etc.) was a badge or identity marker of those already in the Covenant. Their problem was that they were trying to keep Gentiles out of the "club." Paul criticized them for their exclusivity.

The Cross:

TPP: Christ died for us, as a substitute for our sins, because we could never do it on our own. Christ's righteousness is imputed onto us. Substitutionary atonement. As a result, we are seen as pure and totally justified (that's a legal term) in the eyes of God, if we have faith. Solus Christus, it is Christ alone who can do this.

NPP: Because of Jesus' sufferings, He is worthy to be called King and Lord. Christians follow Him to be full members of His community/covenant. If you are "in Christ" you will be saved, because Jesus stands for the perfect Israel. How are you "in Christ"? If you have faith in Him apart from the Law. Faith is the new badge of identity, it's circumcision of the heart and not of the flesh.

Justification:

TPP: In the past, Jesus has taken our place, so we are presently justified. In order to bring our salvation to completion, works must be expressed as a fruit of our faith, otherwise our faith is dead and invalid. So it is the justification that saves, but works merely ensure that the justification by faith is real. And works are done out of gratitude, not duty.

NPP: In the present, we are part of the covenant family of God. Works are done out of duty—God gave His covenant, the ball is now in our court and we respond back.

Similarities between the two:

-Both think that works righteousness is bad. But the TPP thinks that works are necessary after conversion to show that your faith is genuine. And the NPP thinks that works are necessary after conversion, not to justify yourself but to ensure that your "membership" is up-to-date.

-Both agree with *sola fide*, except one uses it to refute works righteousness while the other uses it to refute exclusivity.

-Both love the word Covenant, but use it completely differently. One is about God's promise in Jesus, the other is about the people of God. One is about a past once--and-for-all act; the other is about continuation. That's the difference between "justification by faith" and "being in Christ."

#### Advantages of the NPP:

-Goes against excessive individualism, that it can be just you and God and your conversion. Doesn't falsely interpolate the Protestant Reformation onto the first-century context; medieval Catholics are not first-century Jews.

-Prevents cheap grace. People won't rest on their laurels and kick back and take it easy.

-Emphasis on discipleship. It's not excessively focused on the Jesus prayer, but on the long road. It's not a quick fix but a lifelong commitment.

-Highlights the Covenant's continuity, from Abraham to us. We indeed stand in a continuous line and God's promise to Abraham extends to us today.

#### Pitfalls of the NPP:

-No comfort or assurance of salvation. Yes, it keeps people on their toes, but they're never sure they're going to heaven. (Whether Christians lose their salvation is a primary question in Chinese circles but it seems like a minor question in Western circles. Perhaps this is something which the Chinese church can help unpack.)

-It's not very 'egalitarian' in its soteriology. One of the greatest things about Christianity is that it is the most egalitarian religion in the world—because it's based on grace, not on something you do!

-It doesn't make Christianity very revolutionary, it's merely Judaism + "goyim" (Gentiles). What was the point of faith if we still need the Law to sustain us like "training wheels" or a babysitter? It seems not much has changed.

-It undermines *sola gratia*. Takes away the "amazing" in "amazing grace."

-Seems to remove the joy of our response to God. It's now just duty.

#### A few caveats:

-I don't think you have to be anti-Semitic to be of the TPP.

-I don't think you have to be anti-discipleship to be of the TPP.

-It's not an either-or, it's a both-and. I think we need to step up our discipleship (cf. the Great Commission) in our evangelical churches.

#### Why I still (mostly) agree with the TPP:

-The NPP frames the problem wrongly. Their definition of "works of the Law" is insufficient. They reduce it just to things like circumcision, eating kosher, and keeping Sabbath. But it was so much more than that! Gal. 3:10—"All who rely on observing the law are under a curse".

-The NPP impinges upon a proper understanding of "righteousness." If you think that "works of the Law" are merely ceremonial things, then "righteousness" is merely ceremonial too—ritual purity, animal sacrifices, etc.

-God's righteousness and punishment is not just passive, it's active. For example, you are not a righteous Christian if you simply refrain from sin, but also if you actively do good: if you help the poor, if you seek out justice, if you love your neighbor. The same applies for God. It's not just that God will not do harm to His people, but it's that He will actively do good to them. It's redemptive. And when people sin, it's not just that He leaves them to their own devices, He actively punishes them. This God who is active in history needs to be taken seriously, otherwise the Gospel itself is diminished!

-There definitely was works righteousness in first-century Judaism. Luke 18:9—" [there were] some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else." However, this was not true of all Jews.

-Justification is about soteriology, not just ecclesiology. It's not just about who's in the club and on what basis—it is about eternal salvation. I do love the emphasis on community in the NPP, and I think we Evangelicals have to do it better. But again, it's both-and, not either-or. You can believe in justification by faith alone, and also have a good community. The NPP only focuses on the Covenant Community.

However, I don't think the NPP people are 'liberals' who have no foundation to stand on. There are some good corrective qualities about it. The NPP should be seen as a way of supplementing the historic Reformation understandings of Paul's doctrine of justification – not as its replacement. The good news of the gospel, however, is that we are put right with God – justified, accepted, forgiven - by grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, on the basis of his atoning death and saving resurrection alone. Perhaps the true biblical answer is a hybrid between the two.

Why are traditional Protestants so resistant to the NPP? Part of it is culture and the way they were raised: "justification by faith" is sacrosanct and inviolable, the heart of the Protestant Reformation, so this is tackling their 'sacred cow.' It's also political: their theology comes out of their theological battles with Catholicism, a battle which non-Westerner Christians never had to fight. Also, Reformed people think they've cornered the market on "covenant theology"—but the NPP is trying to out-reform the Reformers by showing that they have more covenantal continuity with the Old Testament. In truth, most of the non-Western world resonates more with the Old Testament than the Pauline epistles, but a lot of TPP people almost act like the OT doesn't exist or is irrelevant.

In a way, the reason this debate is difficult to resolve is because it is a case of comparing apples and oranges. As Hui Li observed to me: it really is a difference in starting point. The TPP is about systematic theology, and the NPP is about biblical theology. But in a sense, shouldn't biblical theology come first? Systematic theology is secondary interpretations of the Bible. But the Chinese church, ironically, has imbibed systematic theology as handed down from the West, and they need to get back to doing biblical theology.

## **How the New Perspective Connects to Eastern Christians**

Every major world religion comes from Asia: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Baha'i. There are no extant religions native to Europe, Africa, or the Americas, that qualify as a world religion (defined as having at least

5% of the world's population as adherents). The closest would probably be Mormonism which came from the United States, but even that doesn't top 5% of the global population. For far too long, we've linked Christianity with the West. But we need to remember it has Semitic roots, which is Eastern. The New Perspective on Paul takes seriously the Eastern context and Paul's Jewish mindset. Therefore, we may need to rethink the Gospel with an Eastern lens.

I believe there is a contribution that Chinese Christians can make to Pauline theology: reframing it in an honor/shame cultural milieu which is more authentic to its origins. Chinese Christians can be the bridge between the TPP and the NPP.

Some of the differences between Westerners and Easterners are:

***Westerners (low context):***

Individualism

Competitive

Materialism

Linearity

Future-orientation

Oral/written teaching & learning

Innocence/Guilt

***Easterners (high context):***

Collectivism

Cooperative

Spirit/emotion

Allegorical story

Present- and Past-orientation

Visual teaching & learning

Honor/Shame

I especially want to focus on the first and last categories. Some people have called Chinese the "Jews of the East." My wife is ethnically Jewish, and there are some definite similarities: business-oriented, high emphasis on academics, classical music (think Itzhak Perlman and Yo-Yo Ma; in fact when I was a violin player in the Yale Symphony Orchestra, it seemed that every member of the YSO was either Asian or Jewish!), frugality, hard work ethic. Perhaps it is no surprise that Chinese so resonate with Christianity, if the Semitic origins of the faith are considered. There is quite a comfortability and familiarity with it, especially with the collectivist nature of the community, and the emphasis on honor and shame.

Undoubtedly the Bible is concerned with innocence and guilt as part of the Gospel. This is called forensic justification. Some of the verses that show this are:

- Ps. 32— "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."
- Matt. 5— "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."
- Rom. 2— "They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them"
- Rom. 5— "But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification."



- Jas. 2— “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”

However, perhaps the Gospel is even more about honor and shame. Here are some passages that reflect that:

- Rom. 9; Rom. 10; 1 Pet. 2 (quoting Isa. 28 & 49)— “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
- Heb. 2— “For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers”
- Heb. 11— “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.”
- Mk. 8; Lk. 9— “For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”
- Heb. 12— “let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”
- Rom. 1— “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”

Even Jesus’s first miracle—the turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana—had nothing to do with healing of the body or forgiveness of sins, it was about restoring honor and dignity to the wedding couple who would have been shamed if the wine had run out. And the story of Nicodemus in John 3, and the woman at the well in John 4, are also examples of justification not by faith but by honor. Nicodemus had everything going for him, but he was ashamed of Jesus. The woman at the well had nothing going for her, but she was ashamed of herself. We know who, between the two, was justified in the end! Yes Jesus told Nicodemus the famous John 3:16-18 verse which is about the Gospel, but we forget that he further highlights the Gospel in John 3:19-21 as about darkness vs. light (Nicodemus being the one who comes in the dark, and the woman at the well being the one who is exposed in the light). John 3:16-21 is a more holistic Gospel: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

So perhaps we need to think about the Gospel as three-pronged: not just the age-old Western debate (deriving from the Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) about mission being either evangelism or social justice, but as it being about saving the soul, saving the body, and saving face. And, though it may not be as explicit, even Westerners understand guilt. Two prime examples from recent history are O.J. Simpson

and Bill Clinton. Though both men were brought into a court of law and exonerated with regard to guilt, their shame remains. Just because they were not fined or arrested or imprisoned, does not mean that people do not mock them or regard them as transgressors. I'm sure they would give anything to have people's collective memories wiped of what they were alleged to have done, and for the history books to be erased as well. (A necessary distinction/qualification needs to be made here: There is a difference between traditional non-Western shame culture and modern Western shame culture. For the former, the opposite of shame was honor or "face"—being known as a dignified and upstanding citizen. For the latter, the opposite of shame is celebrity—to be attention-grabbing and aggressively unique on some media platform, "shameless.")

Nonetheless, shame can be much more damaging to a person than guilt. Because guilt says "I'm sorry, I made a mistake." Shame says: "I'm sorry, I *am* a mistake." Guilt says, "I did bad." Shame says, "I *am* bad." This is much more core to a person's identity. One is more logical/individualistic, the other is more relational/collectivistic.

Jackson Wu wrote a book called *Saving God's Face: A Chinese Contextualization of Salvation Through Honor and Shame*. He outlines how the two worldviews would understand theology:

	<b>Guilt</b>	<b>Shame</b>
<b>God</b>	Lawgiver & Judge (sinless, perfect, just)	Father & Patron (glorious, superior, faithful)
<b>God's Holiness</b>	He alone perfectly keeps the absolute moral standard	He alone is infinitely glorious, deserving all reverence
<b>God's Sovereignty</b>	Forgives transgressors and enacts our future salvation	Honors lowly mortals and humbles the falsely proud
<b>God's Righteousness</b>	Punitive justice	Covenantal faithfulness

Jackson Wu also wrote about the New Perspective on Paul. I think he is on to something, but we need native Chinese Christians to be writing about this. I believe that Chinese Christians can do self-theologizing and provide a needed interface bridging the TPP and the NPP. If the Gospel can be reframed in a collectivist way, in an Eastern way, it can not only reach the Majority World more effectively, but it would become more true to its biblical Jewish roots. This would impact theology and missions and perhaps launch a new Reformation: Not a soterion Gospel which says "Jesus died for me on the cross," but a holistic Gospel means "Jesus Christ is Lord." Col. 1:15-18— Jesus is "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." A holistic Gospel acknowledges that Jesus came to not just to save our souls, but he came to bring social

justice, and he came to restore honor and dignity to us. In other words, the totality of our beings. *That* is the Good News!