Reference Cited


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By examining God’s relationship with the world in the past and present, Lalsangkima Pachuau in his latest work, God at Work in the World aims “to provide a theological lens for the church’s missionary calling” (3). Pachuau is the Dean of the Advance Research Programs at Asbury Theological Seminary. Pulling from various contextual, ecclesiastical, and historical traditions, Pachuau shows that “Christian missions” is rooted in the very being and acts of the trinitarian God. The introduction defines some key concepts and background ideas, helpfully orienting the readers to the content. In chapter one, Pachuau bolsters the said theological and missional rationale by identifying and locating the economic work of the Trinity, especially in the incarnational work of Jesus Christ. Chapters two and three further pursue the incarnational work of Jesus Christ, elaborating on its implications, particularly as it relates to salvation. The fourth chapter then discusses how the church has responded, is responding, and should respond to God’s work in this world. Chapter five comes full circle by crystallizing the doctrines of the incarnation, salvation, and the church, which help to underscore how our understanding of those topics informs our conception of the relationship between culture and the gospel.

It may be said that the book is an extension of Pachuau as a person of evangelical conviction, a learner of global Christianity, and a scholar of charitable demeanor. In other words, the book’s stance is orthodox in conviction, ecumenical in approach, and non-partisan in arbitration. First, the contents of the book reflect convictions embodied in the evangelical world. Although Pachuau uses the word “evangelical” mainly in a descriptive manner, is cautious about the negative political overtones associated with the term, and is charitable in treating a wide range of theological views, his “evangelical” conviction is evident in his treatment of many topics (127–28, 143–45). Second, concerning the
ecumenical nature of the work, the “evangelical” conviction that Pachuau subscribes to is an “evangelical” faith exhibited in meekness. He demonstrates the interconnectedness of the prevalence and the suppression of certain theological themes and Christian practices with historical and ecclesiastical realities.

Third, considering the non-partisan nature of the work, a quick browse through the footnotes and index and a careful reading of the content will prove this to be the case. Pachuau is indecisive, not in the sense of lacking clarity nor in the sense of being unsure of his view, but in regard to being open and nuanced in his judgment.

A specific area that I find challenging, but plays a vital role in the book’s development is the issue of non-partisanism. To what extent one can walk the fine line of ecumenicity and orthodoxy? For example, at the end of a lengthy and helpful discussion on salvation, Pachuau offers what he terms an “inconclusive conclusion” (108). To me, it appears that Pachuau’s attempt to bridge the seemingly unbridgeable divide between the diverging soteriological, ecclesiastical, and Christological positions comes by setting aside the deep epistemological and hermeneutical assumptions underlying each view. Pachuau’s “inconclusive conclusion” is a conclusive hermeneutical judgment. Some may consider this approach the strength of the book. Regardless, a more in-depth argument of how such a “neutrality” has epistemic currency over the others is desirable.

I recommend this book to all students of mission and theology. The author has masterfully integrated different theological, contextual, and ecclesiastical traditions in developing the argument of the book.

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Ester Palma is a theologian and a catholic missionary who has been in South Korea for the last sixteen years. This is a unique book, published in Spanish, which deals in depth with the Catholic mission in South Korea, taking in its rich past and pointing it towards the future.

On the book’s cover is an image of the Sophora tree of Haemi Castle in Seosan. Here, thousands of Korean Catholics were martyred, giving origin and structure to the Korean faith. We can glimpse a new dawn for Korea in this image, watered by the blood of its martyrs. In the same way, this book also