

change their lives. He acknowledges, though he does not fully resolve, the problem of false promises grounded in an over-realized eschatology.

Suh challenges understanding flourishing in terms of health and prosperity, offering an especially powerful argument that disability or chronic illness does not diminish human dignity or value. Instead, he redefines prosperity in terms of empowerment and calls for balancing an ethic of contentment that accepts limitations in our lives with an ethic of hunger that rejects fatalism and seeks breakthroughs in our circumstances. He wraps up these reflections by presenting his kenotic theology of human flourishing, which conceives of God as good, liberating, and hospitable—i.e. caring about personal empowerment, social justice and interpersonal harmony, respectively.

This unexpected feast, mining an impressive breadth of theological and intellectual streams for useful insights, could also empower Christian leaders who feel victimized by the popularity of crass, simplistic versions of prosperity theology. Suh reminds us that the best answer to bad theology is better theology, and he gives us plenty of it.

***Challenging Western Christians and Their Neighbors: Be
Participants in the Mission of Jesus at Home and Abroad***
Steven Paas

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Steven Paas is a Dutch theologian with extensive cross-cultural experience as a theological educator and Presbyterian minister in Malawi. This book adopts a humble, post-colonial perspective that seeks to reframe Christian mission in terms that eschew conquest.

Paas starts with the clear assertion that ‘mission is the work of God, from beginning to end’ (10). This does not mean that God is the only one engaged in the work of mission, however. Rather, a fundamental aspect of being a Christian is that we are sent by God. Jesus is both Saviour and Re-Creator and his aim is ‘the restoration of all things’, but unfortunately, for many he has a darkened identity because of the abuse of Western empires which used Christian language and identity to further their own agendas in undesirable ways. In the context of the West’s Christian-themed justifications of world domination, theological systems ‘were developed on which mission strategies were based, which benefited from the violent conquest and subjugation of foreign countries, peoples and cultures’ (26). This history has caused those in the West to be plagued by equally stunting feelings of guilt (without taking right action to move forward) and superiority bias (buying into the narrative of conquest, which co-opts Christ to prop up national pride).

Paas contends that to be effective as missionaries in a world still reeling from the detrimental effects of the twisted alliance of missionary efforts and political ambitions, Western Christians must experience a ‘theological reorientation to the

Sent Lord, who has become their Sender' (27). Paas seeks to establish a middle way of two-sidedness, suggesting that Christians can positively identify with and use points of contact with other religions to engage in conversations with those who do not yet know Christ.

When a church 'gradually allows worldly influences to determine her identity', Paas contends, it 'is in the process of losing her nature as a missionary community' (66). He spends two chapters delving into the specifics of what this loss looks like.

Paas goes on to examine potential 'weaknesses in the congregation, her structure and culture, which hinder participation in the mission of Jesus Christ' (82). These include extreme hierarchy, an overly loose inclusion of the non-regenerate as members in the church, introversion, any dynamic that causes divisions by elevating one member over another, and an unwillingness to contextualize in order to reach people who are different from us. In the final chapter, he reminds us that missionary work is ultimately 'about becoming sensitive and dependent on the Spirit' and that only with the Spirit's strength and wisdom can Western Christians—or any Christians, for that matter—overcome excuses, hindrances and weaknesses in our missionary endeavours.

This book has much to commend it. It reads like the letter of a Paul-type missionary to a Timothy-type mentee, written with the seasoned wisdom and evident humility of someone who has learned by experience and has walked with God in the practice of what is being preached. Paas seeks to stay in the centre of biblical tension and hold fast to biblical truth while boldly calling out harmful elements of Western missionary history, making him a helpful guide for a new generation of Western Christians who may balk at involving themselves in missionary activity for fear that they will repeat the abuses of the past. This book would have benefitted from a professional copyeditor to catch distracting typographical errors and formatting issues, but it is well worth the effort to look past these minor issues and learn from such a wise, humble theologian and missionary practitioner.

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