BOOKS OF THE YEAR 2019

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Dominion by Tom Holland is undoubtedly the best book I have read this year, but there were other good ones, too.
Category: Observations

There are some years in which I make notes on every book that I read on this blog and others, like this one, when I only comment on a limited number of books. If I'm not mistaken - and I may well be - I've written 19 reviews this year (though I've read over 150 books) which you can find here.

Of these books, a number stand out as deserving special mention.

Though not always easy going, Abide and Go: Missional Theosis in the Gospel of John (The Didsbury Lecture Series)Â by Michael J. Gorman is remarkable for the way that it draws together the themes of mission and spirituality from John's Gospel. Anyone thinking of preaching or teaching through John must read this, it's as simple as that (review here). The Mission of the Triune God: Trinitarian Missiology in the Tradition of Lesslie NewbiginÂ by Adam Dodds is an excellent dive into both the theology of the Trinity and the theology of mission. Anyone who is studying missiology or dogmatics should consider getting hold of this (review here). We Need To Talk About Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority ChurchesÂ by Ben Lindsay is simply excellent and must be read by church leaders, whether or not their congregations are multicultural at this point (review here). A final honourable mention must go toÂ The Northumbrians: North-East England and Its People: A New HistoryÂ by Dan Jackson. If you are from the North-East of England, you must read this book and if you are not, you should read it anyway. It is witty, informative and well written and in many ways, it tells my story (review here).

However, without a doubt, my book of the year is Dominion: The Making of the Western MindÂ by Tom Holland. Some comments from my earlier review will give a flavour of why I think this book is so good.

"It is beyond the scope of this blog (and my abilities) to give an overview of the arguments that run through Dominion, but they are persuasive. There are a few things to note; Tom Holland is not writing from the standpoint of a Christian believer, much less as an Evangelical. Some Kouyanet readers might find some of the things that he says difficult or challenging, but if that is the case, you need to get out more. Equally, this is a book about the history of Western thought, not a church history. You will look in vain for references to the Synod of Dort or Careyâ€™s Enquiry, but you will find a lot about Bartolomeo de Las Casas (and if youâ€™ve not heard of him, you should have). It is also a book about the West, there are some references to the church in Asia, but if you are looking for a complete history of Christianity, this isnâ€™t the place to look. You will also find more about Aristotle, Spinoza and Darwin than you would in your average church history book."

"A recurring theme of this blog is the way in which missionaries from the West encounter the growing global church. One of the important things in this encounter is for Westerners to disentangle the historical, political, philosophic and power structures which are bound up with the way that their faith is perceived by others. Dominion helpfully, but somewhat frustratingly demonstrates that Christianity and a Western worldview are far more entangled than we might otherwise have thought. Training for cross-cultural mission tends to focus on understanding the new

cultures that missionaries encounter, but an essential (and difficult) pre-requisite to this is understanding our own culture and the things which shape our thinking. This book is an excellent resource to help Western Christians develop an understanding of their own background. It would also be remarkably useful to anyone seeking to defend and promote Christianity in the increasingly secular West."

> *The rate of growth, far from going into decline with the end of colonial rule, had exploded. Nothing quite like it had been seen since the expansion of Christendom in the early Middle Ages. As then, so now, the worship of Christ had spectacularly slipped the bonds of a vanished imperial order. Even in the early years of the twentieth century, when the European empires had seemed invincible, Africans had found in the Bible the promise of redemption from foreign rule. Just as Irish hermits and Anglo-Saxon missionaries had once claimed an authority that, deriving as it did from heaven, instilled in them the courage to upbraid kings, so in Africa, native preachers had repeatedly confronted colonial officials.*

For those who are disappointed that I haven't listed all of the books that I've read, here are a few links to other things that I've enjoyed (mainly murder mysteries).