10 MISSION BOOKS 2020

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Ten books that I reckon that any student of mission should be aware of.
Category: Observations

Over the years, I have written a number of posts giving recommendations for reading on mission (try these posts for example 1, 2, 3). To be honest, trying to suggest the most important mission books is a fairly fruitless task, partly because the field is so broad and what is important to one person may not be so vital to someone else and partly because people keep writing books. In this post, I'm going to suggest 10 books that I consider key readings in the field of mission and missiology. I will probably need to update the list at some time in the not too distant future.

The Key Overview

Mission Matters by Tim Chester (review) is a basic book that covers most of the basis is a friendly and approachable style. It is ideal reading for someone considering mission for the first time or for church leaders and mission committee members. It would make a good first reading project for a mission agency board.

The Essential Book for Missionaries

In mission work, our attitude and approach to people matter far more than cross-cultural skills and language ability (though these are vitally important). Global Humility by Andy McCullough (review) is an absolutely essential book that all missionaries, would-be missionaries and mission leaders must-read. It's that important.

The Essential Introductions and Overviews

Introducing Christian Mission Today by Mike Goheen (review)does what the title said and it's absolutely excellent. Anyone who wants to get a good overview of today's mission scene and context should read this book.

Timothy Tennent's Invitation to World Missions (review) covers similar ground to Goheen's book but does so from withing an explicitly trinitarian framework. Keen students of mission will read both.

Christian Mission in the Modern World (review) is a fascinating book. It consists of five lectures that John Stott gave forty years ago, with comments by Chris Wright. In a short space, it gives an excellent overview of the key issues in mission while showing the way in which mission thinking has evolved.

Any of these three books would make a great follow up to Tim Chester for an agency board who were looking to have a reading challenge to deepen their understanding.

The Biblical Overview of Mission

The Mission of God by Chris Wright is essential reading for anyone who wants to grasp either an overview of the Bible or an overview of what mission is all about (hint: the two are very closely related). It isn't easy reading but it is well worth sticking with.

The Historic Mission Theology

Transforming Mission by David Bosch is a monumental work and one which anyone who considers themselves to be seriously interested in mission has to read. In terms of its influence, it is almost certainly the most important book on this list.

The History of Mission

There are a few options here, LaTourette and Neil (referred to in my earlier posts) have written excellent books, but today I wouldn't look any further than Christianity as a World Religion by Sebastian and Kirsteen Kim (review). Not only does this book give a good overview of where the church is today (thus saving me a space on this list) it also gives a good account of how we got here. Above everything else, it gives due prominence to the work of local Christians and doesn't just focus on expat missionaries.

The Essential Iconoclast

Let's be honest, there is something not quite right about much of the Western mission movement. There is a tendency to be a little too *industrial* in approach sometimes as though money, strategy and organisation were all that were required. Michael Stroopes' groundbreaking Transcending Mission (review) asks some hard questions about the origin's and future of the missionary tradition. You may disagree with his solutions, but I think he has identified the right questions.

The Random Personal Choice

I've mentioned more than once on this blog my debt to David Smith. Were it not for his book Mission

After Christendom, my life would not have taken the turn that it has over the past 15 years or so. It is a wonderful book that deserves to be much more widely read.

I realise that with one exception, all of these books have been written by Westerners. Had I extended the list to 15 books, that would have been remedied, but, in truth, I'd probably never have finished writing the post if I'd had to cover 15 books! Perhaps a future post on missoin books by non-western authors might be in order.