BOOKS I HAVE READ: GOD SHINES FORTH

Posted on February 27, 2023 by Eddie

Yet God's glory is not only the fuel of mission in the sense of being its grand objective. God's glory--his own naturally overspilling life, showcased in his Son-is mission's rationale and its motor. out into the world to In whatever sense mission is about our going make God known, it is only ever our being caught up in the already gushing tide of blessing that flows from the heart of the Father in the Son.
Category: Reviews

Why do we do mission? At a point in history where cultural pressures are forcing us to re-evaluate not only our approach to mission and evangelism, but the legitimacy of those activities in the first place, the fundamental question of "why" is desperately important.

Of course, there are all sorts of answers which can and have been given to this question. The unreached need to hear about Jesus. People living in poverty need to be supported. We have been blessed by God and it is our responsibility to share that blessing.

While there is some truth in all of these answers (and many others like them) they are fundamentally wrong - at least they should be. We do mission in response to the love of God revealed through his actions in the Bible and in our lives. First and foremost, mission is about God and our response to him. However, for the most part, Evangelicals are pragmatists and we think about what we do and what we hope to achieve, rather than why we do whatever it is we do.

This question is addressed in God Shines Forth by Daniel Hames and Michael Reeves. Subtitled, How the Nature of God Shapes and Drives the Mission of the Church, gives a picture of how God himself provides the motivation for mission and how an understanding of this should transform us and make us attractive and effective missionaries. Don't get me wrong, this is not a simple how to guide: "three steps to being a great missionary". It is a call to radical and committed discipleship, rooted in an understanding of God's love in action.

My copy of the book is a small format paperback of just under 180 pages and it will set you back around fifteen quid. There is one drawback to the book and that is the style of language in which it is written. Some conservative evangelicals have a way or preaching or writing which seems to me to be overly orotund and ever so slightly archaic. It's not that it is incomprehensible, but I find it hard work to listen to or to read. No doubt, if you are accustomed to this sort of language, it is clear enough, but I found this book harder going than it needed to be. The absolutely excellent content took some digging out. Perhaps it's just me.

The book starts out by acknowledging that many of us find the very notion of mission or evangelism difficult. It then takes time to explore the character of God and how this is demonstrated through his actions in history. In turn, the book demonstrates how this should transform us and make us more enthusiastic and more effective disciples.

Despite my reservations about the level of language used, this is a very good book.

> *Nevertheless, having been drawn in by promises of easy yokes and light burdens, we have the sensation of being trapped in a contractual obligation. The thought of enjoying God forever had sounded warm and inviting, but the very word evangelism can send a chill down the spine. It makes the whole dynamic of the Christian life-even the very gospel we tout as such good news seem almost distasteful. The worst of it is that all this ultimately reflects very badly on God, who begins not to look so good and attractive as we first thought. Like a PR agency representing a difficult client, we begin to wonder what we've got ourselves into. This reveals the real issue. The problem at the root of all our struggles with mission is almost certainly right at the beginning: with our view of God.*
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> *p. 20*

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> *p.37*

I should point out that I was supplied with a free copy of this book in return for a review. As should be obvious, I have not allowed this to colour my comments.