MORE ON THE MISSION OF GOD

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Category: Observations

On more than one occasion, I've questions whether the terms 'missiology' or 'mission of God' (even when written in Latin aÂ *missio Dei*) are actually very useful terms. They are used in so many different ways that you are never quite sure what people mean by them.

In a recent article, Ed Stetzer highlights the evolution of the term 'Misison of God' and notes why some Evangelicals are reluctant to use it. This quote gets to the heart of the issue:

> *Johannes Hoekendijk and others, sought to define themissio deiÂ as larger than the church. Their concern was that the mission of God was more than church extension--and they were partially right.*
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> *Hoekendijk challenged the member bodies in the World Council of Churches to abandon both the traditional form of church and the traditional approach to missions. He held that the congregations should abandon their buildings and institutions and become bands of roving ministers, believing that the time for evangelistic mission work had passed. This was called participating in theÂ missio dei.*
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> *Because of this history, and much of the social justice emphasis (or "social gospel" depending on your view), evangelicals have historically shied away fromÂ missio deitheology. For example, there is this telling description in theÂ Evangelical Dictionary of MissionsÂ under the heading, "Missio Dei":*
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> > *Hoekendijk challenged missionaries to identify and integrate with the suffering masses, seeking to realize God's shalom on earth. As this occurred in the 1960's and 70's, the World Council's ministry focused almost entirely on social, economic, and political "liberation." Positively, the WCC reminded evangelicals that Jesus came feeding and healing as well as teaching and preaching. Evangelicals, especially the neo-evangelicals, admitted they had presented a "one-sided Gospel," as Ron Sider put it. Unfortunately, the leaders in the World Council of Churches also advocated a "one-sided Gospel," one that neglected humanity's need for reconciliation with God.*

However, you really need to read all of Ed's article (and the associated links) if you want to get a full picture of what he is saying.

If you want some further background to the term missio Dei, you could do worse than read my chapter in James Butare's book International Development in Kingdom perspective. It's now available as a pdf here.