# BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

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**Category:** Reviews

If you run a theological or mission library, you really should have a copy of this book on your shelves. There is a lot of good stuff in here that students will want to turn to for a wide range of essay and seminar topics. However, unless you are a very serious student of mission studies, I would not suggest that individuals splash out the considerable amount of money that it takes to get hold of a copy ofÂ The Church and the World (Christian Doctrine in Historical Perspective).

Don't get me wrong, this isn't a bad book, in some respects its a very good one, but it covers a vast amount of ground in not very great detail. Not many people would be interested in the breadth of subjects under discussion, and others would want to go into the subjects in much more detail.

The book is divided into three sections; Biblical Foundations, Patterns from History and Contemporary Concerns.

To my mind, the first section was by far the strongest. There are four chapters, which dig into a biblical theology of mission and which give an excellent introduction to the topic. If this were published as a separate small book or pamphlet, I'd have no hesitation in recommending that people buy it.

The second section takes three examples from church history (early Spanish colonisation of Latin America, post-reformation Anabaptists and the Edinburgh 1910 missionary conference). In and of themselves, the chapters are interesting and enlightening, but three vignettes like this don't really allow you to get to grips with developing trends in mission thinking over 2,000 years. This has the makings of an excellent longer book, but it is ultimately unsatisfying.

The third section on contemporary issues is equally frustrating. The five chapters all provide interesting insights into issues such as liberation theology and a Christian response to war and violence, but they don't seem to hang together as a whole.

Ultimately, I think that this book fails to live up to its ambition. It provides an excellent series of chapters which could be combined and expanded into two or three really good books, butÂ as it stands it is rather frustrating.