# BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE MISSION OF GOD

*Posted on September 23, 2015 by Eddie*

on the one hand, the source of mission is the Church - the existing people of God, the Pentecost community - which continues Christ's economy in a visible, sacramental and ecclesial way; on the other hand, the goal of mission is the Church as the sacrament of the kingdom, as the incorporation of creation into communion with God.
**Category:** Church: World

I don't think I've enjoyed a mission book as much as this one for quite a while; but I'm not sure that I'd recommend that you buy it! Read on...

The Mission of God: Studies in Orthodox and Evangelical Mission, is perfectly described by it's title. It's a book of conference papers/essays by Evangelical and Orthodox scholars reflecting on their own and each others traditions. There are around 250 pages and with a discount on the Regnum books website, it will set you back around Â£22. And that's the problem. It's an excellent book, but I think you would need to be particularly interested in the specific field to want to splash out that sort of money. For most pastors and missionaries, there are probably other books which are calling out for their money. This is a plea for Regnum to consider publishing their books on Kindle or some other electronic format at a lower price; PLEASE!

The book emerges out of the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative and the majority of the chapters are drawn from papers delivered at meetings of the LOI.

After an initial introductory section, the book has four substantive parts; mission, evangelism, spiritual transformation and authority; each comprising several papers by both orthodox and evangelical writers.

As an evangelical, I found the most helpful papers to be those where Orthodox writers reflected on evangelical theology and practice. Their insights where gracious, thought-provoking, and sometimes toe-curlingly embarrassing.

It's impossible in a short review to give a flavour of all of the papers in such a book (24 in all), but I would highlight one thing that I found particularly helpful and that is the Orthodox insistence on the Church being at the centre of mission. This is something that Evangelicals have often ignored. The following quote from Ioan Sauca is very thought provoking:

> *Mission understood as preaching of Christ and his words without taking into account the Church, the presence of his ecclesial embodiment and manifestation in the world, is not only wrong but self-contradictory. Nikos Nissiotis writes:*
>
> *"It is not sufficient to speak of Christ's presence or of conversion to Christ, or of Christ's truths, or of the presence of Christ in the world. We can only do this if we present it together with the reality of His Body, the elect people of God, called out of the world in order to be put into it anew as bearers of the message of this new and distinctive reality of the Body. It is not sufficient to preach Christ alone, lest he becomes the intellectualistic, monistic principle of an individual faith. Christ must be preached within His historical reality, His Body in the Spirit, without which there is neither Christ nor the Gospel. Outside the context of the Church, evangelism remains a humanism or a temporary psychological enthusiasm."*
>
> *Consequently, on the one hand, the source of mission is the Church - the existing people of*

> *God, the Pentecost community - which continues Christ's economy in a visible, sacramental and ecclesial way; on the other hand, the goal of mission is the Church as the sacrament of the kingdom, as the incorporation of creation into communion with God.*

This really is an excellent book. If you have access to a mission library, make sure that you read it. If you are working in Eastern Europe or with people from an Orthodox background, you should buy it.