BOOK OF THE YEAR 2015

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My best book of the year isn't about mission, theology or history. It's about sheep.
Category: Reviews

To be honest, I haven't a clue how many books I've read this year. I've written sixteen blog posts with book reviews, but some of them include several books and I haven't bothered to review some of the more specialist things that I've read.

This might sound like showing off, but there are two things to bear in mind. Firstly, reading is part of my job; I'm supposed to stay up to date with current thinking in mission (which means reading) and I am doing a PhD (which means lots of reading). I'm also a very quick reader and I sleep badly, which accounts for the serious number of novels and history books that I get through.

Honourable Mentions

I can't write this post without mentioning the book that I consider the best introduction to overseas mission available in English:Â Mission MattersÂ by Tim Chester. If you read Kouyanet, you probably have some interest in cross-cultural mission and that means that you should read this book. No ifs, no buts.

I can't suggest that everyone should readÂ Early Christian Mission. This remarkable two-volume work is destined to be a classic of its type. No serious scholar of mission, the Gospels or Acts can afford not to be aware of it, but it is a book for the scholar. Find a good mission library, get hold of this and do yourself some good!

I could go on listing books that I think everyone should read, but those two stand out as highlights. If you'd like to see the full list of my reading for this month, take a look here.

Book of the Year

And so to the book I consider to be the best one that I've read all year. For once it isn't an erudite theological book or a stirring tale of mission, its a sort of autobiography by a shepherd in Cumbria.Â The Shepherdâ€™s Life: A Tale of the Lake DistrictÂ by James Rebanks is quite simply terrific, but more than that, it is important. As I wrote in my original review (which I suggest you read, because it's pretty good):

> *Look,Â The Shepherdâ€™s Life: A Tale of the Lake DistrictÂ is a book that you should read. Not because it is a very well written, nor because it gives you a wonderful insight into the life of hill shepherds and the traditions of the fells. It does all of this and more. However, you should read it because it is important. Everything we eat, without exception, comes from the land and the sea and from the hard work of men like James Rebanks. We donâ€™t actuallyÂ need a lot of the â€˜essentialsâ€™ of modern life, but we cannot do without the food that farmers produce.*

If you've been touched by the stories of the flooding in Cumbria in the past few weeks, reading A Shepherd's Life will give you an insight into the lives that the people live when the cameras have gone and the tourists are all at home:

> *First rule of shepherding: itâ€™s not about you, itâ€™s about the sheep and the land. Second rule: sometimes you canâ€™t win. Third rule: shut up, and go and do the work.*