DISTINCTIVE ENTITIES

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Category: Observations

I've recently been rereadingÂ The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community. The long title is appropriate for a book that is denseÂ and thought provoking. It's not an easy read and certainly not one for the faint-hearted or those with only a passing interest in the theme. However, if you write about mission and throw phrases likeÂ *missio Dei* into your writing, you should read it.

Over the next few days, I'm going to give a few quotes that I found interesting or thought provoking. The quote below refers to the inter-war years, but I think it still has some relevance today.

> *Churches and missionary societies were distinctive entities. Mission occurred apart from the church. While the church could not exist without worship, the same did not hold for missionary activity. A church could exist without reference to mission. Worship as an act demanded of the faithful: mission was the exclusive responsibility of special individuals called and equipped for the task. This essential distinction produced a relationships whereby mission existed as a derivative function of a pre-existent church. This practical questions merely manifested a deeper theological problem. To quote JÃ¼ngel, the "theological distortion in missionaryÂ practice" was consequent on a "theoreticalÂ gap in theÂ doctrineÂ of the church". Volunteer missionary societies developed because the ecclesiologies of the period proved insufficient for the missionary task. The disjunction of church from mission does not merely devalue mission with respect to the life of the community; it indicates that the church misconceives herself.*