WHAT IS MISSIO DEI?

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A good quote with a little bit of reflection by me.
Category: Observations

Another quote fromÂ The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian CommunityÂ and this one is even more geeky than yesterday's.

> *What isÂ missio Dei? Given its significance and the extent of its popular usage, this is a surprisingly difficult question to answer. It can, at one level, be simply stated: the missionary act is grounded in, and flows from, the very nature of the triune God. Drawing on the Johannine "Great Commission" (John 20:19-23), the Father's sending of the Son includes the second movement of the Son sending his church in the peace of the Spirit. Push deeper than this, however, and it becomes evident thatÂ missio Dei lacks coherence. Significant ambiguity surrounds axiomatic phrases such as "God is a missionary God," "the church is missionary by her very nature," and "the church participates in God's mission." The paucity of primary sources only exacerbates this ambiguity. Few authors reflect on the underlying theological issues. Most introduce the concept by citing from the few seminal texts; but, apart from these oft-repeated forms, little substantive development has occurred.*

At the risk of getting myself into trouble, I'd like to make a couple of points based on what Flett writes.

The first is that I agree with his statement that few people reflect on the underlying theological issues. Not only that, but many people don't actually go back to the "seminal texts" that Flett mentions; the content themselves with works which are at one or two removes from the books which he sees as basic to this subject (for Flett, the seminal texts in this field are mainly German works from the middle of the last century).

My second thought is that there are few people within the contemporary mission world who are equipped to do the sort of theological thinking that Flett suggests is necessary (I'm certainly not). Mission work tends to attract people who are activists and even when theological reflection is encouraged, it focuses on what it is that we do, rather than why it is that we do it.