THE MISSION OF THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

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Jesus is confident that the churchâ€™s mission will succeed because the church is animated by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus can completely trust the work of the Spirit in and through the church.
Category: Observations

I continue to plod throughÂ The Mission of the Triune God: Trinitarian Missiology in the Tradition of Lesslie Newbigin. It is, perhaps, the richest book on theology and mission that I have ever read and pending a proper review, I thought that I'd give a few more annotated quotes.

I've recently preached two sermons, one on Acts 1:8 and the other on John 20:21. I was struck in both passages how Jesus links the mission of his disciples to the work of the Holy Spirit. This thread is brought out forcefully in the following quotes.

> *In the New Testament it is clear that the Holy Spirit advances the missio Dei by way of the elect people, the church, by means of election, and this is clear in the story of Cornelius. In Acts 10:3â€“6 the Holy Spirit indeed speaks to non-Christian Cornelius through an angel in a vision, without ecclesial mediation, as Ariarajah has said. However, the Holy Spirit does not reveal the gospel to Cornelius, but rather instructs him to send for Peter who will tell Cornelius what to do. The Spirit is free and sovereign and goes ahead of the church, â€œbut it is (if one may put it so) the church that he goes ahead of.â€ Peter arrived and as he explains the gospel of Jesus Christ â€œthe Holy Spirit came upon all who heard the messageâ€ (Acts 10:44). This is unsurprising given that the dominant New Testament portrayal of the Holy Spiritâ€™s working is in relation to either eschatology, or to the Church.*

This is one of those really obvious things that I'd just never noticed. The Spirit could have explained the gospel to Cornelius, but he didn't, he told him to send for Peter. The Spirit works through the church. This has to be one of my favourite insights in the book.

> *â€œThe Christian mission is always Christological and pneumatological, but the New Testament knows of no Christology or Pneumatology which is not ecclesial.â€*

> *It appears that, ordinarily speaking, in his sovereignty the Spirit will not save without the witness of the church, and yet the churchâ€™s witness alone does not and cannot convert people.*

I love the way that these two quotes draw together the work of Spirit and the work of the church. There is so much to meditate upon here. The final quote shows why we can be certain that the church will complete her mission, despite her many failings and missteps.

> *Jesus committed part of the work of salvation to the church and this confidence is not misplaced because, although human, flawed, and fallible, the church is far more than simply*

> *this. The church is not chiefly comprised of sinful humans but of persons regenerated by the Spirit and made holy in Christ. Jesus is confident that the churchâ€™s mission will succeed because the church is animated by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus can completely trust the work of the Spirit in and through the church.*