BOOKS I HAVE READ: THE MISSION OF THE TRIUNE GOD

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A short review of a very, very good book.
Category: Observations

I've already posted a couple of selections of quotes from The Mission of the Triune God: Trinitarian Missiology in the Tradition of Lesslie NewbiginÂ by Adam Dodds so you know that I think very highly of it.

I read the book on Kindle, but judging from the reviews, it comes as a medium format paperback of just over 350 pages with extensive notes and references. This book makes no attempt to disguise its origins as a PhD thesis and the tone is very academic. This is a book to study, not just to read.

The subtitle, Trinitarian Missiology in the Tradition of Lesslie Newbigin, basically explains what the book is about. It is the author's contention that while Newbigin pointed towards an approach to mission that was based on the Triune nature of God, that he didn't fully develop the ideas. This book seeks to develop Newbigin's ideas into a fully rounded approach to missiology. In my view, he is succesful.

The author provides a good deal of background information, so it is not neccesary to have read Newbigin or to have a background in trinitarian theology to appreciate this book - though readers with the appropriate background will both find the book easier and will get more out of it.

The book consists of six chapters divided into two clear sections. The first section focuses on Leslie Newbigin's work, tracing the broad contours of his missiology (Ch. 1) and then examining his trintarian missiology (Ch. 2). The second section builds on Newbigin's work to develop a trinitarian missiology. The first step is a helpful overview of the Trinune nature of the missionary God (Ch. 3). The next chapter examines the missions of the Son and the Spirit in a trinitarian framework (Ch 4) befoee going to consider the mission of the church as participation in the mission of the Triune God (Ch. 5). The final chapter is by way of summary and offers and appraisal of Newbigin's work in the light of this study.

Two things need to be said about this book. The first is that it is a hard read; if phrases such as "he confuses ontology and epistomology" are not your cup of tea, then this may not be for you. Secondly, it is a very good and a very important book; and some people should push themselves to read it even if it isn't their normal sort of reading matter. The previous post explored how I would set about defining mission, this book shows why a sound and thought-through theological approach to mission is important. Our underlying theology determines our practice.

So who should read this book? Certainly, anyone who is studying or teaching missiology needs to be aware of it. Lesslie Newbigin's works are essential reading and this book builds on his work. I'd also suggest that anyone who is in mission leadership, especially if they are in the habit of throwing around terms such asÂ *missio Dei*, should take time to read and study it. Theologians would do well to use this book to consider link between mission and theology - something that they often miss.

I've already quoted extensively from this book here and here, but I'll add a few more quotes on the subject of theology.

> *Theology is the study of the self-revelation of God in the missions of the Son and the Spirit.*

> *Theology is missionary by definition, therefore, â€œtheology ceases to be theology if it loses its missionary character.â€*

> *Missio Dei was primarily a reactionary term rather than being a carefully articulated theological concept, with unambiguously identifiable content.*

> *Mission is not only the mother of theology but also of the church, for the church can only understand its being as one part of the trinitarian history of Godâ€™s mission to the world.*

> *Missiologists have often strived for their place with biblical scholars and theologians at the theological banqueting table, and find their discipline is often treated with all the culinary centrality of an after-dinner mint.*

> *Unfortunately, one legacy of non-missional church structures is the marginalization of mission studies from the theological academy in both university departments and seminaries.*