

An Integrated Review of
The Mission of God (Christopher Wright), *Paul the Missionary* (Eckhard J. Schnabel), and
Salvation to the Ends of the Earth (Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien)

In *The Mission of God*, Christopher Wright argues that the Bible is a missiological text, being both a product of missions and the impetus for it. Schnabel's *Paul the Missionary* attempts to show how Paul was a missionary theologian seeking to proclaim the eternal mystery of God, in particular, that Jews and Gentiles could be saved through Christ. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* spans the entire canon to show how Christian mission is the unifying motif of all Scripture. Collectively, these books reinforce the idea that missions must be grounded in biblical theology. Isolated commands, church tradition, nor mere humanitarian concern suffice to justify the high place of missions within historical and evangelical Christianity.

As one reads each text, it becomes apparent that the authors are offering a justification for mission via biblical theology. This approach comes from the authors' evangelical convictions to submit to the authority of Scripture, being "committed to the lordship of Christ."¹ Wright is motivated by a concern that mission too often falls prey to inadequate proof-texting."² From Eckhard Schnabel's survey, we infer that Paul's entire missionary life was an apologetic to the primacy of mission in both Testaments.

On the other hand, Wright points us beyond a defense of missions. In addition, it seems he wants to offer a justification of biblical theology itself. Specifically, he asserts that mission is the "framework of Biblical theology" and the "focus of hermeneutical coherence."³ For Köstenberger and O'Brien, mission is proof for "an underlying logic and unity in the biblical

¹ Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 20.

² Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 36–38.

³ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 38, 40.

message” wherein “God acts coherently and purposefully in history.”⁴ Therefore, these works add their voices to a myriad of scholars who have suggested possible unifying themes in Scripture, alongside other options like the kingdom of God, covenant, or love.

A word about terminology is in order. Each author takes time to define key terms like mission, missions, missionary, and missional. Wright defines “our mission” in relation to God’s *purpose* in human history “for the redemption of God’s creation.”⁵ He is “dissatisfied” with Schnabel’s etymological reckoning of mission in terms of sending, that is, “intentionality and geographical movement.”⁶ Köstenberger and O’Brien are broad, saying that mission involves the God’s purposeful “unfolding plan of redemption,” made known through the “good news of salvation in Jesus.”⁷ In general, they steer away from defining mission in terms of “foreign missions.” Instead, the authors want to say that the entire Christian life is “mission.” What has been called “missions” (where missionaries go to foreign cultures to preach the gospel) is but one type of mission-work.⁸ The word “missional” is simply the adjective used to describe that which pertains to or advances God’s mission.

In what follows, we shall look at each book’s individual contribution to a theology of mission. Then, we will compare each work, contrasting points of emphasis and argument in order to find practical help in forming a Biblical missiology.

⁴ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 20.

⁵ Wright, Wright, *The Mission of God*, 23.

⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 22–27; Also, Wright, 23.

⁷ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 19, 20.

⁸ Wright is especially sensitive to avoid defining mission as “crosscultural communication of the gospel” because of it “still evokes images of white, Western expatriates among ‘native’ in far off countries” (24).

Christopher Wright's *The Mission of God*

“The writings that now comprise our Bible are themselves the product of and witness to the ultimate mission of God.”⁹ Wright’s book is an effort to find a missional hermeneutic, whereby mission ceases to merely be something we do, a command to be followed, but rather a product of God’s self-revelation.¹⁰ Hence, mission does not arise from “finding the ‘real’ meaning by objective exegesis and then cranking up some ‘missiological implications’.”¹¹ Accordingly, Wright’s book explores the scope of Biblical authority and God’s purposes. He affirms a conventional rendering of the narrative: creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.¹² This historical drama recounts how God is glorifying Himself among all nations. Using Jesus’ words in Luke 24, he explains that the entire Bible is messianic and missional, concerning the news of God’s Son, Jesus Christ, and going out to all the nations.¹³

Wright begins his treatment by explaining how God reveals Himself both in Israel and in Jesus Christ. God wants to be known. At the heart of God’s self-revelation is the reality of monotheism.¹⁴ Since there are no other gods, the entire world must know and submit to Him. In the pluralistic cultures of today and the ancient near east, monotheism does not render Israel’s religion irrelevant; on the contrary, it is the uniqueness of God’s existence that requires all people to forsake false gods and idols.¹⁵

The fact of Biblical monotheism implies that mission comes not merely from divine command, but rather from the nature of reality.¹⁶ Just as the law of gravity demands I walk

⁹ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48, 21.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹³ This language comes from Wright. See pp. 29–32.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71–80.

¹⁵ For an exceptional exposition on idolatry, see Wright’s chapter 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 52–57.

carefully when I near the end of a tall building, in the same way Israel’s knowledge of *this* sovereign God necessitates edge being a testimony for His name.¹⁷ Their existence pointed to the uniqueness of YHWH. Israel never received an overt call to disperse among the nations of the world in the same way we today think of sending missionaries to other countries.¹⁸ Instead, as they lived “in the sight of the nations,” being blessed and at times suffering His judgment, the world would know the one true God.¹⁹

This is why idolatry is so abominable. Wright explains that the exceptional nature of *this* God of Israel exposes all other so-called gods as futile, the work of men’s hands. Idolatry is a missiological issue because it confuses the Creator-creation distinction, thus redefining good and evil.²⁰ “All idolatry is human rejection of the Goodness of God and the finality of God’s moral authority.”²¹ It is imperative that we discern false gods. He offers four markers that can illuminate potential idols in our lives. False gods include “things that entice us,” “things we fear,” “things we trust,” and “things we need.”²² Missionaries²³ must labor to expose all such idols, as thieves challenging God’s glory and stealing joy that lasts.²⁴

As an Old Testament scholar, it is not surprising that the bulk of Wright’s case largely rests on his exegesis of the Old Testament. Israel displays the worth of God primarily by example rather than by evangelism. Their story acts as a “model of redemption and restoration” for the rest of creation.²⁵ The election of Israel is due to the gracious covenant God made with Abraham. Wright correctly calls this a “pivotal text not only in the book of Genesis but indeed in

¹⁷ Ibid., 87–90.

¹⁸ Ibid., 502.

¹⁹ Ibid., 90–103.

²⁰ Ibid., 163–165.

²¹ Ibid., 164.

²² Ibid., 166–171.

²³ For Wright, this should include every Christian, since “mission” is broadly defined.

²⁴ Ibid., 171–186.

²⁵ Chapters 8–9.

the whole Bible.”²⁶ In Gal 3:8, Paul calls Gen 12:3 “the gospel in advance.” God created Israel *in particular* in order to bless the world *universally*.²⁷ As the people of God lived ethically and justly, expressing the nature of God through ritual, those around them would be made aware of the hope available in God. Wright goes to great lengths to draw out implications for today, including how God’s mission told in the life of Israel might affect environmentalism and diverse other social issues.²⁸ Clearly, he is broadening the traditional conception of “missions.” In this regard, Wright’s view of “mission” is far more practical and theological rooted than conventional appeals to the missions via the “Great Commission.”

Wright’s closing chapters are important for a few theological reasons. First, Wright crushes any false dichotomy between Israel and the church.²⁹ In essence, he shows that Scripture is concerned with the “people of God,” not simply national Israel. Through a litany of Old Testament texts, Wright explains how God regards the nations and Israel as “‘a people’ . This is not ‘Israel plus the nations’ but ‘the nations as Israel,’ one people belonging to God.”³⁰ Wright argues that from a New Testament perspective, it seems “the nations are sharing the identity of Israel.”³¹ “*Only by Israel being distinct from the nations was there any purpose in being Israel at all.*”³² His point is that Israel existed to open the door for the nations to know God. As the Gentiles come to Christ, all other distinctives are of relatively little value to Israel. The gospel mystery is that in Christ the one true God has blessed all nations through one particular nation in order that they may be one people for His name’s sake.

²⁶ Ibid., 194.

²⁷ For Wright’s emphasis on blessing, see pp. 208–221. He uses chapter 7 to expound on this particular-universal motif in Scripture.

²⁸ See chapters 12–13.

²⁹ I especially refer to dispensational theology that continues to maintain a sharp distinction between the church and Israel.

³⁰ Ibid., 498.

³¹ Ibid., 527.

³² Wright, 335.

Eckhard Schnabel's *Paul the Missionary*

Eckhard Schnabel, a New Testament scholar, examines the life of Paul, a Jewish rabbi and missionary to the Gentiles, in order to see how his theology of mission shaped early Christian expansion. He says apostles' work consisted of three parts: (1) to "communicate the news of Jesus the Messiah and Savior," (2) to "communicate a new way of life that replaces, at least partially, the social norms and behavior patterns of the society in which the new believers have the converted," and (3) to "integrate the new believers into a new community" of disciples.³³ From this pattern, he aims to identify the strategies and methods of the early apostle Paul.

More than Wright, Schnabel explicitly emphasizes the essential role in missions of preaching the gospel. He says, "*The oral proclamation of the gospel was a fundamental element of the missionary work of the early church*" [emphasis his].³⁴ As a result, he stresses different elements of mission than does Wright. For example, Schnabel asserts that geographic movement was "a principal element of missionary work" and that the apostles had to seek out "places in which [non-believers] are willing to listen and engage in conversation."³⁵ Since Paul's concept of mission required movement, Schnabel's theology of mission is more practical than doctrinal.

The author begins by positing a timeline for Paul's journeys. He then uses Paul's epistles to highlight key passages related to mission. The details of Schnabel's mapping could be debated but it is fair handed. His later analysis greatly depends on certain details, such as whether Paul actually began missionary work in Arabia or had ministry experience prior to Antioch.

Nevertheless, Paul's letters are illuminating in that they show that "Paul's preaching focuses on

³³ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34. On p. 152, he calls oral proclamation "the central process of missionary work." On p. 210, he says that preaching the gospel was Paul's "primary goal."

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 34–35.

God” and his understanding of the gospel was determinative in all he did.³⁶ This requires Schnabel to particularly focus on the meaning of the “gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον).³⁷ “Paul insists that the manner of his preaching correspond with the content of the message that he proclaims.”³⁸

Paul’s message is well seeped in the Old Testament narrative, in particular God’s promises to Abraham and the prophets.³⁹ Explicating *how* God fulfilled these promises to Israel formed the core of Paul’s preaching in Jewish synagogues. This afforded Paul the ability to overtly appeal to Scripture when evangelizing, an approach less taken with Gentile audiences. To Gentiles, Paul’s preaching was ironic. He would simultaneously establish common ground with his listeners while also confronting pagan deities. His contrasting rhetoric nevertheless found unity in his proclaiming Jesus as Christ and King.⁴⁰ Thus, to Roman hearers, Paul’s gospel that Jesus is Lord would challenge the legitimacy the imperial cult while, to Jewish listeners, the message of a crucified Savior was simply “scandalous.”⁴¹

Schnabel emphasizes the practical implications of a Pauline theology of mission. To accept Paul’s gospel meant changing traditional, religious, philosophical, economic, social, and political views.⁴² Conversion and baptism implied a transfer of ownership or loyalty to God.⁴³ Churches had to be planted.⁴⁴ Missionaries had to be flexible, being ready to travel wherever people were willing to listen, and ready to suffer.⁴⁵ Though Paul was sent to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16, 2:8; Rom 15:16), Schnabel says that the “evidence shows that Paul did not pursue a

³⁶ Ibid., 127. Also, note chapter 3, “The Missionary Message of the Apostle Paul.”

³⁷ Ibid., 210–215.

³⁸ Ibid., 129.

³⁹ Ibid., 156–162.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 183–189.

⁴¹ Ibid., 189.

⁴² Ibid., 180.

⁴³ Ibid., 231; cp. 189.

⁴⁴ Schnabel links the necessity for church communities with the promise of a restored Israel, thus excluding the possibility of “solitary Christians” (p. 232).

⁴⁵ Ibid., 36, 271, 282.

missionary strategy that focused on a particular ethnic group.”⁴⁶ This was due to his conviction that the gospel grew out of God’s covenant with Abraham. After citing Gal 3:25–29, he adds, converts “lose a part—in the case of the Gentiles a large part—of their cultural affiliation. But they gain a new family in which all are ‘one’ in Jesus Christ.”⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Schnabel argues that Paul was not a “crosscultural missionary” in the sense we speak of today, having to learn a new language and cultural world.⁴⁸ Ultimately, Paul’s success was not dependent upon strategy but rather on the power of God in the gospel as his messengers live in light of its truth.⁴⁹

In closing, Schnabel draws out some implications for modern day missions. First, because the central task of missions is gospel proclamation, missiologists (for that matter, all Christians) must be theologically competent and convicted that the Bible is authoritative.⁵⁰ The principle for communication is “intelligibility.”⁵¹ On the whole, missionaries should be trained in “four areas: character, commitment, competence, and culture.”⁵² Since Paul was not a cross-cultural missionary in the modern sense, we cannot discern many specific paradigms to straightforwardly apply to contemporary mission training.⁵³ While methods may vary, we must follow the example of Paul who “does not redesign the content of his preaching depending on the likes and dislikes of his audiences in order to make coming to faith easier or more convenient.”⁵⁴ Contra “seeker-driven churches,” we must not only answer the questions people are asking, but also those not asked.⁵⁵ In summary, Schnabel’s theology of mission is aptly summed up in the

⁴⁶ Ibid., 307.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 334.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 317–319.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 354–357.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 376–377.

⁵¹ Ibid., 377.

⁵² Ibid., 389.

⁵³ Ibid., 391.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 398.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 432.

following: “The logic of the gospel implies not only a commitment to Jesus Christ but also a commitment to the progress of the gospel in the world.”⁵⁶

Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O’Brien’s
Salvation to the Ends of the Earth

Köstenberger and O’Brien exegete a biblical theology of mission largely based on their survey of the New Testament.⁵⁷ Like Wright and Schnabel, the authors affirm that the importance of the Abrahamic covenant for missions; however, God’s eternal purpose is hinted at in the Garden.⁵⁸ From Abraham, Israel was to assume a role as priest to the nations, yet “there is no suggestion in the Old Testament that Israel should have engaged in ‘cross-cultural’ or foreign mission.”⁵⁹ Conversion meant nationalization.⁶⁰ Not only has humanity sinned, but Israel continually fails in her role. Therefore, her prophets foretell of a new covenant that God will establish with His people by which the nations will be gathered with Israel.⁶¹ “The goal of mission is the glory of God, that he may be known and honoured for who he really is.”⁶²

The authors briefly lay the groundwork for the exegeting New Testament’s theology of mission by looking at Second-Temple Judaism. Their conclusion is that “the mission of the early Christians was unique,” not deriving from contemporary social influences.⁶³ Nearly half the book is dedicated to interpreting the Gospel writers. This approach well balances other treatments on mission like Wright’s and Schnabel’s, who focus either on the Old Testament or Paul. While

⁵⁶ Ibid., 437.

⁵⁷ They only dedicate one chapter (2) overtly to Old Testament exegesis.

⁵⁸ Köstenberger and O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 25–31.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 36. Citing Scobie “Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology,” *TynB* 43 (1992): 288.

⁶¹ Ibid., 41–44.

⁶² Ibid., 52.

⁶³ Ibid., 71. Jews’ outreach efforts were “largely apologetic or nationalistic” (67).

Jesus himself rarely engaged in overt evangelism to Gentiles, the Gospel writers try to show how his life points forward to their salvation.

The Gospels depict Jesus as a fulfillment of Old Testament promises. Through Jesus, God keeps his promise to bless the nations through Abraham.⁶⁴ Jesus is not only depicted as the seed of Abraham, but he is the “Son of God”⁶⁵ descending from David and “Son of Man” whom Dan 7:14 speaks of as having “everlasting dominion” (ESV).⁶⁶ In style, the writers constantly show Jesus favorable towards Gentiles, especially in Luke and Mark. “Jesus’ gospel of the kingdom radically undercut Jewish presumptions of God’s partial favour.”⁶⁷ Therefore, it is not shocking to hear his direct commission to go to the nations.⁶⁸

Weight is given to the Jesus’ own sense of mission. Luke treats the book of Acts as a continuation of Jesus’ work.⁶⁹ John is more explicit. The Father sends the Son and the Son sends the Spirit and his disciples into the world.⁷⁰ “The ultimate objective for Jesus is to bring glory to God.”⁷¹ Jesus manifests God’s presence and glory in the world. Following this model, “the disciplines are not just to *represent* Jesus . . . , they are to *re-present* him, that is, Jesus will be present in and through them in his Spirit as they fulfill their mission in the world.”⁷² Like Jesus, they will face “conflict, rejection by one’s own, even the bearing of one’s cross.”⁷³

As Köstenberger and O’Brien look to Paul and the epistles, multiple themes stand out. Paul finds “Old Testament warrant” for the Gentile mission, drawing especially from Abraham

⁶⁴ Ibid., 88, 94, 106, 112–113, 137, 255, 258.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 101–107.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 257. cp. Acts 1:1.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 203, 209.

⁷¹ Ibid., 207.

⁷² Ibid., 222.

⁷³ Ibid., 75.

and the prophet Isaiah.⁷⁴ One aim of the gospel is to bring Jews and Gentile together as a church. Paul “founded churches as a necessary element of his missionary task. Conversion to Christ meant incorporation into him, and thus membership within a Christian community.”⁷⁵ As a church, Jude and Peter emphasize the importance of doctrine to mission.⁷⁶ The thrust of many epistles is not strictly proclamation but instead the “witness” of the church, especially through suffering.⁷⁷ Given that some writers like Peter see “continuity” between the Old Testament Israel and the Church, it is not strange to see John in Revelation stress God’s sovereignty to accomplish His purpose, regardless of time or circumstance.⁷⁸

Evaluations

Methodologically, the three books are complementary rather than contradictory. Wright largely pulls from the Old Testament, Köstenberger and O’Brien the New Testament, while Schnabel profiles the leader of the early church’s missionary labor. Consequently, certain themes emerge as central for a theology of mission. If Wright’s thesis is correct, that there is a “missional hermeneutic” in Scripture, then these motifs do not merely support missions, but should direct any attempt to establish a biblical theology (not just a theology of mission).

Foremost, the authors all connect missions to the promise made to Abraham in Genesis, specifically that through his offspring all the nations would be blessed. Christ is that offspring, fulfilling the covenant and bringing salvation to all “the families of the earth.” Certainly, the Abrahamic covenant is paradigmatic for biblical interpretation. God is exalted as the “God of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 170–172; 163, 167.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 180.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 231.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 235–237.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 239, 248–249.

promise.”⁷⁹ Thus, Christians must become more theocentric in their theology, grounding their faith and practice in the character of God above strategy and social science. Rom 4:16 explicitly links God’s promise to Abraham with faith and grace, “This is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham” (ESV). Thus, whether for the missionary or the non-believer contemplating the meaning of “faith,” saying “that we ‘have faith in God’ means that we are trusting in God’s promises for our future because of what God has already done for us in the past.”⁸⁰

Consequently, a second theme comes into focus. The gospel is “God’s plan according to which the Gentiles are being incorporated into the people of God, along with the believers among the Jewish people.”⁸¹ This revealing of the “mystery” (as Paul calls it) affects both our interpretation of the Old Testament and our practice as missionaries. In view of Paul’s reading of the prophetic promises concerning the nations, one is reticent to assert a sharp divide between ethnic Israel and the Church. In fact, our theology of mission should raise concerns over church growth models that depend on socioeconomic affinity.⁸² Ethnic prejudice is excluded. The gospel must confront nationalism both in our hearers and in ourselves. In addition to Wright’s list, we may discover that our culture and country are idols, things we identify with more than Christ. We should see ourselves as Christians first, then citizens. When the love and plan of God is expanded to include all nations, churches will have to take seriously the task of reaching the

⁷⁹ For more on this theme, see Scott Hafemann’s *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Crossway: Wheaton, 2001).

⁸⁰ Hafemann, *The God of Promise*, 103.

⁸¹ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 147.

⁸² Schnabel unpacks some of the possible implications of ignoring this point respective to church planting, church growth, and seeker-driven churches. See pp. 424–437.

unreached people groups in the world. This will result in a massive reallocation of resources from the West to the majority world.

Third, each text directs the reader to reflect on the nature of God. *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth* highlights the missionary nature of God.⁸³ Wright extensively points out that biblical monotheism makes God and the Bible *more relevant*, not less. Contra pluralistic presuppositions, if there is only one God who created the world, sovereignly sustains it, and graciously offers salvation exclusively through Jesus Christ, then all should take heed. Schnabel suggests that confidence in the power of God will help us remain faithful in proclaiming the gospel without compromise. Methodology does not assure results.⁸⁴ In contrast to many people's opinions, "theology, the discipline which teaches followers of Jesus about God, the Son, and the Spirit, is central and must remain foundational for churches and for their missionary work, no matter where they are geographically, ethnically, or socially located."⁸⁵ If missionaries and churches were to see that missions is primarily about the glory of God,⁸⁶ then our methodologies would become more balanced and holistic. Sending agencies would recognize the need for complementary approaches, including evangelism, social action, church planting, and theological training. God aims to be honored in every place, in all things.

As one surveys each book's contribution, we also discover how different beginnings produce distinctive themes and emphases. For example, Schnabel spends the most time stressing the preaching of the gospel and its meaning. This does not minimize the other authors valuing of it. Yet, this particular feature of his exegesis leads Schnabel to imply (contra Wright) that *not*

⁸³ Köstenberger and O'Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth*, 269.

⁸⁴ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 451–458.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁸⁶ No one better articulates a God-centered view of missions than John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

everything is missions. This presses the debate whether to talk about “missions” or “mission.” Yet, when Schnabel looks to Paul, especially in his letters, we see Paul’s work especially focused on a distinctive message. That controlling center drove his contextualization. As a result, Schnabel is able to draw out numerous practical consequences for missiology. To be sure, Köstenberger and O’Brien add an appendix on “Paul’s use of *euangelion*,” yet on the whole, both their work and Wright’s keep to the metanarrative. It would have been helpful to see more integration between that grand story of mission and the particular message of salvation to be preached.

On the other hand, Wright’s weighty examination of the Old Testament spurs new discussion on a few topics. Namely, Wright asks us to broaden our view of mission(s) from mere evangelism and church planting to care for all creation, both the environment and society. If we seriously believe that mission is “for the glory of God’s name”⁸⁷, then we should seek to honor him in every sphere of creation, even if it is not politically convenient. Wright spends three chapters teasing out the implications of the fact that everything belongs to the Lord and that humans in particular bear the *Imago Dei*.⁸⁸ Among evangelicals, where the Old Testament theology tends to get neglected, Wright’s commentary is noteworthy. The Bible cannot be used as mere proof-text for tradition programs. God has had a plan from before creation. We must take seriously all His word if we will love all of His world.

A number of practical applications and questions emerge from the work of these authors. For instance, missionary training should be highly theological in orientation. Some might suggest that missions sending agencies have a theological mandate on applicants or new missionaries. This is because the theme of mission so extensively influences one’s biblical theology. As a

⁸⁷ Wright, *The Mission of God*, 64.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 357–453.

result, the missionary has a wealth of material from which to contextualize biblical truth and draw principles for mission practice. He or she will not be restricted to Acts and a few other New Testament texts. Further, the missionaries must always seek to produce not just pastors, but new missionaries. If God's mission entails His glory being spread among the nations, then we not only must pray that God would send out workers into the harvest fields; we must equip their heads, hearts, and hands to extend the gospel's reach into places we cannot go. This necessitates a clear theology of mission. People need a larger vision of mission(s) if they are to sacrifice the comforts of home, bear with suffering, possess missiological discernment, and be conformed to the image of Christ, who was the world's first "missionary." The authors demonstrate that cross-cultural missions is not merely a single ministry among any number of optional ministries. Given its centrality in the mind of God, intentional thinking must go into how we train Christian workers, develop strategy, and even communicate the gospel. Within the Church, even among those who are mission-minded, many concepts or definitions are taken for granted, including the meaning of mission(s) and the gospel. How do we preserve the meaning and distinct importance of "missions" while also making clear the "mission of God" in every place? Further reflection therefore is needed in order to assess the value of various practices on the mission field as well as what has been written in previous missiological works. There seems to be a vast chasm between these more theological works (surveyed in this essay) and much of the mission literature that we currently read, most of which concentrates on anthropology or other social sciences. Finally, if we accept that biblical theology is largely a theology of mission, how might local churches apply the lessons learned by missionaries who live in far off places? How might increased conversation between missionaries and sending churches improve ecclesiology, such that there is not a sharp

divide in thinking between pastors *in churches* and missionaries who *plant churches*. How might missiology impact ecclesiology?