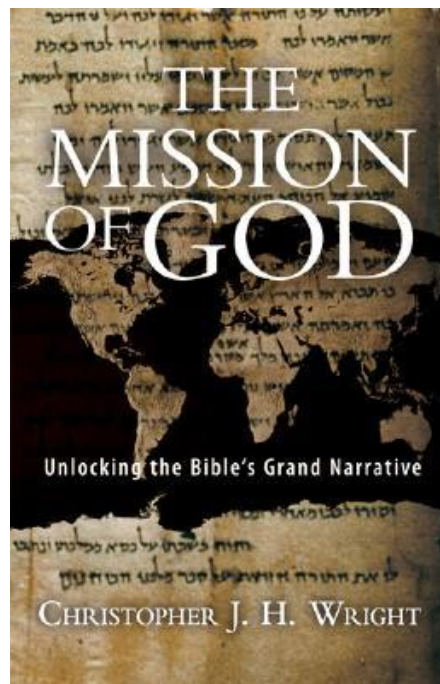




The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative

Christopher J.H. Wright

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Winner, 2007 Christianity Today Missions/Global Affairs Book Most Christians would agree that the Bible provides a basis for mission. But Christopher Wright boldly maintains that mission is bigger than that--there is in fact a missional basis for the Bible! The entire Bible is generated by and is all about God's mission. In order to understand the Bible, we need a missional hermeneutic of the Bible, an interpretive perspective that is in tune with this great missional theme. We need to see the "big picture" of God's mission and how the familiar bits and pieces fit into the grand narrative of Scripture. Beginning with the Old Testament and the groundwork it lays for understanding who God is, what he has called his people to be and do, and how the nations fit into God's mission, Wright gives us a new hermeneutical perspective on Scripture. This new perspective provides a solid and expansive basis for holistic mission. Wright emphasizes throughout a holistic mission as the proper shape of Christian mission. God's mission is to reclaim the world--and that includes the created order--and God's people have a designated role to play in that mission.

The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative Details

Date : Published October 23rd 2006 by IVP Academic

ISBN : 9780830825714

Author : Christopher J.H. Wright

Format : Hardcover 581 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Christian, Christianity

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From Reader Review The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative for online ebook

Ike Unger says

A very in-depth look at the mission of God through out the scriptures.

Laurent Dv says

Good biblical theology of mission. Basically it goes from Abraham to Revelation, and furnish a lot of canonical analysis (of the different corpus or the Bible : pentateuch, prophets, writings : psalms mainly, the gospels, paul, hebrews, the other NT letters). It deals virtually only with redemption (the mission of God to save the whole cosmos/world of course including humans from sin and its consequences). He defends a very equilibrate view of mission including both evangelization and social action (which according to me could be more inclusive - it could encompass all cultural activities as science, music, technology etc-, Wright seems to limit it to humanitarian action against sickness and social oppression). The more interesting thing one can find in his book a carefull exegetical defense of neocalvinist view of mission (,at least the view defending both evangelization and social action as christian mission). By doing that, Wright fill a gap. Besides, even if the main theme of this book is mission, it can help us to understand much topics as covenants, Israel's vocation, identity and mission, redemption, jubilee, exodus and the tension between Israel's election/particularity and God's goal to redeem the whole humanity. It gives us a more encompassing view of Israel and of the Old Testament for doing better exegesis generally.

The only negative point is that Wright doesn't begin his theology of mission with Creation (Genesis 1-2) and only start with Abraham (Genesis 12) whereas it seems that God's mission (to raise the cosmos to the state of consummation in the context of the covenant of works through the fulfillment of the cultural mandate as for example Kline and Beale presented it) although he gives us some remarks. He never mentioned an initial covenant of works between God and Adam, which is weird as he place himself many times in the reformed tradition.

Andrew says

Is the Bible all about mission? Can the whole Bible be understood under the rubric of God's intention to make himself known to the whole world and draw the whole world to himself? We might speak of the biblical basis of marriage but not the marital basis of the Bible. Can we, however, do this with mission? That is the bold claim and case that Christopher Wright makes in his magnum opus.

From Creation to the Patriarchs to Israel to Jesus—the whole sweep of the biblical drama is to make God known to the earth he has made. Israel's purpose is to be a channel of blessing to all the nations. He makes himself known through the Exodus, in exile and in the return from exile. The nations, all the nations, are always in God's sights, anticipating the time when they will turn to him and worship him alone.

Insights abound throughout the book. Here's just one example. For five hundred years Protestants have gone back and forth on the topic of predestination and all its implications. The effect for sensitive souls, however, can be to worry and wonder, "Am I one of the elect? Am I one of the chosen, or will I somehow fall outside

the bounds of grace?" But when we look at what the Old Testament tells us about God's understanding of and plans for his elect, much becomes clear.

There we see that the elect are God's people. And what is the purpose for which God's people were chosen? Not to be those who are exclusively saved but quite the opposite. They were elected to show God's blessing and make him known to the nations so they also could be received by God (Gen 12:1-3; Ex 9:16; 1 Sam 17:46; 1 Kings 8:41-43, 60-61; Ps 67:1-2; Isa 19:24-25; Jer 4:1-2). All his disciples are the chosen ones--chosen to make God known (pp. 262-64).

While this book is widely used as a college and seminary text, it is not too technical for the informed person in the pew who wants a big, grand sweep of what the Bible says God is doing in throughout time and around the world.

Charlie says

A clear, compelling exposition of the biblical/theological basis of the missional church movement. A rare book that combines epic scope with focused prose.

Brett says

Wright argues convincingly that God's missionary heart is one of the big ideas (if not THE big idea) of the entire Bible. In fact, the character and nature of God are unique revealed in His heart for the nations. Wright explores this "grand narrative" in-depth in both the Old and New Testaments. The mission of God is central from Genesis to Revelation. Further, Wright demonstrates how the mission of God is intrinsically related to the people of God - our election, our redemption, our restoration, and the covenants. A must read for every pastor and church leader. A

Eric Chappell says

Review: Outstanding. This book is really an eye-opening piece of work. The whole Bible, all of Scripture is mission, i.e. God's mission to renew all things and he has brought us along on that mission as His people.

Introduction:

"...the whole Bible is itself a 'missional' phenomenon." (22)

"The Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation. The Bible is the drama of this God of purpose engaged in the mission of achieving that purpose universally, embracing past, present and future, Israel and the nations, "life, the universe and everything," and with its center, focus, climax, and completion in Jesus Christ. Mission is not just one of a list of things that the Bible happens to talk about, only a bit more urgently than some. Mission is, in that much-abused phrase, "what it's all about" (22).

Mission--"Fundamentally, our Mission means our committed participation as God's people, at God's

invitation and command, in God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation" (22).

Defines Mission in a more general sense: a long-term purpose or goal that is achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions (23).

Missionary--Wright doesn't like using this term because of its connotations, i.e. the activity of sending and crosscultural communication of the gospel. In that sense, the OT does not have a missionary message.

Missional--in this sense, Israel was missional, i.e. they had an identity and role to God's ultimate intention of blessing the nations.

Structure:

1. Hermeneutical Concerns: The Bible and Mission
2. The God of Mission
3. The People of Mission
4. The Arena of Mission

Part 1: The Bible and Mission

In Luke 24, Jesus not only talks about the messianic thrust of the OT, but its missional thrust as well. "The proper way for disciples of the crucified and risen Jesus to read their Scriptures, is messianically and missionally" (30).

"We recognize that the christological focus of the Bible operates in many different ways . . . To speak of the Bible being "all about Christ" does not (or should not) mean that we try to find Jesus of Nazareth in every verse by some feat of imagination. Rather we mean that the person and work of Jesus become the central hermeneutical key by which we, as Christians, articulate the overall significance of these texts in both Testaments . . . The same is true of the missiological focus of the Bible. To say that the Bible is "all about mission" does not mean that we try to find something relevant to evangelism in every verse. We are referring to something deeper and wider in relation to the Bible as a whole" (31).

Chapter 1: Searching for a Missional Hermeneutic

Wright surveys the history of hermeneutics with regard to mission. His conclusion is that the steps towards a missiological reading of the Bible is so far unsatisfactory.

"...ever since the New Testament church... [we have] wrestled with the problems of multiple cultural contexts. And yet in the midst of them all it has sustained the conviction that there is an objective truth for all in the gospel that addresses and claims people in any context. . . Cultural plurality is nothing new for Christian mission. It is rather the very stuff of missional engagement and missiological reflection. We may be challenged by swimming in the postmodern pool, but we need not feel out of our depth there" (46).

Chapter 2: Shaping a Missional Hermeneutic

1. The Bible as the Product of God's Mission

a. A missional hermeneutic of the Bible begins with the Bible's very existence (48). Scripture is itself the

product of and witness to the ultimate mission of God.

b. Block quote: "The very existence of the Bible is incontrovertible evidence of the God who refused to forsake his rebellious creation, who refused to give up, who was and is determined to redeem and restore fallen creation to his original design for it...The very existence of such a collection of writings testifies to a God who breaks through to human beings, who disclosed himself to them, who will not leave them unilluminated in their darkness, ... who takes the initiative in re-establishing broken relationships with us" (48) [Charles Taber, *Missiology* 11 (1983)]

c. The text is itself a product of mission in action. For example, most of Paul's letters were written in the heat of missionary efforts (49). "In short, a missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement with God's world for the sake of the whole of God's creation" (51).

2. Biblical Authority and Mission

a. The Great Commission implies an imperative, a mandate. So it also presupposes an authority behind that imperative (51).

b. Often because of our view that Authority = Command (in a militaristic fashion), we do not perceive any missional authority in nonimperative texts because we conceive authority only in terms of commands (52). Interesting.

c. Re-think Authority. Authority is the predicate of reality, the source and boundary of freedom. Wright has three realities in mind: The reality of this God. The reality of this story (the worldview of the OT that answers the questions: where are we? who are we? what's gone wrong? what is the solution?). The reality of this people (54-56).

d. The Great Commission (preceded by the Great Communication): "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"--this is the reality behind the command, the indicative behind the imperative. The identity and the authority of Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and risen, is the cosmic indicative on which the mission imperative stands authorized" (60).

Further Reading: Graeme Goldsworthy, "The Great Indicative: An aspect of a biblical theology of mission," *Reformed Theological Review* 55 (1996).

e. Interpret the indicative and imperative in light of each other. A missional hermeneutic will not obsess with only the great mission imperatives or be tempted to impose one assumed priority over another (e.g. evangelism or social justice or liberation or ecclesiastical order as the only "real" mission).

3. The Biblical Theocentric Worldview and the Mission of God

a. The appropriateness of speaking of a "missional basis of the Bible" becomes apparent only when we shift our paradigm of mission from: 1. our human agency to the ultimate purpose of God Himself, 2. mission as "missions" that we undertake, to mission as that which God has been purposing and accomplishing from eternity to eternity, 3. an anthropocentric (or ecclesiocentric) conception to a radically theocentric worldview

b. A missional hermeneutic means that we seek to read any part of the Bible in light of [Wright precedes this with a more detailed explanation of each]:

i. God's purpose for his whole creation, including the redemption of humanity and the creation of the new heavens and new earth

- ii. God's purpose for human life in general on the planet and of all the Bible teaches about human culture, relationships, ethics and behavior
- iii. God's historical election of Israel, their identity and role in relation to the nations, and the demands he made on their worship, social ethics, and total value system
- iv. the centrality of Jesus of Nazareth, his messianic identity and mission in relation to Israel and the nations, his cross and resurrection
- v. God's calling of the church, the community of believing Jews and Gentiles who constitute the extended people of the Abraham covenant, to be the agent of God's blessing to the nations in the name and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ (67-68)

Part 2: The God of Mission

Texts that speak to YHWH as one, only God of all earth: Deut 10:14; 2 Kings 19:15; Jer 32:27; Is 54:5; Gen 18:25; Ps 47:7

"If YHWH alone is the one true living God who made Himself known in Israel and who wills to be known to the ends of the earth, then our mission can contemplate no lesser goal" (71).

Chapter 3: The Living God Makes Himself Known in Israel

God is known through what He does and says.

Exodus and Return from Exile are two examples par excellence of Israel coming to know their God

Knowing God through the Experience of God's Grace

1. The Exodus

A. God promises to do 3 things: Liberate from Egyptian yoke, enter into mutual covenant relationship, bring them to promised land of forefathers.

B. Israel will only "do" one thing: Exod 6:7--know YHWH. See also Deut 4:32-39. What 3 things did they know? That YHWH is Incomparable, Sovereign, and Unique (76).

1. Song of Moses (earliest poetic text in OT): (a) YHWH is incomparable, Who is like You? YHWH is clearly the most powerful God around, beyond comparison when it comes to conflict of wills. Later in OT similar themes emerge: keeping promises (2 Sam 7:22); in power and wisdom (Jer 10:6-7, 11-12); in heavenly assembly (Ps 89:6-8); in ruling nations (Jer 49:19; 50:44); in pardoning sin (Mic 7:18); in saving power (Isa 64:4). Missional Truth: Because there is none like Him, all nations will eventually come and worship Him as the only true God (Ps 86:8-9)--see chs 14 and 15. YHWH in class of His own.

(b) YHWH is king, Exod 15:18--reigning. Verb form entails: He has demonstrated that he is king, he is now reigning, and he will go on reigning without interruption. First significant time Kingdom of God mentioned! Unexpected kingship in that he exercises it on behalf of weak and oppressed (79), i.e. an ethnic minority undergoing economic exploitation, political oppression, and a state-sponsored campaign of terrorizing genocide. Deut 10:14-19 paradoxically puts God's universal reign beside his localized compassion. V. 14, 17 is doxology, v. 15, 18 is surprise, v. 16, 19 is ethical response (79).

(c) YHWH is unique--there is "no other." Does this imply the actual existence of other gods? Wright thinks

that is an Enlightenment anachronistic reading of OT. Likes Bauckham's way of speaking of "YHWH's transcendent uniqueness" (81). The reason there is no other god like YHWH is because there is no other god, period.

2. The Return from Exile

A. YHWH sovereign over history:

1. In control of Israel: what is shocking is that a little defeated nation, scarcely a nation at all, to claim that its own deity was in charge would seem absurdly arrogant. They must be living in delusion and pathetic denial. Isa 41:22-23; 46:9-10

2. In control of all nations: rare in ANE to find other ancient gods claiming to get involved in history, politics, or fortunes of third parties, and when they do it is usually through agency of their own nation. YHWH can act without direct agency of Israel and against her interests (84-5). See Isa 41:2-4, 25; 44:28-45:6.

B. YHWH exercises sovereignty through his word (85):

C. YHWH acts for the sake of his name (87):

1. What motivated YHWH to bring people back from exile? Because leaving them permanently in exile would threaten his reputation. The name of YHWH was at stake in what God did against his own people, just as it was involve in all he did for them. See Moses' appeal to God after golden calf and after rebellion at Kadesh Barnea. See Ezek 36:22-23; Isa 43:25

2. Why did it matter that he should, in the process, demonstrate his claim to deity by his sovereign control of history? Name of God should be universally known. See Cyrus in Isa 45:5-6--nobody (but a few ancient historians) know Cyrus, but millions know YHWH.

D. YHWH's sovereignty extends over all creation: see Ps 33

E. YHWH's entrusts his uniqueness and universality to the witness of his people (90): it will be through Israel's witness that YHWH's powers of revelation and salvation and identity as sole God will be posted in public arena of world history. See Isa 43:9-12

1. Primary responsibility of witness is to KNOW. Therefore, Knowing God!

Knowing God through Exposure to His Judgment

1. Egypt: main plot is deliverance of Israel from oppression of Pharaoh. But subplot is massive power encounter between YHWH and Pharaoh and all his gods. Signaled by Exod 5:2--implication is link between knowing God and obeying Him. Pharaoh will not obey because he doesn't know. Recurring motif, "Then you will know..." in Exod 7-14.

A. What did Pharaoh come to know? See chart on p. 94

2. Israel in Exile (95): Good bit on Jeremiah 29 and the Abrahamic promise and divine irony of being sent to Babylon, the place where Abraham was called out from (99).

3. The nations under judgment (100): Ezekiel 38-39, Gog and Magog. Another example of God acting to extend knowledge of God. They will come to know: the holiness, greatness, and glory of God. Missional

Truth (great application, 103).

Chapter 4: The Living God makes Himself known in Jesus Christ

Why doesn't NT just come out and say, 'Jesus is God?' Because 'theos' in Greek was too vague and ambiguous to give such a sentence any kind of clarity or specificity. Greeks and Romans, like contemporary Hindus, would balk at such sentence if 'god' is left undefined and anarthrous (105).

1. Jesus Shares the Identity of YHWH (106):

A. Prayer and Confession--two clear indications of any person's or community's understanding of content and object of faith.

1. Maranatha (O Lord, come)--Paul says in Aramaic and leaves untranslated, must have assumed his readers were familiar.

a. "The Maranatha invocation of 1 Corinthians 16:22, therefore, represents an old Palestinian formula of prayer, directed to the Lord Jesus. It is a plea for him to come in power and glory. Had these first believers only considered Jesus maran, as their rabbi, prayer would not have been directed to him" (107).

2. Kyrious Iesous (Jesus is Lord)

a. ho kyrios used to translate tetragrammaton, YHWH, in LXX. Used as the Greek rendering for the name of the God of Israel more than 1600x in LXX.

b. Good section on Philippians 2--By inserting name of Jesus where name of YHWH occurred in Isa 45, Christians: (i) gave to Jesus a God title, (ii) applied to Jesus a God text, (iii) anticipated for Jesus God worship

c. Missional implication? If the mission of the biblical God includes his will to make himself known in his true identity as YHWH, the living God of Israel's faith, then by identifying Jesus with YHWH, the NT sees Jesus as central to that self-revelatory dimension of God's mission" (109).

2. Jesus Performs the Functions of YHWH: YHWH in OT described as Creator, Ruler, Judge, and Savior--Jesus in NT described in same way

A. Creator

1. "Paul had the knack of bringing the most massive theological affirmations to bear upon the most mundane practical issues" (110). E.g. 1 Corinthians 8-10: 2 issues--(i) the status of idols (are they in any sense real?) and the state of the meat (is it somehow contaminated by having been sacrificed to an idol?). Paul tackles first in 1 Cor 8:4-6 and the second in 1 Cor 10:25-26.

2. Paul applies Shema to Jesus and then uses Psalm 24 to say that everything belongs to the Lord. Thus, the whole earth belongs to Jesus as Lord. Missional implication? "For if the whole earth belongs to Jesus, there is no corner of the earth to which we can go in mission that does not already belong to him. There is not an inch of the planet that belongs to any other god, whatever the appearances. A Christ-centered theology of divine ownership of the whole world is a major foundation for missional theology, practice and ultimate confidence" (112).

3. Good bit on the use of Psalm 110 in early church--NT joins lordship of Christ with sovereign gov't of the living God of the faith of Israel. That's what Jesus is doing in the premise of the Great Commission.

B. Judge

1. "Day of the Lord"

C. Savior

1. Saving is dominant activity of YHWH in OT.

2. Name: Jesus

3. "Salvation, in its fullest biblical sense, involves more than the forgiveness of sin--though that lies at the deepest core of it since sin is the deepest root of all the other dimensions of need and danger from which God alone can save us" (119).

3. Jesus Fulfills the Mission of YHWH (121)

- A. God wills to be known through Jesus (see ch 3 on God's will to be known) (122)

- B. The gospel carries the knowledge of God among the nations (123)

4. Biblical Monotheism and Mission: Why is biblical monotheism missional?

- A. Biblical mission is driven by God's will to be known as God (126)

1. The exodus establishes a paradigmatic link between God's particular identity as the God of Israel and God's purpose of universal self-revelation to the nations (see Richard Bauckham, Bible and Mission). Later great acts of YHWH have same intention: crossing of Jordon, David's defeat of Goliath, God's covenant with David, God's answering prayer in Solomon's temple (1 kings 8:41-43, 60), God delivering Jerusalem from Assyrians (2 kings 19:19; Isa 37:20), God bringing back Israel from exile (Isa 45:6; Jer 33:9; Ezek 36:23). The whole history of Israel is intended to be the shop window for the knowledge of God in all the earth (127).

2. Mission is not the imposition of yet another religious bondage upon an already overburdened humanity. It is the sharing of the liberating knowledge of the one true living God.

3. The good of creation comes from humanity knowing the biblical God. Biblical mission necessarily requires biblical monotheism.

4. God's will to be known is the mainspring of our mission to make him known (129). God's will to be known precedes and undergirds all of the efforts of God's people in their mission of making him known. Thus, we are seeking to accomplish what God himself wills to happen. This is both humbling and reassuring. Humbling because our efforts would be in vain otherwise. Reassuring, because behind all our fumbles stands the supreme will of God.

- B. Biblical monotheism involves constant christological struggle.

1. Christ-centered monotheism is just as difficult for NT church as YHWH-centered monotheism was tough for Israel. It is a constant battlefield. This is a reason why biblical monotheism is missional: it is a truth to which we are constantly called to bear witness.

- C. Biblical monotheism generates praise

1. Book of Psalms title is *tehillim* (Hebrew), "praises" (132). Surprising since the largest single category of psalms are psalms of lament. Praise in OT was not about being happy and thankful, but about acknowledging the reality of the one living God in the whole of life, including tough times.

2. John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*--"missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't." But we might also say that mission exists because praise does. The praise of the church is what energizes and characterizes it for mission, and also serves as the constant reminder we so much need, that all our mission flows as obedient response to and participation in the prior mission of God.

3. Psalm 96 structure (134)

a. This is a new song that remixes the old words, for it celebrates the old story of what God has done for his people (v. 1-3)

b. it is a new song that radically displaces the old gods whose former worshipers must now bring all their worship into the courts of the Lord (v. 4-9)

c. it is a new song that transforms the old world into the anticipated righteousness and rejoicing of the reign of the Lord (v. 10-13).

Chapter 5: The Living God Confronts Idolatry

1. Paradoxes of the Gods

A. Something or nothing? Interesting question about whether or not Israel believed the existence of other gods.

1. "The essence of Israelite monotheism lies in what it affirms dynamically about YHWH, not primarily in what it denies about other gods" (138).

2. Are other gods something or nothing? Paradoxically, they are both. They are nothing in relation to YHWH, they are something in relation to their worshipers (139).

B. Idolatry

1. Idols and gods as objects within creation

2. Idols and gods as demons

3. Idols are gods as the work of human hands

a. Uniqueness

Hillary Marker says

This book helped me understand the Bible and my role in the kingdom like no other book.

Barton Kimbro says

Has been a very formative book in my life

Bill says

A fantastic, paradigm setting, thought provoking, authoritative work of biblical theology. Christopher Wright says the unifying theme of the Bible is the mission of God in the world -- God making himself known. He unpacks this through 600-odd pages of reasonably dense theological/biblical argument, so not really an introductory level book. Took me 6 months to get through it. Heavily weighted towards discussion of the Old Testament, especially in drawing out themes which are usually taught from the New Testament. I enjoyed his balanced interaction with post-modern and emerging global approaches to the Bible. Fantastic chapter long surveys of 1. God's revelation of his character in the Old Testament and then 2. in Christ, as well as 3. the inclusion of the nations in God's mission in the Old Testament and also 4. in the New Testament. The base level application of Wright's way of understanding the Bible is to reaffirm that as we read and respond to the bible we should think first of God's mission and how we fit into it, rather than what our plans are and how God fits into them.

Here's the extended review of parts one and two I wrote for my OT class:

The Mission of God is a comprehensive and convincing argument for Christopher Wright's view that the grand narrative and unifying theme of the Bible is the mission of God in the world. The Bible, he says, is not primarily about our mission, but about God's mission. Mission, then, is not primarily what we do but what God does. Wright is quite forceful as he argues for this foundational point – his book is not content to be a biblical theology of mission as merely one theme among many, but rather an argument for a missional reading of the Bible from start to finish (p17).

Wright is primarily an Old Testament scholar, and thus whilst the book is certainly biblical in its scope, he unapologetically focuses more on the Old Testament than the New in developing his arguments. This is refreshing and enlightening. Being quite academic in tone and quite imposing in length, The Mission of God is not a particularly accessible book for those unused to reading theology. Because Wright often refers back to foundational terms and concepts established early in the book and develops his arguments in depth, the book required significant concentration and was quite demanding to read. Yet it was also rewarding and encouraging with a healthy number of “light bulb moments” along the way.

In Part One, Wright establishes his argument for a “missional hermeneutic” – not simply to establish a biblical basis for mission, which has often been done, but rather to “demonstrate that a strong theology of the mission of God provides a fruitful hermeneutical framework within which to read the whole bible” (p26). Of particular interest is his examination of the challenge to historical western reformation theology as the increasingly global church begins to interact with the Bible from within many different cultures (p38-41). Rather than surrendering to a post-modern pluralism in response, Wright argues that a better understanding of the Bible as the record of God's mission to all people provides a unifying, unchanging central theme which is accessible to every culture.

The remainder of the book applies this hermeneutic to three pillars of the Christian worldview – Part Two concerns the God of Mission, Part Three the People of Mission and Part Four the Arena of Mission (the world). Given the length of the book, I have only reviewed Parts One and Two.

Part Two examines the mission of God to make himself known to the world. This is one of the most memorable and pithy ideas from the book – the Bible, in essence, is simply God making himself known. Firstly, God makes himself known through the people of Israel (chapter 3). In particular, Wright traces God's progressive revelation of himself -- incomparable, sovereign and unique -- through his people's experience of his grace and exposure to his judgement, both in the exodus and the exile. Secondly, building on this foundational Old Testament picture, God makes himself known in Jesus Christ (chapter 4). Wright outlines the systematic identification of Jesus with the God of the Old Testament, taking on the roles of God and fulfilling the mission of God. Chapter 5 is a thorough examination of the biblical alternative to worshipping the one true God – Idolatry. This chapter warned against superficial and uninformed identification of 'modern day idols', while helpfully suggesting the biblical markers of and responses to idols or false gods that humans are inclined to create and worship.

I've greatly enjoyed the book thus far! In relation to my own Christian journey, The Mission of God has continued to build my own understanding of the Bible as a single entity. The Bible plays a massive role in my life as a Christian and a pastor, so to gain insight into its overall identity and the unifying themes will bear fruit each time I read the Bible personally and teach the Bible corporately. The Bible, in all its diversity, is simply God making Himself known to humanity. My life and ministry, then, is defined first by God's mission in the world, not by my personal mission in response to him.

Wright relies heavily on the Old Testament in developing much of his argument. This has also grown my appreciation for the unity of the Bible, as he demonstrates clearly in the Old Testament various themes I was mainly familiar with from the New Testament. For example, he outlines the basic Old Testament worldview, answering the questions "where are we?", "who are we?", "what's gone wrong?" and "what's the solution?" (p55). This was a 'light bulb moment' of clarity for me, realising anew that the worldview of the New Testament is absolutely identical with that of the Old, having only the final layer of revelation to complete an already existing picture.

The most significant application of The Mission of God to the contemporary church is in broadening our definition of mission in our changing global culture. Wright takes issue with a simplistic definition of mission which relies heavily on familiar proof texts, most classically the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 (p35), and a focus on a military style response of obedience to this command (p52). At the same time, he warns against the pendulum swinging too far in the other direction by overemphasising, for example, justice and liberation at the expenses of evangelistic mission (p40). Instead of singling out particular aspects of mission, leading to imbalance, Wright argues that the Bible as a picture of the overarching mission of God in the world provides a broad and healthy basis for understanding our own role within his mission. Quoting another author, he summarises "it is not so much that God has a mission for his church in the world, but that God has a church for his mission in the world" (p62). This is helpful, given movements within the church to become more 'missional', to respond and adapt to postmodernism. Wright carefully defines the term 'missional' (p24) in light of God's mission rather than ours, and looks toward a positive way of incorporating the challenges of postmodernism without abandoning core biblical truth.

Reading The Mission of God by Christopher Wright has challenged and stretched me theologically, both in the topics he addresses and the depth with which he addresses them. I'm convinced by his argument for the Mission of God being the unifying theme of the Bible and the central motivation of the life and mission of Christians. I'm looking forward to continuing to think along these lines and to seeing the fruit of this God-centred outlook on life and mission in my own Christian walk and ministry.

Sean Dotson says

Great book not an easy read. Wright brings out the whole narrative of scripture is pointing towards Jesus

James Hansee says

Outstanding book covering the breath of scripture through a missional hermeneutic. While at examination of the concepts and texts are long, there are golden nuggets throughout this book. It's not an easy read, but a satisfying one. Reading this book has caused me to be thinking new thoughts regarding the Bible particularly the Old Testament and the mission of God found there. I would recommend this book to serious students of God's word who already have a strong foundation of biblical knowledge.

Sarah says

I really want to review this book. I want to because I'm so excited about it. But...I just can't even. It's out of my league. I will simply state that reading this book has significantly transformed the way I read the Bible, due to its broad and vast, yet deep and thorough look at God's great mission seen throughout all of scripture, together - as one "grand narrative". Even though it spans nearly 600 pages, I hope to read it again.

Gilles GEORGEL says

Livre qui aborde l'Ecriture sous l'angle de la Mission de Dieu à partir de l'appel d'Abraham. Excellente réflexion qui ouvre l'horizon de la mission de Dieu parmi toutes les nations. Le sujet traite de l'éthique du peuple de Dieu comme paramètre de son témoignage dans le monde également.

BJ says

A wonderfully well-nuanced and holistic book by this superb Old Testament scholar who places Jesus, the Messiah, crucified and risen as the "key to all of history"(535). Jesus is the center of history because in God's story Jesus "is the one who accomplished the mission of God for all creation" (ibid). Wright avoids common reductionism in many evangelical circles and paints a robust theology of mission. The book's greatness is not just in its great treatment of the theme of mission but in its treatment of demonstrating how the Old Testament is fulfilled by the New Testament. God's mission has always been the same and the Old Testament and New Testament do not show two missions of God to the world, but one mission of God to the world. The mission of God is cosmic, renewing all of creation; the mission of God is personal, saving sinners from death by the self-substitution of God in the work of His Son Jesus; the mission of God is multinational, God has chosen Israel not for the sake of ethnic Israel exclusively but for the sake of the world, making one new person, the Israel of God, from every tribe and tongue; the mission of God is God-centered, ultimately, God's mission is about Himself and doing all to the glory of His name and bringing all of creation into the praise of that glory; the mission of God is cross-centered, in that at the cross and resurrection of Jesus, God in the person of Jesus, crushed the devil, defeated death, and forgave sin. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Christopher Wright has helped me, and I think he will help you, read the Bible in a more

unified way and see the purpose of God for the world through clearer glasses.

James Korsmo says

What is the Bible all about? Is it a random collection of writings about people who have experienced God? Is it one story about Israel and another somehow connected story about Jesus? In this masterful work, Christopher Wright sets out to demonstrate that the Bible, from start to finish, can be read as focusing on God's mission: in both the Old and New Testaments, God is on the move.

The depth of Wright's book is too much to summarize here, beyond surveying the ground he covers and discussing a few of the high points along the way. He begins by discussing hermeneutics, that is, how we read the Bible and what we see when we do, and the argument he makes there is that instead of mining the Bible for insights about "missions," we should instead look for God's mission that permeates the pages of the Bible. It's not about searching for texts that tell us to go to the nations, but instead about being attuned to what God is doing and finding our part in it.

To flesh out this theme, and to demonstrate how it is one way of showing the unity of the Bible, Wright begins with God, looking at who God reveals himself to be and what God reveals himself to be doing in the world. This involves especially the fundamental notion of God's uniqueness, the foundation of biblical monotheism. The second foundational idea about God is that God wants to be known by that which he has created. God has revealed himself in many and various ways. The final investigation Wright undertakes with regard to God's identity is an extended investigation into the theme of idolatry, a major theme especially of the Old Testament, where he demonstrates that the constant prohibitions of idolatry over and over show God's desire to be known and Israel's conviction (though often forgotten) that God is the only true God.

After establishing who God has revealed himself to be, Wright goes on in part 3, the most substantial part of the book, to look carefully at "The People of Mission." This begins with the programmatic and foundational text of God's covenant with Abraham, with special focus on God's commitment to bless Abraham and bless the world through him. This statement of God's intention really sums up what God is doing, and signals a major shift after the rather dismal happenings in Genesis 3-11. After humans have broken their relationship with God and utterly messed up God's good creation, God steps in on a mission, a mission of blessing. And the way God goes about it is through Abraham. God makes a particular choice, of Abraham and his descendants, but God is not playing favorites. Instead, God chooses the particular for the sake of the universal. Abraham is a man with a mission, he is a man whom God chooses to use to begin the reconciliation of the whole world. Wright investigates these themes, and especially the two poles of universal and particular, as he goes on to discuss election and the people of Israel as God's missional people. He then goes on to investigate God's redemption of his people, through the programmatic story of the exodus, and God's model for restoration, the Jubilee year. Wright then gives special attention to the covenants of God with his people, in Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Covenant, showing how they trace God's mission throughout Israel's formative statements. He then concludes his discussion of God's people with a look at the ethical implications of God's mission and election, with a discussion of the role of the law as the instrument of God's purposes and blessing in the world. Each of these topics could warrant a full discussion, and some of them will probably warrant revisiting, but, in short, Wright traverses the span of the Old Testament showing that God is up to something, and Israel is where it begins, but certainly not where it ends. Through it all, there is always at least an eye to the nations (God's eye, if not always Israel's).

In the final part of the book, Wright broadens his scope to what he calls the "arena" of God's mission. Where is this mission situated, and who is involved. He begins with the whole earth, with a sustained and insightful discussion about the care of the earth, integrating creational responsibility into missional activity. He steps

into what is often a sensitive issue in many evangelical camps with a clear and balanced call to take note of God's whole creation, and to care for it as part of God's mission, all the while noting that this doesn't mean a divinization of that creation. Instead he shows how care of creation is a part of our mission, how it fits with the larger picture of what God is doing in the world, and how it embodies the mission we as God's people are supposed to have to the world. He then goes on to discuss humanity as the field of God's mission, beginning with a discussion of humanity in God's image, demonstrating that we have been made for relationship with God, and that is God's intention for all people. He concludes the chapter with an insightful look at the Wisdom literature of the Bible, investigating how it incorporates the "wisdom" of other cultures (always critically) and can demonstrate how to create an international or cross-cultural bridge in our proclamation of God's truth. He also has a very insightful and important excursus in the middle of this chapter on the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the mission of God's people in the world. It provides a clarion call to take note of opportunities to be part of what God is doing here on Earth and to note the opportunities to undertake God's work. Wright then concludes his discussion of the arenas of mission with a look at the "nations" in first the Old Testament and then in the New Testament. The Old Testament has a persistent eye on the nations, with Israel declared to be a nation of priests for God, but the fullness of God's plan for the full incorporation of the nations isn't fully made known until the New Testament, when this persistent vision of inclusion and universality is given God's means, in Jesus Christ. Finally, God's eschatological promises of the gathering of the nations, of the universality of God's blessing, are made known and are under way.

Christopher Wright's book, *The Mission of God*, is a spectacular work of theology. He achieves his goal of showing that God's mission is the underlying "grand narrative" of the Bible, from first chapter to last. Wright goes far beyond a "theology of mission" to demonstrate that "mission" itself is what God is all about, and it is God's mission that we need to take note of. Our "missions" are derivative and secondary, even as they are important.

Wright, as an Old Testament scholar, focuses especially on the Old Testament texts, but this is, I think, one of the greatest strengths of the book, for he demonstrates the broad sweep of who God is and what God is doing, painting a coherent and continuous picture from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. In fact, this book would be well used as an exercise in Old Testament Theology, as well as a book investigating the whole Bible, for he illumines most of the major themes of the Old Testament, creation, covenant, election, ethics and law, and fits them together into an elegant mosaic of God's purposes.

The Mission of God is technical at times, but still highly readable, and I recommend it enthusiastically. It helps bring to life the Old Testament, showing that it isn't just dusty literature with a few important prophecies, but that it is the very heart of God's revelation, brought to completion (not obscurity) in Jesus Christ. Wright does Christians a service, in showing what the Bible is all about, and I think he succeeds in showing that God is on a mission, and that this theme unifies the narrative of the Bible.
