

1-1-2011

Book Review: Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues by Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss with Timothy Tennent

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Recommended Citation

Carlton, R. B. (2011). Book Review: Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues by Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss with Timothy Tennent. *Great Commission Research Journal*, 2(2), 321-324. Retrieved from <https://digitalarchives.apu.edu/gcrj/vol2/iss2/16>

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Craig Ott and Stephen J. Strauss with Timothy Tennent. *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010, xxx + 383 pp., \$29.99.

Reviewed by R. Bruce Carlton, Associate Professor of Missions and Missions Department Coordinator, Boyce College.

As the church continues into the twenty-first century, there is a need for the church of Jesus Christ to clarify what it means for the church to be sent by God to carry out His plan in the world. In the first volume of Baker's Encountering Mission series (*Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical and Practical Survey* by Moreau, Corwin, and McGee), the authors, in one of the chapters, presented a framework for moving toward a theology of mission. Now, in the fifth volume of this series, Ott, Strauss, and Tennent build on that framework and seek to bring clarity and direction to the mission of God and the mission of the church. Together, these three scholars seek to navigate the sometimes murky and turbulent waters of the theology of mission in an effort to provide a solid evangelical theology of mission that can serve the church at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The purpose of this scholarly effort is to "examine the various understandings, developments, and challenges of mission with scripture as our guiding authority and with history, human sciences, and multicultural perspectives as our aids, in hope of bringing us closer to a biblically faithful and practically relevant theology of mission" (xxx).

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Ott, with twenty-one years of missionary experience in Europe with *ReachGlobal*, serves as associate professor of mission and intercultural studies and occupies the *ReachGlobal* Chair of Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He authors the introduction and chapters 1–9. Strauss served as a missionary in Ethiopia for nineteen years with Serving in Mission (SIM) followed by ten years as the USA Director for SIM, and he presently serves as the professor of world missions and intercultural studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He authors chapters 10, 11, and 13. Tennent served for eleven years as professor of world missions and Indian studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and now serves as the President of Asbury Theological Seminary. His contribution to this volume is chapter 12.

True to their assertion that the guiding authority for an adequate theology of mission is Scripture, the first section (chapters 1–6) focuses on the biblical foundations. Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overview of the theme of God's universal

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plan of salvation and redemption. God's plan is not universal in the sense that all will be saved; however, it is universal in that from beginning to end, the Scriptures testify of God's plan of redemption focusing on people from every nation, tribe, and language. Chapter 3 asserts that the justification for mission is to be found in *missio Dei*. The God of Scripture is a sending God, thus mission is much more than "a human initiative in response to God's command and acts of salvation" (61). It is the sending activity of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit that provides the biblical justification of mission.

322 The discussion on the purpose and nature of mission (chapter 4) is pivotal because "how one defines the purpose of mission will have much to do with how one defines that task of missions" (80). The discussion here, in this reviewer's opinion, alone makes this book a valuable resource for missiologists and missionaries alike. The authors affirm that the glorification of God or doxology is the "overarching purpose of mission" (80). The foundation of mission is redemption; the center of mission is the kingdom of God; the hope of mission is eschatology; the scope of mission is the nations; the fruit of mission is reconciliation; and the character of mission is incarnation. The authors sum up this discussion on the purpose of mission as mission being "the sending activity of God with the purpose of reconciling to himself and bring into his kingdom men and women from every people and nation to his glory. . . . a sign of the kingdom and an invitation to the nations to enter the kingdom and share the hope of the kingdom promised in Christ's return" (105).

The final two chapters (5–6) close out the section on the biblical foundations of mission. The authors demonstrate how different interpretations of the purpose of mission lead to different understandings of the task of missions or the specific things that the church undertakes in order to fulfill its mission. The discussion focuses on historical understandings of the task of missions—from proclamation and conversion to church planting and church growth to civilization and moral improvement to philanthropy, humanization and liberation—and a biblical evaluation of various interpretations (chapter 5).

In chapter 6, the authors present a personal view of their understanding of the task of missions based on the two mandates—creation and gospel. This leads them to conclude that the "task of missions is the creation and expansion of kingdom communities among all the peoples of the earth" (156). Such kingdom communities are characterized by the following three dimensions: the Great Calling (glorifying God); the Great Commission (evangelism and discipleship); and the Great Commandment (social concern and compassion). In a world where many evangelicals seek to de-emphasize social concern for fear of falling into a

Carlton: Book Review: Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundation social gospel and where others stress social concern and justice over against the verbal proclamation of the gospel and the call to repentance and conversion, the authors do an excellent job of calling the church to avoid excesses and seek to demonstrate the reign of God through both word (gospel mandate) and deed (creation mandate).

The center section of this volume (chapters 7–10) focuses on the motivation and means for mission. The authors discuss the motivation for missions, the role of the church in missions, the missionary calling and vocation, and spiritual power and missions. In each discussion, there is an overview of some of the historical developments, a biblical evaluation of the issue at hand, and a positing of the authors' views and conclusions. On each issue, the authors do a credible job of presenting the various viewpoints on the issue at hand, but, in this reviewer's opinion, do not shed much new light on the topics at hand. For example, the discussion of the role of the church in mission is a re-hashing of the modality/sodality argument. There is no new insight offered, and the authors' conclusion simply seeks to find a synthesis of the two views. At this point, the authors allow the pragmatic need for mission societies to influence their conclusion that both the local church and mission societies are still needed, although they do assert the primacy of the local church. While this may have been true during the time of the modern missionary movement (19th and 20th centuries) because the church was not living out her missionary nature, this does not mean that the *status quo* is the best option for the twenty-first century.

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The final section of this volume (chapters 11–13) deals with mission in both the local and global context. The authors tackle the issues of contextualization and the encounter between Christianity and other major world religions. The final chapter seeks to respond to the issue of the necessity of mission by dealing with the questions regarding the uniqueness of Christ, the reality (or not) of hell, and the fairness of God. Like the center section of this volume, the authors do a credible job of presenting the issues and offering a biblical response; nonetheless, there is not much new light shed on the topics at hand.

Overall, this volume in the Encountering Mission Series is and will be a valuable resource for professors and students in the classroom as well as practitioners on the field. Having served on the field for over twenty years and, now in the classroom, teaching missions over the past four years, this reviewer finds this work to be a much-needed evangelical perspective on the biblical theology of mission and current theological issues in global missions. Although this reviewer may not personally agree with the authors' conclusions, the authors have articulated a relevant, biblically-based, and practical theology of mission.

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Throughout the work, the reader will find the sidebars and case studies engaging and valuable tools for making practical application of the subject matter.

As a side note, in David Hesselgrave's *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Kregel Publications, 2005), he presents ten critical questions regarding missions in the twenty-first century that the church needs to address. Whether intended or not, Ott, Strauss, and Tennent provide a solid, evangelical response to a number of these questions presented by Hesselgrave. This reviewer finds that *Encountering Theology of Mission* takes an honest look at both sides of many of the questions posited by Hesselgrave, carefully examines the biblical record, carefully examines the historical developments and contemporary issues, and presents a consistent and sound evangelical response.

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David A. Stoddard, *The Heart of Mentoring: Ten Proven Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential*, Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2003, 213 pp., \$15.99.

Reviewed by Jeff Ritchey, Ph.D., Associate Chairman, Department of Intercultural Studies, Liberty University.

David A. Stoddard is the founder and president of Leaders Legacy, Inc. The purpose of this non-profit organization is to develop leaders through training, coaching, and mentoring. Stoddard graduated from San Diego State University and has been involved in sales and marketing in the healthcare industry. He has over twenty years experience in personal mentoring.

The Heart of Mentoring seeks to touch the heart of potential mentors with the hope of developing within them a passion for mentoring others. The purpose of the book is not to outline specific methods or steps in the mentoring process but to examine foundational principles which can be used in mentoring or other types of relationships. Stoddard values a holistic, long-term, relationship-driven approach to mentoring rather than a focus on behavioral change or skill enhancement which can be short-sighted and not address the total life of the individual. According to the author, those who are completely fulfilled are those who are involved in mentoring.

As a way to introduce the mentoring relationship, Stoddard relates two stories. The first involves a lack of definition in the relationship as well as a results-oriented approach. Predictably, this relationship dissolves after a short period of time. The second story illustrates the healthy characteristics of a positive mentoring relationship. With the constant change in today's society and the resulting uncertainty, Stoddard emphasizes the importance of mentoring.