

Kevin George Hovey, Foreword by R. Daniel Shaw, *Guiding Light: Contributions of Alan R. Tippett: Toward the Development and Dissemination of Twentieth-Century Missiology*. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series vol. 38. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2019). 336 pages. \$31.20

Alan Richard Tippett (1911-1988) is a well-known name to those familiar with the field of missiology and is perhaps best known for defining the concept of power encounter. This missionary biography by Kevin Hovey, a fellow Australian, is the publication of his PhD dissertation completed at Alphacrucis College, Sydney, Australia.

While the biography does cover his entire life, specific focus is given to the years 1954-1988, which Hovey contends “. . . was a crucial time for missions globally, with the late 1960s being a watershed” (xxv). Hovey also focuses more on Tippett’s career and writings than on his personal life and family.

The book is divided into three sections that include eight of the nine chapters in the book. Chapter one, which stands alone, contains much of what one would expect to find in the opening chapter of a dissertation, explaining the context of the study and how it will be conducted. Here, Hovey introduces the five themes that he felt defined Tippett’s life and work: (1) Centrality of a relationship with God; (2) Centrality of the Church; (3) The Importance of Appropriate Research Methodologies; (4) The Importance of Strategic Missiology and Strategic Missionary Practice; and, (5) Guidelines for Mission Boards and Field Missionaries (21).

Hovey then proceeds to provide a short introduction to each theme. Quite naturally, the first theme grew out of Tippett’s own relationship with God (22). The second theme reflects the emphasis in his writing that he gave to research and teaching on church growth (22). The third theme grew out of his missionary experience in Fiji where he did extensive ethnographic research, developing his own research methods along the way. That research served him well not only in his missionary experience, but also in his doctoral studies and teaching at Fuller (22). The fourth theme reflects Tippett’s conviction, again drawn from his experience in Fiji, that missionaries and missions societies must have a well-thought through strategy for their work (22). The fifth theme, which is strongly related to the fourth, came from Tippett’s observation that there were parts of the world that were ripe for harvest, but that mission leaders frequently failed to strategize to adequately reach them (22). The explication of these themes is threaded throughout the book.

The first section, entitled *Alan Tippett's Life Journey*, comprises chapters two through four. Chapter two is a snapshot of his life journey from his birth and childhood in Australia to his twenty years of missionary service in Fiji, his doctoral studies in Oregon and twelve years at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Mission in Pasadena, California and, finally, his retirement years back in Australia.

Chapter three describes the meteoric rise of Tippett's influence in the global missions community. There were a number of factors that contributed to this, including his self-induced departure from Fiji where he felt his influence had become too strong to be of further value to the church in Fiji that was struggling to come out of the colonial era, an idea to which Tippett was strongly committed (54-5). A second factor was accepting Donald McGavran's invitation to join the nascent School of World Mission (now School of International Studies) at Fuller Theological Seminary, which was fast becoming one of the most influential study of missions centers in the world. During this time, he also served as the founding editor of *Missiology*, the highly influential Journal of the American Society of Missiology. In his own reflections of three years in this job he stated "I think we were truly the mouthpiece of a large body of missionary opinion, which believed that the day of mission was not dead and that mission would somehow go on until the end of the age."¹

Unfortunately, once Tippett retired from Fuller and returned to Australia permanently, his influence declined. Hovey lists several possible reasons including Tippett's laborious writing style (81), no specialized textbook (although Hovey does note Tippett's *Introduction to Missiology*, which was published the year before his death) (82), his rambling speaking style (83) and his retirement to Australia, where he was not well known outside of missions circles (83-4), his lack of continued writing for publication (85-6), and ongoing tension with his own Methodist denomination and mission board. (87) Happily, in 2012 the William Carey Library, with the endorsement of Ralph Winter, began publishing a number of his articles and manuscripts (81) and many of them are now available through online booksellers. When I read this, I immediately purchased a number of them and added them to my own personal missions library. In my opinion, the publication of his work has at least partially resurrected his influence.

Section two, entitled *Tippett's Writings: Theological Basis and Research Methodologies*, comprises chapters five and six. Three of Tippett's life themes, drawn from his prolific writing, are examined in these chapters (27). Chapter 5 focuses on his convictions regarding the

¹Alan Tippett, *No Continuing City*, Unpublished manuscript. (Canberra: St. Mark's Library, 1986), 426, cited in Hovey, 54.

need for a relationship with God, which includes the exclusivity of salvation through Christ alone, and the centrality that the Church must occupy in missional thinking and practice.

Chapter six focuses on Tippet's third life theme, *Research Methodologies*, which were significant in Tippet's own missionary experience in Fiji. If the gospel were to be able to shed its post-colonial, western trappings, missionaries must thoroughly understand the culture of the people group(s) to whom they are sent. Understanding culture requires having or developing the tools needed to understand the culture and to think through how the gospel can best be expressed within that culture. This was Tippet's premise for conducting extensive research during his years of missionary service in Fiji. Because the sub-field of applied missionary anthropology was not well developed at the time, Tippet quite willingly drew on the work of secular anthropologists like Homer Barnett, A.F.C. Wallace, Arnold Van Gennep and others, as well as developing his own ideas (131). Hovey notes that Tippet well understood that the discipline of missiology drew on the fields of history, anthropology and ethnohistory, among others and made extensive use of these fields in developing his own research methodology (131). Like any good scholar, his keen observations and contributions to missiology flowed from his research, both in the library and in the field.

The third section, comprising the remaining three chapters, is entitled *Strategic Missiology and Strategic Mission Practice*. In dedicating a section of his book to Tippet's views of strategy, Hovey successfully highlights the practical nature of Tippet's work. Neither Hovey nor Tippet are armchair scholars, confining themselves to the rarified air of academia. Hovey mentions that Tippet's writing "revolutionized" his and his wife's (Glenys) own missionary work along the Sepik river in Papua New Guinea (xix). Tippet's influence on Hovey is evident throughout the book. Like Tippet, the Hoveys eventually left the field and devoted their lives to training missionaries. For both men research and missiological theory must result in planting churches, including developing church leadership and organizational structures that deeply reflect the cultural environment of the host church.

In summary, I think this is a magnificent book that would benefit any missionary and, most certainly, missionary educators and scholars. It will most certainly contribute to Tippet's outstanding legacy and well-deserved ongoing influence on missions studies and practice.

While I have yet to read much of Tippet's work, which I discovered as a result of this book, Kevin Hovey played a significant role in the development of my thinking in my early years as a missionary. In addition to the friendship we shared, I took a class with him in 1995 on

a biblical response to animism at the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio City, Philippines.

The only weakness of the book is minor. The sections mentioned on pages 27-8 are not listed on the Contents page nor are they set off in the book itself. While one would not expect to see this in the dissertation itself, I think the flow of the published edition would have been enhanced by their inclusion. Nevertheless, I strongly recommend this book.

Reviewed by Dave Johnson