Thirty Books That Most Influenced My Understanding of Christian Mission

Jan A. B. Jongeneel

As a teenager I started to read books on Christian mission in my parents’ home in Kockengen, a village near Utrecht, Netherlands. They were supporters of the Reformed mission among the Toraja people in Sulawesi, Indonesia. While I was a student at the university, I received from my father a signed copy of the Reformed Mission League’s volume *Alle volken* (All Nations) (The Hague: Van Keulen, 1963), which I still possess.

**In Training**

As a student in theology at Leiden University, I studied Christian missions, following the curriculum decided by my church, the Netherlands Reformed Church. The professor required extensive knowledge of only one book: Hendrik Kraemer’s *Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1938). This volume, which Kraemer wrote in seven weeks, was the first missionological work I studied carefully; it became the book that most impacted my understanding of Christian mission. Before studying this classic work, I examined *Der Islam* (Basel: Basler Missionsbuchhandlung; Stuttgart: Evang. Missionsverlag, 1956), by Emanuel Kellerhals. He pointed to Kraemer as one of the three key figures for studying the history, doctrine, and nature of Islam from the standpoint of a Christian missionary.

During my stay in the mission house at Oegstgeest (1968–71), I combined the drafting of my Leiden University dissertation (on the rational views of Enlightenment philosophers on Jesus Christ) with preparatory studies for doing missionary work in Indonesia. The latter were focused upon the unity and variety of people groups in the Indonesian archipelago, their languages, history, and religions, with special reference to Protestant Christian missions and churches. I frequently talked with Bernard J. Boland, a former missionary who at the same time was completing his Ph.D. study on Islam in Indonesia, published as *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971). Most of my teachers in the mission school, later known as the Hendrik Kraemer Institute and nowadays located in Utrecht, were former missionaries in Indonesia. Some of them wrote books in Indonesian, others in Dutch or English. The rectors at that time, for instance, published some stimulating studies. Evert Jansen Schoonhoven’s inaugural address at Leiden University, which dealt thoughtfully with the tensions between mission and tolerance, was published as *Zending en tolerantie* (The Hague: Boekeencentrum, 1962). His successor, Ido Enklaar, published *De scheiding der sacramenten op het zendingseveld* (The Separation of the Sacraments on the Mission Field) (Ph.D. diss, Amsterdam, Holland, 1947), in which he criticized the Dutch missions (and Indonesian churches) that did not allow all baptized members to immediately take part in the Eucharist.

**In Indonesia**

During my stay in Indonesia (1971–80), I published a bibliography of religious studies and Christian theology in Malay and Indonesian since the seventeenth century. The second volume of this work contains one chapter on missionology and another on polemics and apologetics. In both chapters publications written by Indonesians alternate with translations of Western books. Reference is made to studies of two pupils of Johannes C. Hoekendijk, my predecessor at Utrecht University, who became the founding fathers of missionology as a theological discipline in Indonesia: the Indonesian theologian Johannes L. C. Abineno, who wrote *Sekitar theologia praktika* (Regarding Practical Theology) (Jakarta: BPK, 1969), with a large chapter on Christian missions, and the Dutch missionary Arie de Kuiper, who wrote *Missiologia: Ilmu pekabaran Indjil* (Missiology: The Science of Preaching the Gospel) (Jakarta: BPK, 1968). Their thoroughly grounded studies helped me to express my own thoughts in Indonesian.

In the same period, Asian theology outside the setting of Indonesia began to attract my attention. A seminar for Asian and Western teachers of Christian ethics in the theological colleges of Southeast Asia, held at Singapore and organized and chaired by the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama, at that time dean of the South East Asia Graduate School of Theology, brought me in touch with Asians other than Indonesians. I began to read and grasp Koyama’s *Waterbuffalo Theology: A Thailand Theological Notebook* (Singapore: SPCK, 1970). And I also decided to study Asian theology in general, with the help of surveys such as Douglas J. Elwood, *What Asian Christians Are Thinking: A Theological Source Book* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1978). Over time, my own lectures in dogmatics and ethics in Indonesian colleges became more Asian and less Western. Even famous Western theological handbooks became somewhat irrelevant in my teaching because they did not deal very deeply with many of the acute problems that the Indonesian churches and my Indonesian students were facing.

**At Utrecht University**

After my appointment as lecturer (1982) and professor (1986) at Utrecht University, I carefully studied two monographs written by famous predecessors: François E. Daubanton, *Prolegomena van Protestantsche zendingswetenschap* (Prolegomena of Protestant Mission Science) (Utrecht: Kemink, 1911), which is a historical survey and analysis of nineteenth-century mission studies; and Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap* (Church and People in German Mission Science) (Amsterdam: Kamert & Helm, 1948), which is a historical description and analysis of German concepts regarding the link between church/mission and ethnicity (German: Volk).

Both classic studies, never translated into English, inspired me to draft my missionological encyclopedia in two volumes. This time-consuming endeavor brought me in touch with thousands

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of mission studies published between 1800 and 2000 in various Western languages and generally available in the excellent libraries of Utrecht University, the Hendrik Kraemer Institute at Oegstgeest, Yale Divinity School in New Haven, and the Missionary Research Library in New York. Five studies especially attracted my attention and influenced my missiological thinking (apart from numerous bibliographies, encyclopedias, and dictionaries). In the order of their publication:

- a fine normative work by the German Gustav Warneck, the founding father of missiology as an academic discipline:  
  *Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch* (Protestant Mission Theory: A Missiological Theoretical Endeavor), 5 vols. (Gotha: Perthes, 1892–1903), which has not been translated into English;
- the best missiology ever written by a Roman Catholic scholar, the Belgian André V. Seumois, O.M.I., *Introduction à la missiologie* (Introduction to Missiology) (Schöneck-Beckenried: Administration der Neuen Zeit, 1952), never translated into English;
- a broad study of teaching world mission and evangelism in Western Protestant theological institutions by the Norwegian Olav Myklebust, *The Study of Missions in Theological Education*, 2 vols. (Oslo: Egede Instituttet, 1955–57); and

Some of these five books are rooted more implicitly than explicitly in Christian spirituality. Other books, however, are entirely devoted to missionary spirituality and prayer. In this field Roman Catholics have often written more impressive works than Protestants: for instance, Pierre Charles, S.J., *La prière missionnaire* (The Missionary Prayer) (Paris: Casterman, 1935), and Michael C. Reilly, *Spirituality for Mission* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978). When I was stressed or facing problems, I do not take one of these studies but like to read a chapter in the classic work of the Norwegian Ole Hallesby, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1931), where I find comfort. During a very difficult period in my life when I was dealing with depression, however, I found myself unable to read books or articles. I only could repeat the rhymed psalms that I had memorized as a youngster and hymns such as “Safe in the Arms of Jesus” (Fanny Crosby and W. Howard Doane, 1868), which functioned as mantras and helped me go forward. Thanks to God Almighty and Jesus Christ the Shepherd, I recovered 100 percent from depression and started to read and study again.

**A Broader Focus**

After this severe experience my academic interest switched from missiology as an academic discipline to the perception and reception of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ over the centuries, both within and outside of Christianity. I began work on my voluminous *Jesus Christ in World History* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009; reprint: Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2011), with the assistance of Robert Coote. It never could have been written without the help of earlier studies by other scholars on the perception of Jesus Christ in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Marxism, Western philosophy, the arts, and so forth. In this regard it is good to mention the following three books as paving my way: M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance* (London: SCM Press, 1969); Ola H. Schumann, *Jesus the Messiah in Muslim Thought* (Delhi: ISPCK/HMI, 2002); and Roland H. Bainton, *Behold the Christ* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Moreover, such a comprehensive study never could have been realized without carefully studying leading historians such as Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, abridged by David C. Somervell (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), and leading philosophers such as Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959). I have wrestled not only with Jaspers’s concept of “axis” and “axial period” but also with the linear understanding of time and history, rooted in the Hebrew Bible, over against the cycle or wheel. The Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade (*The Myth of the Eternal Return* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1954]) and Keiji Nishitani (*Religion and Nothingness* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982]), a representative of the Buddhist Kyoto school in Japan, proved to be excellent guides for understanding the pre-Christian cyclical view of time and history, which is still strong today in Asia and other parts of the non-Western world and sometimes also exercises considerable influence in church life. Two outstanding theologians were of great value for my rethinking and profiling the lordship of Jesus Christ in world history and subsequently the finality of the Christian mission: Hendrik Berkhof, *Christ the Meaning of History* (London: SCM Press, 1966), and J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, “The Gathering Up of History in Christ,” in *The Missiological Church in East and West*, ed. Charles C. West and David M. Paton (London: SCM Press, 1959).

I think that, from my youth, I learned more from oral tradition than from books. Oral communication not only precedes written communication (in childhood) but also succeeds it (communication with dying people is usually oral). About conversion and church planting I may have learned more from stories in Asia and Africa than I did from Western publications. Nevertheless, missionary and missiological books are needed, not only popular books that sell well, but also—and perhaps most important—profoundly academic mission studies. In my limited free hours I like to read missionary biographies and autobiographies, but as a scholar I systematically pursue in-depth studies on the nature of the worldwide Christian missionary involvement and the art of communicating the Gospel with neighbors of other faiths. I have been much encouraged to notice that classic studies such as Kraemer’s *Christian Message* (reprint: Bangalore: Center for Contemporary Christianity, 2009) and Newbigin’s article mentioned above are nowadays accompanied by excellent non-Western missionary and missiological studies. I especially like in-depth studies by first-generation Christians such as Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1989).

Finally, I learned a lot from the forty-one dissertations that I supervised at Utrecht University in the past two decades. As a scholar, I was often impressed by the way of thinking of my non-Western Ph.D. candidates, coming from a context different from my own. As a believer, I listened with humble appreciation to the life stories of the two Asian Ph.D. candidates who in their home countries also became “new” Christians.
A Christian mission is an organized effort to spread Christianity to new converts. Missions involve sending individuals and groups across boundaries, most commonly geographical boundaries, to carry on evangelism or other activities, such as educational or hospital work. Sometimes individuals are sent and are called missionaries. When groups are sent, they are often called mission teams and they do mission trips. There are a few different kinds of mission trips: short-term, long-term, relational and Mission science synonyms, Mission science pronunciation, Mission science translation, English dictionary definition of Mission science. n Christian theology the study of the missionary function of the Christian Church Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014 Â©Â© Â Thirty books that most influenced my understanding of Christian mission. The discoveries are part of several hundred new planet candidates identified in new Kepler mission science data, released on Tuesday, 1 February, 2011. NASA finds Earth-size planet candidates in habitable zone. David Grinspoon of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science is a member of NASA's Venus Flagship Mission Science and Technology Definition Team. We need first to have a thorough understanding of this phenomenon historically, scientifically, and spiritually. So comprehensive has been the assault on the realities surrounding this issue that many Christians have been influenced by it, at least at the margins. For that reason, the educational portion of this discussion will be the most detailed and comprehensive. We will start with some historical and cultural observations. Historical and cultural overview of the phenomenon.