
Compiled by Tim Davy, co-editor of Encounters.

Summer can be a great time for reading, so we asked a selection of mission-minded people what books they would recommend. I'll get the ball rolling with three recommendations of my own. **The Soul of Mission** (Pustaka Sufes. Sdn. Bhd), edited by Kang-San Tan, is a refreshing and varied collection of essays written on the themes of spirituality, leadership, history and mission in an East Asian context. There is much to learn and enjoy even (perhaps, especially!) if, like me, you are not very familiar with that region.

John Ortberg's **The Life You've Always Wanted** (Zondervan) is full of wisdom, humour, profundity and common sense regarding spiritual growth. An immensely encouraging read, Ortberg has a gift for sifting through the pretence of our self-delusions and points us to a more genuine discipleship.

Finally, a book about statistics! By far the book that has sharpened my critical thinking the most this year is Michael Blastland and Andrew Dilnot's **The Tiger that Isn't** (Profile). A genuinely entertaining read, it shows how numbers can be used, abused and (mis)understood. I cannot hear statistics in the news or in my research without thinking of this book.

Jo Jowett

In Strength Not Our Own by Goergie Orme (Christian Focus Publications) is one of the most honest autobiographies I have read in a long time. Georgie, a former Redcliffe College student tells the story of her call to work among disabled Maasai children in Kenya. She traces God's hand on her life from the days of struggle as a young Christian to her involvement with numerous disabled children whose lives were transformed by God and touched by the love and compassion of a woman who gave them a chance they may never have otherwise had. This book will be an inspiration to anyone considering a call to mission. It focuses not on Georgie's achievements but on countless miraculous demonstrations of God's strength.

Called by God? - A Handbook for those Testing Christian Vocation by Stuart Buchanan is due to be published in September by SPCK. The many years of experience which Stuart brings together in this book make it a must-have resource for all those involved in interviewing and helping Christians to explore their calling. His honest and thorough handling of the subject recognises that the process can be complex and pain-staking but also a joy and a privilege. The combination of godly insight, real-life stories, practical tools and sometimes painful experience all reflect a heart to see God's people become the right people in the right place at the right time. Every mission agency personnel department and church mission group should have a copy.

Gordon Showell-Rogers

Chris Wright's magnum opus, **The Mission of God**, is stunningly stimulating and comprehensive. From his exposition of Luke 24/45-49, to his holistic and eschatological applications it is full of wonderfully refreshing insights.

Faith and Power: Christianity and Islam in Secular Britain (2005 edition) by Lesslie Newbigin, Lamin Sanneh, and Jenny Taylor. A thought-provoking assessment of religious

identity, mission, and the influence of the dominant 'secular' context on both seems to me to have wider European application, beyond the UK's shores.

God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis by Philip Jenkins is a helpful antidote to some of the apocalyptic panic buttons being pressed by Christians and others. The final piece of Jenkins 'Future of Christianity' trilogy (all well worth reading) provides some careful sociological perspectives on one of the big issues of the day for our continent.

Cities of God (subtitle 'The Real Story of how Christianity became an urban movement and conquered Rome') by Rodney Stark builds on his earlier 'The Rise of Christianity', and rigorously (and quantitatively) tests a series of hypotheses about the growth of the Early Church. The application of the findings is very relevant in early 21st century secular and 'post-Christian' Europe.

Birger Nygaard

The small and easily read popular book by abbot Christopher Jamison, **Finding Sanctuary** deals with the quest of modern man to find help his stressful life through the rhythm and values of monastic life. This is one of those books, which helps us reflect on alternative ways to present the Gospel. You clearly feel that Jamison is an evangelist, and really wants people to come to faith in Christ. His approach seems to be very meaningful to a lot of people, who would not respond to normal "evangelism". It is clear that the ways in which people find God is multiple.

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard is now 10 years old. But it is one of those books, which I need to go back to and revisit over and over again. It deals with the content and consequences of the Gospel at a level of depth, which is seldom come by these days. His perspectives on the Gospel and the Christian life have vast missiological implications. Cheap gospels and gospels of sin management is not what he is going for. Dallas Willard is not easy reading. But it is worthwhile spending time with his books.

A couple of other books comes from British sociologists of religion. They do not write from a Christian but from a sociological perspective: Paul Heelas, **Spiritualities of Life** deals with the development of non-religious spiritualities of life, which may be one of the most pervasive influences in Western popular spirituality today. This is not a Christian development at all. But if you are involved in mission in Europe, you need to know and relate to what is happening in this area. Another book focusing on the same development is Gordon Lynch's **The New Spirituality**.

Raymond Potgieter

I found a gem in **The Drama of Scripture** by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen (SPCK). In this book the unified story of God's plan of redemption unfolds, first for Israel and by implication the nations of the world in fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant blessing Gn 12:3b. The Bible story is dramatic, hence the title. In the unfolding of that drama the reader is taken on a journey through time touching upon a nation's history in which God's actions are magnificently displayed and interpreted. What a joyful read for a mission minded theologian, to see the storyline of the single message of the Bible merging mission and theology! Appended is a study guide that allows a serious reader to meditate thoughtfully on the content and meaning of what was read.

Another good read was **From the Straight Path to the Narrow Way** by David H. Greene (ed.) (Authentic). Here is a book that traces the gracious work of faith in Jesus Christ as a consequence of mission work among Muslims, mainly in Africa. Most contributors are active missionaries on the field, passionate about the Lord Jesus Christ, giving delightful excursions

out of the classroom into the heat of the day of mission work. A refreshing approach was the continual juxtaposing of Christ not to Muhammad but to the Qur'an, worthy of serious reflection. A recent acquisition was **Pascal's Wager: The Man who Played Dice with God** by James A. Connor (Harper San Francisco). Dipping into it confirmed money well spent and also whetted my appetite so much that I cannot wait to settle into reading it during the next long weekend. Modern thinking owes much to Pascal who questioned medieval certainties about God by his famous wager.

Eddie Gibbs

John Drane, **After McDonaldization** (Darton, Longman and Todd, 2008). Don't be intimidated by the long paragraphs. It is well worth ploughing through to unearth some deep insights and creative thinking in the areas of mission, and discipleship.

Tony Jones, **The New Christians** (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008). The best analysis to date on all things emergent. It is helpful to get a scholarly insider's perspective on a controversial phenomenon.

Jaap Ketelaar

In his book **The New Conspirators: Creating the Future One Mustard Seed at a Time** Tom Sine (Christian-trendwatcher) challenges Christians to follow Jesus 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year in a radical, holistic, serving way. God wants to use our small efforts to do mighty things in this world that is changing so rapidly. New forms of being church are described that are very encouraging. Do not read it when you want to stay in your comfort-zone!

In **The Leadership Mystique: Leading Behavior in the Human Enterprise** Manfred Kets de Vries (management consultant, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre) combines his knowledge and skills in management and psycho-analysis. The 'inner theatre' of the leader is fundamental for functioning well. As with the iceberg, the biggest part is below sea level and there we are challenged to manage things right in our own life to then serve others.

Emily Hannah

G. Goldsworthy, **According To Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible**, (IVP) has been an absolute find for me this year as I contemplate doing a year long series for 11-16 yr olds examining how God's redemptive plan has been unfolding from the beginning of time. With a clear structure that allows you to use the book as a resource to dip in and out of, as well as to be read, it is ideal for anyone looking to teach an overview of the bible, or to gain an understanding for themselves. Before reading the book, I had not fully grasped how God had chosen to reveal Himself and the need for Jesus through Israel, through the failings of the law, wisdom literature, and man's promised faithfulness. This book helps you to fully grasp that the failings of Israel were no surprise to our great God, but rather part of His intricate plan to point us to the only way.

Having in the past year found myself living in a very comfortable set up, I look with expectancy to reading S. Claiborne's **The Irresistible Revolution: living as an ordinary radical**, (Zondervan). In today's consumer culture, as we watch the dichotomy between the rich and poor widen, I find myself asking more frequently what it means to live as a disciple, obedient to the teachings of Christ. When does my comfort and desire to acquire house, children, security, interfere with seeing the power of God move not just in the lives of others around me, but also in my own? This is a tale of Claiborne's own discomfort with comfort, and his own interpretation of living out biblical truths. Whilst I am not sure I will agree with all

that he concludes, it is a challenge that ought to be made to myself, and is a voice that needs to be heard in today's consumer culture within the church.

Hun Kim

One is **A Promised Land: A Perilous Journey** edited by Daniel G. Groody and Gioacchino Campese. This book offers theological perspectives on migration as well as Diaspora. 19 authors describe the foundations of migration, mission among migration, and various aspects of human rights related to migration, etc.

Another one is **Mission to the World** edited by Tormod Engelsen et al. As the sub title shows in this book, it talks about effective communication of the Gospel in the 21st Century. In fact this book has been dedicated to Knud Jorgensen who is the mission leader of global church. For my perspective, it is worthwhile to review some important issues in mission through this book; for example, migration and conversion, the Southern Phase of Christianity, Women leadership in mission and so on.

Jim Van Meter

Since I took a sabbatical a few years ago, I realize in a deeper way than ever that as a mission leader the most important thing I can do is to intentionally care well for my own soul. A well cared for soul is the best thing I can offer to the Kingdom of God. Three books by Ruth Haley Barton have helped me intentionally care for my soul. **Invitation to Solitude and Silence** was the main book guiding my sabbatical. **Sacred Rhythms** leads a person through a process of developing a rhythm for the care and transformation of one's soul. Her latest book **Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership** encourages the leader to do the one thing he can do – create the conditions that set us up for an "encounter with God in the places where we need it most – to continually seek God in the crucible of ministry no matter how hard it gets."

Detlef Bloecher

I have been most fascinated by Kenneth Bailey's **Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospel** (IVP 2008). Bailey expounds Biblical texts from the historic languages, oriental commentaries as well as cultural background in his unique style. He exposes numerous cultural misunderstandings and uncovers the natural meaning – an extremely inspiring Bible commentary. I was also a revisit of many personal experiences, having lived myself in the Middle East for a number of years.

Another excellent read has been Christopher J.H. Wright's **The Mission of God** (IVP 2006) where he proves that the great commission is firmly grounded in the Old Testament.

Another fascinating book is Hudson Deane **Good and Faithful: New Zealand Missionaries and their Experience of Attrition** (Daystar Publications Trust, NZ, 2008) in which he analyses the reasons for premature return of Kiwi missionaries. The results are quite revealing: e.g. mission executives often name interpersonal conflicts as the prime reason for return, but the missionaries identified primarily family needs, work-related issues, while conflicts with peers came only as number 13 – contrary to the usual perception. He also analysed the data for the missionaries' social status and age groups and identifies the unique challenges – and how member care needs to be situational. Another chapter deals with the emerging generation of workers Gen Y. This is the future of mission and we better learn to understand them now.

Ceri Longville

Much of my reading for my Masters dissertation has been focussed on Internet Evangelism. I have been exploring the potential that local churches have to reach out to their wider non-Christian community via a welcoming, relevant and engaging online presence.

Mark Stephenson, in his book, **Web-Empower Your Church** sets out some very helpful and practical guidelines for church website development. He writes from his own experience of setting up from scratch, to what is now, a very large church website, accessed by people worldwide. His 'down-to-earth', honest account of his personal journey made it a compelling read.

Andrew Caeraga's book, **eMinistry: Connecting with the Net-Generation**, gives attention to the fact that so many younger people today, cultivate friendships and communities online. It gives advice on how best we, as Christians we can respond to and engage with the Net-generation within their online culture. Caeraga challenges us to make good use the Internet, "For the church, the Internet is a truly global opportunity to share Christ, a mission field that is ripe for harvest. Now is the time to go out into that field." Although the book was written before Facebook and Bebo became so popular, many of its principles and cautions of can also be applied to social networking sites.

Andy Matheson

Mark Labberton's, **The Dangerous Act of Worship** (IVP) is a stimulating short read on the connection between worship in its broadest sense and the call to justice. He writes from a pastor's perspective of the awakening in his own life in this regard.

Then Malcolm Duncan's **Kingdom Come** (Monarch) provides a thought-provoking discussion about how in the UK, local churches can authentically engage in their local communities at this time of political and religious transition. The theological grounding is interspersed with local examples and the call to what he terms 'distinctive faith' is very helpful, as people begin to work in partnership with government and others.

Finally I would recommend **Covenant and Community: Our Role as the Image of God** by Doug Baker (Wipf and Stock). Baker suggests that a true interpretation of being made in the image of God is found not in the inherent characteristics of humankind but in our purpose – it is a stimulating read.

Jim McGee

On the Missionary Trail: A Journey Through Polynesia, Asia, and Africa with the London Missionary Society. The book documents the London Missionary Society's 1821 deputation of two supporters, George Bennet and Daniel Tyerman, to visit and report on the work of the agency's missionaries on three continents. The trip took seven years and only one of the two returned alive.

In addition to some classic missionary story action and humor (much of which is drawn directly from the voyagers' journals), the book demonstrates the impact of mission research in several dimensions. Bennett and Tyerman filed reports that countered the negative stories told about missionaries by commercial sailors (who resented how faith in Christ led to stronger moral standards among the natives!), shaping public opinion in England and helping recruiting.

They documented the reasons why many early missionaries abandoned their calling, while encouraging those who persevered – helping retention.

And by comparing the conditions and practices in locations where people had come to faith with those in locations where people were resistant, they documented key factors in fruitful ministry – helping effectiveness.

Krish Kandiah

Fiction: **The Shack** - just for pure controversy and thought provocation.

Theology: **Surprised by Hope** by NT Wright.

Evangelistic: **LIFESWAP** (ok so it's my new evangelistic book based on John's gospel).

Non-Fiction Secular: **The Canon** - a great book that puts the wonder back into science (it is not a christian book).

Biography: **Martin Luther King: A Life**.

and from fellow Slipstreamers Johnny Laird, Redina Kolaneci and Nick Walsh...

If you haven't read them already, Shane Claiborne's **Jesus for President** is very good, and Michael Frost's **EXILES: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture** is just excellent.

Loving God Up Close by Calvin Miller - the style is sparkly and inspirational. Or if you fancy something cool - Ice cream as the clue to the meaning of the universe - **A Journey Toward Eternal Delight** by Billy Sprague... the title says it all :).

I really enjoyed Rob McAlpine's book **Post Charismatic?** which kinda falls into the Emerging Church arena. It's looking at how to continue to believe in the gifts and fruits of the Spirit in light of so much abuse and hype. I loved it...

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