

Mission Reading

Issue 25 Editor: Tim Davy

Our local library recently held a campaign to get kids into reading called, 'On a reading mission'. Though not a campaign as such this edition of Encounters could be said to be 'On a mission reading mission'. In the spirit of last August's favourably received issue on summer reading, this issue will feature several articles aimed to inspire and inform your reading.



The four articles are distinct, yet complementary. For Article 1 we canvassed a variety of mission-minded people for their book recommendations of the last 12 months. It's always an interesting exercise to browse other people's bookshelves!

Article 2 is an interview with Pieter Kwant, a man at the forefront of books and mission. Pieter is International Programme Director for Langham Literature and also runs the publishing and agency company, Piquant. Be informed and encouraged by what he has to say about some of the exciting and strategic projects going on around the world.

We change tack again in Article 3 with Richard Johnson's paper, 'Fictional Mission'. Why should we bother reading fictional accounts of missionaries? In his fascinating and persuasive article Richard contends that mission-related fiction can teach us many things that the more 'historical' genres (such as missionary biographies) cannot. He also highlights his top five mission fiction reads and sets out a bibliography for those interested in pursuing the genre further.

Finally, in Article 4 we highlight 'The Top 25 Business as Mission Books'. This list was originally compiled by the excellent [Business as Mission Network](#) website; my thanks to them for kindly allowing Encounters to reproduce it here.

Whatever you are doing over the summer, may you be refreshed and encouraged.

Tim

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Mission Reading Recommendations



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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On Publishing from Everywhere to Everywhere

An interview with Pieter Kwant



Pieter Kwant is International Programme Director for Langham Literature and also runs the publishing and agency company, Piquant. Interview by Tim Davy, co-editor of Encounters.

Pieter, have books and mission always been part of your life?

For the last 33 years, I have been involved in books in one way or another. I started just after my conversion, in South Africa, in a theological book store, where I learned theology by listening to discussions between theologians who visited the shop. It was my task to know not only the current debates, but to be one step ahead so that I could sell them the books that they would want to read next. Working with a friend who had a degree in theology, and being initially responsible for unpacking books, you have no idea how much I learned about theology as we discussed the books we unpacked and I often took books home to read, returning them a few days after. I worked there for four years, selling books in around seven languages from a selection of 100,000 theological books. This gave me a grounding in book selling and theology as well as a deep love for books. The new media have never erased this deep attachment as books remain for me the most user-friendly means of communication that I know.

One thing that had a significant impact on my life before my employment in this book store was that, after having been converted for a year, I was disciplined by a farmer in Natal, in South Africa, who showed me his library. One morning, I took out my first book, which was *Evangelicalism in England* by Poole-Connor. I read it immediately and proceeded to read another - the biography of George Whitfield by Pollock, and then started reading *The Millennium* by Boettner, which I finished. That same week I started reading *The Dust of Death* by Os Guinness. Being a Dutchman, my English was not quite adequate for the challenge of reading this and I read it with a dictionary in one hand and the book in the other. I had to read the first chapter five times. Within the next few weeks, I had read the complete works available of Frances Schaeffer and HRR Rookmaaker. To me it was almost like a baptismal experience.

My interest in L'Abri led me, my wife and our budding family to Switzerland and the Netherlands to join L'Abri, as I felt very strongly that I wanted to go back to Europe. One of the desires that grew there was to be able to do something in the Kingdom of God for Africa, and possibly the wider world. As it turned out, the door opened for me with employment with Inter-Varsity Press after a year at L'Abri and subsequently I worked with STL and Paternoster Press. Since the year 2000 I have been involved in running my own company, Piquant Agency and Piquant Editions - a small publisher - as well as being involved with Langham Partnership International.

You are currently responsible for Langham Literature; can you tell us a bit about the programme and what your role involves?

Langham Partnership International run three programmes, one related to providing scholarships to Majority World students who want to do a PhD; the second providing preaching seminars in various countries; and I myself am responsible for the literature ministry of Langham Literature, which falls in two parts. We are involved in the distribution of evangelical books to some 1200 theological colleges in 96 countries and we work in five major languages - English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic. We do this through grants of books being made available as well as through subsidizing books. We deal, through the colleges, with their scholars and teaching staff, their students and their alumni in ministry. Secondly, we are involved in the creation of indigenous materials in many languages and we actively encourage local authors to write and local publishers to publish - particularly books that are useful for pastors in their preaching ministries. We concentrate on

large projects, like the *Africa Bible Commentary*, the *Contemporary Arab Commentary* and now also the *South Asian Bible Commentary* and the *Latin American Bible Commentary*, all of which are one-volume commentaries which hopefully will be able to have a long term use in these areas. All of these have indigenous writers and are developed locally. My task is merely to act as a catalyst and a 'dynamo' as I was affectionately called the other day.

What role have books played in mission? Do they still have a part to play?

One of the large projects with which I am involved is *Operation World*, which has been a large part of my life for many years. I believe this book has had an enormous effect on mission, both in its giving much-needed information as well as in encouraging prayer for mission. Our own publication, *Operation China*, was used by local Chinese missionaries to evangelise some of the many people groups described in it.

Books play a key role in enthusing, encouraging and mobilizing people - individuals and churches - for mission. However, new technologies are changing the way we communicate, think and learn. Large mission books in particular have a very small readership now. New methods are called for because the task is not yet complete, and I am sure that books will continue to play a role, small but significant, in future.

How has the movement of mission from 'From the West to the Rest' to 'From Everywhere to Everywhere' been reflected in your work?

Ten years ago, most of the books provided through what was then Evangelical Lit Trust were produced in the West and written by western authors and given to the Majority World. Virtually all Majority World publications were translations of Western works. Our vision now is to - wherever markets have matured - encourage a reversal of this trend by resourcing local authors to write in their own languages for their own people.

Within the *Global Christian Library* series, we are encouraging the development of a major dogmatic series in 12 volumes, written by Majority World, as well as Western authors to enable the dialogue to take place on an equal basis, from everywhere to everywhere. The various approaches enriched by the cultural background from which they are written often gives the others a perspective that is enriching.

You oversaw the production of the *Africa Bible Commentary*. What were some of the challenges and joys of such an immense project?

On Wednesday, this week, we delivered the finished and typeset manuscript of the French edition of the *Africa Bible Commentary*, completing the production of the whole project. The project was conceived some eight years ago and a team was put together that pulled together the expertise of 70 African theologians to write this one-volume commentary on every book of the Bible, as well as 70 articles addressing some of the realities of Africa. I was asked to be the Technical Partner, looking after all the publishing aspects - editorial, production and marketing - as well as being its Agent. 25% of the commentary was commissioned in French and 75% in English; 25% female and 75% male; it was written and produced over five years and the first edition has sold over 65,000 copies and has enjoyed a very positive reception. The French edition will come out in November and other translations - Amharic, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Hausa - are in the pipeline. The great joy in this project was the tremendous fellowship and friendship that developed between us over the years as editors, production and technical staff. To see it now in the hands of so many and being used and studied makes one very thankful to God for the privilege of being involved - and believe me a privilege it is. The challenge has really been trying to keep it all on track, keeping everyone encouraged and enthused when things were difficult and fielding thousands upon thousands of emails in order to coordinate our editors in Africa, our editor in

Canada, our office in Carlisle, our typesetter in New Zealand, our printer in China and our publishers in Kenya, Nigeria and America. It has been a challenge!

In what ways can writing and research in the Majority World be encouraged?

I think that on a local level, wherever one finds oneself, it is important to recognise the gifts of the Spirit within the church that could or should be shared with the national church or further a field. Especially in some Majority World countries what comes from the West is perceived as best, reinforced by the West. I can honestly say I have learned a lot from Majority World Christians and theologians that I could not have learnt in my local setting. The moment you look at the Scriptures from within another cultural setting, it challenges the presuppositions and often un-Biblical attitudes that go unchallenged in our own culture. I would encourage the church in the Majority World to be far more positive about their contributions, within their own context as well as world-wide.

What are some of the projects you are working on at the moment? Which ones do you see as particularly strategic or exciting?

Within my own publishing venture, Piquant Editions, we are working on a 20-odd volume history of the church in China. It attempts to tell the story province by province, including the House Churches, the missionary churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Three Self Church, from AD650 up to the present day. We have published the first summary volume: *China's Book of Martyrs*. The volume we are working on now is on Henan Province.

As an Agent in the Piquant Agency, I am working on the new *Operation World*, as well as on a *Visual Operation World* that is being developed by Patrick Johnstone. The latter is a full-colour book and CD interpreting and extrapolating the data from *Operation World*.

Within Langham Literature, I am working hard on the three commentary projects I mentioned - the Arabic, South Asian and Latin American commentaries. We are also supporting an indigenous commentary project in Vanuatu, streamlining the distribution network on the South American continent and increasing our distribution in the Middle East.

As well as on mission, you also publish on the arts. Do you see much interaction between the two?

Traditionally not, but recently we have found that an increasing number of pastors, youth workers and evangelists have an arts background. There is great interest in how to use 'creative' ways to promote the gospel. Similarly there are several growing networks of artists with a missionary or outreach vision and even traditional mission sending organizations like OM and YWAM have growing departments specializing in the arts, and not just in music but visual and performing arts and filmmaking. No doubt, it is a result of the huge role the (advertising) media play in our culture - it is easy for Christians to perceive 'evangelism' as 'marketing the gospel'. That is something we try to address with our publications. So, yes many of our artists are extremely mission-minded. Fewer of our mission writers are interested in the arts. My own view is that whatever God has given us to do, we should do under the Lordship of Christ and for his glory.

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Fictional Mission

An introduction to and bibliography for missionaries in fiction



Author: Richard Johnson, Head of Biblical Studies, Redcliffe College, Gloucester.

One of the smaller sub-genres of literature that should be of interest to all mission practitioners is that of 'fictional mission'; in other words, novels (or other fiction) in which missionaries play a significant role within the plot, and at times may be the central character(s) within the story. Such novels have a long history – the earliest that I know of is Sydney Owenson's *The Missionary: An Indian Tale*, published in 1811 (and reprinted by Broadview Literary Texts, 2002). I would guess that there must be over a hundred novels within this genre; in a provisional list at the end of this article I have mentioned about fifty candidates for inclusion, and I would be grateful if any readers of this article can add to the list!

Of course, as with all genres, there are many 'fuzzy edges'; should one include, for example, epic novels set in the colonial period (such as Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*), or the many post-colonial African novels (by writers such as Chinua Achebe) which frequently have a missionary figure lurking somewhere within the narrative? What about R.M. Ballantine's nineteenth-century Pacific novels, such as *Gascoyne: The Sandal-Wood Trader: A Tale of the Pacific* (James Nisbet, 1864), or *Jarwin and Cuffy: A Tale* (Frederick Warne, 1878), in which John Jarwin, the hero, meets no less a figure than John Williams in the delightfully entitled chapter VII: 'Our Hero is Exposed to Stirring Influences and Trying Circumstances'? (John Williams, of course, is the 'stirring influence'; and Cuffy, by the way, is the name of Jarwin's dog – in case you were wondering). And what about the numerous examples of juvenile fiction published by the missionary societies to interest their younger supporters – Margaret Baldwin's *Rose Yuan of Ming-O: A Tale of Cathay* (1925), for example, one of a series of 'Entertaining Books of Missionary Interest' published in the 1920s by the Religious Tract Society?

It is notoriously difficult to define precise criteria as to which books should be included and which not, so (other than deliberately excluding juvenile literature) I have simply, and highly subjectively, tried to list those books 'which might be of some interest to the readers'. Please put all errors and omissions down to 'Ignorance, madam, sheer ignorance' – as Dr Johnson responded to the lady who asked him why he had defined 'pastern' as 'the knee of a horse'.

However, before giving you my own list of 'fictional mission', I will first suggest a few reasons why it might be useful to read such works, and then (for those wanting some guidance as to their summer holiday reading) I will give my own 'Top Five'.

Why read 'fictional mission'?

It is tempting to mention in passing that many mainstream missionary biographies probably contain a good deal more fiction than we might wish to acknowledge; and since this is a case where to mention the temptation is also to have fallen into it, I think the best thing to do is to move on rapidly. So why should one bother to read fictional accounts of mission, when books describing 'real' mission work must, surely, be more valuable in encouraging mission, informing prayer and in identifying appropriate mission strategies?

I won't discuss in this article the more general question of the importance of stories in human life, but let me suggest three reasons why missionary 'fiction' *can* be more useful in understanding the dynamics of mission than more 'historical' genres such as 'missionary biography':

a) a plurality of voices

Mission fiction is excellent at looking at events from a plurality of points-of-view; seeing them not only from the viewpoint of the missionary, or of mission supporters, but also from the viewpoint of the receptor culture, or from those who feel threatened by missionary activity. It often provides an articulate voice from the margins, or from the 'underside', and can be an effective critique of the Western/colonial mentality which we all acknowledge has at times infected the work of mission agencies.

b) a wider range of human experience

Mission fiction is very good at depicting that 'darker' side of human nature which missionary biographies are likely to edit out. It reminds us, perhaps unintentionally, that the treasure we have is in 'jars of clay'. A missionary struggling with jealousy, theological doubts, sexual fantasy, hatred of one's call, or of one's fellow-missionaries, or other emotions and temptations common to humanity, is not likely to mention the fact in their monthly newsletter or daily blog; and biographers are likely to skip delicately around such demons. However, the novelist has no such inhibitions, and therefore many novels are paradoxically more 'true-to-life' (or at least more 'true-to-the-inner-life') than many supposedly 'historical' accounts.

c) a wider historical and geographical canvas

If there is fiction in much 'historical' narrative, there is also a great deal of history in much 'fiction'. A good novelist will take pains to get the historical framework 'right', and will usually depict the relevant material in a far more powerful way than the historian. In addition, a novelist can unashamedly move their characters around the historical chess-board in order to be 'where the action is' without the constraints imposed upon the biographer. A range of significant missiological issues can be introduced into the life of a fictional character in a way which, as it happened, may not have been the experience of any one historical individual.

In all of these ways 'fictional mission' paints mission on a bigger, and often more human, canvas than many traditional missionary genres. At their best such novels can explore the way that 'being a missionary' is also a way of 'being human'; and can provide vivid reminders of how a failure to become fully human will also lead to being a failure as a missionary. They are voices that, as human beings, we all need to hear.

My Top Five – in brief!

Wilkie Collins, in the original 1860 preface to *The Woman in White*, wrote to his reviewers:

In the event of this book being reviewed, I venture to ask whether it is possible to praise the writer, or to blame him, without opening the proceedings by telling his story at second-hand?... is he doing a service to the reader, by destroying, beforehand, two main elements in the attraction of all stories – the interest of curiosity, and the excitement of surprise?

Let me therefore promise at the outset not to give away any significant plot details or surprises! There is of course a great deal more in each of the books than I can possibly convey in a single paragraph, so if you choose not to read them *because of* the review please read them instead *in spite of* the review! If you love literature at all, you will not be disappointed. Incidentally, I have generally given the UK publishers; although several of these novels were published slightly earlier in the US.

1. John Hersey *The Call* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985)

A vast, 700-page, epic novel of missionary work in China during the first half of the twentieth century. David Treadup answers 'the call' to become a missionary with the YMCA in China, arriving in 1905. Over the following decades, against the ever-present background of China's turbulent history, Treadup struggles with how best to articulate the Christian message within the Chinese context. Just about every significant missiological issue affecting missionaries in the China of that time is addressed, and the Chinese background (with which John Hersey is familiar, having spent his early childhood in China) is accurately and sympathetically portrayed. Overall, a magnificent novel.

2. Barbara Kingsolver *The Poisonwood Bible* (Faber and Faber, 1999)

Perhaps the most famous recent example of fictional mission, in April 2003 it came 125th in the BBC's 'The Big Read'. (Mind you, having just reread the list of the Top 200 I'm not sure whether that says anything much at all!) Once one gets over the unlikelihood of the dysfunctional Price family being accepted for missionary work in the Congo in the late 1950s, the book is perhaps best read as a classic example of how *not* to do missionary work. However, it is also beautifully and evocatively written, being told (and, I think, rightly) from the perspectives of Nathan Price's wife and 4 daughters rather than from Nathan Price himself. I'm still not convinced that the final 100 pages or so were necessary, but nevertheless it's a book that can be read again and again.

3. Shusaku Endo *Silence* (Peter Owen, 1976)

From childhood Shusaku Endo was fascinated by the history of the Jesuit mission to Japan. Francis Xavier had landed in 1549, and there followed a period of remarkable success, and by the end of the century around 300,000 Japanese had become Christians. However, this was brought to an abrupt halt when a combination of political, economic and religious factors caused the expulsion of all missionaries in 1614. Those who stayed on were ruthlessly hunted down, and the church was persecuted almost to the point of extinction. Most of the missionaries suffered martyrdom rather than denying their faith, but in 1632 Ferreira, the head of the Jesuit mission, apostatized, sending shock waves through the order. Apostasy was symbolised by stepping on a *fumie*, a medallion with an image of Mary and/or Jesus. Shusaku Endo had seen such a *fumie*, worn down and darkened by the numerous feet that had stepped on it, in a museum, and, having grown up with the stories of the heroic Christians who had been martyred, he became fascinated by the stories of those who were weak and who had apostatized. Was there the possibility of forgiveness or redemption for such people?

Silence deals with key missiological issues such as persecution, martyrdom, betrayal, torture, apostasy, failure, and the silence of God, and the often rather bland question 'What Would Jesus Do?' is brought to an excruciating point; and it is hard to avoid reading it without the question frequently being turned around to 'What would I have done?' Neely (1996, 458) writes about this work: 'No other novel about missionaries probes basic theological issues so thoroughly, nor incites more conflicting views.'

4. Mario Vargas Llosa *The Storyteller* (Faber and Faber, 1990)

Set amongst the Machiguenga tribe in the jungles of Peru, this book again powerfully explores questions of language, contextualisation, storytelling, and the survival of an indigenous way of life. Saúl Zuratas – nicknamed Mascarita, or 'Mask Face' – is a student

who becomes fascinated with the figure and role of the tribal 'hablador', or 'storyteller', who 'using the simplest, most time-hallowed of expedients, the telling of stories, were the living sap that circulated and made the Machiguengas into a society, a people of interconnected and interdependent beings.' (p93). He fears that the SIL missionaries, whilst seeking to preserve the Machiguenga language, are actually destroying something even more fundamental to the nomadic Machiguenga identity. Again, a novel that raises vital questions for mission to indigenous peoples and more widely.

5. Charles Williams *The House of the Octopus* (Edinburgh House Press, 1945)

'This play represents the full maturity of Williams' thought on the question of human integrity and its relation to the providence of God, and it throws a searching light on a certain kind of religious temperament.' (Glen Cavaliero in Horne, Brian *Charles Williams: A Celebration* (Gracewing, 1995, 203). It was certainly one of Charles Williams' final works, as he died on 15th May 1945. The play concerns a missionary, Anthony, who has established a church in the South Seas. Again the themes of persecution, betrayal and apostasy are highlighted, as the island is invaded by the empire of P'o-l'u, but the story mainly concerns the way in which Anthony, although initially very judgemental about a girl who has apostatised under the threat of persecution, is finally forced to recognise the deep and equally dangerous pride within his own heart. When the congregation tell him:

'The new life must be ours and not yours;
God is our cause of being, and only God'

he is finally compelled to admit:

'I do not wish you to live from God alone;
I wish always to be your means to God.' (p78)

It has to be said that Charles Williams is never the easiest of writers, but there are unique and profound aspects to his vision which make him well worth wrestling with.

A 'fictional mission' bibliography

I have arranged this bibliography by continents. It is by no means complete, and, as I mentioned above, I would be glad to be informed [contact me [here](#)] of any additions that you think should be included. Sydney Smith once wrote 'I never read a book before reviewing it; it prejudices a man so.' I can't claim to be in Sydney Smith's league, as I have actually read some of these books; but I confess, not all, and at times I've needed to trust that most notorious example of hyperbole in the English language, the publisher's blurb. George Orwell once wrote, 'When all novels are thrust upon you as works of genius, it is quite natural to assume that all of them are tripe.' Well, many of these novels are not works of genius; but I hope that none of them are tripe either. My apologies that space prevents a greater degree of annotation; but do come back to *Encounters* with any comments of your own about 'fictional mission' books you have read!

General articles

There is something of a dearth of critical writing about fictional mission, but the best starting point is:

Neely, Alan. "Images: Mission and Missionaries in Contemporary Fiction and Cinema." *Missiology* 24:4 (Oct 1996) p451-478

Three novels (those by Willa Cather, Chinua Achebe and Barbara Kingsolver) are also reviewed in the recent article:

Price, J. Matthew "Popular Notions of the Missionary Task in a Post-Missionary Era: A Hopeful Response to the Images of Missionaries Depicted in Twentieth Century Novels" *Missiology* 36:2 (April 2008) p245-257

Europe

From the point of view of fictional mission, this is by far the easiest continent. Does anyone out there know ANY novels about mission in Europe? The only one I am aware of is:

Arthur, Randall *Jordan's Crossing* (Multnomah Publishers, 1993)

Unfortunately, the publisher's blurb in this case rather put me off: 'A SUSPENSEFUL, ACTION-PACKED NOVEL OFFERING INSIGHT AND HEALING TO THOSE AFFECTED BY LIBERALISM IN THE CHURCH' (all capitals and colours courtesy of the publisher). Well, at least you've been warned.

Asia

We've already mentioned Owenson's *The Missionary*, Hersey's *The Call*, Endo's *Silence*, and (in passing) Scott's *Raj Quartet*. We should certainly add here other novels by Shusaku Endo (such as *The Samurai* (Peter Owen, 1982)) which are equally worth reading.

A couple of well-known novelists from the earlier part of the C20th should also be mentioned; both of these books were best-sellers in their time:

Cronin, A.J. *The Keys of the Kingdom* (Victor Gollancz, 1942) [early C20th China]

Godden, Rumer *Black Narcissus* (Peter Davies, 1939) [India]

If one also includes novelisations of the lives of real missionaries, then perhaps we should mention:

Morrow, Honoré Willsie *Splendour of God* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1929)

- a novel based on the lives of the Judsons in C19th Burma.

More recent novels should include:

Lapierre, Dominique *City of Joy* (Warner Books, 1985) [Calcutta, India]

Matsuoka, Takashi *Cloud of Sparrows* (Delacorte Press, 2002) [C19th Japan]

and, although more of an adventure story with some missionary characters,

Highland, Frederick *Ghost Eater* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2003) [C19th Sumatra]

Africa

Over the last 50 years the Heinemann 'African Writers Series' has become very well-known, and includes numerous books which feature a missionary character; or at the very least deal with the clash between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. Amongst many others (not all published by Heinemann) we could mention:

Achebe, Chinua *Things Fall Apart* (Heinemann, 1958) [Nigeria]
 Echewa, T. Obinkaram *The Land's Lord* (Heinemann, 1976) [Nigeria]
 Mopeli-Paulus, A.S. and Miriam Basner *Turn to the Dark* (Jonathan Cape, 1956) [Lesotho]
 Munonye, John *Obi* (Heinemann, 1969) [Nigeria]
 Nzekwu, Onuora *Blade Among the Boys* (Hutchinson, 1962) [Nigeria]
 Thiong'o, Ngugi Wa *The River Between* (Heinemann, 1965) [Kenya]
 Wangusa, Timothy *Upon this Mountain* (Heinemann, 1989) [Uganda]

Not surprisingly, missionaries often figure in novels by non-African writers set in Africa. Here are a number to add to Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible*:

Barley, Nigel *The Coast: A Novel* (Viking, 1990) [Niger]
 Hulme, Kathryn *The Nun's Story* (Muller, 1956) [Belgian Congo]
 Jeal, Tim *The Missionary's Wife* (Warner Books, 1998) [Southern Africa]
 Leanne, Shelly *Joshua's Bible* (Warner Books, 2003) [Southern Africa]
 Michener, James A. *The Covenant* (Random House, 1980) [Southern Africa]
 Target, G.W. *The Missionaries* (Duckworth, 1961) [Central Africa]
 Tyler, W.T. *The Ants of God* (Collins, 1982) [Ethiopia]

North and Central America

Novels in this section usually involve missions to the indigenous Indian tribes; for example:

Craven, Margaret *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (Bodley Head, 1967) [British Columbia]
 Mitchener, James A. *Texas* (Random House, 1985)
 Moore, Brian *Black Robe* (Jonathan Cape, 1985) [Northern Canada]
 Wyman, Margaret *Mission: The Birth of California, The Death of a Nation* (Idyllwild, 2002)

One exception, set in San Francisco in the early C20th, is:

Burrows, Geraldine *Chinatown Mission* (Five Star, 2002)

Moving down into Central America, two more novels should be mentioned:

Cather, Willa *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (Heinemann, 1927) [Mexico]
 Hardie, Sean *Till the Fat Lady Sings* (Michael Joseph, 1993) [Honduras]

Latin America

Two well-known films dealing with missions to the indigenous Indians each have books associated with them:

Bolt, Robert *The Mission* (Penguin, 1986) [Paraguay]

Matthiessen, Peter *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (Random House, 1965) [Brazil]

Like *The Mission*, another novel dealing with the Guarani Indians in Paraguay is:

Pallamary, Matthew J. *Land Without Evil* (Charles Publishing, 2000)

Llosa's *The Storyteller* obviously deals with a similar theme, and one other book by another best-selling novelist can hardly be missed out:

Grisham, John *The Testament* (Century, 1999) [Brazil]

Finally, two novels by former missionaries are:

Elliot, Elisabeth *No Graven Image* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1966) [Ecuador]

Montgomery, G. *The Lonely Ones* (Scripture Union, 1970) [Peru]

Australia and the Pacific Islands

There are a growing number of aboriginal writers dealing with the clash between missionaries and aboriginal culture. Two that I am aware of are:

Johnson, Colin *Doctor Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (Hyland House, 1983)

McLaren, Philip *Sweet Water – Stolen Land* (University of Queensland Press, 1993)

And one older book by a non-aboriginal writer:

Stow, Randolph *To the Islands* (Macdonald, 1958)

The islands of the South Pacific have always held a romantic fascination for the European mind, and various novels (or plays, in the case of Charles Williams) set in the area include missionaries amongst their cast of characters. Going back to the nineteenth century we have already mentioned the novels of Ballantine; perhaps we should also mention in passing:

Melville, Herman *Typee: A Narrative of a four months' residence among the natives of a valley of the Marquesas Islands: or, A peep at Polynesian life* (John Murray, 1846)

Let me also mention four C20th works:

Kirchhoff, Bodo *Infanta* (Viking, 1992)

Maugham, W. Somerset *Rain: The Story of Sadie Thompson* (Dell, 1921)

Shearston, Trevor *White Lies* (University of Queensland Press, 1986)

Warner, Sylvia Townsend *Mr Fortune's Maggot* (Chatto and Windus, 1927)

Finally, moving northwards we have:

Michener, James A. *Hawaii* (Random House, 1959)

Conclusion

Hopefully this has given you a taste for what is available! I'm sure that there is much material that I have not come across, and a large scope for missiological analysis of such books; but don't forget that many of these can be read for the simple enjoyment that reading a good story brings. I leave you, though, with a final question to ponder on: why, on the whole, have the best books (as literature) been written by writers with major reservations about the missionary task?

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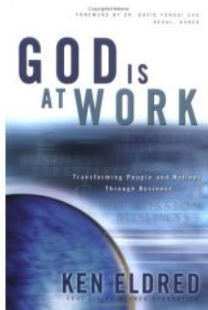
The Top 25 Business as Mission Books



Originally compiled by the Business as Mission Network (www.businessasmissionnetwork.com). Edited by Tim Davy, co-editor of Encounters.

One of the many exciting aspects of contemporary mission is the intersection between mission and business, or, as it is often called, *business as mission*. An excellent resource for this whole area is the [Business as Mission Network](http://www.businessasmissionnetwork.com) website. Among many other things they publish a periodically updated list of their top 25 books on faith and business, and they have given kind permission for Encounters to reproduce the list here. My thanks in particular to Justin Forman for arranging this.

So here is the list. Where possible the titles are linked to review articles on the Business as Mission Network website. The article on their top title, Ken Eldred's *God is at Work*, is also included.



1. [God is at Work](#) by Ken Eldred

"Every significant movement can point to a book, paper, article or series of all of the above that communicates in one clear voice the vision of a movement.

God is at Work by Ken Eldred defines and gives examples for the movement of Business as Mission with clear cut precision. Sharing from personal experience with two companies and acclaimed success Ken forecasts a movement of the Church and the Christian community to Business as Mission with speed similar to that of the response to the California gold rush.

Taking what appears to be some content from a previous book that he co-authored called *On Kingdom Business: Transforming Missions Through Entrepreneurial Strategies* the book establishes maybe one of the most widely recognized baseline definitions for business as mission.

The last chapters of the book clearly outline the key forms of business as mission and the role that each play. Everything from micro enterprise development to overseas privately owned companies. One of the things that is most insightful about the book are the specific case studies of people that are living out the concepts in countries around the world. It is refreshing to see a book that is so intent on highlighting specific next steps rather than living in a world of theory.

Of all the books that exist on business as mission this has been the one brought up most frequently at events or meetings with business and mission agency leadership teams. It is also the book that I received the most email replies about when nominating business as mission catalysts to watch in 2007.

It's a great read, and I encourage you to visit the website to take a look. You can purchase a copy of the book and read excerpts by clicking on this link: <http://www.godisatwork.org/>."

and the rest...

2. [Lausanne Forum Papers](#)
3. [Business as Mission](#) by Michael Baer
4. [On Kingdom Business](#) edited by Ken Eldred and Tetsunao Yamamori
5. [Great Commission Companies](#) by Steven Rundle and Tom Steffen
6. [Marketplace Christianity](#) by Robert Fraser - (NEW to the List)
7. [Business for the Glory of God](#) by Wayne Grudem
8. [God at Work](#) by David Miller
9. [Kingdom Catalyst](#) by Johnny Combs
10. [Doing God's Business](#) by Paul Stevens
11. [Tentmaking](#) by Patrick Lai
12. Transformation by Ed Silvano - (NEW to the List)
13. [Business as a Calling](#) by Michael Novak
14. [Devotional Ventures](#) by Corey Cleek
15. [Anointed for Business](#) by Ed Silvano
16. [Convergence](#) by Brett Johnson
17. [God at Work](#) by Rich Marshall
18. Where There are No Jobs by David Befus - (NEW to the List)
19. [Kingdom Companies](#) by Jorg Knoblauch and Jurg Opprecht
20. Transform the World by Sharon Swarr and Dwight Nordstrom
21. [Entrepreneur's Creed](#) by Merrill Oster and Mike Hamel
22. [Business as Mission](#) by Tom Steffen and Mike Barnett
23. [The Gods of Business](#) by Todd Albertson
24. Loving Monday by John Beckett
25. [Galtrnoics Story](#) by William Goheen

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