

# NEDERLANDSE ZENDINGSGESCHIEDENIS: ONTMOETING VAN PROTESTANTSE CHRISTENEN MET ANDERE GODSDIENSTEN EN GELOVEN (1601- 1917), MISSION (MISSIOLOGISCH ONDERZOEK IN NEDERLAND) 56.

Author: Jongeneel, Jan A.B

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For anyone in need of a concise, compact, yet thorough overview of Dutch mission history *in toto*, Jongeneel's *Nederlandse zendingsgeschiedenis* suggests itself as a practical and eminently readable resource. The English title of the book reads: *Dutch Protestant mission history: Encounter of Protestant Christians with other religions and beliefs (1601-1917)*. That being said, the book is entirely written in Dutch and therefore accessible only to those able to read the language. Nevertheless, given the nature of its content, the book is intended for students and researchers of the mission history of the Netherlands, which presupposes a readership somewhat fluent in or at least rudimentarily familiar with Dutch.

Jan Jongeneel is no stranger to the missiological scene, given the wealth of his experience and his *curriculum vitae*. He has spent long periods of time working in Indonesia, lecturing in the Netherlands, going on working trips to overseas territories, and accompanying postgraduate students writing theses on applicable subjects. This makes him an appropriately autochthonous authority to carry out such a monumental task. And monumental it is, since, as the title suggests, the book attempts to sketch



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out a comprehensive historical outline and analysis of not only Dutch mission history in the sense of organised and institutional missiological activity, but even more broadly, of encounters between Protestant Christians from the Netherlands and representatives of other religions and beliefs in the timeframe from 1601 to 1917. Also, the book is intended as the first of a two-volume project, meaning that the author's timeframe is actually even larger than it seems at first; the second volume, on which Jongeneel is currently working, is to cover the period from 1917 until the present.

Naturally, this is an ambitious project, and it raises the question as to which delimitations the author selects in order to reduce the scale of the content to a manageable scope. He delimits his topic, firstly, by taking a two-pronged approach: On the one hand, he proceeds chronologically and in a more general fashion by way of topical overviews, and on the other hand, he provides concise biographical sketches of only six major, i.e. outstanding representatives of each era and sphere of activity (and yes, Johannes van der Kemp is included). This allows him to keep the pace of the book flowing without getting bogged down into countless details. Secondly, Jongeneel devotes his attention to foreign mission and faith encounters abroad; in terms of the domestic scene, he contents himself with describing select encounters with non-Westerners entering the Netherlands during the timeframe. In other words, he focuses on Dutch Protestants and those associated with Dutch missions in foreign parts, and on non-Christian visitors and immigrants to the Netherlands and their encounters with Protestant faith streams (although he does mention Christian visitors too, such as the many South Africans who studied theology at universities in the Netherlands over the course of history). In addition, Jongeneel excludes encounters between Dutch Protestants and adherents to the Jewish faith in non-Western contexts.

The book is written by a Dutch author about encounters in Dutch mission history and expressly dedicated to the legacy of Dutch preachers, mission operatives, and their partners killed in the course of mission service prior to 1917. Even so, the book is no hagiography, since Jongeneel takes care to emphasise evidence presented by primary sources (though he does also consider secondary sources) and to present as balanced an overview as possible; something in which he eminently succeeds, in my opinion. He can counter such statements as: "*Doch voor alle perioden geldt, dat vele tientallen Nederlandse predikanten, zendelingen en gemeenteleden zich ingespanssen hebben voor het leren kennen van andere godsdiensten en geloven, en voor het vertrouwd maken van hun aanhangers met het Evangelie,*" with others such as: "*In de Nederlandse zendingsgeschiedenis wisselen grandeur en misère elkaar steeds af.*" He does not shy away from more controversial subjects such as the connection between Dutch commerce and Christianity, and that between Dutch Christianity and slavery. The book also avoids the charge of nationalism in that Jongeneel is careful to address the interaction and cooperation between Dutch persons and other nations, such as the German mission personnel (especially the

Moravian Herrnhuters, who feature prominently) and Japanese nationals. Clearly, the author has not only Dutch readers in mind. This becomes evident from the fact that he provides helpful terminological clarifications specific to the Dutch language (for instance, Dutch distinguishes between *missie* and *zending*, with the former relating to Roman Catholic expansion in particular and the latter to Protestant activities; this is in contrast to English, German, and French, which tend to treat their respective equivalents as synonyms), as well as English equivalents to Dutch words in some cases.

Jongeneel selects the year 1601 as the *terminus a quo* for this volume, since this was the year in which a Dutch Christian, who had been liberated from prison in Aceh, published an account of his encounter with Muslims, the first known publication of an encounter of this nature. Jongeneel concludes this volume with 1917, the year in which a mission society was founded in *Oegstgeest* in the wake of the 1910 Edinburgh conference. Jongeneel divides the interim period into two sections, with 1793/97 constituting the watershed point, the years in which the VOC and WIC, the prominent Dutch commercial ventures were disbanded respectively. He discusses each of these sections in two chapters, one focusing in each case on the domestic scene in the Netherlands and the other on developments in the non-Western world.

In keeping with the scope of the book, the range of foci in each chapter is considerable, covering socio-economic and political contexts, institutional ecclesiastical developments both at home and abroad, modalities and sodalities, various missiological thinkers, the work of preachers, teachers, and pastoral caregivers in foreign lands, Bible societies, informal encounters between Christian laypersons and adherents of other faiths both domestically and internationally, and general results flowing from these encounters. The international field covers, albeit briefly, most areas of Dutch colonial and mercantile engagement over the course of these centuries. It goes without saying that if the book had been intended as an exhaustive treatment of these foci, the scope itself would have been prohibitive for the undertaking.

However, the strength of the book is its sequential and encyclopedic overview of these fields, as well as its broad-scale theological and missiological analysis. It engages theoretical reflections by Dutch mission thinkers, as well as the practical reflections and actions of experienced practitioners overseas, briefly comparing and contrasting the two areas, for instance, with regard to the relationship between Christianity and slavery. Jongeneel complements this aspect by providing a helpful general literature review, footnote references to carefully selected comprehensive volumes covering each individual field, and by adding at the back a comprehensive bibliography. This book would therefore be a valuable resource for researchers entering into the field of Dutch faith encounters, since it directs them to additional relevant era-specific and area-specific works and sources with more in-depth coverage.

Occasionally, Jongeneel also provides concise timelines specific to each topic or area, which help to give an overview of developments in that field. In my opinion, the book could have benefited from more maps; it does provide two pages of maps, but they are located in the back and are not easy to find when needing to track geographic developments on a global scale. This, however, is a minor quibble. Overall, the book succeeds in what it sets out to do, and, considering the lack of other comprehensive studies of this nature, makes for a valuable addition to every missiologist's library.