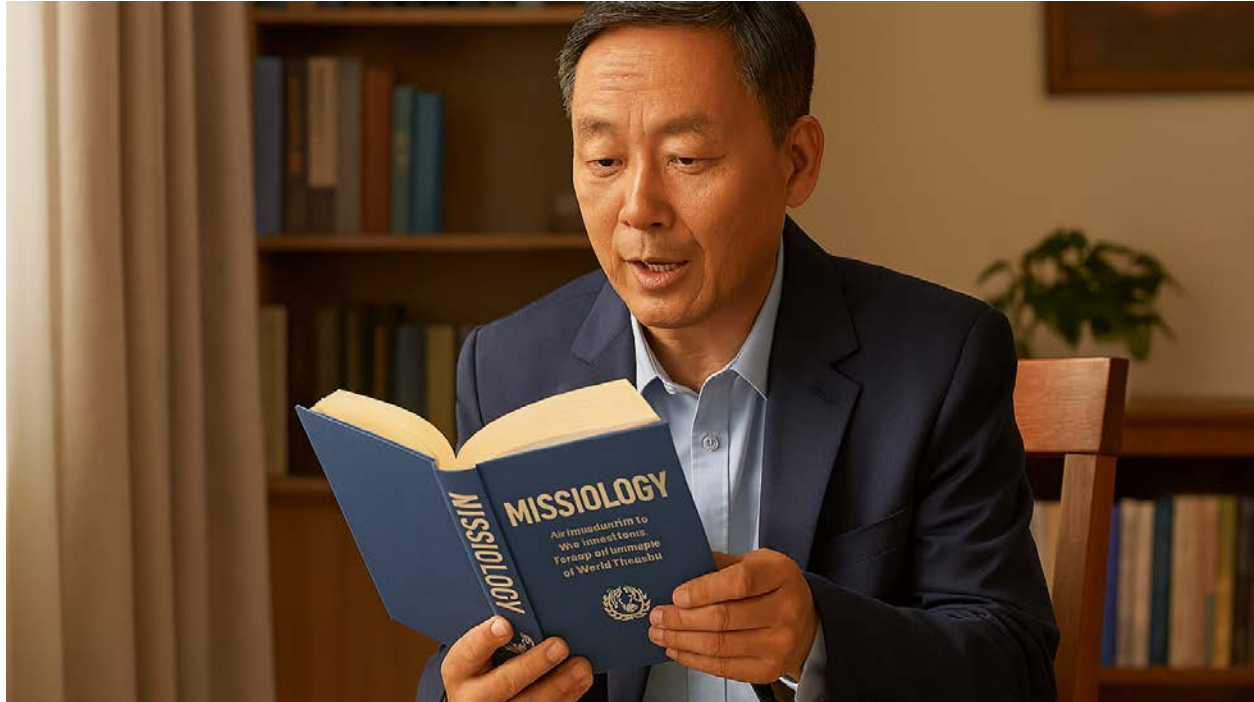


Book Review of Missiology: An Introduction to The Foundation History And Strategies of World Missions

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Preface

From the length, number of pages, and number of authors, one can see how rich this book is in content. With recommendations from various sides, this book is a remarkable work for the missionary era, providing theoretical foundations and guidance for modern church mission work. Using forty-two chapters and more than 800 pages, it gives a relatively comprehensive exposition of the content of missiology. On the one hand, reading it feels like a daunting task; on the other hand, it stirs anticipation, hoping for unexpected gain. God is a missionary God—the initiator, driver, and practitioner of mission. As the Triune God, He personally participates in the great work of mission. The mission God gave humanity at creation was to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, exercise the authority God gave them, and represent Him in governing His creation. In this, the thought of mission is implied. Mission theology is built not only on biblical theology but also on the missionary practice of church history. After Jesus, the church holds a vital role in mission. Emil Brunner once said: *“The church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. Without mission, there is no church; if the church ceases to be missionary, faith itself will cease to exist.”* The church, as the channel and means of mission, faces many problems and challenges throughout the development of mission history. Mission has never been smooth sailing, and even today it still advances amid difficulties and challenges. In its discourse on mission theology, this book provides references from many angles, perspectives, and dimensions, aiming to view the history of mission broadly and offer guidance for the modern missionary task.

Overview of the Book

Chapter 1 is an overview and definition of missiology.

Chapters 2, 7, 8, 9, and 10 address the important subject of mission theology—missiology without Christian theology would be useless and hollow.

Chapter 3 introduces the current state of missions.

Chapters 11–15 explore the history of missions: in the West, Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Chapters 16–19 deal with indigenization, contextualization, cultural integration, cultural adaptation, cultural analysis and definition, translation, and communication skills.

Chapters 21–25 take a comparative religion approach, identifying three main viewpoints: pluralism, inclusivism, and exclusivism.

Chapters 26–37 discuss mission strategies, their effectiveness, and their shortcomings.

Chapters 38–39 provide references regarding missionaries' preparation in various aspects—spiritual, family, church service, and spiritual warfare in the mission field.

Chapter 40 discusses the local church and global mission.

Chapter 41 presents case studies of missions.

Chapter 42 addresses the unfinished task—the unfinished great work of mission.

The Author's Reflections

One highlight of this book is that multiple authors discuss the same topics—missions and evangelism—laying the foundation for its richness and freshness. Moving from the perspective of a single author to multiple voices makes the discussion of mission more comprehensive and thorough. At the same time, this can also be a weakness, since with multiple authors, repetition of viewpoints or arguments inevitably occurs. Nevertheless, this does not significantly affect the work's discourse.

The book's practical mission examples are excellent. It not only has a biblical-theological foundation but also provides examples of missionary practice. This combination of research and practice offers valuable reference for mission work. Naturally, multi-author collaboration leads to repeated points—such as examples of Paul's mission—but these also complement one another, enriching the discussion from different perspectives. The first half of the book emphasizes biblical theology more, with relatively less discussion of mission practice, but this also provides a strong foundation for both mission theology and practice.

The Mission Purpose of the Church

The church is by nature a missionary community. If the church loses its vision for mission and no longer contains a missionary element, it forfeits the right to be called a church (Emil Brunner). I resonate deeply with this: when the church lacks drive in mission, it loses vitality and freshness, becoming old and stagnant. As a missionary community by nature, mission is not only the church's calling but also its lifeline. If the church does not press forward in mission, the result is self-destruction. As John 15 records, Jesus said that branches not bearing fruit will be cut off; bearing fruit is a concrete expression of mission.

On the other hand, this book also looks at mission from a broad historical perspective. The success and spread of missions in the West had the Roman Empire as its central factor. Mission progressed westward and eastward, which may also be viewed from the perspective of historical theology. Written missionary accounts accompanied mission efforts, leaving precious records for mission history. In mission history, living examples of missionaries such as Hudson Taylor and David Livingstone stand out. As witnesses and practitioners, with diverse strategies and approaches, they made indelible contributions to missions. Historical events also became channels and means for mission. Of course, some historical events cast negative shadows over mission and caused great hindrances.

Therefore, mission must start from its divine essence and be grounded in pure faith. Mission strategies must keep pace with the times. Bible translation is also a vital aspect of mission, as are written evangelism, film, and training local believers. Mission must also consider contextualization and cultural adaptation. Knowledge of various religions is indispensable for mission work—we must know both ourselves and others in order to find entry points for the gospel when facing people of different faiths.

What inspired me in this book is that beyond gaining theories, strategies, and practical examples from its discussions, the most important is to have a missionary vision. In carrying out the missionary mandate, it is not only about participating in practice but also about advancing with the times—researching and developing missionary strategies, since every era faces different contexts and every situation presents unique challenges to mission.