Obituary for Karel Adriaan Steenbrink (16 January 1942–22 August 2021)

On 22 August 2021 Karel Adriaan Steenbrink passed away unexpectedly at the age of 79. He suffered from cancer, but up to his last day he seemed quite well; so his death was sadly a very unwelcome surprise to his wife and family.

Born in a big Roman Catholic family in Breda on 16 January 1942, he went, in 1954, to the Missiehuis Pater Damian, a preparatory seminary run by the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in Sint-Oedenrode, the Netherlands. He continued his studies at the Philosophicum in Valkenburg and the Catholic University of Nijmegen (today Radboud University of Nijmegen).

After research in 1970–1971, he published a dissertation entitled *Pesantren, madrasah, sekolah: Pendidikan Islam dalam kurun moderen* (1974), on Indonesian Islamic education. Interestingly, he lived for a year at a *pesantren*, an Islamic boarding school in Gontor, Indonesia. Upon application, his views on God were examined. He explained that being a Christian, he believed in a God who does not beget nor was begotten in a human corporeal way. Thus, he met the conditions of Surah 112 of the Qur'an. From 1981–1987 he worked as a lecturer at the State Institutes for Islam, IAIN, an Islamic State University in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. At these institutes he practiced interreligious dialogue with his students and his confreres and made many lifelong friendships. In the meantime, he had married Paule Maas, with whom he had two sons.

In 1989, Steenbrink was appointed to the Inter-University Institute for Missiology and Ecumenics (IIMO), a center of expertise in missiology, ecumenics, intercultural theology, and interreligious dialogue. Here he was also managing editor of *Exchange*, the academic journal of this institute. He upgraded this journal to an A-level academic publication, published by Brill. The crowning achievement of his academic career was his appointment as Professor in Intercultural Theology at the Utrecht University in December 2005.

Steenbrink was not only an expert in Indonesian Islam, but also in Indonesian Christianity. His last major publication consisted of the three volumes of his *Catholics in Indonesia* (2003, 2007, and 2015). He will be greatly missed by family, friends, students, and colleagues, but he leaves behind an

important legacy of Muslim-Christian dialogue for subsequent generations to learn from and build upon.

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