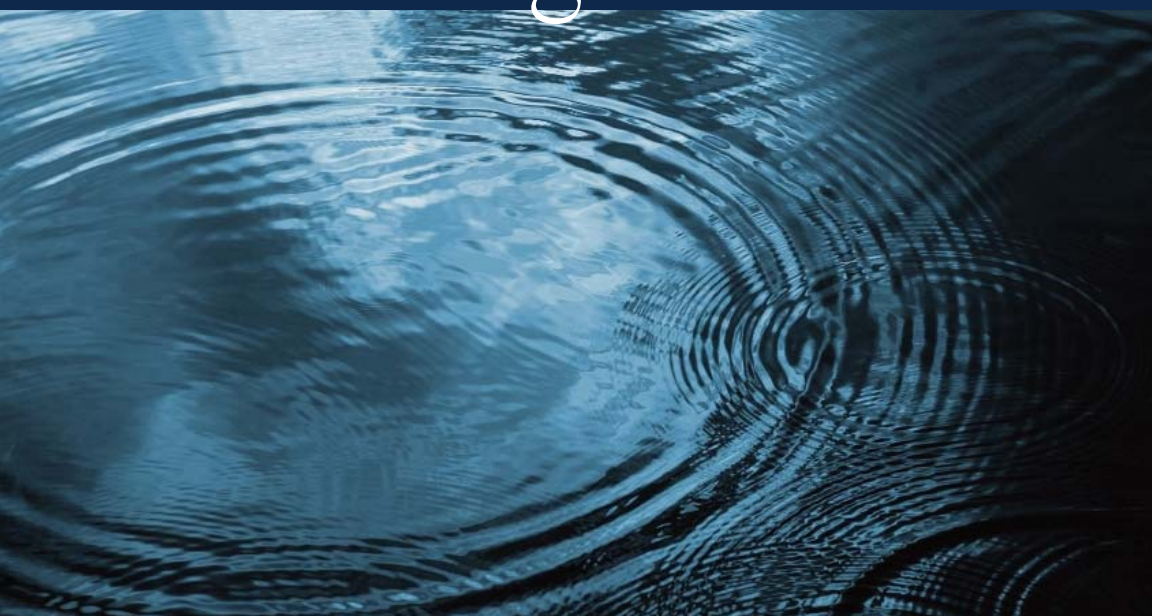


Edited by Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avtzi and Stefan Paas

Sharing Good News



Handbook on Evangelism in Europe

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**World Council
of Churches**
Publications

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FOREWORD

"The church is called to renew its methods of evangelism to communicate the good news with persuasion, inspiration, and conviction." So states *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*,¹ the new ecumenical mission affirmation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) (§109).

Evangelism and Christian education are interrelated in vision and vocation for the renewal of mission and evangelism. A holistic approach to the latter entails both theological education and training in evangelism, both in theory and praxis. At the same time, the radically changing denominational and religious landscape in Europe—and globally—presents the churches with the challenging opportunity to renew the expressions of their witness, in search of new ways of making the message of the gospel relevant within secular, multicultural, and multireligious contexts.

In response to the changed concepts of mission work in relation to evangelism, the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), through the evangelism project, launched a process of regional consultations addressing the place of evangelism in theological education and missiological formation in all continents. The process for the region of Europe included two consultations followed by two drafting meetings, all aimed toward the completion and eventual publication of the present book by WCC Publications. A great number of esteemed academics and mission practitioners from across Europe and, in some cases, from the global constituency contributed throughout the process to the successful development of this book.

1. Jooseop Keum, ed., *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013).

It is therefore with great joy that CWME and WCC welcome this much-anticipated theological study on evangelism in Europe. Our hope and aspiration are that through the illustrated contextualized, fresh approaches to evangelism, this book will prove to be an important tool for theological faculties of academic institutions across Europe, as well as for churches and mission agencies offering programmes on missiological formation.

I would like to thank sincerely the members of the editorial group, who have accompanied the entire endeavour with tireless commitment and great work: Ms Francis Brienen, Prof. Dr Donna Orsuto, Rev. Dr Wonsuk Ma, Rev. Dr Martin Reppenhagen, Mr Dawit Olika Terfassa, and the three editors, Rev. Dr Gerrit Noort, Prof. Dr Stefan Paas, and Ms Kyriaki Avtzi. An additional word of thanks is due to Ms Debbie den Boer for her editorial support in the final stages of the process.

Let me also express my gratitude to CWME and in particular to its director, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, as well as to the Associate General Secretary for Mission and Unity of the WCC, Rev. Dr Hielke Wolters, for their ongoing support and encouragement of the work for evangelism.

Metropolitan Dr Geevarghese Mor Coorilos
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PREFACE

Gerrit Noort and Stefan Paas

Evangelism in Human Life

If “evangelism” means the sharing of good news, human life is evangelistic to the core. As soon as human beings feel that they have discovered something new, interesting, and good to have, or when they feel responsible for the misery of others, they start sharing. Our cultures are rife with this type of benevolent bonding. People write blogs, tweets, and articles; they welcome strangers and refugees; they go into politics to put things right; they travel to other countries to build schools and drill wells. We love to share information and wisdom; we love to communicate “good news.” Large companies trust this fundamental instinct when they unembarrassedly talk about “evangelism marketing” and the power of “testimonials.” This is what it means to be social beings. It is what it means to be capable of enthusiasm, pity, and responsibility.

The writers of the New Testament knew the expression “to evangelize” before they became Christians. They knew it from their Greek translation of the First Testament, for example in Isaiah 52:7, where it reads: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news.” They also knew it from its use in secular realms, for

example in announcements of royal births or great victories. Was there a better word to denote the most wonderful news that they had heard of, the news that God had done something unique and world changing in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection? So they wrote about the *euangelion*, the "gospel" of Jesus Christ, and they "evangelized" throughout the cities of the Roman Empire.

As simple and logical as this seems, the concept of "evangelism" is not that straightforward and self-evident anymore, at least not for Christians in the West. Here Christianity's honeymoon is long past. The sharing of the good news has been compromised by a history of colonialism outside Europe, and a history of Christendom within Europe. In our cultural imagination, the gospel of Jesus Christ has become almost inextricably linked with memories of cultural superiority, authoritarianism, and obscurantism. Many Christians have become shy; they may still have enough faith for themselves, but they feel embarrassed about any attempt to persuade others. There is too much historical baggage, too much insecurity about the claims of faith in a rational age.

In some ways this credibility crisis of Christianity is connected to a wider lack of trust among Western cultures. The West is not so certain of itself anymore. It has lost its guiding narratives, and what is left are fragments at best. Populists and nationalists, shouting empty promises, pop up everywhere. New nations rise to power; new narratives fuel the imaginations of the world's masses. Increasingly, Christians find themselves marginalized in societies that feel decentred themselves. Western nations have become extremely pluralistic and deeply insecure. We all know that the world that used to be will not return, but we do not know how our future will be. The only thing we know is that we possess most of the world's wealth, and we are scared to lose it. Fear, rather than confidence, begins to penetrate the secularized nations of the West.

And yet, this may be the time in which Christians can rediscover what it means to bring good news as people who are "foolish and weak." This may be the time to learn all over again what "witnessing" means: not to talk from a position of power, but from a position of a weakness that is joyfully embraced. After all, even if we accept that many mistakes have been made and that many more will be made, there is an inescapable evangelistic logic within Christianity. It can be summarized as follows:

- if we are emotionally affected—even if tempered by doubts—by Jesus, his story, and his kingdom, it makes no sense to look down out of

principle on people who recommend this experience to others and want to share their enthusiasm with them;

- if we are rationally convinced—even if only hesitantly—that unique truth and wisdom can be found in Jesus and his story, it makes no sense to reject out of principle attempts to persuade others of this;
- if we are volitionally committed—even if with some reserve—to practical consequences that can be drawn out of Jesus and his story, it makes no sense to criticize out of principle those who think that human lives would be enriched by following Jesus.

Even if this may sound far too minimalistic for many Christians, it is the very least we can say about the importance of evangelism. It is not only rooted in our basic social instincts; it is also part of the fundamental structure of Christianity itself. We cannot *not* evangelize; therefore, we'd better learn to do it well.

Recent Developments

Historically, evangelistic mission was something that European missionaries did outside of Europe. The European continent itself was considered fully evangelized. Even today this seems the case—that is, if we may believe the *Atlas of Global Christianity*, published in 2009 and inspired by the centenary of Edinburgh 1910. Measuring evangelism “by assessing whether individuals have had an adequate opportunity to hear the gospel and to respond to it, whether they respond positively or negatively,” Europe’s evangelized population in 1910 was 97.5 percent. In Finland, Slovenia, Malta, and Spain even 100 percent of the population had been evangelized. In 2010 the percentage of the evangelized in Europe was still quite high, at 96.2 percent. Romania, with 99.7 percent, is now the most evangelized country in the world. Thus, even though the percentage of the Christian population in Europe is declining, the percentage of the so-called evangelized seems quite stable. The *Atlas* then goes on to divide the world into “unevangelized, Non-Christian” (world A; fewer than 50 percent evangelized), “evangelized, Non-Christian” (world B; at least 50 percent evangelized, but fewer than 60 percent Christian), and “Christian” (world C; more than 60 percent Christian) countries. While world A and B

countries are mainly in northern Africa and Asia, the whole of the American continent, most of the sub-Saharan countries, and Europe (with minor exceptions) belong to world C. Thus, Europe, according to these recent statistics, still remains predominantly Christian and almost completely evangelized.¹

Although one may question the theological value or explanatory power of such statistics,² they help to understand why many European theologians and pastors have not prioritized evangelism in Europe. They consider preaching, pastoral care, and diaconal ministry more urgent than proclaiming the good news to non-Christians. During most of European history evangelism was left to marginal Christian groups of a pietistic or revivalist nature. There were exceptions here and there, but, altogether, David J. Bosch's comment about European theology seems justified: "[A]s Europe became Christianised and Christianity became the established religion in the Roman Empire and beyond, theology lost its missionary dimension."³

Only recently has this begun to change. Several developments have contributed to the renewed attention for evangelism in European churches and among European theologians. One important influence has been, of course, the challenge of secularization. As of the beginning of the 20th century the reality of de-Christianization dawned upon the theological imagination. Rather than seeing evangelism as the revitalization of lapsed Christians, church leaders became increasingly aware that Europe was transforming into a genuine mission field. Some even started speaking of a new paganism in Europe. One of those was Lesslie Newbigin, focussing on England: "If God is driven out, the gods come trooping in. England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church."⁴ Currently, all over Europe churches are rediscovering their missionary heritage, and exciting new initiatives are being deployed.

Globalization has also contributed to this new awareness. After the colonial period, Christians from other parts of the world have increasingly found

1. Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 308–313.

2. Siga Arles, "World Religion Database: Realities and Concerns," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010): 20: "disease of *numberitis*."

3. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 489.

4. Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1993), 236. Prominently within the WCC: W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "Evangelism among Europe's Neo-Pagans," *International Review of Mission* 66, no. 264 (October 1977): 349–60.

new homes in European nations. This has not only led to the revitalization of a Christian presence in many European cities, it has also brought new and rather unfamiliar forms of Christianity to the European imagination. The jury is still out on deciding to what extent African and Asian Christians will be able to re-evangelize Europe, but it is clear that Christians from the South and the East are quite unembarrassed about the importance of evangelism. Malawian theologian Harvey C. Kwiyani speaks in this context about the “evangelisthood of all believers,”⁵ and this seems to express the lived theology of immigrant Christian communities quite well. Both an increasing intercultural theological awareness and the presence of new vital Christian communities have reframed the theological discussion about mission and evangelism.

Finally, there have been substantial developments within the ecumenical movement as well. While older oppositions between ecumenicals who were into social action and Evangelicals who were into evangelism may have been exaggerated, there is an extent to which the ecumenical movement shared the embarrassment about evangelism that was so typical of Western churches. This is no longer the case. Report after report has been issued, all highlighting the importance and urgency of evangelism as the very heart of Christian mission. The fact that the Orthodox and many Pentecostals have joined the ecumenical movement has certainly played a role in this reinvigoration of evangelism, alongside the developments sketched above. These ecumenical reports have been flanked by similar developments in the Roman Catholic Church, where a number of popes have emphasized the necessity of a “re-evangelization” of Europe, culminating in Pope Francis’s inspiring apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel,” 2013). In short, evangelism is back at centre stage.

This Handbook

This book testifies to the renewed interest in evangelism within the ecumenical movement. Its origin lies in an initiative taken by the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC). In 2012 it launched a series of regional consultations on the place of evangelism in theological education and missiological formation. The principal objective

5. Harvey C. Kwiyani, *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2014), 58–60.

of this process was to evaluate and enhance training programmes for evangelism by fostering ecumenical cooperation among faculties and networks. The first consultation, in the European region, was held in Bossey (Switzerland), 28–31 October 2012. The consultation brought together about 30 participants from 16 countries across Europe, representing churches, ecumenical and educational institutions, as well as mission bodies.

Amongst the main issues addressed during the consultation was the importance of relating Christian witness to the changing landscape of Europe by developing contextual evangelistic approaches. Focussing on the significance of having practical involvement in the ministry of evangelism at the heart of theological education, participants acknowledged that churches “are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission.” The participants of the consultation affirmed that a freshly reimagined, renewed understanding and a new commitment to evangelism are needed. As the consultation observed a lack of resources for teaching evangelism, it recommended to the WCC the “development of an ecumenical handbook for teaching evangelism in Europe, which addresses the challenges and best practices.”⁶ The present study is a direct result of this recommendation.

The book is meant as a textbook to be used in formal and informal theological education. It can also be used by practitioners as a quick introduction into many issues, as it contains an almost exhaustive overview of everything that is important in the field of evangelism. The book is divided into four parts. The first part, after an introductory chapter on the meaning and use of evangelism, describes the history of evangelism in Europe and the challenges that currently face those who want to evangelize this continent. Part 2 presents different theological approaches to the subject, seen from Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Pentecostal, and immigrant perspectives. The third part provides a number of case studies from all over Europe. This part alone makes it worthwhile to read this book and reflect on it. This part also contains a number of theological reflections on the case studies, pertaining to conversion, methodology, ecclesiology, and spirituality. The fourth part concludes the book with a chapter on education and on a common understanding of evangelism.

Composing this handbook has been an ecumenical project in itself. Its contributors, both women and men, represent a wide number of WCC

6. Kyriaki Avtzi, Anne Marie Kool, Mikhail Goundiaev, and Gerrit Noort, “Report WCC-Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe, 28–31 October 2012, Bossey, Switzerland” (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 11 (unpublished report).

member churches, as well as CWME-affiliated bodies. All the major confessional traditions of Christianity are represented, insofar as they play a role in Europe. This includes writers from migrant churches and Pentecostal authors. The editors have also tried to achieve a balanced representation of the immense variety of the European continent, even if this is virtually impossible. Therefore, the book contains contributions from the far West (United Kingdom) to the far East (Russia), and from the far South (Italy) to the far North (Sweden). It describes and reflects on ancient monastic forms of evangelism and on modern, Internet-based forms. Thus, the book offers its readers the most complete overview of current evangelism in Europe that is possible. We are quite confident that there is no study available on this subject at this moment that is more exhaustive and more ecumenical. But of course, this is for its users to decide.

Stefan Paas

Evangelistic Mission in Europe: Seven Historical Models

2.1 Europe as a “Mission Field”

In 1963 the WCC Department on World Mission and Evangelism adopted the slogan “mission in six continents.”¹ This sentence, according to Emilio Castro, attempted to express “the fact that the day is over when countries could be divided into ‘Christian’ and ‘pagan’ areas.”² Moreover, by the 1980s we could observe on different frontiers a renewed attention for evangelism as the heart of Christian mission. In 1982 the World Council of Churches published the report *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, in which a new appreciation for evangelism was combined with WCC’s traditional strong emphasis on social justice. The recent report *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (2013) continues this approach, while the influence of the Pentecostal movement and Eastern Orthodoxy can be noted

1. Ronald K. Orchard, ed., *Witness in Six Continents: Records of the Meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches held in Mexico City, December 8th to 19th, 1963* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1964).

2. Emilio Castro, *Freedom in Mission: The Perspective of the Kingdom of God: An Ecumenical Inquiry* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985), 161.

as new elements.³ In the Evangelical movement a more or less opposite shift has taken place: in several manifestos we find a growing emphasis on holistic or integral mission (social justice, ecology) alongside evangelicalism's traditionally strong focus on evangelism.⁴

Looking at Europe, the contextual aspect immediately comes into view. Prominent European politicians, especially from the Christian Democratic side of the spectrum, now and then refer to the Christian "soul" of Europe. Theologians and other thinkers point to the increasing "speechlessness" with regard to religiosity in general and Christianity in particular. The pluralization of European nations leads to questions of a missiological nature, just like the migration of non-Western Christians to this continent. Recent developments in the Roman Catholic Church are also interesting. Post-Vatican II documents such as *Ad Gentes* (1965), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) have accelerated theological reflection on mission and evangelism among Catholics. Moreover, since the early 1990s several popes have focussed emphatically on what has been called the "re-evangelization of Europe."

This general awareness of Europe as a field of mission, in combination with a renewed attention for evangelism as the heart of mission, was not a sudden breakthrough caused by the end of colonialism and the atrocities of the Second World War. To a large extent it was the formal acceptance of grassroots insights that had been present for a long time among missionary practitioners. In fact, throughout history many Europeans have been quite prepared to admit that Europe was not very "Christian" at all. Thus, it has always been necessary to "make explicit and unambiguous the centrality of the incarnation, suffering, and resurrection of Jesus Christ."⁵ In this chapter I will present seven different paradigms or models of evangelism that have been used in Europe, and that—to some extent—still influence our approaches of evangelism today. These models are: (1) peaceful propagation, (2) Christianization as civilization, (3) reform, (4) revival, (5) the worldview approach, (6) humanization, and (7) power evangelism.

3. For a comparison and analysis of both documents, see Jan A. B. Jongeneel, "'Mission and Evangelism' (1982) and 'Together towards Life' (2013)," *Exchange* 43 (2014): 273–90.

4. For a survey of this development, see C. René Padilla, "Integral Mission and Its Historical Development," in Tim Chester, ed., *Justice, Mercy, and Humility* (Paternoster, UK: Carlisle, 2003). See also C. René Padilla, *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985).

5. World Council of Churches, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 29.

2.2 Peaceful Propagation

Christianity entered Europe as a minority movement. In the book of Acts we find narratives of the apostle Paul preaching in cities in Greece and Macedonia in the middle part of the 1st century CE (cf. chs. 1.3.3, above, and 8.2.2, below). Most likely, however, he was not the first Christian to evangelize there. Probably, soon after the events in Jerusalem that formed the beginning of the Christian movement, Christianity travelled along trade routes, carried by unknown witnesses who may have proclaimed the gospel as far as Spain. Paul's own apostolic ministry ended in Rome, Italy, where he probably suffered martyrdom. Also, the New Testament contains letters, mainly by Paul, to Christians and churches in Europe, demonstrating that there was a vital Christian presence in many cities in the 50s and 60s CE.⁶

In this first stage Christianity was usually looked at as a Jewish sect, and as such it was tolerated. Its status was never secured, however, and discrimination to the extent of outright persecution was part and parcel of the Christian experience almost from its hour of birth. Becoming a Christian, therefore, implied determination and conviction.⁷ Probably, the number of Christians in the Western Roman Empire remained quite small until the 4th century, when the measures of the emperors Constantine and Theodosius made it attractive (if not profitable) to become a Christian. Meanwhile, however, Christianity gradually increased its numbers. Around 400 CE it possibly comprised around 10 percent of the population in the Roman Empire, with its main concentrations in the Greek-speaking East and in the cities.⁸

Christianity's growth in these first centuries can be explained by (but not reduced to) a fruitful combination of lifestyle and witness.⁹ First, Christians emphasized marital fidelity both by men and women, while they allowed their women to marry rather late compared to Roman standards. This made it attractive for women to become Christians. Second, while Roman society endorsed abortion (causing the death of many women) and infanticide (especially of

6. One of the most complete surveys of early Christian mission is Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Urchristliche Mission* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2002), trans. as *Early Christian Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004).

7. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 3d ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 35–39.

8. For a rough estimation of the number of Christians preceding the conversion of Constantine, cf. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 4–13. For the concentration of early Christians in the cities, cf. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

9. Stark, *Rise of Christianity*.

girls), Christians opposed these practices vehemently. This meant not only that Christians gradually outbirthed their pagan neighbours; it also meant that Christian communities usually contained more women than men. As Roman society, by its misogynic practices, had a surplus of men, it seems that pagan men often married Christian women. Apparently, this created opportunities for evangelism, as, for example, the first letter of Peter demonstrates (1 Pet. 3:1-7). Third, Christians gained a good reputation by their conduct in public life, especially in trading and during times of epidemic diseases. Often, Christians remained when others fled, looking after the sick and burying the dead.

In this way Christianity came to Europe, in particular to the southern parts. Some scholars think that this peaceful propagation of Christianity—in contrast with its more violent spread in the North—can explain Christianity’s character as a deeply embedded folk religion in, for example, Italy and Greece, as opposed to Christianity’s position in northwestern Europe.

2.3 Christianization as Civilization

In 312 CE the emperor Constantine converted to Christianity after Christ appeared to him in a dream predicting his victory in a battle with his rival. Subsequently, he issued an Edict of Toleration (313 CE), thus effectively ending Christianity’s status as a suspect minority movement. One of his successors, Theodosius, made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire (380 and 392 CE). These measures introduced an entirely new dynamic for Christianity. Not only had it become a respected religion almost overnight; it also had assumed the role of the ruling religion, with effective powers to legislate against other religions. In less than 50 years the number of Christians grew from 10 to more than 50 percent of the population. From now on Christian bishops were to be the representatives of the state religion, whereas persons with political ambitions could only pursue their dreams by becoming Christians. Thus, toward the end of the Western Roman Empire it had become the “normal” thing to be a Christian; it was good for your social status and your career.

The collapse of the Western Empire (usually dated 476 CE) made an end to the political structures of the classic Roman world, but not to Roman civilization as such. In the absence of a wide-stretching political government, the church by and large became the inheritor of this civilization. In large areas, churches and (increasingly) monasteries were the only effective providers of

culture, reading, law, and art. Several Germanic tribes who fought over the political inheritance of Rome had converted to Christianity already in the end-stage of the Empire. Logically, Christianity, being the prime cultural survivor of the awe-invoking civilization of Rome, was to become the religious and cultural heart of these new European kingdoms. In the next centuries this Christian-Roman-Germanic civilization was spread, particularly by Frankish kings like Clovis and Charlemagne, into northwestern Europe.¹⁰ Their actual missionary force consisted of “a stream of inspired ascetics,” of whom a considerable number came from the recently Christianized island of Ireland.¹¹ Historian Peter Brown characterizes this mission as a “*mission civilisatrice*,” meaning that the Christianity that these missionaries brought was always an inseparable mixture of Roman law and traditions, on the one hand, and Christian faith, on the other.¹²

It is hard to tell to what extent the conversion of these northern tribes was deep-seated. Christian mission was part of the political process of extending the Frankish Christian empire, and thus functioned in a societal order that was maintained with force. While in these tribal societies people would normally follow the religion of their king, this did not mean that they had a profound understanding of or even a great deal of sympathy for this religion. Also, historical research shows that these Christianized tribes usually kept pre-Christian habits and beliefs close at hand. In short, their Christianity seems to have been syncretistic, to say the least.¹³ An exception to this rule were the monasteries that developed as centres of Christian learning and practice in these days.¹⁴ Also, some missionaries developed early methods of contextualization, as, for example, Gregory the Great’s letter to the British bishop Augustine (596 CE) demonstrates, and by the translation of the gospels in the Saxonian language (around 830 CE), presenting Christ as a feudal lord and his disciples as knights (*Heliand*).

According to Stephen Neill, the baptism of the Lithuanian king Jagiello (15 February 1386) “marks the end of European paganism as an organized

10. Cf. Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, 39–96.

11. Andrew F. Walls, “The Translation Principle in Christian History,” in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, 8th ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 37.

12. Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

13. Cf. Anton Wessels, *Europe: Was It Ever Really Christian? The Interaction between Gospel and Culture* (London: SCM Press, 1994); Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origins of Christendom* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999).

14. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 230–36.

body.”¹⁵ From now on Europe was a Christian continent, that is, all Europeans—apart from some clearly defined outsider bodies—were considered Christians by baptism, laws were purported to be based on Christian principles, and church and state worked closely together. Moreover, Europe became increasingly covered by a dense network of cathedrals, churches, monasteries, and schools, all contributing to the further spread of Christian beliefs and values, and to a strong symbolic presence of Christianity in every nook and cranny of the continent.

2.4 Reform

In the late medieval period there was increasing discontent among committed Christians about the lack of Christian depth in the majority of the Europeans, including many clergymen. Much of this protest was rooted in the monasteries, with their attachment to the *vita perfecta* (perfect life) and *conversio* (conversion), but many educated laypeople and church leaders supported it. Time and again programmes were launched to raise the level of education of the clergy. By preaching, instruction, obligatory confession and church attendance, liturgical innovation, and a more effective church organization, attempts were made to “convert Christians” (Peter Nissen).

The various Protestant Reformations in the 16th century can be considered as examples of this type of Reform Christianity, which aimed for the conversion of Christians. If we accept that this urge to bring Christianized peoples to a more committed Christianity is a form of mission, this may also help us to reframe the discussion about the reformers’ sense of “mission.”¹⁶ In earlier studies it was often stated that the Protestant reformers did not believe in mission. Much depends, however, on the definition of the word. Since the Roman Catholic nations Portugal and Spain were in direct contact with unbaptized peoples in South America, the idea of worldwide evangelization could take root much earlier among Roman Catholics, something that Catholic theologians did not hesitate to hold against their Protestant opponents. In this respect the 16th-century Protestant reformers generally had a more limited horizon,

15. Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, 96.

16. Cf. Paul Wetter, *Der Missionsgedanke bei Martin Luther* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1996); Thomas Schirrmacher, ed., *Martin Bucer als Vorreiter der evangelischen Mission* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2006); Thomas Schirrmacher, ed., *Calvin and World Mission: Essays* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2009).

sometimes affecting their concept of mission. It seems wise not to focus too much, however, on the presence of words like “mission” in the works of the (Catholic and Protestant) reformers of the 16th century. The massive move to “Reform Christianity” in early modern Europe, with its attempts to convert whole populations to a serious and personal type of Christianity, should be considered as a prefiguration of the missionary movement that started in the late 18th century. To a great extent, in its totalizing approach (“the ends of the earth”) and its emphasis on personal Christianity, this missionary movement was all about repeating the reform experience within European Christianity during the previous centuries. So, instead of attempting to “read back” the missionary movement of the 18th and 19th centuries into the Reformation age (“Did the Reformers share ‘our’ sense of mission?”), we might do better to “read forward” the ethos of this Age of Reform in the younger movement (see below).

Thus, in the aftermath of the Reformation, Europe was divided between Roman Catholic and Protestant spheres of influence. For more than a century these different traditions targeted territories controlled by their opponents, treating these areas in practice as mission fields. For example, in the first part of the 16th century a number of small Protestant communities had originated in France. They met in private homes for prayer, singing, and Bible reading. Sometimes these amorphous groups were called “planted churches” (*églises plantées*), which in this context means something like “preliminary church” or “church-to-be.”¹⁷ Between 1555 and 1562 the Reformed city of Geneva sent out ordained pastors to these groups, on their own request, in order to render them into full churches (*églises dressées*). When the first war of religion ended this period of mission, approximately forty Reformed churches had been formed all over France.¹⁸ These early Protestant missions in Europe, whatever we may think of their theological legitimacy, were just as dangerous and demanding as any mission overseas. The same goes for Roman Catholic missions to territories ruled by Protestants. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV founded the *Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), with the explicit goal not only to reorganize foreign missions, but also to re-establish ecclesiastical structures in territories that had been lost to the Reformation. In fact, this made every Protestant nation a mission field.

17. Cf. Peter Wilcox, “Églises plantées and églises dressées in the Historiography of Early French Protestantism,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44, no. 4 (1993): 689–95.

18. Andrew Buckler, *Jean Calvin et la mission de l'Eglise* (Lyon: Olivétan, 2008), 137–52.

Catholic evangelists travelled as far as Sweden and Norway to establish the Catholic faith.

Nevertheless, all this was done within the framework of Christendom (see ch. 3.2.1, below, for an explanation of “Christendom”). Protestants and Catholics agreed on the concept of one religion within one nation, even if at the time it could not be decided yet which religion a country would accept (as in France). The Augsburg Treaty of 1555 transferred the transnational Christendom system to a national level: people had to accept the religion of their rulers or move to an area where their own religion was practiced (*cuius regio eius religio*). In a system like this, “evangelism,” to use the anachronism, was meant to “normalize” the religious situation within a certain territory. In other words, its function was to bring as many people as possible into the church of the realm, and thus establish a truly Christian state. Other churches were persecuted (as in France and Germany), or at least severely restricted in their attempts to “evangelize” (as in Holland and England).

Within the early Reformation tradition, only the “radical” wing of the Reformation could think without limitations of Europe as a true mission field. The Anabaptists rejected the assumptions of territorial Christianity (such as infant baptism), and believed that the Great Commission applied to all believers at all times. They also criticized the magisterial reformers’ (especially Luther’s) emphasis on justification by faith alone, since they believed that this resulted in a separation of justification and ethics, and thus in a superficial, nominal religion. In this way they preserved—at least for a while—a mobile Christianity, consisting of committed disciples, as in the early church (a “believers’ church”). Today’s critics of “Christendom” find much of their inspiration in this left wing of the Protestant Reformation.

2.5 Revival

Already in the 17th century, Jesuit workers who evangelized nominal Catholics in the French countryside considered their own work as “mission” in every meaning of the word. Their experience in the North American mission field had taught them that there was not so much difference between Breton farmers and Native Americans. “On both sides of the Atlantic, Jesuits shared the same apostolic ideals and the same ideas of the mission; they had a similar attitude

towards the people they sought to convert, used similar methods of persuasion, and expected similar results.”¹⁹

More or less the same was true in Protestant areas. The limited success of the Reformation in converting the baptized masses of Europe caused a growing discomfort within circles of committed Christians in the 17th and 18th centuries. In Germany, the Pietist movement broke with the formal Christianity of Lutheran orthodoxy. They aimed at a true conversion of individuals, and the formation of small groups of believers within the national church (*Volkskirche*). They redefined mission as an enterprise of ordinary Christians, rather than (colonial) governments and church hierarchies. Also, they relativized “national” or “territorial” Christendom. Instead, they promoted the fellowship of believers, transcending national or confessional borders. The emphasis on a deep-felt, individual experience of conversion, connecting the newborn Christian with brothers and sisters in different nations and denominations, was also typical for the 18th- and early-19th-century revivals in England and America. These movements were characterized by a modern, “democratic” tendency, empowering “ordinary” Christians to band together in “societies” and commit themselves to mission, evangelism, and service. Moreover, in line with the growing emphasis on empirical truth in modern times, they advocated an “experiential” Christianity—a religion of the heart. To be a Christian one must have experienced a “heart strangely warmed” (John Wesley), a personal encounter with the saving Lord Jesus. This experience would normally result in a holy life of discipline and abstinence, which subsequently would lead to a restoration of society. Christianity was thus seen as a major force of social and personal discipline, both by churches and secular authorities, and therefore essential in the creation of civilized societies.

Revivalist preachers—or “evangelists” as they were often called—typically addressed their nominally Christian audiences without much regard for church membership, baptism, or a formal knowledge of the Bible. In this context the term “baptized pagan” was used by many a revivalist in order to shock his audience into repentance. Since the Middle Ages the word *pagan* or *heathen* had been used to denote peoples living outside the borders of Christendom. The word had roughly the same meaning and contained the same implications as the Greek word translated as “barbarian.” It referred to people distinct in skin colour and language, and with an inferior level of civilization. If these

19. Dominique Deslandres, “*Exemplo aequae ut verbo*: The French Jesuits’ Missionary World,” in John W. O’Malley et al., eds., *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 267.

people became Christians, their descent was not erased by baptism. A converted Native American, an African slave, or an Indian Christian was usually called a “baptized pagan.” But now “baptized pagan” could be used within the confines of Christendom as an equivalent of “nominal Christian,” and many 19th-century preachers and evangelists used it as such.

This kind of rhetoric shows that, regardless of all theoretical distinctions between “foreign missions” and “home missions” that have been drawn later, both types of mission were organized along the same lines, out of the same motives, and more than once by the same people, right from their beginnings. For example, Johann Hinrich Wichern, who established the German *Innere Mission* (domestic mission), stated in 1857 that his mission was the “continuation or resumption” (*Fortsetzung oder Wiederaufnahme*) of the earlier mission work in Europe “to conquer the Judaism and paganism that was still unbroken or had regained its strength.” In his opinion, mission to the pagan world (*Heidenmission*) and *Innere Mission* were “two aspects of the same service.”²⁰ On the other hand, the “revivalist” part of this mission shows that it was based on the assumption of an at least superficially Christianized population. After all, “revival” assumes that there is something that can be “re-lived.”

2.6 The Worldview Approach

Although the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh in 1910 was still cherishing a rather unproblematic territorial understanding of Christendom that should be expanded to the ends of the earth, a completely different chord was struck at the Jerusalem gathering of 1928. The American missiologist Rufus Jones contributed a paper to the conference, with the significant title “Secular Civilization and the Christian Task.” He made it clear that the time of “Christian nations” was over, if it had ever existed at all: “We go to Jerusalem then, not as members of a Christian nation to convert other nations which are not Christian, but as Christians within a nation far too largely non-Christian, who face within their own borders the competition of a rival movement as powerful, as dangerous, as insidious as any of the great historic religions.”²¹

20. Quote in H. J. Margull, “Über die Einheit von Weltmission und Volksmission,” in *Zeugnis und Dialog: Ausgewählte Schriften* (Hamburg: Missionsakademie an der Universität Hamburg, 1992), 49–50.

21. Rufus M. Jones, “Secular Civilization and the Christian Task,” in International Missionary Council, *The Christian Life and Message in Relation to Non-Christian Systems of Thought and Life, Report of The Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, March 24th–April 8th, 1928* (London: International Missionary Council, 1928), 273.

With the benefit of hindsight we may say that here, for almost the first time in an “official” document by a leading Christian body, an awareness can be found of the Western world as a mission field and of the church as intrinsically missionary. Even more interesting, perhaps, was Jones’s introduction of the “rival movement” of “secular culture.” This terminology was consciously modeled after the way non-Western religions, like Hinduism or Islam, had been described in the Edinburgh conference of 1910. In other words, Jones suggested that Christianity within the borders of its historic heartland had found a formidable adversary, an alternative “religion,” as it were. It was yet another way to say that Europe had become a mission field as any other part of the world where Christianity had to struggle with other religions and philosophies, every bit as resistant as the great world religions. Even within the West it was no longer self-evident to be a Christian, either nominally or seriously.

We might say, therefore, that Jerusalem 1928 saw the birth of a new, “ideological” paradigm of mission in Europe. Around the Second World War this would be expanded further by adding “neo-paganism” as another competitor of Christianity, one that had been suppressed by formal Christianity for a long time, but would now reappear at the surface of society. In 1938 the Dutch missiologist Hendrik Kraemer published his famous book *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, in which he defined Western “relativism” and “secularism” as rebellious ideologies, forgetful of their Christian origins. Especially the rise of nazism (“tribal religion”) was a matter of concern. According to Kraemer, nothing demonstrated more clearly “that the Christian Church, religiously speaking, in the West as well as in the East, is standing in a pagan, non-Christian world, and has again to consider the whole world its mission field, not in the rhetorical but in the literal sense of the word.”²²

This opposition of Christianity against other, competing philosophies of life would be the basis for the worldview-driven approach of mission to the West that characterized the postwar contributions of influential Protestant writers like Lesslie Newbigin and David J. Bosch. Alongside the conceptual pairs of “true vs. false Christianity” (in the post-Reformation conflict between Catholics and Protestants) and “serious vs. nominal Christianity” (in the age of revivals) a new pair came into being, that of “Christianity/gospel vs. culture.” This rather intellectual approach defined both Christianity and other life views first and foremost as “thought-systems” or “worldviews,” that is, more or less

22. Hendrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), 16–17.

coherent patterns of ideas concerning the what and why of human life and the world we live in.

This relationship of Christianity with what has been termed “secular culture” or “humanism” remained an important part of discussions in missionary conferences. Thus, by the middle of the 20th century there was a general awareness, at least among leading theologians, that many (Western) Europeans, perhaps even the majority, were not Christians, and that Christianity had to dialogue and compete with other, very strong life views in its own historic heartland. Also, there was a widely shared opinion that the churches were to turn toward mission, to find ways to the hearts and lives of secular people.

2.7 Humanization

For some, this analysis of living in a new “mission field” did not go far enough. These critics, often inspired by the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, advocated that the whole traditional missionary framework, dividing the nation into Christians and potential Christians had crumbled. Modern humanity had lost a sense of ultimate meaning; humans did not need God anymore to explain the world, to support morality, or to give meaning to life. Influenced by Bonhoeffer’s analysis of culture, the Dutch missiologist Johannes Hoekendijk rejected the church-centred idea of mission in the theology of Kraemer and others. The church should not try to draw the world into its fold, but it should follow the agenda set by the world, since this was the place where God realized God’s purposes.²³ Others, like the missionary statesman M. M. Thomas, asserted that it is not necessary for people to join the church or to call themselves Christians. Rather, Christian mission should point toward the “humanization” of the world, and invite all people of good will to join this cause.²⁴

From this point of departure new, “post-ideological” (or even “post-missionary”) perspectives have emerged in our days, rejecting allegedly worn-out oppositions like “Christianity” vs. “secularism,” and turning to more inclusive approaches, such as the common search of humanity for wisdom, unity, love, liberation, and redemption. The crucial question in this paradigm, however,

23. Johannes C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

24. Cf. M. M. Thomas, “The Meaning of Salvation Today—A Personal Statement,” in Roger E. Hedlund, *Roots of the Great Debate in Mission: Mission in Historical and Theological Perspective* (Bangalore: Theological Book Trust, 2002), 269–77.

is the matter of witness to Jesus Christ and his kingdom. Is the kingdom of God closely linked to Jesus Christ as he is revealed in the scriptures, or is it rather a symbol for God's general providence in creation? If it is the first, then the necessity of evangelism as witness to Jesus Christ is underlined. If it is the second, however, it becomes unclear why people should believe in Jesus and follow him in order to be part of the movement of the kingdom. Also, this might mean that the church does not really have its own voice anymore, since, after all, it is the world that sets the agenda.²⁵ Thus, the question may be asked how this latter perspective relates to the salvific work of Jesus Christ, and how it can maintain a distinct presentation of his kingdom without identifying it with whatever the world considers good and just.

Nevertheless, more moderate versions of this approach have demonstrated how important it is to link evangelism to the cause of the kingdom and the restoration of God's world. To be evangelized means to be invited in this cause, as there is no taking part in Christ without taking part in his mission. Thus, this model draws people away from a single-minded interest in the "benefits" of the gospel, and urges them to consider the "mission" of the gospel (Karl Barth).

2.8 Fighting the Powers

Probably the most influential model of evangelism today is connected with the worldwide, fast-growing movement of "neo-Pentecostalism." There are many similarities with older Pentecostalism, such as speaking in tongues, baptism in the Spirit, healing, and prophecy. We also find a number of specific traits, however, among which a strong emphasis on holistic and material salvation (healing, wealth, fitness, etc.), and on words of power. Furthermore, neo-Pentecostalism is characterized by its fondness of theatrical performances, such as dramatic prayer healings, large worship meetings with all sorts of body movements, so-called Jesus marches, public baptismal events in swimming pools and the like, and travelling apostles with impressive "spiritual careers."

In Europe the movement is represented mostly by African immigrant churches, but also by newcomers like the Australian multinational Hillsong. Clearly, these churches look at Europe as a continent in need of revival. Classic themes recur, such as the pointing out of moral corruption, and the necessity of restoring a Christian culture by a multitude of individual conversions. As

25. For an elaborate discussion, see see Stefan Paas, *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids 2016), chs. 2 and 4..

regards evangelism, this movement thus stands firmly in the revivalist tradition of the 18th and 19th centuries. However, it adds its own flavour.²⁶ Crucial in a neo-Pentecostal approach of evangelism/revival is the concept of “power” which must come from above. This in itself is not a new idea for Christians, but neo-Pentecostals claim that this power can be invoked by believers, in particular through common prayer and worship.

Cultural differences determine to a large extent how this basic idea is worked out. In West African migrant churches, for example, the concept of “spiritual warfare” is often found.²⁷ This is a form of prayer in which—with a loud voice and a variety of body movements—battle is waged against invisible spiritual powers that allegedly keep Europe in their possession. This concept is connected with a dualistic worldview: there are two empires that constantly fight each other over souls and nations. Believers can contribute to this warfare by intense, continuous, common prayer. Evangelism is a “power encounter.” If there are no victories in the spiritual domain, people and societies will not be converted.

In a Western neo-Pentecostal church like Hillsong this concept of “power” gets a slightly different shape. Rather than the idea of spiritual warfare, we find an element that is more often brought forward in wealthier environments. This is the idea that God influences the world through the successful lives of believers, people with impact and influence. When people encounter a Christian who is so evidently blessed, they encounter the Holy Spirit. The presence of such Spirit-filled people can eventually change whole societies. The path toward such a national revival leads through the planting of (preferably large) churches which are centres of prayer and worship. The church is, as it were, an energy plant, a “power-house” from which renewing power floods into the country. Consequently, this leads to a missionary approach that is primarily focussed on worship and the formation of churches. Through the church, and especially through massive, enthusiastic praise, God will be “tangible” and “audible” in society. Power from God is “sucked down,” so to speak, in a roaring worship service, whereafter this power finds its way into the world through the changed lives of a multitude of believers.

26. See esp. Paas, “The Crisis of Mission in Europe: Is There a Way Out?,” *Scandinavian Evangelical e-Journal* 3 (2012).

27. Cf. René Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in the United States and Argentina, 1989–2005: A Geography of Fear* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

2.9 Concluding Remarks

This historical overview shows that evangelism—presenting Christ in an “explicit and unambiguous” way—has always been part of the experience of European Christians. Depending on social and cultural conditions, however, it has assumed different shapes. The long history of Christendom, with its close connection of Christianity and politics, still looms large in many missionary analyses of Europe. To some extent, many missionary models still seem eager to either assume or restore a Christianized nation. In this sense, the lessons from the earliest stages of the church, in which Christianity was truly a minority religion in the world, may be more relevant than ever. Also, revivalism seems to exert a large influence well into our 21st century. This is no surprise, as this tradition has done so much to shape current understandings of evangelism. Revivalism, however, may be too dependent on the concept of a (nominally) Christian culture, where there is still something to be “re-lived.” Increasingly, evangelism in the current European context must be done within a truly missionary framework and in a pioneering spirit.

