

## **Sharing Good News**



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## Handbook on Evangelism in Europe

*Edited by Gerrit Noort, Kyriaki Avtzi  
and Stefan Paas*



**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*,<sup>1</sup> 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.

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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  
Moderator, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism  
World Council of Churches*



## 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 “un-evangelized, 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.<sup>1</sup>

Although one may question the theological value or explanatory power of such statistics,<sup>2</sup> 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."<sup>3</sup>

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."<sup>4</sup> 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

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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,”<sup>5</sup> 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

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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.”<sup>6</sup> 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.





## PART ONE

# Evangelism and Its Context in Europe



Martin Reppenhagen

## Evangelism: Scope, Limits, and Definitions

### 1.1 Rethinking Evangelism

**Evangelism is deeply rooted in the gospel. Deriving from the Greek verb *euangelizein*, which is frequently used in the New Testament to describe the preaching of the gospel, evangelism means simply telling or offering the good news of the gospel. In that sense evangelism is an undertaking with a good content that brings joy to those hearing the message. In most of the Bible translations, however, *euangelizein* is not translated as “to evangelize,” but as “to preach (the gospel).” Traditionally, this was then equated with pulpit preaching, making *euangelizein* an inner-church activity while relating “evangelism” to specific (often somewhat less important) events for those outside the church. This traditional view, however, has begun to change in recent Christian discourse. Today, many leading theologians say that a church without evangelism is a contradiction in itself. Evangelism may be called the “church’s beating heart.” And deficiencies in evangelism would definitely lead “to serious heart failure.”<sup>1</sup>**

1. Eberhard Jüngel, “Referat zur Einführung in das Schwerpunktthema: Synode der EKD 1999 in Leipzig,” in Kirchenamt der Evangelische Kirche Deutschland, ed., *Reden von Gott in der Welt. Der missionarische Auftrag der Kirche an der Schwelle zum 3. Jahrtausend* (Hannover: EKD, 2001), 15.

As crucial as the word *evangelize* seems to be in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, however, its definition remains contested. There are those who have a broad understanding of evangelism, including witness, proclamation, Christian presence in the world, and even social work. Others may focus on the verbal aspect of evangelism, while others equate evangelism with a specific type of doing evangelism. Some may insist that the time for evangelism in Europe is over and today's evangelism is just proselytizing Christians of other churches. Others just feel unprepared to share their faith or don't feel the need to do so in a postmodern and pluralistic society. Many outside the church and even a few inside the church may equate evangelism with intolerance and may opt for banning evangelism.

During the last decades a rethinking of evangelism in Europe has occurred, amounting to what may even be called a renaissance of evangelism in Europe. There is a new interest in evangelism in Europe, because "for those who experience Christ as the ground of their being" it seems self-evident "that they have to share this ground of their being with others," as Walter Hollenweger wrote in his influential book *Evangelism Today: Good News or Bone of Contention?* back in the 1970s. Thus, evangelism becomes a crucial part of the life of the church. Although theological reflection may not necessarily produce evangelists, there is a deep need for the Christian "to give an account of the process of sharing to himself, to his fellow Christians and to non-Christians."<sup>2</sup>

By these words we have already introduced the theme of evangelism. In the remainder of this chapter I first describe important biblical material pertaining to evangelism. The Bible is and should be the ground of our reflection on a subject as important as this. Second, I summarize some recent theological developments in the theology of evangelism.

## 1.2 Evangelism in the Bible

### 1.2.1 Methodological complexity

Traditionally, any theological reflection on evangelism would start with the biblical texts, after which it would proceed to a systematic theory of evangelism. The relation between scripture and today's evangelism, however, seems to be more complex than was often assumed. Even the scriptural basis seems to be rather complex and varied, making it difficult to speak of one single biblical

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2. Walter J. Hollenweger, *Evangelism Today: Good News or Bone of Contention?* (Belfast: Christian Journals, 1976), 5.

foundation. The plural “foundations” seems to be more appropriate.<sup>3</sup> While reflecting on missiology, David J. Bosch speaks of “models of mission” or “paradigm shifts” instead of “biblical foundations.” In his major work he focusses on the complexity and diversity of missionary concepts in the biblical texts and in Christian history.<sup>4</sup> There just isn’t one single “developed theory of evangelism” of early Christianity that we can take as a foundation for our practice, William J. Abraham writes. Even “the picture of the early Christians marching out to evangelize the Roman Empire in order to fulfil the Great Commission is a myth.”<sup>5</sup>

Pointing out these complexities is not a theological capitulation but, rather, a realization that seeking “biblical precedents or literal biblical mandates” for all modern evangelistic activities is an anachronistic approach. The Bible is not a book full of recipes for our modern practice. Thus, it may be more appropriate to speak of a biblical “grounding” and “orientation” of evangelism, while trying to take the multiple choir of voices in the Bible seriously.<sup>6</sup>

In my reflections on evangelism in the Bible, I start with a brief word study before going on to further considerations from the Bible. This discussion is definitely selective and limited in scope but nevertheless basic for today’s understanding of evangelism.

### **1.2.2 Brief word study of *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελιζω)**

The word *euangelizo* (εὐαγγελιζω—“to evangelize”) is found 54 times in the New Testament, and its basic meaning may be rendered as “to proclaim/bring a good report.”<sup>7</sup> Besides the nontechnical sense with varying objects, *euangelizo* has become a technical term for proclaiming the message of Christ, designating

3. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983).

4. David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 15. Others, like Heinrich Balz, start with today’s mission and end up with a biblical verification; cf. Balz, *Der Anfang des Glaubens: Theologie der Mission und der jungen Kirchen* (Neuendettsau: Erlanger Verlag für Mission und Ökumene, 2010), 18ff.

5. William J. Abraham, “A Theology of Evangelism: The Heart of the Matter,” in Paul W. Chilcote and Lacey C. Warner, eds., *The Study of Evangelism: Exploring a Missional Practice of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 19.

6. Marc R. Spindler, “The Biblical Grounding and Orientation of Mission,” in Frans Verstraelen et al., eds., *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction—Texts and Contexts of Global Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 125. A still quite helpful study and modern classic is Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). Five biblical models of evangelism have been elaborated in Frances S. Adeney, *Graceful Evangelism: Christian Witness in a Complex World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 14–26.

7. Georg Strecker, “εὐαγγελιζω,” in Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, eds., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 69–70.

“the salvific meaning of the Christ-event.” In this context the term is used for preaching that aims at repentance and faith. Christological in content, *euangelizo* focusses on conversion and baptism.<sup>8</sup> In some cases the term is used absolutely without object, usually translated as “to proclaim the gospel.”

For Paul, “εὐαγγελιζο refers to the total task of the apostle in proclamation,” without distinguishing between a missionary or inner-church situation. Examples of missionary proclamation are, for instance, Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:16-23; and Galatians 4:13. Especially the aorist tense of the verb refers to the first proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Cor. 11:7). Although this missionary situation is the primary focus for *euangelizo*, Paul uses the term for his proclamation to Christians as well (Rom. 1:15; Gal. 1:16, 23). For both—Christians and non-Christians alike—the desired outcome of proclaiming the gospel is a response of faith.

In three passages (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2 Tim. 4:5), the term *euangelistes* (“evangelist”) is used as a reference to the ministry of a proclaimer serving “the church through the proclamation of the gospel. A clearly demarcated church office is not apparent.” This “evangelist” was not just an inner-church ministry, however, as a closer look at Philip shows. As one of the deacons (Acts 6:5), he evangelized in Samaria, on the way with the Ethiopian minister, and at Azotus (Acts 8:5, 26-39, 40). While travelling he spread the gospel of Christ, people came to faith in Christ, and they were baptized. It is quite difficult to see an established office of distinct evangelists in the early church, although Ephesians 4:11 writes: “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists [*euangelistas*], some pastors and teachers.” It is possible this should be read dimensionally, as a reference to a role which could be taken up by all representatives of the church and even by all Christians.

### ***1.2.3 Old Testament background***

With reference to the Old Testament, *euangelizo* “can be rendered *announce (eschatological) salvation.*” The Hebrew word for “proclaim” (*BSR*) in essence involves the bringing of good news.<sup>10</sup> In Isaiah 61:1, *BSR* is even used in an absolute way, meaning “good news of deliverance.” Thus, it is part of thanksgiving and praise.<sup>11</sup> Especially in Isaiah 52:7 (and Nah. 2:1) the messenger is

8. Acts 8:12; 8:35-36; 11:20-21; 14:15, 21.

9. Luke 9:6; Acts 14:7; 1 Cor. 1:17.

10. Stephen T. Hague, “*bsr*,” in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 1 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 775–77.

11. Ps. 40:10; Ps. 96:2; Is. 60:6.

“bearer of good news . . . , the good news of God’s salvation . . . leading to a climax: peace, good, salvation—your God reigns. . . . It entails a condition where all things are in their proper relation to each other, with nothing left hanging, incomplete, or unfulfilled . . . ; it entails a condition of freedom from every bondage, but particularly the bondage resultant from sin. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

The good news of salvation is then related to or results from God’s kingship, not only over Israel but over the entire world. God reigns and therefore salvation is at hand. Hence, there seems to be a tension between God as being king in the here and now, and God as becoming king in the eschatological future. This future, however, is at hand right now. The “being-king” of Yahweh “is being proclaimed as ‘becoming-king’, because Yahweh’s kingship of the world is not a condition but an event that is now in the process of commencing (cf. Is. 52:7-10).”<sup>13</sup> The anointed Servant/Messiah in the Servant Songs in the book of Isaiah proclaims the good news “to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn” (Is. 61:1-2). “Here the Servant/Messiah himself is the one who brings the good news of God’s triumph. Because he has done what no one else could do (Is. 53:4-5, 10-12; 59:15b-21; 61:1-6), he is not only the preacher of the good news—he *is* the good news, able to give (61:3) what he announces.” In that sense his word accomplishes that of which it speaks. Proclaiming deliverance is bringing deliverance in face of misery and hardship.

The addressees of this message of salvation are the poor: “Those who are broken by life that they have no more heart to try; those who are bound up in their various addictions that liberty and release are a cruel mirage; those who think that they will never again experience the favour of the Lord, or see his just vengeance meted out against those who have misused them; those who think that their lives hold nothing more than ashes, sackcloth, and the fainting heaviness of despair.”<sup>14</sup> In Matthew 11:5 (Luke 4:18; 7:22), Jesus cites from Isaiah 61, characterizing his work with the work of the anointed, which is again closely linked to the proclamation of God’s kingship (Luke 4:43).

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12. John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 368.

13. Bernd Janowski, cited in Philip J. Nel, “mlk,” in Willem A. VanGemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 2 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 956–65.

14. Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah*, 564ff.

### **1.2.4 Other vocabulary**

Quite close to *euangelizo* is *kerusso* (κηρυσσω), which actually means “to proclaim something in public.” “κηρυσσω αυδ κηρυγμα [*kerygma*—‘proclamation’] are relevant in the beginnings of the Christian mission in connection with corresponding expressions (e.g., *euangelizo*).”<sup>15</sup> It seems that both terms more or less have the same meaning.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Luke speaks of Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God as “to proclaim [*euangelizesthai*] the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43), while Matthew renders it as “to announce [*kerussein*] the gospel [*euangelion*] of the kingdom” (Matt. 4:23). In Matthew 4:17 it is said: “From that time Jesus began to proclaim: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” The content of Jesus’ public proclamation is the kingdom of God and the call for repentance to God. This proclamation aims at an answer from those who listen to the message. The kingdom of God is present in Jesus’ person and ministry (Mark 1:14-15), while still having a future dimension (Matt. 15:1-13; Mark 9:1; 14:25). It is there already, and it is yet to come.

In the book of Acts Christ is at the centre of *kerusso*. Here, the term clearly has a missionary connotation, characterizing the flow of the gospel beyond Jerusalem. Jesus, the proclaimer of the kingdom of God, has become the proclaimed Christ. “There is little doubt that this eschatological tone of Jesus’ kingdom ministry had enormous impact on the early church, including its motivation for mission.”<sup>16</sup> For Paul, *kerusso* marks the preaching of the gospel; it is “the explication of the faith that has been made possible through the proclamation.”<sup>17</sup>

### **1.2.5 Conclusion**

On the basis of this limited word study one may summarize that evangelism is the proclamation of the good news of salvation brought in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Evangelism is the gospel, the *euangelion* (euaggelion), at work.

## **1.3 Further Biblical-Theological Reflections on Evangelism**

A fully developed theological vision for evangelism today cannot be derived merely from word study.<sup>18</sup> Further considerations and observations are needed.

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15. Otto Merk, “κηρυσσω,” in Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, 2:288–92.

16. Senior and Stuhlmüller, *Biblical Foundations*, 156.

17. Rom. 10:8, 14ff; 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Cor. 15:11, 14.

18. Abraham, “Theology of Evangelism,” 20.



In this section I look into Jesus' ministry, some practices of evangelism in the early church, and the apostolic ministry of Paul.

### ***1.3.1 Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom (Jesus' ministry)***

According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' proclamation can be summarized as follows: "proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 4:23; cf. Luke 4:43). And since "the kingdom of God has come near," this announcement is followed by an appeal of repentance: "repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15). The nearness of God's reign is, according to Jesus, "good news," a message of salvation for humankind. And while announcing the kingdom of God in words, it is Jesus in person who brings the benefits of this future kingdom. "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you" (Luke 11:20).

Linking his message to the Isaianic passages discussed above, Jesus identifies his gospel as good news for the poor. Jesus brings deliverance for the oppressed. Asked by John the Baptist whether he is the expected one, Jesus answers with reference to Isaiah 61:1: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them" (Matt. 11:5). And in Luke 4:18 Jesus reads from this prophetic text in the synagogue of Nazareth, adding: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). These references are in congruence with Jesus' saying in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

Many have discussed whether the poor who are mentioned here must be considered as poor in material or, rather, in spiritual ways. This dilemma, however, seems to be false to begin with. The poor are not blessed *because* they are poor; neither can the promise of the kingdom of heaven be reduced to a strictly spiritual understanding. Thus, Jesus' proclamation is closely linked to healing the sick and liberating the demon possessed. His gospel is a full gospel, forgiving sins, casting out demons, and addressing injustice (see ch. 8.2.4, below).

Another important observation from the ministry of Jesus for our understanding of evangelism is how Jesus encountered people, especially the marginalized and needy. Several encounters with lepers, blind men, tax collectors, and other marginalized people, are narrated in the gospels. As a man, he even dared to be in contact with women. Thus, he was accused: "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Matt. 11:19; cf. Luke 7:34).

If the kingdom of God is at the centre of Jesus' proclamation, then Christ himself became the centre of the gospel proclamation after Easter. This proclamation of Christ as the saviour was combined with charitable activities. Adolf von Harnack points out ten different types of these activities by the early church, such as giving of alms, supporting widows and orphans as well as sick people, caring for prisoners and poor people, burying the dead, and being hospitable. The Christian church had a good reputation because of its charitable deeds within its fold and for others.<sup>19</sup> And this is not the least reason for the expansion of the church in the first centuries throughout the Roman Empire. Any (re-)consideration of evangelism needs to keep that in mind. This inner linkage between Christian proclamation and Christian conduct cannot be overestimated.

### ***1.3.2 The expansion of the early church***

The dynamic spread of the Christian message and the planting of churches in the neighbouring countries of the Mediterranean Sea during the first and its succeeding centuries is mostly a story of success. Beginning in Jerusalem, later in Antioch and Rome, and in almost every major city of the Roman Empire, Christian churches were started. Some of these churches were planted by intensive missionary outreach, like the one by the apostle Paul and his team workers. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul's epistles testify to the success of this enterprise. The majority of churches, however, were not planted by strategic evangelistic outreach. Although we do not know much about actual numbers of missionaries, we may assume that "professional" travelling pioneer evangelists like Paul were a minority of those who spread the gospel. As a fulltime missionary Paul made it his "ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named" (Rom. 15:20).<sup>20</sup>

Without belittling Paul's efforts in mobile evangelistic outreach, the spreading of the gospel and the planting of churches took shape predominantly in the Holy Spirit moving "ordinary" people, bringing them to faith and enabling them to be witnesses of Christ in their families and networks (cf. ch. 8.2.2, below). According to Luke's testimony in the book of Acts this movement started in Jerusalem at Pentecost with "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" welcoming Peter's message and being baptized (Acts 2:5, 41). Most

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19. Adolf von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1902), 105–148.

20. For a thorough and exhaustive study of the early Christian mission see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Urchristliche Mission* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2002).

likely quite a few of these Jews went back to their home countries in the diaspora and spread the gospel of Christ they had received. Others spread the gospel by moving from one place to another, such as Prisca and Aquila, who were associated with Paul's evangelistic work and active in evangelism in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome (see ch. 8.2.2, below). These day-by-day contacts with family members, neighbours, colleagues, clients, and tradesmen were evangelistic opportunities for Christian witness. Within and through this networking the gospel connected with people.<sup>21</sup> Evangelistic outreach in this early period may thus be seen as a spontaneous outflow of Christian faith and community rather than organized or strategically planned evangelism.<sup>22</sup>

The house church of about 30 to 50 people from different social backgrounds became the early Christian centre of evangelism or mission for the local context, establishing itself as a third party between Jewish synagogue and Greek culture club, or between the circle of the family and the polis. These house churches acted like open systems in bridging and bonding. Closely linked in worship, Christian teaching, and bread breaking, they were in contact with other churches. As a sisterly and brotherly community living a life *coram Deo* and having a new ethos, they were attractive for outsiders. In these communities, stories of Christ and his gospel were told and the early Christians were keen to share this message with others.<sup>23</sup> Being a witness of Christ, individually or in community, may describe this Christian existence quite well (Acts 1:8; John 13:35; 1 Pet. 2:12).

The local Christian community became the major agency for mission and evangelism.<sup>24</sup> Wolfgang Reinbold, in his study on mission in the early church, points to worship gathering with its important evangelistic sensitivity (1 Cor. 14:23-25). In this way, he asserts, the church grows.<sup>25</sup> Most important here is the basic evangelistic or missionary orientation of the gathered community in worship.<sup>26</sup>

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21. Udo Schnelle, "Die Attraktivität der frühchristlichen Gemeinden: Ein Modell für die Zukunft?," in Michael Domsgen and Dirk Evers, eds., *Herausforderung Konfessionslosigkeit. Theologie im säkularen Kontext* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014), 73–92.

22. Wolf-Henning Ollrog, *Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter: Untersuchungen zu Theorie und Praxis der paulinischen Mission* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 130. See also von Harnack, *Mission und Ausbreitung*, 266ff.

23. Wolfgang Reinbold, *Propaganda und Mission im ältesten Christentum: eine Untersuchung zu den Modalitäten der Ausbreitung der frühen Kirche* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 283, 346.

24. *Ibid.*, 202.

25. *Ibid.*, 195ff.

26. Jürgen Becker, Paulus. *Der Apostel der Völker* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 270.

Against this background, it may strike us as rather odd that the apostle Paul rarely commands the early Christians to evangelize. “It is . . . a striking fact that in all his letters to the churches Paul never urges on them the duty of evangelism. He can rebuke, remind and exhort his readers about faithfulness to Christ in many matters. But he is never found exhorting them to be active in evangelism.”<sup>27</sup> Beyond the Pauline missionary enterprise and some other strategic missionary enterprises, the overall expansion of the early Christian church did not happen by planned action. There are, however, some hints in the Pauline letters where Paul expected support of the Christian communities not only through their sending money or co-workers, but through their evangelistic action and outreach as well imitation of his example.<sup>28</sup> While Paul went from place to place to plant churches (Rom. 15:20), the local church was evangelistically active in its context (1 Thess. 1:6-8). And although the biblical basis isn’t quite extensive, it may be true that other important cities like Jerusalem and later Antioch saw it as their responsibility to send out missionaries or evangelists to other territories.<sup>29</sup>

### ***1.3.3 Some observations of Pauline practice***

Throughout his letters Paul emphasizes the fact of being commissioned by the risen Lord to proclaim the gospel: “I became its servant according to God’s commission that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known” (Col. 1:25). Thus, Paul saw “his evangelism as a priestly duty to the nations, significantly adding that he specially made it his ambition to exercise his gospel ministry ‘where Christ was not known’ (Rom. 15:16-22; notice his quotation of the Servant passage from Is. 52:15, which speaks of the knowledge of the Servant among the nations).”<sup>30</sup> For this very reason he travelled throughout the northern territories of the Mediterranean Sea using the synagogues in the Jewish diaspora and the fresh new Christian communities in different houses

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27. Lesslie Newbigin, *Mission in Christ’s Way: Bible Studies* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987), 4.

28. Peter T. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 126ff.; Robert L. Plummer, *Paul’s Understanding of the Church’s Mission: Did the Apostle Paul Expect the Early Christian Communities to Evangelize?* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 143ff. For an overview of the different positions, see Plummer, *Paul’s Understanding*.

29. For Jerusalem, see Rudolf Pesch, *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament: Die Apostelgeschichte, Volume 2: Apg 13-28* (Zürich: Benziger, 1986), 19; David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 375ff. For wandering evangelists, see Green, *Evangelism*, 167ff.

30. Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 124.

as mission bases for his evangelistic outreach. Right from the very beginning of his mission journeys this happened through teamwork. Around 40 persons are mentioned in the so-called proto-Pauline letters as being involved in the extensive work of being sent by churches, as team workers and even as independent missionaries. Although called Paul's "co-workers," Paul himself saw them and him as both commissioned by God: "For we are God's servants, working together" (1 Cor. 3:9).<sup>31</sup>

With this motivation,<sup>32</sup> Paul concentrated on mission to certain strategic cities. In these major cities and towns in different regions Paul evangelized through direct proclamation, in debates, in personal or public dialogical conversations, in house gatherings, or in synagogues. Even miracles belonged to his evangelistic ministry (see ch. 8.2.2, below).<sup>33</sup> Although focussed on his mission "to the ends of the world" (Rom. 15:28: Spain), he kept contact with and nurtured the new churches by writing and visiting. Taking Paul as an evangelistic model, one has to concur that proclaiming the gospel by extensive traveling and sometimes remaining at a distinct place for a certain time, planting churches and nurturing them, are all duties of an evangelist.

Although Paul addressed different audiences in different, distinct ways, one may nevertheless conclude that "the convictions forged in Paul's own inaugural experience—that Jesus was the Christ and that God was now offering salvation to all through the death and resurrection of his son—formed the basic platform of his mission message."<sup>34</sup>

Paul's missionary or evangelistic self-understanding may be best summarized with the words of 2 Corinthians 4:7-15, starting with "But we have this treasure in clay jars. . . ." Three main themes important for evangelism can be seen in these verses: "power in the midst of weakness" (vv. 7-9); "life in the midst of death" (vv. 10-12); and "faith leading to speech" (vv. 13-14). Weak and limited human beings are entrusted with the gospel as a salvation-bringing

31. See also Edward Earle Ellis, "Coworkers, Paul and his," in Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993): "In Acts and the Pauline letters some one hundred individuals, under a score of titles and activities, are associated with the apostle at one time or another during his ministry" (183).

32. Michael Green points to three motivations; see Green, *Evangelism*, 236–55.

33. Senior and StuhlmueLLer, *Biblical Foundations*, 332–39. The Acts of the Apostles contain a number of narrated occasions when evangelists like Philip or apostles like Peter and Paul addressed Jews and Greeks with the gospel. Just compare the encounter with Lydia (Acts 16) with the philosophical debate on the Aeropagus (Acts 17). Or compare the evangelistic proclamation to different audiences. There are similarities but significant differences. E.g., see the three examples of evangelistic engagement with pagan worshippers in Acts in Lystra (Acts 14:8-20), Athens (Acts 17:16-34), and Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41).

34. *Ibid.*, 187.

message for the very reason that it is by God's might and power but not by human possibilities. It is based on the truth of the word and the power of the Spirit. But although the good news is told and displayed by "perishable earthenware," and this testimony may be called "defective testimony," by the work of the Spirit and by the grace of God it comes up effectual.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.4 Current Theological Understandings of Evangelism

### 1.4.1 Experiences and definitions

For many today within or outside the church, evangelism or evangelizing is closely associated with Billy Graham—types of evangelism that have their roots in the 18th-century Methodist revival meetings. The first evangelistic gathering in Europe in that sense may well be the open-air meeting of miners in Bristol in 1739, who were addressed by the revivalist George Whitefield. These gatherings spread all over Britain and later all over Europe. North American evangelists like Charles Finney and Dwight L. Moody followed this tradition in the 19th century, running evangelistic campaigns in Europe. Billy Graham continued this tradition in the 20th century, making it into a worldwide campaign. Until the 1960s or even 1970s this specific "rallying" method of evangelism was so successful that evangelism became identified with a single evangelist leading tent meetings or evangelistic campaigns in stadiums or halls, accompanied by a choir and fellow Christians giving a testimony. For quite a few churches and congregations, to be "evangelistic" meant, and perhaps still means, to have a tent set up once a year or to run evangelistic campaigns with a preacher called an "evangelist." Although this specific method for evangelism usually doesn't attract thousands of people for a single event like it did in the past, especially in the more secularized parts of Europe, it is still considered and practiced as a possible way for evangelism in quite a few churches.

Perhaps because this practice has been so dominant for a long time, "evangelism" has become a polluted term, associated with rudeness and intolerance, for many Europeans. It seems that "the very word 'evangelism' sets many people's teeth on edge."<sup>36</sup> Many (older) people describe negative experiences they have had with evangelism, of evangelists have shouting at them to convert

35. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come: An Exposition of the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 20.

36. John Finney, *Emerging Evangelism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2004), 7.

and to lift their hands. Some point to proselytism (cf. chs. 8.1.3 and 8.2.4, below) or to efforts in just growing or maintaining one's own church by evangelism. Recent publications on evangelism by the World Council of Churches or local and national church bodies usually take up these issues and distance themselves from negative habits and practices. Dealing with evangelism, then, also means the "work of binding up the wounds of our fathers and mothers in evangelism."<sup>37</sup>

With all that in mind one should be hesitant to define "evangelism" in too narrow a way, by limiting it to a specific form or method. And despite the popular but narrow understanding of evangelism just described, the term and other related ones have become widely used since the 1970s. Indeed, it has become quite common for Roman Catholics to talk about "evangelization," while Protestants mainly use "evangelism." Although these terms overlap in their use, "evangelism" may refer to "(a) the activities involved in spreading the gospel . . . and (b) the theological reflection on these activities," whereas "evangelization" may be used to refer to "(a) the process of spreading the gospel or (b) the extent to which it has been spread. . . ."<sup>38</sup> Thus, the latter term is close to "Christianization" or even "civilization." Others, including non-Catholics, prefer "evangelization" for practical reasons, partly because so many Catholics use it and partly because the term *evangelism* is too much associated with specific methods.<sup>39</sup> Another possible distinction defines "evangelism" as the sharing of the good news by Christians on a day-to-day basis and "evangelization" as referring to more organized and planned forums, like special meetings or campaigns. Altogether, the variety of use is rather bewildering. Therefore, in the following, the word *evangelism* is mainly used in line with WCC usage of the term.

Regardless of which term is preferred, very different definitions and interpretations can be behind them. Sometimes these differences cause misunderstandings, even more so because different understandings are often connected with the same term. Therefore, it is helpful to keep several definitions in mind that have been in use and are obviously still used. Evangelism has been defined:

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37. Abraham, "Theology of Evangelism," 22.

38. David J. Bosch, "Evangelism, Evangelization," in Karl Müller et al., eds., *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 151.

39. Finney, *Emerging Evangelism*, 8. See also Darrell L. Guder, *Be My Witnesses: The Church's Mission, Message, and Messengers* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 133ff.

- a. “according to *method* and *style*. It is then primarily understood as public preaching of a revivalist nature to large . . . audiences by specially gifted (often itinerant) ‘evangelists’”;
- b. “in terms of results: evangelism is communicating the gospel effectively; it is producing converts”;
- c. “in terms of its ‘objects’ . . . distinguished from mission.” While mission refers to people not yet being Christians, evangelism refers to the calling back or re-Christianization of already-baptized people.

While these definitions are a first and rough guide for understanding (traditional views of) evangelism in its different aspects, they are still in danger of reducing evangelism to questions of method, results, or objects.<sup>40</sup> As such, “evangelism” runs the risk of becoming the pragmatic, methodological branch of mission. Therefore, on the way toward a definition of evangelism, the relationship between mission and evangelism has to be considered.

#### ***1.4.2 Mission and evangelism***

Mission and evangelism seem to be partners or even twins, because they are often used in combination. Thus, the 2013 WCC affirmation *Together towards Life* speaks of “mission and evangelism in changing landscapes.” The same can be said of the 1982 document *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation*, and the WCC commission dealing with these issues is called “Commission on World Mission and Evangelism” (CWME).

This opens up the question *how* they are related to each other and what makes them different. To begin with, we have to admit that in many ways both terms were and are used interchangeably. Evangelicals even tend to say, “Historically the mission of the church is evangelism alone.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, in many ways “mission,” “evangelism,” and then especially “witness” are more or less describing the same thing.

In many 20th-century documents, however, a tension can be observed between these words. Especially in times when “mission” and “evangelism” were seen as suspect terms, “witness” became a substitute in many WCC and national church publications. In recent Roman Catholic publications, on the other hand, one finds tendencies to replace “mission” with “evangelization.” “Interestingly,

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40. Bosch, “Evangelism, Evangelization,” 151ff.

41. Arthur P. Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1978), 18.



perhaps as a reflection of the rather strong aversion to the word ‘mission’ that had emerged in the churches and in theology and (ironically!) missiology, the pope uses the word ‘evangelization.’ However, the meaning of the terms is the same, and we believe that they can be used interchangeably,” write Roman Catholic missiologists Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder.<sup>42</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi* is quite a good example of that, understanding “evangelization” as a kind of umbrella term referring to the whole church being sent into the world, while the term *mission* is rarely used. While *Ad Gentes* focusses on the missionary nature of the church having a broad understanding of mission, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* widens the understanding of evangelization as the church’s “deepest identity,” because “any partial and fragmentary definition which attempts to render the reality of evangelization in all its richness, complexity and dynamism does so only at the risk of impoverishing it and even of distorting it.”<sup>43</sup>

Beyond the Roman Catholic Church, similar attempts have been made to develop a very broad understanding of “evangelism,” including deeds of justice, peace, and human development, while omitting the term *mission*, which is so often associated with Western imperialism and colonialism. Despite these tendencies both terms—*mission* and *evangelism*—are still in use and are even going through a kind of renaissance. Churches in Europe speak more openly of “mission” and “evangelization,” meaning “evangelism.” This happens often interchangeably. In some contexts “mission” is preferred, in others “evangelism.” Here and there it seems to depend on which of the two terms is regarded the more polluted one. Keeping that in mind, it seems nevertheless quite helpful to differentiate between the meanings of both words. Thus, it has become customary to take “mission” as an umbrella term describing God’s sending of the church or a church in mission, being sent. “Mission,” then, includes the church’s social involvement, prophetic ministry, interchurch aid, development aid, caring responsibility, and evangelism. All these dimensions are part of the one mission, but no single one of them can be exclusively equated with the church’s mission. They are all related to and depend on each other.<sup>44</sup> Thus, “evangelisation is mission, but mission is not merely evangelisation.”<sup>45</sup>

42. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 144.

43. Pope Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,” 8 December 1975, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 68 (1976), par. 17.

44. For a helpful discussion on this, see David J. Bosch, “In Search of a New Evangelical Understanding,” in Bruce J. Nicholls, ed., *In Word and Deed: Evangelism and Social Responsibility* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1985), 81ff.

45. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977 / Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993 [1975]), 10.

Therefore, mission and evangelism are linked together, but they are not the same “in such way that *mission* is understood as the total task God has set the church for the salvation of the world or as the church’s ministry of stepping out of itself, into the wider world, in this process crossing geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, ideological, and other frontiers or barriers. Evangelism, in contrast, may then be regarded as one of several dimensions of the wider mission of the church, indeed the core, heart, or center of mission.”<sup>46</sup> Although some may dispute whether evangelism is the “center of mission” and therefore somehow ultimate, there seems to be an increasing consensus to distinguish between “mission” and “evangelism” in such a way.

This distinction is also found in the WCC documents from 1982 and 2013, on mission and evangelism. Mission then is “the life-giving mission of the Triune God,” which is coined as *missio Dei*,<sup>47</sup> and evangelism is “to bear witness to the vision of abundant life for all in the new heaven and earth.”<sup>48</sup> Here, evangelism is an essential part of God’s mission in the world and a specific responsibility of the church. Starting with the focus on a missionary God, because “mission begins in the heart of the Triune God,” the church as a “community of hope” is sent into the world.<sup>49</sup> And while discovering “more deeply its identity as a missionary community, its outward-looking character finds expression in evangelism.”<sup>50</sup> Here *Together towards Life* follows quite obviously the understanding of *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* and of *The Cape Town Commitment* of 2010, which states: “Our engagement in mission, then, is pointless and fruitless without the presence, guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. This is true of mission in all its dimensions: evangelism, bearing witness to the truth, discipling, peace-making, social engagement, ethical transformation, caring for creation, overcoming evil powers, casting out demonic spirits, healing the sick, suffering and enduring under persecution.”<sup>51</sup>

Mission, then, is seen as the mission of God (*missio Dei*), which springs up from the very heart of God for the benefit of God’s creation. In that sense mission flows from God’s very own nature and follows the logic of God’s love

46. Bosch, “Evangelism, Evangelization,” 152.

47. Tormod Engelsen, “*Missio Dei*: The Understanding and Misunderstanding of a Theological Concept in European Churches and Missiology,” *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 367 (October 2003): 481–97; John G. Flett, *The Witness of God: The Trinity, Missio Dei, Karl Barth, and the Nature of Christian Community* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

48. World Council of Churches, *Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), par. 1.

49. *Ibid.*, par. 2.

50. *Ibid.*, par. 79.

51. The Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment* (Cape Town, 2010), 12.

for the world. The church is then part of this mission flowing from God. “The missionary God who sent the Son to the world calls all God’s people (John 10:21), and empowers them to be a community of hope.”<sup>52</sup> In that sense the church is part of God’s sending to the world. “The church . . . came into being for the sake of mission.”<sup>53</sup> Mission describes, therefore, God’s sending the Son and the Son’s sending the church to the world. The crucial part of this “being sent” is evangelism.

While the different aspects of evangelism will be explored later in this book, the following definition by South African missiologist David J. Bosch may serve as a good working definition:

that dimension and activity of the church’s mission which, by word and deed and in the light of particular conditions and a particular context, offers every person and community, everywhere, a valid opportunity to be directly challenged to a radical reorientation of their lives, a reorientation which involves such things as deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers; embracing Christ as Savior and Lord; becoming a living member of his community, the church; being enlisted into his service of reconciliation, peace, and justice on earth; and being committed to God’s purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ.<sup>54</sup>

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52. WCC, *Together towards Life*, par. 2.

53. *Ibid.*, par. 57.

54. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 420.