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Mission from Anywhere to Europe

Americans, Africans, and Australians Coming to Amsterdam

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Abstract

World Christianity entails a multi-centric Christianity, and mission from anywhere to anywhere. Today, any place can be a mission base and a mission field at the same time. According to Andrew Walls this may lead to a new “Ephesian moment” in Christianity. To what extent this is happening can only be found out, however, by doing actual research into local encounters of different Christianities. In this article three post-War missionary movements to Europe are subjected to scrutiny: American evangelicals, who came to Europe after the Second World War; African immigrants, who started to plant churches in the 1980s; and Australian neo-Pentecostals, who have recently extended their missionary efforts to European cities. Especially, attention is paid to their views of Europe and European churches, their methods of mission, and how they are received by Europeans. This analysis forms the basis of several missiological reflections regarding mission in secularized (Western) Europe, with a view to the realization of “Ephesian moments”. It is demonstrated that the late modern missionary movement to Europe is determined to a large extent by globalizing tendencies, which threaten local expressions of Christianity. Also, some stereotypical pictures of Europe, as they are held by missionaries, are challenged. Different approaches are suggested in order to have a genuine encounter between different kinds of Christianity on the European mission field.

Keywords

world Christianity – Europe – reversed mission – reverse mission – neo-Pentecostalism – revivalism

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World Christianity Today

The face of Christianity has changed dramatically since the Second World War and the subsequent crumbling of the colonial empires. Especially Andrew Walls has reminded us that we have arrived at a situation of “world Christianity”. Walls asserts that this is in fact a return to the roots of Christianity before the “great ecumenical failure” in the sixth century (Walls 2012:27, 33). In the “first age” of world Christianity, between 70 AD and the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), Christianity consisted of a wide range of cultural and linguistic expressions. But “across this vast and diverse area there was a sense of the community of Christians, of one church dispersed across the world (1 Pet 1:1)”. Now we have recovered to some extent the vision of a worldwide and multi-centric Christianity, this may be the time to restore “the sense of an intercontinental and crosscultural community of Christians” (Walls 2012:30).

Walls’ statement invites us to reflect critically on the conditions that are needed for his vision to become reality. In this article I will do this from a missiological perspective. After all, the changes in world mission may be the best illustration of what multi-centric Christianity entails. Today, Christian mission “may start from any point, and be directed to any point”. It is “mission from anywhere to anywhere” (Walls 2008:202; cf. Walls 2012:33). Therefore I will make my case by presenting three case studies of mission to Western Europe (with apologies for a Dutch bias). I will discuss American evangelicals, who came immediately after the War; African neo-Pentecostals, who migrated to Europe since the 1980s and 1990s; and Australian neo-Pentecostals, who have planted their churches in European cities only very recently. After providing some general information, I will focus on four questions in each case study. First, I will ask how these movements perceive Europe: its spiritual condition, its history, and the role of its churches. Secondly, I will describe the basic message, methods and strategies of each movement. Thirdly, I will pay attention to responses by Europeans to these movements. And finally, I will list some results of each particular missionary movement. I will conclude this paper by returning to Walls’ thesis, and ask what can be learnt from these case studies with respect to his call for restoration of an “intercontinental and crosscultural community of Christians”.

Marketing Revivalism: American Evangelical Protestant Mission in Europe

American missionary activity in Europe increased dramatically after 1945. Already in the early 1950s there were about 70 United States denominations,

organizations, and ministries that had decided that Europe was indeed a mission field (W. Wagner 1993:24–25). Since 1989, when Eastern Europe became accessible for missionaries, the number of American missionary organizations in Europe has “exploded” (cf. Linzey 2003). In 1996 there were nearly 5,000 missionaries in Western Europe and another 2,400 in the East. Besides these, the number of short-term volunteers and independents was estimated as more than 30,000 (Stark 2001:118).

Images of Europe

Why have so many American missionaries come to Europe? Here it may be instructive to consult a book that was written especially to mobilize Americans for mission in Europe: *Let Europe Hear: The Spiritual Plight of Europe*. This book was written in 1963 by Robert P. Evans, founder of Greater Europe Mission, and it gives a clue as to the diagnosis of Europe’s condition by American Protestants in the middle of the twentieth century. In short: First, European churches demonstrate a lack of vitality due to *close connections with the secular state* (Evans 1963:22–24). Second, Europeans consider themselves Christians on the basis of infant baptism and territory, but not on the basis of a *personal experience of saving grace* (1963:33–34). Third, Europeans mix their Christian traditions with *paganism, occultism, and superstition* (1963:17). Roman Catholicism particularly is nothing but “paganised Christianity” (1963:57). Fourth, Europeans are led by *oppressive priests and non-evangelistic pastors* (1963:57, 68). Moreover, Protestantism is deeply affected by liberal views of the Bible (1963:71–72).

The fact that the churches in Europe have not been able to stop ongoing secularization is seen to underscore their lack of theological, spiritual and organizational vitality. “No wonder”, says Evans, “thinking Christians today are beginning to wonder whether Europe was ever truly evangelized” (1963:20). Such observations have been repeated in many American descriptions of Europe’s spiritual condition ever since.

Message and Method

The classic evangelical remedy for Europe’s spiritual disease consists of the basic ingredients of an American religious culture. This implies religious liberty (a free religious market), an evangelistic message that revolves around an individual experience of conversion, and pragmatic structures of organization that facilitate the proclamation of this message. Perhaps the most explicit American missionary export product has been Church Growth Theory. A quip by C. Peter Wagner, one of its leading figures, has inspired many North American missionary agencies working in Europe: church planting is supposed to be “the single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven” (Wagner 1990:11). Church Growth’s founding father, Donald McGavran reflects

the assumptions of a high-demand North American religious economy, when he writes: "Only the creation of multitudes of new vital congregations (either within or without the State denominations) will reconvert the myriads of European Christo-pagans" (McGavran 1980:262).

Responses from Europeans

The Anglo-Saxon type of revivalist religion has not always landed well on European soil. In many areas it has been labelled as an essentially alien, proselytizing, judgmental, holier-than-thou type of Christianity. Post-war American missions in Europe have met more or less the same criticisms. American evangelicalism draws upon nineteenth-century revivalism and twentieth-century fundamentalism. This has generally resulted in a pragmatic, change-oriented theology, aimed at results, and impatient with more complex aspects of theology (Abraham 1999:8–10). In this context, theology is trimmed down to a few essentials that help people to reach a "decision for Christ". This has led to views of baptism, conversion, ecclesiology, and Christology that have often caused aversion among European theologians and church leaders as being too simplistic. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that through the work of (originally) American societies as Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, and innumerable others, many Europeans have had a personal conversion experience, often with great impact on their lives. I share William Wagner's verdict that Americans "have maximized the place of 'proclamation' evangelism", and thus "helped to reawaken the conscience of Europe" (Wagner 1993:177). Also it must be said that the marginalized Free Churches in continental Europe have generally profited from the support of American missionaries, for example through the establishment of theological education (e.g., in Louvain, Giessen, Prague, Badhoevedorp).

Results

Seen from a purely quantitative perspective the result of American missions has been limited. There have been no mass revivals and American denominations have failed to build a significant presence on European territory (W. Wagner 1993:126–127, 133–135; Koop 1986). However, this may not be the best way to evaluate American missions to Europe. In my opinion the main contribution of Americans to European Christianity in the previous decades has been this: Americans have helped Europeans to make the transition to the late-modern, pluralistic religious market situation that emerged after the decline of Christendom. Let me highlight some aspects of this.

First, although the growing awareness of Europe as a mission field was largely an indigenous process (most leading European theologians had reached

this conclusion in the 1950s already – Paas 2012a), the Americans have certainly contributed to it. The simple fact that missionaries are coming to your doorstep may provoke initial anger, but it is also a wake-up call. Moreover, the presence of outsiders who ask critical questions about territorial Christianity, church-state relations, and so on, has been a great help in changing Europe's self-identification as a Christian continent. The Americans have assisted Europe to understand that in the late-modern age Christianity is consumed rather than assumed. People are no longer involved in the church on the basis of national identity, but on the basis of individual choice (Paas 2012b).

Second, American evangelicals have imported many tools and strategies that help the church to do mission in a pluralistic culture of consumption. In a sense, what they brought was not new or never heard of. Many if not most of their messages and methods had been invented in the European revivals in the eighteenth century: conversion as a datable experience, mass meetings, open-air preaching, itinerant ministry, prayer groups, para-church societies, and so on. However, in America these innovations had been customized, modernized and marketed. They had been turned into models for general use, to the extent that even the church itself became a "method" or a "strategy" – as in Church Growth Theory (McGavran 1980). Whatever one may think of this, the least we can say is that Americans, by their pragmatism, have given the European churches some tools to manage a rapidly changing world rather than merely to analyze it.

Third, more recently, Americans have tended to adopt a role as consultants and advisors, leaving the actual field work to nationals (W. Wagner 1993:137–140). More and more Americans realize that "the future of the European Church does not lie in missions from elsewhere but from a new consciousness that is created at a grassroots level among European churches. American mission agencies are, in a real sense, nothing more than catalysts and facilitators" (1993:132). In the 1980s and early 1990s, for example, the "seeker-driven" Willow Creek model (Pritchard 1995) was embraced by many churches in Europe, sometimes with great evangelistic profit. Also, a process of indigenous church planting in continental Europe seemed to take off here and there outside the traditional and, in continental Europe, rather marginal Free Churches (cf. Paas 2008:84–88).

The World Our Parish: Neo-Pentecostal Missions to Europe

Since the next two case studies will both deal with neo-Pentecostal missionary movements, I will introduce this branch of Christianity first. Just like

twentieth-century American evangelicalism, neo-Pentecostalism is a very transportable faith (Coleman 2000:22–23). Essentially, it is a “style of spirituality” rather than a denomination (Da Silva Júnior 2011:79). It shares many characteristics with ‘Old’ Pentecostalism, like speaking in tongues, Spirit baptism, healing, prophecy, and the like. In addition, however, it consists of a loose set of features that can be emphasized or toned down depending on context. The following characteristics are generally recognized as typically ‘Neo-Pentecostal’:

A this-wordly orientation. While classical Christianity (and many other religions) tended to emphasize the difference between the “temporal” and the “eternal”, presenting the “eternal” as the somehow more “real” and meaningful realm, neo-Pentecostals designate the here and now as the arena where salvation happens. The meaning of human life must be found in this world rather than the next. Instead of considering this life as a preparation for encountering God in the hereafter, God is seen as the great Provider of blessings for the faithful in this life of work, family, and so forth. The main framework in which God-talk functions, is not the framework of truth, but of relevance. God “works”, and that is what makes him true. Therefore, many commentators would consider neo-Pentecostalism as an example of a truly modern, even “secular” religion (Thomas 2009; Maddox 2012:153–155; cf. Tawney 1926:93–94). In short, there is no doubt that neo-Pentecostalism is radically “world-affirmative”.

A holistic (and materialistic) view of salvation. Jesus came, died and rose again, not primarily to bring souls from earth to heaven, but to bestow all kinds of goods on his people on earth. He became poor to make us rich – quite literally. Salvation in neo-Pentecostal terms is not just salvation from sins, but it is also healing, material blessings, success in work or relationships, inner balance, and so on. Therefore, conversion is not in the first place a transformation in order to be saved after this life, but it transforms the body into a receptacle of divine gifts, a place of worship, spiritual battle, and encounter with God. This is where terms like “prosperity gospel” or “health and wealth movement” come in, although proponents of this movement prefer the name “Faith Movement”.¹

Words of power (“name it and claim it”). There is a great, almost “magical” confidence in (and fear of) the power of words in neo-Pentecostalism. If a word is spoken in order to make positive changes, it can be called “positive confession”. Coleman defines this as “a statement that lays claims to God’s provisions and promises in the present”. Words spoken in faith enable the

1 Much of this doctrine can be traced back to American leaders like Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and Oral Roberts (cf. Coleman 2000:27–31).

believer “to assert sovereignty over multiple spheres of existence, ranging from their own bodies to broad geographical regions” (Coleman 2000:28, 131–133). Of course, there is also a negative side to this. Words of criticism can be explained in very material ways as a form of “contagion” or even as “curses”, standing in the way of God’s blessing. Either way, this lends great power to human beings, since simple words spoken in (bad) faith can do great things on earth. Other typical concepts are connected to this belief in proclamation power, such as for example the idea of “territorial spirits” (Wagner 1991; cf. DeBernardi 1999) hindering evangelism, which must be fought by loud formulaic prayers.

Performance, theatre, and personalization. Neo-Pentecostalism has a highly theatrical outlook. It is fond of dramatic faith healings, massive worship concerts with a great variety of body movements (laughing, falling, dancing, crying, lifting hands, etc.), public baptisms in a swimming pool (sometimes inviting bystanders to get baptized on the spot), multimedia spectacles, and many more visible performances. Also neo-Pentecostalism tends to emphasize heavily the role of leading pastors, who often travel around intensively, and function in many ways as role models of “spiritual careers”. Thus, religion is not just performed; it is personalized. In a way, this may be part of the “materiality” of salvation in neo-Pentecostalism. There is something sacramental about this, making clear that the main connection between God and man is not established by listening to the Word, but by performances of the body, and receiving words and healing touches from anointed leaders.

These four features are very flexible and adaptive. In a Northern middle class setting, neo-Pentecostals will typically emphasize aspects of salvation that are related to therapeutic issues, self-acceptation, career challenges, diet problems, sexuality, and family roles; in lower class milieus, or in settings in the global South, neo-Pentecostalism will more often put stress on prosperity, demonic possession (exorcism), spiritual warfare, or issues of discrimination and racism (Hunt 2000:336–342; Da Silva Júnior 2011:73–75). This orientation towards the felt needs of upwardly mobile people, and its emphasis on “empowerment” – physically, mentally, socially, financially – has made it possible for the movement to spread with an amazing speed to the far ends of the world, and settle itself in a wide range of social classes (cf. Coleman 2000:31–40). Especially in large urban centers the “Faith Movement” has demonstrated a true megachurch potential on every continent. Thus, neo-Pentecostalism may be the example par excellence of what Andrew Walls calls “mission from anywhere to anywhere” (2008:202). Although originally from North America, it has spread like an epidemic, constantly adapting and reworking its heritage.

It is genuinely multi-centric.² Through its large international network (or rather a series of overlapping networks), its reliance on modern media, and its “diasporic” sense of identity, neo-Pentecostalism seems able to thrive everywhere. It is constantly on the move, bouncing to and fro from every corner of the planet. With regard to mission in Europe, there are two recent examples I wish to discuss. One is the mission of African neo-Pentecostals who have recently migrated to almost all European cities; the other one is the arrival of several Australian denominations, in particular Hill Song, in some cities. First, I will look at the Africans.

African Missions to Europe

It is well known that recent migration has revitalized many older churches in Europe. Moreover, innumerable new churches have been planted. Of course, the theological variety among all these immigrants, including those from Africa, is immense. Here I concentrate on West-African neo-Pentecostals. They are the largest group by far. Also, there is a clear tendency among African immigrants in Europe towards “pentecostalisation” (Koning 2011:73).³ Moreover, of all immigrant churches, they have the most expansive missionary vision, including outreach to people who do not belong to the same language and culture (cf. Koning 2011:92; Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:26–27). This also pertains to terminology. While these churches are seen by Europeans (including European church leaders) as “immigrant” or “migrant” churches, neo-Pentecostals talk about their congregations as “international churches” or “new mission churches” (Währisch-Oblau 2009:35, 42, 51). As for the missionaries themselves, they definitely reject images fostered by European church leaders suggesting that they were “immigrant pastors” only, catering for the needs of their “own” people. On the contrary, they see themselves as people who are

2 Hunt (2000:333–336) argues against the “hegemonic model” that (working from a more or less Marxist framework) describes movements like these as American export products, which are imposed on innocent non-Americans through the application of sophisticated and powerful communication systems. In fact, globalizing religions are adapted, reworked, mixed with local traditions, and subsequently returned to sender. There is always a level of local receptivity, and creative appropriation plays a major role.

3 Koning also shows how most immigrant churches focus their mission efforts on ethically and linguistically related people groups (2000:60–73, 99–108, 138).

called by God to go worldwide. God has sent them to the world to proclaim his gospel. They are *missionaries* (Währisch-Oblau 2009:237–239).

In her study of African neo-Pentecostal missionaries in Germany, Claudia Währisch-Oblau has shown how they construct their task as a project of “reversed” mission. It is about “giving something back” to the continent that has blessed them in the past (2009:259). As Währisch-Oblau points out, there is something of a “subversive element” in this: if the white missionaries who brought the gospel to Africa are described as a blessing, then it is clear that the missionaries coming from the South to the North cannot be anything else but a blessing, too. There is an implicit logic of mutuality here: we have accepted your missionaries, so you should accept ours. Mission history is presented as completely unproblematic, contrary to all the feelings of guilt that still live on in the West about the colonial past. But the consequence is that this new mission is free to override the tribal traditions of Europe as well (2009:260–262).

Images of Europe

By and large, most immigrant churches reflect the traditional pictures that non-European evangelicals have of Europe: secularization, nominal Christianity, and decline of Christian morality. Just like the Americans in the 1950s and 1960s, most immigrant churches stress the essentially Christian character of Europe. Christianity has brought Europe its civilization and wealth (Währisch-Oblau 2009:255; Koning 2011:107–108). Although it is still in many ways a good place to live, thanks to its Christian past, the decline of Christianity is a real danger. Many examples of moral decay are mentioned to illustrate this, with special attention being paid to homosexuality, gay marriage, cohabitation before marriage, and the like.

This combined perception of Christian history and current decline determines their missionary approach as, essentially, a revivalist paradigm. In an unpublished research paper, based on fieldwork in Amsterdam, Harley Schreck and Jim Mellis write:

Immigrant pastors argue that their churches offer new forms of worship or theological perspectives that could encourage or enhance the work of the Dutch churches. They suggested that there are two types of contributions they offer Dutch churches. Firstly, they argue that their churches are evangelizing the Dutch and helping to bring about revival in the Netherlands (...). Secondly, they argue that immigrant churches have given Dutch Christians more confidence to publically declare their faith

in a society where church attendance has fallen off significantly since the 1960s (Schreck and Mellis 2013).

Of course, this mission is more than an addition to the mission work of older Dutch churches. It is a kind of criticism, since these churches appear to have failed in doing the job (cf. Koning 2011:102–108, cf. 78, 83). There is not just a problem with the loss of a Christian culture in the West; it is made worse by the lack of vitality of the churches. Therefore, European countries are in need of revival. “The image is a restorationist one”, says Währisch-Oblau: “Rather than bringing a new message to people who have never heard it before, the mission of the migrants is to restore the German church to its glorious past, thereby re-making Germany into the Christian country it once was” (2009:258).

Message and Method

Essentially, African missionaries in Europe bring the same revivalist message as their Methodist and Evangelical forebears. What Europeans need is a personal relationship with Jesus, an experience of individual, transformative conversion (Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:28–29). Apart from welcoming people in their worship services, many churches go out on the streets to evangelize. They hand out standard evangelical tracts, often because these can be freely ordered from evangelistic agencies in the country. Währisch-Oblau describes those tracts as containing a “traditional evangelical approach” and “evangelical jargon, revolving around terms like sin, repentance, salvation and eternal life” (2009:232–233). An important asset is the use of Gospel music, since Africans are aware that many Europeans like it. Therefore, concerts in their own building, on the streets, or in public halls are an important method to build bridges with secularized Europeans. Sometimes, pastors give evangelistic training to their church members, instructing them in the art of casual conversations (“when with the Dutch, talk about the weather!”) and how to drop references to the Bible in these conversations (Koning 2011:149–150).

A specific contribution of neo-Pentecostals in this respect is the concept of “spiritual warfare” (cf. Währisch-Oblau 2009:272–301; Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:31–32). This is essentially a work of prayer, and it is closely related to the idea of “positive confession” that I have mentioned previously. The basic idea is that evangelism is a spiritual battle against invisible powers that hinder the evangelist and hold cultures captive in demonic chains. African neo-Pentecostals reproduce this vision within a traditional West-African cosmology. Salvation is viewed as holistic and earth-centred, but always in peril. Jesus wants to give every believer a life in fullness. However, early death, illness, poverty, infertility, misfortune, racism, and accidents show that satanic powers (or witchcraft) are

still active to hinder the believer from achieving the life that Jesus promises. The concept of spiritual warfare thus strongly depends on a dualistic worldview: two empires are constantly fighting over souls and countries; believers can contribute to this fight by intense, continuous, and collective prayer. Neo-Pentecostal Africans see this as an important contribution to the re-evangelization of Europe: there are as many demons in Europe as in Africa, only Europeans do not want to realize it. Evangelism is a “power encounter”: if nothing happens in the spiritual realm, no conversion of individuals and cultures can be achieved.

A very interesting illustration of this concept is described by Währisch-Oblau. During a meeting some West African pastors asked their German counterparts: “What makes the Germans tick? We want to understand this so that we can evangelize more effectively”. The Germans answered their request by organizing a seminar on the great minds that have shaped modernity in Europe, especially in Germany. So, a professor came and he explained to the Africans the philosophies of Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud. What happened next may be best quoted in full:

After the full day seminar, the participants gathered for dinner. During the meal, they announced that they would convene a special prayer meeting later that night. Now that they had understood what was blocking evangelism in Germany, they were going to wage spiritual warfare against the spirits of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud. The prayer meeting that night lasted almost two hours and was one of the most intense I ever witnessed. The participants, migrant pastors from Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Nepal, Vietnam, and Indonesia screamed and shouted at the top of their voices, jumped, shook their arms and raised their fists until they were streaming with sweat. They clearly waged a battle – their prayers were not supplications or intercessions, but “authority prayers”: “In the name of Jesus, we assert authority over Germany! We declare that the spirits of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud have no right to oppress this country! We totally bind the spirits of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud and all spirits who have been following them! We declare that they will no more mislead the Germans, in the name of Jesus! We cleanse Germany from the spirits of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud, in the name of Jesus! (Währisch-Oblau 2009:300)

The researcher remembers the deep shock she felt. She was sure that the Germans had completely failed to make the participants understand the meaning of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud. However, the colleague who had been

teaching “wondered aloud whether perhaps an exorcism of the spirit of religious criticism might be exactly what Germany needed” (2009:300).

Responses from Europeans

As noted above, African missionaries believe that they offer a serious contribution to the re-evangelization of Europe. However, this contribution does not seem to be noticed by the recipients. In their research paper Schreck and Mellis note that none of the Dutch pastors they interviewed recognized the alleged results of African mission to the Netherlands. They “could not find any evidence of renewal or revival in Dutch churches or among Dutch Christians that could be linked to the contributions or examples presented by immigrant Christians or their churches”. African immigrant churches are seen as strange with their emphasis on driving out demons, opposition to homosexuality, and prosperity gospel. The latter seems particularly strange in a rich country where one enjoys luxuries and does not feel the need for “victory” in one’s life. Additional issues that are mentioned are that African worship services are far too long and too loud, and that pastors in African churches are authoritarian (Schreck and Mellis 2013).

Apparently, there is a huge gap between Europeans and these Christian immigrants from the South. Generally, the larger European churches maintain official relationships with immigrant networks, and sometimes they have made this a priority (cf. Frederiks and Pruiksma 2010). However, the lack of mutual understanding is deep. Interestingly, the gap is interpreted differently. Europeans, Christians and non-Christians, typically construct this gap in terms of *culture*. Africans, however, generally deny that culture is the problem. The real cause of the gap, according to Africans, is not culture but social and racial distance (Koning 2011:84–86; Währisch-Oblau 2009:252–253). Racism is an evil most immigrant Christians meet almost daily, in subtle and less subtle forms. As for socio-economic issues, European church leaders sometimes utter their frustration about meetings with African pastors, which are often used for requests for worship-space and money, while they want to discuss intercultural relationships and exciting theological questions. Africans, on the other hand, often feel deeply disappointed by the perceived lack of cooperation on the part of Dutch Christians in finding suitable worship space, or in their unwillingness to rent their own buildings to African congregations.

Most members of African churches, including many pastors, work in jobs at the lowest end of the job market. Most also live in lower class neighborhoods. Socio-economic issues like income, housing, visas, work permits, medical care, and so on, are often the most pressing ones for them (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:24). On the other hand, they meet people who seem to have everything.

This disturbs the classic missionary paradigm in which almost always the missionary came from a more successful and wealthier culture than the people on the mission field. This was even true, to some extent at least, for the American missionaries coming to Europe after the war. But here, the missionaries come from the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. Neo-Pentecostal pastors sometimes realize that this must lead to some adaptation of their message. The basic good news of material salvation that works so well in Africa makes little sense in Europe. Währisch-Oblau mentions several pastors who emphasize spiritual emptiness and the lack of community in the West as entrances for their gospel message – therapeutizing the message, to some extent. In short, the needs of Europeans are not material but relational (2009:253).

Results

One story of a very successful African missionary in Europe is repeated time and again. It is the story of the Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelajah who leads the “mega-church” “The Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for All Nations” in Kiev, Ukraine (cf. Asamoah-Gyadu 2012). His story is indeed remarkable, but it is also an exception. By and large, African missionaries are not very successful in reaching out to Western Europeans. One reason for this is, of course, the experienced distance reported above. In a way, African Christianity is still too “alien” for Europeans to be attractive. Some African church leaders express their expectation that their children may do a better job in evangelizing Europeans. Another factor in this lack of results may be a specific neo-Pentecostal one. Constructing evangelism basically as a spiritual battle, fought in powerful outbursts of prayer, may actually hinder the legwork that is needed to engage Europeans on the streets or in the workplace. Especially when the evangelists are far less powerful – culturally, socially and economically – than the ones they want to reach, it becomes tempting to “spiritualize” evangelism and cultural engagement. In fact, this may imply that one believes one is doing mission in the Western culture while spending all his or her time in worship gatherings and prayer nights – like soldiers in remote war-rooms flying drones over enemy territory without ever setting a foot on the ground. I am not denying that this should be done, or that Africans can teach the Western church an important lesson here, but mission is a matter of “beautiful feet” (Isaiah 52:7) as much as “constant prayer” (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

This does not mean that immigrant churches are without any missionary success. Some immigrant churches in the Netherlands (not necessarily African churches) report a small number of Dutch-born members through marriage. Also, immigrant churches occasionally attract some lower class Dutch people who find a place of community and affection there. This accords with

the story of the most successful African church on the continent, Adelaja's church in Kiev, which draws many people who have histories of substance abuse (Koning 2011:188–191; Asamoah-Gyadu 2012:25). Moreover, some migrant churches in the Netherlands report a significant number of conversions by non-Christian *immigrants* (Muslims, Buddhists or no religion). This is especially true for those coming from countries where Christianity is marginal (Koning 2011:186).

In summary, it is still too early to give an evaluation of this type of mission in Europe. Its most important contribution today may be that it undermines the dominant secularization narrative. In our increasingly multicultural societies there is a new presence of Christianity: colored, predominantly young, vital and upwardly mobile. It may be that new generations of Europeans, less preoccupied by anticlerical attitudes and more used to a multicultural society, will take this type of religiosity more seriously.

Mission from Down Under: Australian Mission in Europe

Another branch of the Faith Movement has developed in Australia, especially in the Assemblies of God. Founded in 1937, this particular network of Pentecostal congregations has experienced rapid growth in the last two decades, even though it comprises less than 2 per cent of the population (cf. Davis and Yip 2004:113–114; Connell 2005:318). Hillsong in Sydney, worldwide the best known representative of this Australian neo-Pentecostalism, was planted by Brian Houston and his wife Bobbie in 1983. The church became famous through its music ministry, organizing concerts and selling albums all over the world. Today Hillsong has grown into a “mega-church” of some 20,000 worshippers each weekend. The church has an expansive vision, resulting in many recent church plants. One of the first was the Hillsong plant in London (1999), which is also the home base for missions in continental Europe (cf. Tangen 2012).

Hillsong's church-planting model is that of “extensions”: first a number of “connect groups” (home-groups) are formed. After some time a local pastor, who has had his training in Sydney or in London, is appointed. First, worship services will be organized, which are connected each Sunday with the main church in London by a live screen. When the new church has grown to a sustainable size and has gathered enough resources, it will start its own worship services. In this way, Hillsong churches have been planted in Kiev, Moscow, Stockholm, Paris, Konstanz, Düsseldorf, and Copenhagen. Hillsong Amsterdam was started in 2009. Although other Australian neo-Pentecostal churches are

active in Europe, as for example Phil Pringle's C3 church,⁴ I will concentrate on Hillsong here.

Images of Europe

In his study of one of the first Faith churches in Europe, Word of Life in Uppsala (Sweden), Simon Coleman has given some examples of what he calls "a formal ideology of sectarian self-righteousness" (2000:109–110, 120, 122). Generally, neo-Pentecostal churches tend to speak quite dismissively about other churches, including older Pentecostal congregations. In contrast with at least some parties in the older American mission movement there seems to be little or no interest in cooperation with other churches. We have seen that African neo-Pentecostals actually do invest some energy in establishing connections with older churches, but it is difficult to find out to what extent this interest is driven by economical and practical motives rather than a sense of theological connectedness.

As a wealthy and influential church, Hillsong has no economic need to work together with local churches. Its approach largely seems to confirm the tendency of neo-Pentecostals to work in isolation. Specific relevant data are scarce however, so my evidence is largely anecdotal. John Connell relates, for example, how more intellectual issues in theology are downplayed in Hillsong preaching, rendering it rather populist in style and content. This includes sneers against other churches: "A clergyman came to talk to me about eschatology, but it's more simple than that; I felt like telling him 'get a life'" (2005:323). A colleague of mine, who visited a Hillsong leadership seminar in the Netherlands, told me how the opening lecture was dominated by images of churches in ruins – as the dark background against which Hillsong does its mission in Europe. In my own experience, the Hillsong church-plant in Amsterdam not only avoided any communication with existing churches before and after opening, it also actively recruited teenagers from older churches to the extent of aggressively approaching them with offers of free concerts, CDs, and the like.⁵

So it seems safe to assume that Hillsong, by and large, shares the perception of so many missionary movements that have come to Europe, or even more so. Thus, the vision statement until very recently spoke about seeing "revival

4 C3 (formerly "Christian City Church") was planted in 1980 by Christine and Phil Pringle, in Sydney. In 2008 it changed its name to "C3 church". The denomination now has some 300 congregations all over the world.

5 Based on conversations with teenagers in several Amsterdam congregations.

sweep this land” (Houston 1993).⁶ Interestingly, however, this vision statement is not locally produced; it features on every local Hillsong website, from Cape Town to Stockholm. Apparently, “*this* land” can be *everywhere* (or nowhere in particular). Here, as in many other aspects Hillsong demonstrates how its huge resources add conforming power to the already strongly global nature of neo-Pentecostalism, thus enabling it to standardize its local branches to a large extent. In fact, new churches become “local expressions of global culture” (Connell 2005:329; cf. Tangen 2012:54).

Therefore, the most significant aspect of Hillsong – at least in its public presentation – may be how little it says about other churches or Christians. It does not need them, and it does not seem to be interested in them. Its standardized vision statement spends many words on “the Church I see”. This church is “large in size”,⁷ growing, influential, converting, compassionate, empowering leaders, and so on and so forth. After a long list of qualifications of this envisioned church, the vision statement ends with “Yes, the Church that I see could very well be our church – Hillsong Church!” (Houston 1993). There is hardly any mentioning of the world outside the church, except that it is a place that needs “revival”. And there is not a single word about other churches; they might as well not exist.⁸ The only thing that matters is the one church in this vision statement, a church that grows and grows, until it fills and dominates

6 This particular sentence has been removed in the updated vision statement (Houston 2014). While the 1993 version had “I see a people so Kingdom-minded that they will count whatever the cost and pay whatever the price to see revival sweep this land”, the 2014 version reads: “I see a church graced with layers of ‘once-in-a-generation-type’ leaders (...). Leaders who will pay the price and count the cost of impacting cities and nations with great, God-glorifying churches”. This disappearance of ‘Kingdom’ talk, and the replacement of “people” by “leaders” and of “revival” by “churches” may reveal something about developments within Hillsong’s theology, but I will leave that aside for now.

7 Cf. Coleman 2000:155–156, on the “quantified spirituality” of neo-Pentecostalism. See also Maddox 2012:148. She speaks of “growth churches” to denote a worldwide culture of megachurches which have an “unwaveringly forward-looking, growth-oriented vision” as their most important characteristic.

8 It is fair to say that, although this older statement still features on Hillsong’s website, Brian Houston has recently written a revised vision of “The Church I Now See” (in contrast with the 1993 document “The Church I See”) that has a slightly more moderate tone (Houston 2014). The document no longer contains the final exclamation about Hillsong Church, and it contains two new phrases that with a certain amount of good will can be interpreted as the modest beginning of an ecumenical vision: (1) “I see a church that champions the cause of local churches everywhere”, and (2) “I see like-spirited churches in cities of influence...”. However, if anything, the new document is even more parading the status of Hillsong Church as a “global”, “big”, “occupying land”, “leading”, etc.

the world. This utopian church “could very well be” Hillsong. This is a vision beyond sectarianism. It does not criticize other churches; it simply ignores them. Hillsong’s image of Europe is absent. There is no Europe: there is only “the” Church and “the” world.

Message and Method

Hillsong’s mission statement is: “To reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centred, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life” (Hillsong 2014). This statement is further specified with words and phrases like “growth”, “influence”, “repentant sinners responding to Christ’s call to salvation”, “lives that are changed forever”, “empowering a leadership generation to reap the end-time harvest”, and so on (Houston 1993).⁹ This accords with Simon Coleman’s observation that Faith Movement rhetoric is “highly conversionist in orientation” (2000:104).

Apart from this, Hillsong also shares the Movement’s emphasis on “impact” and “influence”. Typical neo-Pentecostal teachings are that God influences the world through the successful lives of believers: meeting a Christian who is successful in his profession, means that people encounter the Holy Spirit. Moreover, the presence of such Spirit-filled people in politics or in business may even change the whole of society. So, spiritual and material development go hand in hand, as it were (Coleman 2000:191–192, 222–225). The vision is that of worshiping churches leading to worshiping nations and a worshiping world, so that the whole world will be filled with God’s glory. This vision is expressed, or rather sacramentally accessed, in quantitative symbols: more people, bigger churches, larger conferences, more leaders, louder music, more forceful prayers, more money, more generosity, fitter bodies, and more miracles.

Logically, this implies a worship-centered and church-centered view of Christian mission (cf. Tangen 2012:62). As Hillsong’s vision statement says: “The church that I see is a worshipping church whose songs reflect such a passion for Christ that others sense His magnificence and power. A distinct sound that emanates from a healthy church, contagious in spirit – creating music that

9 Again, some of these phrases have been removed in the new version of the vision statement (Houston 2014). While in every sense as reveling in quantitative symbols as before (or even more so), the revised document does no longer contain more or less traditional evangelistic phrases about “changed lives”, “end-time harvest”, and “repentant sinners”. It is actually quite striking how the new document uses an even more church-centered and business-like language than the old one. Also it may indicate that Hillsong’s leaders are toning down this classic conversionist language as a consequence of limited evangelistic success (see below).

resounds from villages and tribes to great cities and nations.” (Houston 2014).¹⁰ I have found very little if any information about other methods or strategies of evangelism and mission, such as soup kitchens, intellectual debates, street evangelism, Alpha courses, handing out tracts and brochures, or participating in social justice projects and local politics. I assume that Christians who are involved in Hillsong do participate in such activities, and occasionally Hillsong leaders do affirm the importance of them, but there is no clue on its website that the church sees this as a part of its mission strategy. First and foremost this strategy revolves around bringing people into the community of the church (including connect groups) through spectacular, dramatic, highly customized, multisensory worship events. These worship meetings are focused on a Christian audience, in the sense that they use “tribal” jargon freely (even in a colloquial way), and take lots of time for singing, praying aloud, and preaching. There is no attempt, as far as I have seen, to build bridges with a rationalistic, post-Christian culture. Also, its “extension” model of church planting leaves little room for a contextualized expression of Christianity in different cities.

On the other hand, Hillsong’s congregational structure is very much adapted to a late modern culture of consumption. Shane Clifton, for example, has highlighted the pragmatic course that Hillsong has chosen in areas like leadership, eschatology, and mission. Here, classical Pentecostal doctrines have been trimmed to a more manageable and transportable size in order to further church growth and church multiplication (Clifton 2009). For example, Hillsong and its sister churches have defined the senior pastor and the elders as members, and the congregation as partners with no formal authority (cf. Tangen 2012:53–54). This changes the church from a political, more or less democratic organization with “members” into a more consumerist or activist organization with a “board” and “clients”. Contrary to what many may think, late modern people often appear to be prepared to give up formal voting power in exchange for efficiency, quality, and inspiring leadership (cf. Coleman 2000:38, 109–110). Of course, their informal power that enables them to leave when they do not longer like this church remains intact throughout.

It must be said, finally, that Hillsong’s pragmatic and largely affirmative approach of late modern consumerist life-styles does not mean that it denies

10 The 1993 version was more concise and lacked the references to “sound” and “music”. (“I see a Church whose heartfelt praise and worship touches Heaven and changes earth; worship which influences the praises of people throughout the earth, exalting Christ with powerful songs of faith and hope”). Again, there seem to be subtle theological changes here, for example in the replacement of (theocentric) “exalting Christ” with (anthropocentric) “passion for Christ”.

the necessity for Christians to be involved in self-transcending causes. On the contrary, Karl Inge Tangen has shown that Hillsong succeeds in combining an individualistic discourse of self-development and personal growth with an ecclesial discourse of family and communion, and a missionary discourse of serving God and others (Tangen 2012). However, since his research concentrates on discourse analysis it remains unclear to what extent this “heroic” and “transformative” language is translated into actual mission on the ground and in the streets. As we have seen, a neo-Pentecostal mission approach may lead to a focus on changing the world through organizing prayer meetings and worship events, without having a clear vision of how this world should be changed, which concrete obstacles must be conquered, and what a changed world might look like. After all, it is one thing to sing out loud that we are “history-makers” and “planet-shakers”¹¹ in a crowded worship hall, but it is another thing to be on a real-life mission outside the walls of the church.

Responses from Europeans

Globalization can connect worlds and divide cities (cf. Coleman 2000:60). An exponent of a global culture may attract many consumers, but it does usually not generate much sympathy among representatives of the local religious market. For example, I have never met a Dutch pastor in Amsterdam who speaks approvingly of the new Hillsong plant. Faith Movement churches in the West have been criticized in the press for their authoritarian leadership structures, their lack of financial transparency, their supposed right-wing politics, their conservative views of gender-issues or sexuality, their superficial theology, and their “enthusiasm” (cf. Coleman 2000:140, 213–217; Connell 2005).

Moreover, the so-called “health and wealth” approach of salvation is a sensitive issue in the West. As we have seen, neo-Pentecostals do adapt their messages on this issue depending on their context. A recent Dutch television documentary by a secular station reported about two neo-Pentecostal churches: the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Lagos, Nigeria, and the recent Australian C3 plant in the South-eastern part of Amsterdam.¹² The documentary emphasized that both churches stand in the same tradition, but it highlighted the differences as well. Whereas the African church focused basically on money and symbols of wealth, the Western church concentrated on career-development of young urban professionals.

11 “History Maker” and “Planet Shaker” are Hillsong lyrics.

12 VPRO Tegenlicht, “Het welvaartsevangelie”, 4 March 2013. To be accessed on <http://tegenlicht.vpro.nl/afleveringen/2012-2013/het-welvaartsevangelie.html>.

Results

This rather bad press of neo-Pentecostal churches has not hindered a significant growth of Hillsong in European cities. The plant in Amsterdam, for example, has grown in few years to almost 800 attenders, which is quite spectacular on an Amsterdam scale. However, where do these people come from? Coleman points out that, although Faith rhetoric is “highly conversionist”, the available evidence in the Word of Life church in Uppsala suggests “that a significant proportion of active participants already have a committed Christian background, with Pentecostalist churches providing the highest number of ‘crossovers’” (2000:104).

As for Hillsong, a series of interviews in the Australian mother church suggested that the dominant attraction of Hillsong for young Australians was that this church helped them “to reconcile or in some way bring the traditional Christian faith they were socialized in and their contemporary lives together” (Davis and Yip 2004:116). Tangen presents ten interview reports from the Hillsong church in London. Eight of these people were committed members in other churches previously (mostly Pentecostals), one of them had made a decision for Christ at some time but had backsliden, and only one was a new convert (2012:125–175). So, despite its repeated talk of conversion and influencing society, the actual evangelistic success of Hillsong churches seems to be very limited, even though more data is needed to support this reasonable suspicion. The lack of contextualization, as noted above, may be the reason for this, apart from a possible lack of “real” evangelistic engagement as a consequence of neo-Pentecostal ideology.¹³ Recent research in the Netherlands strongly suggests that the main difference between churches that attract a significant number of newcomers to Christianity and churches that do not is the actual energy being spent in evangelism, not the theology or mission rhetoric (Vos 2012).

Concluding Missiological Reflections and Questions

In this concluding section I want to return to Andrew Walls’ thesis that we may be returning to the Golden Age of Christianity, namely an “intercontinental and crosscultural community of Christians”. What light do these case studies throw on his attractive vision?

13 As I suggested in footnote 9, the recent changes in Hillsong’s vision statement (i.e., the disappearance of conversionist language) may reflect an adaptation to this limited evangelistic success.

World Christianity and Globalization

To begin with, this may indeed be our “Ephesian moment” (Walls 2002:72–81). For the first time in centuries we may learn to know Christ together with all the saints, together with baptized humanity in all its diversity. Since all sorts of Christian missionaries are coming (back) to Europe, bringing with them experiences from far horizons, there is a unique opportunity for sharing and mutual edification. However, as we have seen in the case studies presented above, this second age of world Christianity is not a copy of the first. In our days world Christianity means coming to terms with an increasingly globalized world, a world where Coca Cola is sold everywhere except North Korea. On the one hand, globalization intensifies our “consciousness of the world as a whole”. The world has become a localized experience. This may indeed be a step towards the renewed Ephesian experience of Christianity. On the other hand, however, globalization refers to the “compression of the world”, to ever-closer interconnection, to increasing uniformity as well as vicious local reactions against an intrusive global culture (cf. Robertson 1992:8). Globalization introduces new dynamics of power, new dimensions of empire, and new forms of colonization. Power is no longer located in Rome or Geneva, but it is diffused in countless networks that can be more oppressive than ever, since there is no way to avoid them – even in the remotest corners of the planet. Therefore, as far as I am concerned the jury is still out to decide whether the West has indeed lost its theological power to enforce uniformity. All in all, it may be true that the West has found a way to renew its grip on the world in this global age instead of losing it. The strings that it holds have become invisible and omnipresent at the same time (cf. Ormerod and Clifton 2009).

So, world Christianity has a Janus face. It may open unprecedented perspectives of theological interaction, but it may also become a harbinger of increasing religious uniformity as aggressive types of missionary Christianity spread over the world. The case studies have demonstrated that mission in our age is indeed “mission from anywhere to anywhere”. But this multi-centric mission may be more complex than it seems. Just like in the worldwide web, it may be the case that behind all these “anywheres” a limited number of “somewheres” are hiding. In other words, the movements may come from many places, but the actual messages and methods are produced in some very specific locations. Globalized mission brings a variety of Christianities to every place in the world, thus inaugurating many Ephesian opportunities in many places. Yet, the question remains how many Christianities are actually capable of embarking on mission in a global world. There is an implicit selection process going on here, since Christianities capable of expansion in a world like this may be very few and very similar indeed. This in turn may lead to a more uniform world

Christianity, a loss of diversity instead of fruitful theological interaction – a Coca Cola Christianity so to speak. I believe that this is even more the case when these globalizing Christianities are dismissive of local versions, declaring them “dead” or beyond repair.

Therefore, world Christianity is far more than just a string of more or less equal cultural expressions of the one faith. It may be more adequate to describe world Christianity as a series of Christian expressions with different powers to handle this global tendency to uniformity. Some Christianities may have developed a high degree of resistance and self-confidence, allowing them to maintain a distinct identity, even in a changing world. Others have proven to be capable of spreading their own kind of Christianity around the world, thus becoming actors in the process of globalization. Eastern Orthodox churches may be examples of the first category, while evangelical Protestantism is a clear example of the second. But what about Christianities that are so tied to national and historical locations that they have little flexibility to adapt to new societal conditions or creatively negotiate the arrival of new forms of religion in their neighborhood? If they can neither beat globalization nor join it, they are doomed to disappear, or so it seems. This may be the fate of those types of Christianity that have always had an open relationship with their societies, without developing a strong ecclesial identity of their own. Here, we may think of the ancient Lutheran and Reformed churches in Europe, or the mainline churches in America. They do not just suffer a huge decline of membership; they also seem to be at a loss in finding a response to the rapid changes in the world and in Christianity.

The “Ephesian moment” in world Christianity can only become a reality, when there is serious and respectful interaction between various Christianities in many places of the world. In particular, the more expansive types of Christianity (as, for example, evangelical Protestantism and neo-Pentecostalism) must come to a fruitful exchange with more territorial Christianities, such as the Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran and Orthodox types. Of course, this is a mutual responsibility and it will leave no one unaffected. As we have seen, this kind of interaction is an exception rather than the rule on the European mission field. Therefore, I will end this article by pointing out some issues that must be discussed in order to reach more mutual understanding.

Issues for Discussion

A good example of fruitful theological interaction as a consequence of missionary encounters in Europe may be the growing consensus on conversion among Christians of different churches (cf. W. Wagner 1993:78–102). Whereas American missionaries tended to emphasize a typical revivalist model of

conversion as a born-again experience, over against a more ecclesial, sacrament-based identification of Christian identity, most theologians today agree that conversion cannot be cast in a single model.¹⁴ Actually, most converts to Christianity experience this as a process rather than a single moment (cf. Finney 1992; Paas 2003:49–66). The encounter of different traditions on the European mission field may have contributed to this new convergence of theological views. It is a lesson in itself that this awareness took at least a generation to grow.

Be that as it may, I will concentrate on unresolved issues here. There are three out of many possible subjects I would like to highlight. My comments will be brief and statement-like, focused on provoking discussion rather than a balanced conclusion. First, it strikes me to what extent *revival* is the universal ingredient in all three missionary movements that I have discussed. Time and again the picture is that of a Europe that used to be Christian, and must be restored to its former character or destiny. I wonder to what extent this desire of revival hinders a genuine missionary engagement with secular Europe. The concept of revival assumes that there is something to be “re-lived”. It assumes that Europeans are nominal Christians who know what Christianity is all about and who would believe in God and Jesus if only they are approached in the right way. Every new movement entered Europe with the conviction that they had found the formula that would do the trick, based on the experiences in their own nations. As a consequence they have hardly spent energy on serious contextualization. In short, Europe has never been approached as a true mission field, where people must be won by creative and persistent evangelism. The net result is that the Free Church sector has been ploughed over many times, but that a real breakthrough towards the heart of European culture has not been made. What would happen if missionaries started to approach Europe (or, rather, the many subcultures in Europe) as a *mission* field rather than a field in need of revival? What would happen, for example, if they looked at Europe more or less like the best Western missionaries looked at the great non-Christian cultures of India, China or Japan before the twentieth century?

Secondly, another motive in all these movements is *impact* or *influence*. They want to *transform* Europe in its spiritual, moral, political, cultural, and societal dimensions. This motive stems from the revivalist heritage of evangelicalism. As Andrew Walls argues, the evangelical movement of the late eighteenth century contained a deep nostalgia for Christendom, and it believed that spiritual renewal would once again produce a thoroughly Christian nation

14 Of course, theological criticism against a one-sided revivalism within the United States has also played a role here. For a survey, see Keller 2012:54–61.

(2001:41). However, it is not helpful to take this particular historical connection of conversion and civilization and turn it into a characteristic of Christian mission throughout. I believe that there is a natural connection between the conversion of individuals and societies; it is part and parcel of Christian mission to believe that it is good for societies if more people follow Jesus (Paas 2012c:16–51). That does not mean, however, that Christian mission must always result in Christianized societies. The rhetoric of cultural transformation is the language of power, and it raises significant concerns in the host culture. Europeans do not want Christendom back. They may be willing to consider Christianity, but not if it seeks to dominate the entire culture again. We might say that in a secular society Christian mission must make clear that it does not want the “secular” to disappear. If it fails to do so, the vision of culture change is not just a-historical; it is unproductive as well. As we have seen in the case studies, the unrealistic character of this vision has led to its spiritualization in neo-Pentecostal mission. Mission is not revival. It does not try to “restore” a Christianized society, nor does it assume that it has the wisdom and power to do so. Christian mission works from the margins of culture to the center, knowing that its latitude is mostly determined by the host culture.

Thirdly, in all these movements there are elements and characteristics that highlight specific issues in a missiology of Europe, and that must be discussed separately. For example, all these movements contradict somehow the *critical and skeptical mood* that dominates European intellectual culture, including the churches. Evangelicals and neo-Pentecostals emphasize the possibility of change, positive thinking, individual power, gifts, and the like. Somehow they introduce Christianity as a motivational source for living a modern life. Inevitably, the concept of the afterlife fades to some extent as a consequence of this world-affirmative focus. Its benefit may be that Christianity may become “re-centered”: connected with the ordinary life of late modern people, including issues of work, money, career, ethnic identity, and happiness.

Especially neo-Pentecostals add another element that needs discussion. It is the idea that Europe is controlled somehow by *evil powers* that must be fought spiritually rather than intellectually. I completely sympathize with every criticism of the dualistic character of this doctrine, or of its underdeveloped doctrine of creation. However, I also agree with the German pastor mentioned above, that an “exorcism” may be exactly what Europe needs. An important challenge for a missiology of Europe is to find a good working relationship between this particular emphasis and the more “traditional” (intellectual, social justice, apologetic, evangelistic) approaches to mission in Europe.

A final example of a specific issue that is addressed may be *sexuality*. Significantly, most mission movements in the case studies repeat well-known

traditional Christian criticisms of cohabitation before marriage, homosexuality, gay marriage, and other sexual transgressions as the ultimate illustration of what is wrong with European culture. Again, this is a variation on well-known revivalist themes: immorality as the diagnosis and evangelism as the remedy. However, in no other area may the gap between European (Western) culture and its Christian traditions be wider than precisely here. Christian morality has not been able to accompany the masses of Europe in their transition (since the 1960s) from a survival culture to a post-materialistic culture of self-development and consumption. Traditional Christian morality made much sense in a culture where people needed each other and were constantly trying to survive the next winter or epidemic. It does not make much sense, however, in a culture of secured existence, individual liberty, and reliable contraceptives.

To be clear, I do not want to resolve a theological or ethical issue on the basis of sociology. Sometimes the church needs to maintain ethical codes against the spirit of the age. The point is, however, that in our age this kind of Christian moral advice is considered as arbitrary command rather than traditional wisdom. People in Amsterdam, for example, can see why it is better to be faithful to your partner, and why it is wise not to have sex too soon. They also agree that cheating on your partner is wrong. But they find it incomprehensible why Christians forbid sex categorically if you are not married or if you have the wrong genes, and they find it hard to see why Christians have such a problem with divorce (as long as there are no children involved). On the other hand, they find it very immoral that Christians often do not seem to care about the future of the ecological system, or why they deny equal rights to women and homosexuals (including the right to lead the church, or to have sexual relationships) in a world where women and homosexuals are treated very badly in many countries. They find it hard to understand, for example, why Christians do not put more emphasis on the problems of wealth accumulation, or why they do not have more problems with luxury. What we meet here is nothing less than a secularized and radicalized Christian ethic of equality and respect (cf. Taylor 2011:187). I believe that this is a very important field of discussion for missionaries to the Western culture. What does it mean that late modern Westerners (at least Europeans) are now the first generations in human history who do not have to worry about food, shelter, massive infant mortality, and the like? And how can Christian morality be communicated as gospel and life-sustaining wisdom instead of arbitrary law? How can it address a wider range of issues in a way that is more plausible for Europeans?

I am not pushing an agenda here. The tension between individualized lifestyles and classical Christian morality is simply an important issue in the practice of mission work in a secular Western country. Like all issues mentioned

above it must be worked out better and with more balance. However, I believe that these are some fields of discussion that are indicated by the case studies that I have described. They point us in the direction of closer and more serious interaction between different Christianities in their Ephesian encounter on the European mission field.

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