

SHOULD WE TALK LESS ABOUT EVANGELISM?

Erwin Ochsenmeier — ETF Heverlee — Dec 3, 2011

1 Introduction

“If we find ourselves shrinking from this responsibility [of personal evangelism] and trying to evade it, we need to face ourselves with the fact that in this we are yielding to sin and Satan.” (Packer2008, 86.)

2 Where are the Converts?

3 What Is Evangelism?

Examples of definition:

“...evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God.” (Lausanne Covenant, §4)

“‘Evangelism’, while not excluding the different dimensions of mission, focuses on explicit and intentional voicing of the gospel, including the invitation to personal conversion to a new life in Christ and to discipleship.” (From the preparatory paper “Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today” of the WCC, Werner2007, 184).

4 The Early Church

5 The Silence of the New Testament

R. Allen already noticed the difference between “the restless entreaties and exhortations which fill the pages of our modern missionary magazines” and the New Testament where there is little urge to remind believers that theirs is the duty to propagate their faith. ... “It seems strange to us that there should be no exhortations to missionary zeal in the Epistles of St. Paul. There is one sentence of approval ... [1 Thess 1.8] but there is no insistence upon the command of Christ to preach the Gospel.” (Allen1927, 8–9, 125–126.)

“It is striking that the numerous, often rather specific exhortations that Paul addresses in his letters to the churches that he established or knows do not include appeals to be active in mission and evangelism and to work toward winning additional inhabitants of their cities and of the surrounding villages to faith in Jesus Christ.” (Schnabel2004, 1452.)

6 A Glance at the New Testament

6.1 Focus on the Church

6.2 Focus on the Evangelists

7 Evangelism Today

7.1 Focus on the Evangelists

“Many people today have objections to the Christian faith or, at least, questions which they want answered before they are ready come to faith in Christ. They need to be persuaded about the truth. Paul was willing to try to persuade people. (178) ... Usually when people raise theological questions and objections they are genuinely looking for the answers. The most common questions which I get asked are, ‘Why does God allow suffering?’ and, ‘What about other religions?’” (Gumbel2011, 179).

“Looking back now, I’m sure I spent entirely too much time working on the farm and playing baseball during my boyhood, and not enough time with the books.” ... “For one thing, I would speak less and study more...” (Graham1997, 37, 852).

“I pray earnestly that God will raise up today a new generation of Christian apologists or Christian communicators, who will combine an absolute loyalty to the biblical gospel and an unwavering confidence in the power of the Spirit with a deep and sensitive understanding of the contemporary alternatives to the gospel; who will relate the one to the other with freshness, pungency, authority and relevance; and who will use their minds to reach others for Christ.” (Stott2006, 52).

7.2 Focus on the Church

8 Conclusion

9 Bibliography

ALLEN, R. *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes which Hinder it*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: The World Dominion Press, 1927.

BEBBINGTON, D.W. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History From the 1730s to the 1980s*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

GRAHAM, B. *Just as I Am: the Autobiography of Billy Graham*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997.

GUMBEL, N. *Alpha: Questions of Life. An Opportunity to Explore the Meaning of Life*. New Ed. Eastbourne: Kingsway Communications, 2001.

PACKER, J.I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2008. (Orig. 1961)

SCHNABEL, E.J. *Early Christian Mission*. 2 vols. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004.

STOTT, J.R.W. *Our Mind Matters: the Place of the Mind in the Christian Life*. Second Ed. Downers Grove, Mich.: InterVarsity Press, 2006. (Orig. 1973)

WERNER, D. “Evangelism from a WCC perspective – a recollection of an important ecumenical memory, and the unfolding of a holistic vision.” *International Review of Mission* 96 (July-Oct. 2007): 183–203.