

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *European Journal of Theology* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_european-journal-theology\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_european-journal-theology_01.php)

# European Christian Renaissance and Public Theology

## *Johannes Reimer*

### SUMMARY

This article argues that European culture has to a large extent been formed by Christianity and its values but also points to the numerical decline of the Church. This came about because modernism / rationalism and Pietism have failed to influence Europe deeply due to their one-sided approach to life. For a well-planned Christian renaissance

\* \* \* \*

### RÉSUMÉ

L'auteur souligne que la culture européenne a été en grande partie façonnée par le christianisme et ses valeurs, mais il constate le déclin numérique de l'Église. La raison en est que le modernisme ou rationalisme et le piétisme n'ont pas pu influencer profondément l'Europe à cause de leur vision trop étriquée de la vie. Une renaissance

\* \* \* \*

### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel stellt die Behauptung auf, dass die europäische Kultur zu einem großen Teil durch das Christentum geprägt worden ist. Er weist aber auch auf den zahlenmäßigen Rückgang der Kirche hin. Diese Entwicklung ist darauf zurückzuführen, dass Modernismus und Rationalismus sowie Pietismus – bedingt durch ihren jeweils einseitigen Zugang zum Leben – es versäumt haben, einen tief greifenden Einfluss in Europa auszuüben. Wenn eine Wiedergeburt des Christentums gut geplant werden will, dann ist es von entscheidender Bedeutung

\* \* \* \*

### 1 Christian Europe?

Europe essentially exists because Christianity developed.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be truer than the reality of the close relationship between the historical development of Europe and the Christian Church. Since the apostle Paul crossed the Aegean Sea in response

it is crucial to know which factors influence culture: not only the cognitive but also the material, the social and the religious. The way to effective Christian influence on culture and thus to change is engagement with the cultural elite by means of public theology; hence a Christian renaissance requires theology to go public. But so far this has hardly happened.

du christianisme ne pourra venir que si l'on prend en compte les facteurs qui déterminent la culture : non seulement les idées, mais aussi les facteurs matériels, sociaux et religieux. En vue d'exercer une influence chrétienne sur la culture européenne et son évolution, il est important d'entrer en dialogue avec l'élite culturelle, et, pour se faire, de porter la théologie sur la place publique. Mais jusqu'à présent, on ne s'y est que trop peu employé.

die Faktoren zu kennen, welche eine Kultur beeinflussen, und zwar nicht nur die kognitiven, sondern auch die materiellen, sozialen und religiösen Faktoren. Der Weg zu einem nachhaltigen christlichen Einfluss auf eine Kultur und somit auch zu ihrer Veränderung liegt in der Auseinandersetzung mit ihrer kulturellen Elite mittels „public theology“, d.h. dem öffentlich und gesellschaftlich relevanten Bereich der Theologie. Daher verlangt eine Renaissance des Christentums danach, dass die Theologie in die Öffentlichkeit geht. Dies ist bis heute aber kaum geschehen.

to the Macedonian call, the destiny of Europe has been designed in conversation with Christian beliefs. The late pope John Paul II claimed:

The history of the formation of the European nations runs parallel with their evangelization, to the point that the European frontiers coincided with those of the inroads of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>

The European civilisation is genuinely Christian. It was formed by its Christian movements, monasteries, universities, cathedrals and churches. It is no exaggeration to suggest that most of the Christian world today had its beginnings in Europe. Western civilisation at its heart is European and to a great extent Christian. The missionary movement of the Christian Church started in Europe and introduced European Christian values to the world.

But things have changed since then. Sadly enough, it was again Europe that introduced secularisation to the world with all the implied decadence. The late Pope John Paul II was correct when he passionately called his church to evangelisation and at the same time pleaded for the re-evangelisation of the old Europe:

Today after twenty centuries, the Church senses the urgency and the duty to carry on with renewed efficacy the work of evangelising the world and re-evangelising Europe. It is a pastoral choice, re-proposed in view of the third millennium that flows from the mission to save the whole human and all humans in the truth of Christ. Today more than ever, the evangelisation of the world is tied to the re-evangelisation of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 Europe in need of renewal

We may question the words of the Polish pope about the importance of Europe for the salvation of the world. European churches, however, do need renewal. Millions of Europeans have left their churches and some major Christian denominations will soon cease to exist if nothing major happens. Let us consider the situation in Great Britain, for example. If current trends continue, there will be no classic British Christianity in less than one generation.<sup>4</sup> The Church of Scotland would lose its entire membership by the year 2033<sup>5</sup> and the Methodists would disappear in 2031.<sup>6</sup> In the forty years between 1960 and 2000, the active membership of English churches dropped from 9.9 million to 5.9 million; a reduction of 40%.<sup>7</sup> If we take the population growth into consideration, the reduction even increases to almost 50%. In only forty years the Church of England lost half of its membership, closed more than 6,000 church buildings and employed 7,500 less pastors.<sup>8</sup> This is truly a devastating development, only comparable to the destruction of church life in the Communist countries of Eastern Europe.

The situation in other Western European countries is not much better. In Germany hundreds of thousands of people leave their churches annually. Take, for instance, one of the most vital and active German Protestant churches, the 'Evangelische Kirche of Württemberg'. 201,054 members turned their backs to this church between 1991 and 2004, an annual average of 14,361.<sup>9</sup> A church-wide analysis of the Sunday worship attendance in 47 of 51 church districts, conducted in the year 2003, uncovered the following figures: 47.6% of the attendees were 60 years of age and older, 28.2% between 40 and 60; 17.9% were between 20 and 40 and only 6.4% of the church visitors were under 20 years of age.<sup>10</sup> No wonder Willi Beck calls his own church a 'Seniorenkirche', a church of seniors.<sup>11</sup> According to a recent membership questionnaire of the EKD (German Protestant Church), no more than 33% of its members attend services occasionally<sup>12</sup> and regular attendance is below 5%.<sup>13</sup> The Roman-Catholic church and other Christian denominations are undergoing a similar development.

Christianity is losing its stand in Germany, Britain and other European countries. Christianity will become a marginal religious group, if nothing major happens. The appeal of Pope John Paul for the re-evangelisation of Europe has meanwhile become a common concern of many.<sup>14</sup> European Churches need a new reformation – but how? Europe must be re-evangelised! But again, how?

The marginalisation of European Christianity runs parallel with a permanent decay of European culture in general. Our countries are financially bankrupt, socially alienated and morally in muddy waters. The idea of a socially just state, forcefully promoted by the proponents of the social market economy, is dying. Today, millions of Europeans are poor and more than one third of us are indebted to the banks without any real chance to leave this financial dependency. If the present trend continues, the European population, which in 1960 formed 25% of the world's population, will drop to 5% by the middle of this century. These figures have led some to speak of the 'demographic suicide of Europe'. On a demographic, ethical, moral, economic and political level, there are many demons in Europe working hard on her destruction and decay. Not only the European churches need renewal – Europe itself must be renewed.

So do we need a Christian Renaissance of Europe? The Roman-Catholic Father Peter Bristow claims, 'Renaissance and renewal are the

special features of Christianity.<sup>15</sup> Its doctrine of the cross and conversion enables humans and civilisations to rise like ‘the phoenix from the ashes’. Peter Bristow again:

It is a bold and prophetic vision recalling Belloc’s view expressed in the early 1930s that Europe would be Christian or it would not exist at all. If there is a renaissance of the Faith in Europe and the old continent rediscovers its identity, its Christian roots and spiritual values, it can contribute to the flowering of a new age of civilization and peace all over the world.

Surely we Christians agree, don’t we? But let us, for a moment, consider this: Why has Christian Europe ended up where we are now? There were no real external forces obstructing Christianity in Western Europe to foster and nourish a Christian culture. In fact, the opposite is true. In many Western European countries Christian denominations enjoyed the status of a state church. The doors for evangelisation have always been wide open for them. Christianity has, as a matter of fact, been the main force behind the story of Western success.<sup>16</sup> Who then marginalised the church? Which forces and powers are winning the battle for the minds and hearts of the Europeans? Are those forces inherent in the system of Christendom itself?

A growing number of concerned Christians tend to believe exactly that. According to their analysis, it is the Christendom paradigm which has become the main stumbling block for the church to develop and transform the European culture.<sup>17</sup> Alan Kreider, for example, states: ‘We will not fully understand the current malaise of Western Christianity until we come to terms with the phenomenon of Christendom in its many dimensions.’<sup>18</sup> The term *Christendom* describes a certain view of the world. The church and its role in society developed in Europe after Christianity became *religia legitima* in the Roman Empire through the Edict of Milan in 313 under Emperor Constantine (272-337). Christianity soon became an imperial religion and its future was very much determined by its relation to the state. Time and space do not allow the discussion of this Christendom phenomenon in more detail and depth.<sup>19</sup> I am concerned with the question of transformation and change in a given culture. Therefore I am limiting myself to those issues of the modern Christendom paradigm which seem to successfully hinder the church to transform European cultures.<sup>20</sup>

### 3 Understanding culture and cultural change

Transformation requires knowledge of the target. You have to know what you want to transform before you start to develop a working theory of change and transformation. Transformation of culture requires an understanding of culture. Limited understanding of the target automatically leads to failure. Therefore, we will have to examine carefully our predominant Christian understanding of culture. How do Christians in Europe generally view culture? Is our understanding relevant? Does it help to grasp cultural reality fully?

Secondly, transformation requires a philosophy of change. You have to know how to transform in order to be successful. Transformation is more than an experiment. It is a process following a working theory. The approach we take will considerably influence success or failure. What approach do the majority of European Christians use to change people and society?

The two basic questions, as we will see, are of utmost relevance to the issues we are discussing. Both questions address missiology, the theological discipline which determines the path of Christian expansion in a given society. The challenge of transformation and change in Europe is indeed a challenge to missiology.

#### 3.1 Common understanding of culture and change

How do the majority of European Christians see culture? In my observation, the most common definition identifies culture with a set of values an individual or a collective of individuals holds. Culture is then manifested in the choices the individual or community subscribes to or is intrigued by in order to design a way of life. Values guide choices and choices determine behaviour. Good values produce good choices and as a result determine a good social culture. The rise and fall of civilisations, according to this theory, depends upon the set of values their people hold on to. To change and transform culture requires a change of values. Consequently, one will appeal to people’s reason and expect a change of mind, a decision for better ideas. We might call this kind of definition ideological because it identifies values with the right ideas and views. Or we may say it is a world-view driven definition of culture. Most of our missiology today follows such a definition.

It is easy to see where such a definition came

from: it is a typical product of a modern mind, which defines humans by their ability to think. It reflects Rene Descartes' (1596-1650) famous logion 'Cogito ergo sum' (= I think, therefore I am).<sup>21</sup> This logion became a *fundamentum inconcussum*, an unquestionable principle of the rationalist Cartesian philosophy. European rationalism finds its fundamental principle here, which for centuries determined all epistemology. Consequently Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) believed that ideas are central to all reflection on life and existence. Ideas move history. Right ideas create right living! The mover and shaker is the human individual.<sup>22</sup> Likewise the individualism of John Locke (1632-1704) saw the autonomous and rational individual as the main actor of social change.<sup>23</sup> These and similar philosophical thoughts are the sources of the ideological view of culture. At the end of the modernist journey, culture became a rational construct of values, views and cognitive decisions.

European Christianity has been deeply influenced by rationalism and its view on culture. Some even praise Christian theology as being the source of rationalism in Europe.<sup>24</sup> It is not my task here to debate the role of Christianity in setting the stage for rationalism in Europe. The truth is, however, that there is a close correlation between Christianity on the one hand and rationalism on the other. The 'victory of reason' in European Christianity is evident everywhere. Rational theology, it seems, is a sign of Christendom.<sup>25</sup> Even in large parts of the Christian Church, where you would least expect rationalistic thinking, the modern paradigm of culture is in operation. Consider, for instance, the Pietistic movement that was largely responsible for most of the European spiritual revival and mission. Pietism dates Christian existence, in terms of a personal relationship with God, to the moment of a personal decision of the individual to follow Jesus in all of life, leading to a conversion of mind and heart. August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), the father of the Pietism in Halle, wrote: 'First you have to repent of all your evil deeds, and then your mind will have to change within you. Only then is there "the beginning of Christianity".' In reality such a conversion would stand for an intellectual acceptance of a set of values based on the Holy Scriptures. The text of the famous black American gospel song puts it to the point: 'I have decided to follow Jesus – no turning back.'<sup>26</sup>

The pietistic act of conversion has become the model for most of evangelical and charismatic evan-

gelism and mission. Attached to the pietistic conversion is the promise of a changed life. In popular terms: You give your life to Christ, you accept his teachings, and your life will be radically changed.<sup>27</sup> And changed individuals will change society. Here is the reason for the enormous 'informational activity' that evangelism-minded Christians have developed: millions of tons of tracts, books, CDs, TV programmes, sermons etc. appeal to the minds of people around the world to accept Jesus into their lives. And many do accept him as their Lord and Saviour. Has this, then, changed the world?

Sure enough, many people have reported a life-changing experience after a typical pietistic conversion. I am a child of Pietism myself. But did society and culture change as a result of pietistic mission? Maybe. I am aware of some interesting results. But in general? I do not think so; surely not in Europe, the motherland of Pietism! And neither in the USA. Pietism may have had considerable influence on the shaping of the Church in Europe but its culture has hardly been influenced. The opposite seems to be true. The rise of pietistic influence in Europe seems to have been paralleled by an alienation of society from Christianity. A decision for Christ and Christian values, a change of mind, seemingly does not change society automatically. In fact, I would argue, it even hinders such a development. Why? Because the prevailing concept of culture as a set of values and of change of culture through making value choices is simply wrong.

How can you change reality without understanding it properly? Jesus Christ himself shows the way by saying: 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32). Whenever we do not know the truth, sustainable change is impossible! Ignorance, says the apostle Paul, results in alienation from a life in God (Ephesians 4:17-18). Has the ignorance of the Christian community regarding culture led to the decay of Christianity in Europe? I believe it has! It will not be enough to appeal to the Christian community for re-evangelisation, as John Paul II and many other ecumenical and evangelical Christians are doing. Sticking to a modernist understanding of culture and cultural change will foster a re-confessionalisation of Europe, and here and there boost a certain denomination at the expense of other denominations, but it will never manage to re-evangelise Europe. Whoever appeals to a Christian renaissance of Europe will have to come up with an alternative concept of culture. A task which Evangelical missiology must take as seriously as possible.



### 3.2 Culture as a design for living

No other term has produced more questions and opinions than the concept of culture. After all, what is culture? How do cultures function and what are ways of cultural change? The Latin term *cultura* suggests a comprehensive view of the total reality of human existence. Modern-day anthropology develops its definitions along similar lines. The father of contemporary cultural anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917), defined culture as the totality of human philosophy of life and behaviour in a given social context. Every attempt to define culture from a particular perspective on human reality has failed so far. Culture is a complex phenomenon and requires a comprehensive definition. Louis Luzbetak rightly claimed culture as ‘design for life’<sup>28</sup> and Lothar Käser defined culture as ‘strategy for human existence’.<sup>29</sup> Culture is the way of life of a people. It embraces all strata of life in a given group of people, the immanent as well as the transcendent, the material and the social, the cognitive and the religious.<sup>30</sup> So it is not easy to come up with a simple definition of culture.

Ferraro suggests defining culture as a multi-levelled reality. According to this view there are four layers determining culture:

1. The things we have (the material culture) form the basic level.
2. The things we do (the social culture) come on top of it.
3. The third level is formed by what we think (the cognitive culture).
4. Last but not least, the things we believe (the religious culture) form the highest level.<sup>31</sup>

The same concept can be represented by concentric circles.<sup>32</sup> At the bottom of the pyramid or in the outward circle of culture lay the material values of a given culture, consisting of every materially accessible value. You will easily recognise a Muslim woman in Germany just by her outward appearance. Or, both the Turks and the Greeks consider anise brandy a national digestive, even if the Turks call it *raki* and the Greek *ouzo*. The custom of both cultures prescribes anise brandy as a digestive even when other alcoholic drinks are not permitted. You can picture many other outward material signs of your own culture.

The next layer of culture describes things we do: codes, norms and institutions, or systems of behaviour. It is those systems which ultimately determine the right or wrong behaviour of people. Codes of behaviour are set by systems and institu-

tions of a given culture. A young man in the Caucasus, for example, will never be allowed to marry a woman of his choice without consulting his family clan. The way you generally behave in the German public is determined by a code of behaviour called Knigge. You do not know the Knigge? Well, that means you will not really make it in society. In German society, I mean.

All cultures determine their codes and norms of behaviour in one way or another. Those codes are usually formed by the ideas and views people have. The worldviews shape behaviour.

At the heart of every culture, there is religion, a set of beliefs which transcend the obvious and the real. Anthropologists holding to this view of culture will argue that you will only access culture by starting with the material, crossing the social and the cognitive, and finally reaching the religious values. It is impossible to enter the religious heart of a given culture directly. It takes time to understand a culture and it takes even more time to change it.

The modernist view on culture suggests looking at culture as a cognitive construct. We can now see how lopsided this view is and how problematic in terms of cultural change. Comprehensive structures always require comprehensive ways of change. This is a general truth and it clearly applies to a Christian theology of transformation.

### 3.3 Cultural change – what is needed?

How do cultures change? Is it enough to introduce a set of transformed values into a given culture, as the modernist paradigm suggests? Or is it rather important to change the material forces of the production, as the scientific materialism tries to convince us? How do cultures change? Some preliminary thoughts.

1. Cultural influence runs from the top to the bottom, from the centre to the outside. In other words, the religious culture informs the cognitive, the cognitive the social and the social the material culture. To introduce change means to enter the power highway of a given culture and control it.<sup>33</sup> You will have to understand the totality of a culture to be able to enter that highway. You will simultaneously have to identify with and criticise a given culture, recognising and naming the weak points of a cultural system in order to change it.
2. Cultural influence is guarded and preserved

by cultural institutions and systems. This might be a tribal leadership or intellectual elite. Change requires comprehensive access to those systems of power. Without change in those elites culture is not changeable.

3. Cultures are never static; they are in a constant process of change largely due to intercultural exchange and the growing knowledge of humankind. A representative of a culture may discover material expressions not known to her or his own material culture and will then introduce them to his or her social space. Hence a certain moral behaviour is changed because of intercultural exchange or because this certain concept is found attractive. And some may go through life-changing spiritual experiences. Regardless where the gap happens, the result of introducing something new to a culture will create a tension between the different layers of a given culture. To name the tensions means to identify the needs of a culture, which then offer opportunities for change. To know the gaps in a cultural system means being able to define areas of change.
4. Cultural change is most powerful if it approaches all layers of a culture. People who control the power highway, running through the different layers of culture, are likely to become the most wanted agents for transformation.

#### 4 Christian Renaissance – more than a vision

For a Christian renaissance in Europe, the above suggests that it is only possible if cultural change is in process. This requires a proper understanding of culture and cultural change. Transformation will only be successful when both the target and the method of transformation are clearly defined. One cannot transform postmodern Europe by simply applying modern definitions of culture and cultural change. Christian renaissance requires a comprehensive approach to culture and cultural change. This can only be done by a holistic missiology.

The multilevel concept of culture, as discussed in this paper, offers a frame of reference for a theology of transformation which will have the capacity to foster a Christian renaissance of European society. Such a theology will approach change on all four levels of culture: the material, social, cognitive and religious levels. It will have to look carefully at the areas of cultural tension and debate them on

the background of the issues discussed by the elite of a given culture. Discussing theology in public means to promote a public theology. As a matter of fact, public theology is the only way towards cultural change. A theology developed within the four walls of the church will miss out on issues relevant to culture and become irrelevant for the process of transformation. In other words, we plea for a contextual missiology – a missiology which intrigues and fosters public theology.

But what is public theology? The term was developed in the USA in relatively recent times. It is meant as an attempt to practice theology in the frame of reference offered by culture and society.<sup>34</sup> It is a contextual theology at its best, whereas you do not necessarily reflect publically discussed issues in a theological way. This, however, has been common to systematic and practical theology for centuries. Public theology discusses life-relevant issues in public! The public theologian literally enters the public sphere, becoming a vital and active member of the intellectual elite. He or she not merely reflects the work of the elite in an interdisciplinary manner, but rather looks to access the issues intra-disciplinary, as Johannes van der Ven suggested.<sup>35</sup>

Public theology by definition incorporates other cultural disciplines such as sociology, psychology, cultural anthropology, economy and political sciences, to mention a few. It requires empirical research and will highly profit from the work of empirical theology and empirical missiology.<sup>36</sup> Cultural change follows networks, systems and institutions of power, identifying cultural tensions and offering comprehensive solutions. Public theology looks for ways to enter such networks and use their venues of influence and change.

It is, nevertheless, important to underline the fact that such networks and systems are seldom systems of real political power. They may inform the institution of exercised power, such as state and administrative institutions or even state churches, but at the same time they set trends by critically evaluating the practised power. To give an example, we look at the mass media in Germany. The most popular and bestselling newspaper, *Bild*, runs millions of copies. This massive market seems to suggest a powerful tool of influence but in reality trends are rather set by an exclusive news magazine called *Die Zeit* with a relatively small circulation. Similar structures exist in all strata of society. Large universities, globally operating NGOs, and nationally as well as internationally operating insti-

tutions may reach the masses, but do they also set trends? Is there enough critical thinking involved or do these systems more or less serve the current paradigm? Transformers will look for innovative, critical and at the same time influential networks. The public theologian targeting change must be in this sphere of operation.

Do Christians in Europe today belong to structures of change? Is a Christian renaissance visible because Christians are addressing the issues of change? No, we are not. Few European departments of Theology have introduced public theology as part of their curriculum. The European theological tradition concentrated on doing theology mainly as a philosophical exercise. No wonder theology, as an academic discipline, has become one of the least attractive disciplines for potential students. Nowadays, many theological schools struggle to attract students. In Germany some famous theological departments at universities have already closed their doors. None of the private elite universities in continental Europe have ever established a faculty of theology. Only in recent years have European theologians started to investigate concepts of contextual theology and only in this decade has public theology become a matter of theological interest. I do not yet see more than experimental thinking coming to the surface. If public theology is a presupposition for societal change, and if Christian renaissance requires theology going public, any talk of an approaching re-evangelisation of Europe is highly speculative because the basic foundations of change do not exist. European elites are not interested in Christianity and the change networks of Europe have few Christians working for them, if any.

We might even go one step behind the ability of European Christianity to introduce change. Most European churches still operate inside a modern paradigm, reading culture from a perspective of an outdated and inaccurate definition. Evangelism still aspires towards value change, Christian education concentrates on ethics and morals, and Christian social involvement concentrates on managing the social space. Beyond doubt, European Christianity itself needs transformation. Without considerable change in Christian theology and church practice, there will be no Christian change agent for Europe.

Does this mean that the idea of Christian renaissance was dead before it even started? Is it a utopia? I do not think so. I feel the winds of change approaching. There is a growing tumult in Chris-

tian European circles about the state of Christianity and the continuing process of marginalizing the Church and the Christian faith. A group of 'post-Christendom theologians' demands a new paradigm of church existence in the context of Europe. They see and promote the new emerging theology and structures. There is reason to hope for a new day in European Christianity. And it is in fact a major challenge and task of missiology to promote such a change in theory and praxis.

Dr. Johannes Reimer teaches Missiology at the University of South Africa and at the Theologisches Seminar Ewersbach in Germany.

## Notes

- 1 This article is the edited version of a paper presented at the 2010 conference of the Fellowship of European Evangelical Theologians (FEET) in Berlin.
- 2 Pope John Paul II, 'Declaration to Europe', 9 September 1982, 71.
- 3 Pope John Paul II to the European Convention of the Missionaries to Migrants, 27 June 1986.
- 4 On the situation of Christian denominations in Great Britain, see Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain. Understanding Secularization* (London: Routledge, 2000); S. Bruce, 'The Demise of Christianity in Britain' in G. Davie, P. Heelas and L. Woodhead (eds.), *Predicting Religion: Christian, Secular and Alternatives Futures* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Peter Brierly, *Religious trends* (London: Christian Research, 1999); Duncan MacLaren, *Mission Implausible. Restoring Credibility to the Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004).
- 5 Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 5.
- 6 Bruce, 'Demise of Christianity', 53-63.
- 7 Brierly, *Religious trends*, as quoted in MacLaren, *Mission Implausible*, 1.
- 8 MacLaren, *Mission Implausible*, 2.
- 9 Willi Beck, *Gottesdienst – die Mitte der missionarischen Gemeinde. Zweitgottesdienst – Entwicklung als Baustein für eine zukünftige Sozialgestalt der evangelischen Landeskirche in Württemberg* (Unpublished MTh Dissertation; Pretoria: UNISA, 2007) 35.
- 10 Friedemann Stöffler, 'Wird Luthers Kirche zur Seniorenkirche?' in *Zitronenfalter* 11/2003; cf. Beck, *Gottesdienst*, 43.
- 11 Beck, *Gottesdienst*, 43.
- 12 Wolfgang Huber, Johannes Friedrich & Peter Steinacker, *Kirche in der Vielfalt der Lebensbezüge. Die vierte EKD Erhebung über Kirchenmitgliedschaft* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006) 453.
- 13 Beck, *Gottesdienst*, 44.
- 14 Friedemann Walldorf, *Die Neu-Evangelisierung Europas* (Giessen: Brunnen, 2004), examines differ-



- ent strategies to re-evangelise Europe; readers can notice the helplessness of ecumenical, Roman-Catholic and evangelical leaders alike.
- 15 Peter Bristow, 'A Christian Renaissance for Europe' (1 June 2008) on [www.christendom-awake.org/pages/pbristow/renaissa.html](http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/pbristow/renaissa.html).
  - 16 See in this regard Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity led to freedom, capitalism, and Western success* (New York: Random House, 2005) who demonstrates the close involvement of Christianity in shaping the capitalist West.
  - 17 Stuart Murray-Williams, *Post-Christendom* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004) 145ff.
  - 18 Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999) xiv.
  - 19 See Stuart Murray-Williams' work on the development of the phenomenon, *Post-Christendom*, 23.
  - 20 For an analysis of the relation between the Gospel and culture in Europe see A. Wessels, *Europe: Was it ever really Christian? The Interaction between Gospel and Culture* (London: SCM, 1994).
  - 21 Descartes justified his fundamental principle in *Principia philosophiae* (*Die Prinzipien der Philosophie*; Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1644) chapter 1:7; in a modern German edition: René Descartes, *Philosophische Schriften in einem Band* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996) 55.
  - 22 For a critical reflection on Hegel and his system see for example Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie. Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1992).
  - 23 John Locke, one of the main representatives of the British Renaissance, saw individuals and their rights as central for all human society; see John Locke, *Ein Brief über Toleranz* (English – German), transl., intr. and comment by Julius Ebbinghaus (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1996).
  - 24 Stark, *Victory of Reason*, 5ff.
  - 25 Stark, *Victory of Reason*, 3ff.
  - 26 August Herrmann Francke, at [www.bible-only.org/german/handbuch/Francke\\_August\\_Hermann.html](http://www.bible-only.org/german/handbuch/Francke_August_Hermann.html) [accessed 1 September 2010].
  - 27 For an overview, see Markus Matthias, 'Bekehrung und Wiedergeburt' in Hartmut Lehman & Ruth Albrecht (eds.), *Geschichte des Pietismus* (ed. Martin Brecht) Band 4: Glaubenswelt und Lebenswelten (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004) 49-82; Helmut Burkhardt, *Die biblische Lehre von der Bekehrung* (Giessen/Basel: TVG Brunnen, 2005).
  - 28 A deeper discussion of views on culture is in my book on the theology of society-relevant church growth: Johannes Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen. Theologie des gesellschaftsrelevanten Gemeindebaus* (Marburg: Francke, 2009) 189-193.
  - 29 Lothar Käser, *Fremde Kulturen. Eine Einführung in die Ethnologie* (Bad Liebenzell: Verlag Liebenzeller Mission, 1997) 37.
  - 30 Stephan Dahl, 'Einführung in die Interkulturelle Kommunikation' [2001] on [www.intercultural-network.de/einfuehrung](http://www.intercultural-network.de/einfuehrung), 4 [accessed 1 September 2005].
  - 31 Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 191.
  - 32 See Dahl, 'Einführung', 4; Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 192.
  - 33 Reimer, *Die Welt umarmen*, 189.
  - 34 See for instance Willie James Webb, *The Way out of Darkness. Vital Public Theology* (Bloomington IN: Author House, 2007); Elaine Graham & Anna Rowlands (eds.), *Pathways to Public Square* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2006); Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
  - 35 Johannes van der Ven, *Entwurf einer empirischen Theologie* (Weinheim: Deutscher Studienverlag, 1990).
  - 36 Van der Ven, *Entwurf*; Tobias Faix, *Gottesvorstellungen bei Jugendlichen: Eine qualitative Erhebung aus der Sicht empirischer Missionswissenschaft* (Empirische Theologie, Band 16; Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2007).