

**Re-visiting mission in Europe through contemporary image-formation:
a missiological manifesto for the 21st century**

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1. Introduction

Recently a picture of a three-year-old at a Turkish beach stirred up the debate about the refugee crisis in Europe and invoked many to take action.

One image can make a difference!

Positioning Europe in the worldwide field of mission implies the construction and maintenance of images about Europe and European Christianity.. Images then fuel specific types of missionary enterprise and play an important role in motivating funding.

One of the most remarkable sources of finding such images is the Atlas of Global Christianity (AGC)¹ which aims to present “a **comprehensive analysis** of Christianity” and “**an accurate, objective and incisive analysis** of the worldwide presence of Christian faith”.² “**Authoritative statistics**” are projected on maps offering “**a striking visual representation of the numerical strength or weakness of Christianity**”.³ The Atlas thus seeks to give “**as nuanced a picture as possible**” of the history of Christianity over the last 100 years showing an “**unmistakable**” general pattern, that Christianity experiences a “**severe recession**” on the European continent that once was its primary base, while it has undergone “**unprecedented growth and expansion**” in the other parts of the world.

This general image of the *Atlas* raises **several questions**.

(1) Why is **only reference made to Europe** as having experienced “a severe recession” and not to North America, **as there is only a small difference between the decline in Europe with 15.9% and in North America with 15.1%**?

(2) When studying the Atlas more in depth, we discover that there **is not only decline in Europe, but also significant growth**, so reality of European Christianity cannot be covered using one image only.

(3) The Atlas is praised because its “**detail beyond belief**”,⁴ as “**impressive but improvable**”⁵ with the **amount of work needed to collect and estimate these data as**

¹ Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee, "Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010," (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009).

² Ibid., xi.

³ Ibid., xi.

⁴ Peter Brierley, "World Religion Database: Detail Beyond Belief!," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010).

⁵ Robert D. Woodberry, "World Religion Database: Impressive-but Improvable," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010).

“mind-bogglingly”.⁶ However, **widespread caution** is raised with regard to **the accuracy of the figures**⁷ and **not to engage in statistical analysis with the data, “without robustness checking... they contain random error and probably some systematic error”**, although even these estimates are considered as “extraordinarily valuable”.⁸

Theoretical framework

This presentation takes as **its theoretical framework contemporary image formation**, used e.g. in Roma Studies and to survey national stereotypes.⁹ The study of the process of image formation in texts has to do with their **emergence, formation and dissemination**, but also with the dynamics between the image that characterizes the other and one’s own identity (self-image).

This framework helps us to explore the

- **emergence and formation of the images, focusing on**
 - o **the “lenses” instrumental in their creation: the underlying missiological theories and perceptions and the worldview in which they are rooted**, but also on
- **the dissemination, why and how these images are used, in invoking mission strategy and in motivating funding for mission enterprise.**

All kinds of strategies deliberately “play” with (stereotyped) images and use them in order to influence public opinion¹⁰

In re-visiting mission in Europe, one of the questions is whether the **images** in the Atlas are

- **a reflection of the reality** that people have of Europe or
- **an image orchestrated “from above”, that some people wanted others to share** in an attempt to influence or direct people.

The question is then also what would lie behind this attempt to influence. **It all depends on the kind of lenses used (PPT): magnifying, de-magnifying, or lenses that omit certain elements of reality.**

Main question

My aim with this paper is to

- **not engaging in a critique of the detailed statistical maps**, but in the assumptions of missiometrics, the discipline to which the *Atlas* belongs and in the underlying mission theory and worldview in which it is rooted.
- This paper first looks at **what images of Europe and European Christianity are used** in the Atlas of Global Christianity.
- Then it deals with **some conceptual and methodological problems**, why the images

⁶ Robert D. Woodberry, "Bookreview: Atlas of Global Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010).

⁷ Brierley, "World Religion Database: Detail Beyond Belief!."

⁸ Woodberry, "Bookreview: Atlas of Global Christianity."

⁹ Manfred Beller and Joseph Th Leerssen, *Imagology : The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters : A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007).

¹⁰ Yolanda Rodríguez Pérez, *The Dutch Revolt through Spanish Eyes : Self and Other in Historical and Literary Texts of Golden Age Spain (C. 1548-1673)*, Hispanic Studies : Culture and Ideas (Oxford ; Bern: Peter Lang, 2008)., 15.

are not capturing reality of European Christianity: the “lenses” are blurred by the secularization theory and not able to catch the renewed interest in religion and spirituality.

The question is what innovation is needed in the methodology to capture more adequate images of the realities of European Christianity, by disclosing the lenses and uncovering the biases, rooted in the self-image of the editors (the specs they wear), with their particular “North American” view of church membership, that differs greatly from the European.¹¹

What I offer is a **missiological manifesto** based on these reconstructed images, reflecting on **future perspectives and challenges in six key areas**. My aim is to present **thought provokers** for continuing the conversation within Global Christianity on the issues important for mission in Europe and **to create greater awareness of our own biases**.

My hope is that **this process will result in “acquiring the posture of a missional church”**¹² in our own European, American and global contexts, and in a **true shift from Western to Global Christianity by taking away Western philosophy induced hindrances for the advance of the Gospel**.

2. Images used in the AGC to capture Europe and European Christianity (7”)

#1 Secularized Europe

In the Atlas, the image of a secularized Europe occurs most frequently, **with secularization “drastically” affecting every country of Europe**, particularly Western Europe¹³. The “considerable loss of membership”¹⁴ is also caused by the loss of relevance of institutionalized religion. Protestant nations experience a “major decline” in religious belief and practice, not necessarily implying a “triumph of secularity” over other religious phenomena¹⁵. Western European secularity is considered as distinctive, because of the “vitality of national religious faith” in Eastern Europe. The key question is whether Europe is the “lead society” of universal secularity or whether it is “an exceptional case”.¹⁶ Also Mediterranean Europe copes with “a crisis of unprecedented proportions” in tackling a **“pervasive wave of secularization”**¹⁷. Attempts are made to transform the national religious structures into ‘more competitive and dynamic’ religious communities to serve the spiritual needs of the population.

The most serious challenge in **Eastern Europe** is not to underestimate “the power of the

¹¹ Peter L. Berger, Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas, *Religious America, Secular Europe? : A Theme and Variation* (Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008).

¹² George R. Hunsberger, "Acquiring the Posture of a Missionary Church," in *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*, ed. George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996).

¹³ Johnson et al., 172.

¹⁴ Ibid., 88.

¹⁵ Ibid., 154.

¹⁶ Ibid., 154.

¹⁷ Ibid., 167.

ever-intensifying processes of secularization and globalization¹⁸”, with the majority of the population of Russia “nominally” Orthodox. Fedorov considers Tomas Halik’s assessment of the Czech churches characteristic for all churches in Eastern Europe, as after 1989/1991 the believers and the sympathizers... “[expecting] key positions in the Church to be held by inspiring leaders were disappointed by a procession of tired bureaucrats who lacked the magnanimity, vision and creativity necessary to prepare the Church for the coming decade. ... A perfunctory patching-up of the institutions of the Church began without any debate about the need to adapt to the changed conditions. ... The church did not become a subject of inspiration or dialog partner in the media, instead [it became] a curious object of marginal interest, occasional scandal, and, sometimes, a whipping boy.” **Fedorov disagrees with the optimistic statistical image of the Atlas, suggesting an “exciting rise of interest in religion and the revival of church life in post-Communist Europe.**¹⁹”

This secularized Europe image shows an **ambiguous image** with on one hand maps of a continent with a percentage of “**professing Christians**” of **80.2%**²⁰ and on the other hand **emphatic images of a continent in “severe recession”**.²¹ Although the secularization of Europe has been considered as an “undeniable fact”, we should rather talk about “the **unchurching of the European population**” and of “religious individualization”, as many cease to participate in religious practices, but still maintain high levels of individual religious beliefs.²²

The complexity of this image is underlined by a well-known characterization of the European situation as “**believing without belonging**”,²³ while large numbers still identify themselves as “Christian” but also by the reverse of “**belonging without believing**”²⁴, as “‘secular’ and ‘Christian’ cultural identities are intertwined in complex and rarely verbalized modes among most Europeans”.²⁵

Case Study of the Czech Republic

This complexity is illustrated by a case study from the Czech Republic, considered to be one of the most secular and atheistic countries in the world, with the lowest percentage of Christianity in Europe, only 21%. Czech atheism is considered “very particular”.²⁶

Sociological research and pastoral experience show that there are not many “convinced atheists”, and statistics regarding atheists not being very convincing as in the recent census (2011) about half of the population did not answer the questions related to religion and Christian churches. Czech atheists are not very orthodox in their atheism, as those who profess to be atheists or who say they have no religious affiliation still do admit the

¹⁸ Vladimir Fedorov, "Christianity in Eastern Europe," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 158.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹ *Passim*.

²² Jose Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration," *Tranzit* 27, (2004).

²³ Grace Davie, *Europe, the Exceptional Case: Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, Sarum Theological Lectures (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2002).

²⁴ Daniele Hervieu-Léger (2003/2004) quoted in Jose Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration," *Eurozine*, no. 29 July (2004)..

²⁵ *Ibid.*

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

existence of supernatural phenomena and have an interest in them.²⁷

Czech society is **more anti-clerical than it is atheistic**²⁸ as Czech people refuse the Christian God, but do not cease to believe in “something”. In the same census 6.7% of the population (750.000) does consider themselves to be believers, even although they do not associate themselves with any church, so Czech people are not so much against religion, but against organized religion. This so called “grey zone” between traditional believers and convinced atheists continues to grow²⁹. It is a category that is completely missing in the Atlas. Pavel Cerny concludes: **“There is no real secularism in our country. Various ‘gods’ are back. The Czech society is not secular in religious terms. Many seekers long to taste and experience something transcendental.**^{30”}

On an anecdotal tone, recently I had a conversation with a Czech scriptwriter for films, in one of the famous coffee houses of Prague. We spoke for almost two hours. He told me he was working on **inventing his own religion**. His guess was that it would take him about three more years.

#2 Changing landscape in European Christianity with decline and growth **(8”)**

A second dominant image is that of a changing landscape in European Christianity with decline and growth.

- **The rise of agnostics and atheists, causing a large shift away from Christianity**, in Western Europe soon about 22% of the population³¹, shows an intense transformation in its religious demography. Christianity in Europe is declining through “defections”, mainly to agnostics and atheists, **considered “the evidence of secularization”**.³²
- On the other hand, there is **growth with “Independents” and the so-called “Marginal Christians”** as the fastest-growing traditions and
- with **immigration also impacting the growth of Christian communities**.

It is remarkable that the Atlas sets **clear boundaries** by offering two clear-cut images, one of a **“professing Christian”** and another of **who has shifted away from Christianity** as agnostics and atheists. The images from other sources, including the WCD of which the Atlas derives its data³³ show a **more diffused picture**³⁴, a **“grey zone”**.

The **European Values Study** does agree that Europe is a secularized continent, but not as secularized as it seems, as about **half of all the Europeans pray or meditate at least once a week**³⁵. Atheists are a small minority, with the exception of France (15%): it is a kind of **“cafeteria religion”** or a **“church-free spirituality”**. The EVS concludes: **“Europeans remain religious, their approach is eclectic, and they borrow ideas from several traditions. Meanwhile many institutionalized churches, especially in the West, are running empty.**^{36”}

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

³¹ Johnson et al., 172.

³² Ibid., 156.

³³ Ibid., 342-343.

³⁴ Cf. Stefan Paas, "The Use of Social Data in the Evangelization of Europe: Methodological Issues," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 1 (2013), 9..

³⁵ European Values Study, "Religion" (accessed 11 September 2015).

³⁶ Ibid.

*#3 Institutional erosion in Historic Churches***(9")**

A closely linked third image in the *Atlas*, is that of institutional erosion in the historic Churches. **Institutionalized religion is considered to be 'certainly on the wane'**, especially Christianity, **still religion has not disappeared, but taken different forms**. Protestantism has proved more vulnerable to this 'institutional erosion', due to its emphasis on inwardness rather than on liturgical expressions of faith as found in Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam.³⁷ **Virtually all over the European continent an 'unmistakable, indeed gross 'decline' in the outer expressions of church attendance and Christian belief can be observed.**³⁸ In Scandinavian churches it is no exception that **80% of the children are baptized**, whereas less than **2% of the population is regular church-goer**. In Sweden the decline has been most dramatic from 99% Christian in 1910 to 66% in 2010.

As an outside insider, Daniel Jeyaraj observes that people in the Western world, most of them as "children of the Euro-American Enlightenment underscoring modern secularism, individualism, the market economy, and consumerism",³⁹ are kept away from the Church due to the ongoing denominational squabbles, **conflicts among Christians, inconsistent Christian attitudes towards ethical issues** and sex scandals and sincerely wait for the demise of Western Christianity. Although not perfect, **non-Western Christianity** shows a different image with **signs of vitality**, authenticity and hope, so Jeyaraj. **He is thus more specific about the reasons.**

This image is probably a true representation of institutionalized mainline European Christianity, but **a divergence occurs between the statistical data and the "interpretive essays"** as the former only deal with the quantitative image and the latter rather with a qualitative analysis and evaluation. **One could ask in what sense the essays fulfil an "interpretive" role of the maps or whether they offer a different image, that the maps did not capture.**

*#4 Migration as factor in revitalization***(10")**

A fourth, frequently returning image is that of migration as a factor in revitalizing European Christianity. Although the influence of Western Christianity is "waning but still powerful", due to **migration of non-Western peoples**, the influence of the "South" upon "North" is said to have "greatly increased", leading to **new vigor in the "often dwindling" churches of the "North"**, creating "opportunities for dynamic interaction" leading to the formation of "unprecedented Christian identities"⁴⁰. Migrants **bring with them their Christian faith**, "generally **more dynamic and enthusiastic** than their European hosts",⁴¹ leading some of the largest congregations in major centers of Western Europe. Some of them are **part of growing movements of "reverse mission"** from Protestant and Independent churches, **shocked by seeing the decline of Christianity in countries from which they inherited the**

³⁷ David Martin, "Christianity in Europe, 1910-2010," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009).

³⁸ Martin Conway, "Christianity in Northern Europe," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009).

³⁹ Daniel Jeyaraj, "The Re-Emergence of Global Christianity 1910-2010," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009).

⁴⁰ Johnson et al., 66.

⁴¹ Ibid., 172.

faith.⁴² In Northern Europe immigration is also considered an important factor in “bringing a more dynamic form of the faith” into a region with low church attendance like in some Western countries. **The future of Christianity in Europe is said to be “in the hands of immigrants, largely from the Global South”.**⁴³

A parallel image of the impact of immigration is the rise of Islam, considered by the Atlas as unexpected. The **number of Muslims** in Western Europe is said to **have ‘skyrocketed’ to 11 million** mainly due to the arrival of immigrants from Turkey and North Africa.⁴⁴

This image displays **immigration more or less as a success story** and seeks to applaud the immigrants with their vibrant faith as the “solution” to the “problem” of “secularized Europe”, as hope for European Christianity in the light of the “massive” decline.

However, the **reality is much more complex and surrounded by myths**. Reality is that many **migrant churches serve their own ethnic communities** with the European historic churches struggling with fitting them in their “legal” structures. **Remarkable new development are the Chinese Churches reaching out to the Roma. A great hindrance for the suggested “cross pollination”, is the issue of otherness and the extreme right wing tendencies.** Immigrants often bring another form of Christian faith than the traditional European, come from another cultural background and thus do not “fit” the nation building role that religion plays in many countries. The presence of migrant Christians sometimes results in **superior attitudes from the side of the indigenous European Churches** towards migrants and their theological convictions.⁴⁵

#5 Growth of Independent Churches at the periphery

(11”)

The growth of Independent Churches, defined as the “**Churches of the Spirit**”, is the fifth image that can be identified. They are found to be “**not at the center of political power and economic wealth but at the periphery**”. The majority being Pentecostal/Charismatic, they grow in strength, assertiveness and evangelism in societies that “lost faith during two World wars”.⁴⁶ **All Christian traditions are said to have been affected by the renewalist movements**, often leading to ‘a more vibrant faith’.⁴⁷ In Mediterranean Europe the **Independent churches are fast growing**. Especially on the **margins of Europe, Portugal, southern Italy, Romania and Gypsy communities, does Pentecostalism show growth.**⁴⁸ Also in Eastern Europe is the Charismatic renewal movement “sweeping through all the Christian traditions”, like in Romania the Lord’s Army⁴⁹ Pentecostals in Eastern Europe grow 3.5 % per year.⁵⁰

It is striking that in the whole Atlas this is the only instance where the Roma (Gypsy) communities are mentioned. They literally are “casted out”, even although the 10-12

⁴² Kirsteen Kim, "Missionaries Ent and Received, Europe 1910-2010," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

⁴³ Johnson et al., 156.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁴⁵ Kyriaki Avtzki et al., "Report Wcc-Consultation on Evangelism in Theological Education and Missional Formation in Europe," in *WCC-consultation on evangelism in theological education and missional formation in Europe, 28-31 October 2012* (Bossey, Switzerland: WCC, 2012).

⁴⁶ Johnson et al., 76.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 172.

⁴⁸ Martin., 154.

⁴⁹ Johnson et al., 160.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103.

million Roma (Gypsy) minority is considered since the late 1990s as one of the greatest challenges Europe faces. They are "hidden" in the statistics, mostly of the "Independents". A massive exclusion is going on in Europe as a result of the many stereotyped images⁵¹. **Many Gypsy Pentecostal communities have their roots in the revival among the Roma that started in the 1950s in France.**⁵² This "revival" spread out of France to Spain and over the whole world. Currently more than 2 million believers are considered to belong this movement, in 44 countries.⁵³ **A shift from the center to the periphery of Europe is going on.**

#6 Shift of European Christianity from center to margins

(12")

A sixth image is related to another shift of European Christianity from center to periphery, namely in global Christianity. Once the European continent was the primary base of Christianity, but since 1910 a "severe recession" can be observed with "the de-Christianization of the West [making] the West a post-Christian society".⁵⁴ **Western Europe has moved from "Christian heartland to Christian wasteland",** demonstrating once more that the pattern of Christian advance is serial rather than progressive, "withering at the center and blossoming at the edges", with recession in the West and advance elsewhere. Walls concludes that the heart of the Christian faith shows a "vulnerability and fragility of which the cross is a reminder".⁵⁵

One of the 'ironies of history' is that at the **beginning of the twentieth century** Western Europe occupied a **central position in Christianity**, and could now be depicted as **"the secular champion of the world"**.⁵⁶ In the course of a century the churches moved "from a central position to the margins of society". **(Double marginalization of churches: to margins of European society, and to margins of Global Christianity)**

Also with the **role and existence of (overseas) missionaries** considered by many as an "anachronism", and Western European churches are now seeking new ways to reaching out to an un-churched generation, **"sea changes in patterns of mission activity"** in, from and to Europe have taken place⁵⁷.

A crucial question is **whether indeed a shift has taken place or whether this "centralist mindset" in European Churches, as being the "Christian heartland" still continues.** The **image that Christianity** acquired through the missionary movement as a **Western religion persists and poses a problem for non-Western Christianity** and is **"one of the stumbling blocks" for evangelism in their world.**

⁵¹ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, "Europe Invents the Gypsies. The Dark Side of Modernity," *Eurozine*, no. 24 Febr. 2012 (2012). <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-02-24-bogdal-en.html> (accessed 23 Sept. 2014).

⁵² Anne-Marie Kool, "European Churches' Perspectives on Mission Work among the Romaat , ," in *Don McClure Mission Lectures, 2012. szeptember 24-25* (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA: 2012).

⁵³ Anne-Marie Kool, "Eastern European Churches' Responses to the Roma People," in *International Roma Consultation: Roma for the Nations, Budapest 29 Sept.-3 October 2014*, ed. Great Commission Center International (Budapest, Hungary: 2014).

⁵⁴ Moonjang Lee, "Future of Global Christianity," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009)., 104.

⁵⁵ Andrew F. Walls, "Christianity across Twenty Centuries," in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press,, 2009)., 48.

⁵⁶ Johnson et al., 170.

⁵⁷ Kim., 272.

Lee observes, “though we talk about a post-Christian West and a post-Western Christianity, **the prevailing forms of Christianity in most parts of the non-Western world are still dominated by Western influences...** a de-Westernization of the image of Christianity is now an uphill battle for the sake of the future of non-Western Christianity.”⁵⁸

The statistical maps of European Christianity in the Atlas, with a broad definition of “professing Christian” emphasizing its statistical strength without any diversification, only reinforces this phenomenon.

So the question is whether European Christianity has accepted the historical reality of advance and recession or whether they still embrace the “Christian continent” image, as a way to stick to power? Should we ask a similar question to North American Christianity?

3. Conceptual and methodological problems (13”)

1. Methodology of the AGC

In the emergence and formation of the images of the Atlas a number of conceptual and methodological problems can be identified. The methodological notes giving account of the concepts and methodologies are summarized in the last few pages. Remarkably, these are an **excerpt from the first edition (1982) of the World Christian Encyclopedia**,⁵⁹ later updated for the World Christian Trends,⁶⁰ intended to give the reader of the Atlas “**some ideas**”⁶¹ on how the data behind the statistical images and maps were compiled and analyzed. **The World Christian Database⁶² and the World Religion Database⁶³ serve as sources for the data of the Atlas.** With regard to the methodology used, Woodberry is right in emphasizing that “**more transparency is needed**”⁶⁴. It might well be that the **great quantity of details easily silenced possible critical voices**. It is **peculiar that hardly any serious critical interaction and discussion of the underlying methodology** of the Atlas has taken place, neither of its two data providing predecessors.⁶⁵

The data are simply taken for granted, as I have taken them for as authoritative in my teaching and research during the last two decades.

2. Concepts and Definitions

The conceptual problems related to the Atlas would deserve a special article, as they are fundamental to the statistical images presented. **Key features** of the statistical

⁵⁸ Lee., 104.

⁵⁹ David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia : A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions in the Modern World, Ad 1900-2000* (Nairobi ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

⁶⁰ David B. Barrett et al., *World Christian Trends, Ad 30-Ad 2200 : Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2001).

⁶¹ Johnson et al., 342.

⁶² Center for the Study of Global Christianity (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), "World Christian Database," (Leiden: Brill). http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/uid=3189/title_home?title_id=wcd_wcd.

⁶³ Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, "World Religion Database International Religious Demographic Statistics and Sources," (Leiden, The Netherlands Boston, MA: Brill). http://www.worldreligiondatabase.org/wrd_home.asp.

⁶⁴ Woodberry, "World Religion Database: Impressive-but Improvable.", 22.

⁶⁵ Except for a not very convincing study: BECKY HSU et al., "Estimating the Religious Composition of All Nations: An Empirical Assessment of the World Christian Database," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47, no. 4 (2008).

presentation⁶⁶ are first of all to **establish broad parameters**, to give a general order of magnitude of the situation, a second one is the comparative aspect: **“Like must be compared with like**, and like can only be compared with like” (342). The third feature is that statistics are with a few exceptions, **“general-order estimates”**.

Definition of Christian

Since 2001 a new methodology is introduced in the WCD to divide the Christians into four different groups: professing Christians, affiliated Christians, practicing Christians and Great Commission Christians⁶⁷.

1. The first and broadest category, or “definition of membership”, is that of **“Professing Christians”**: **“those who profess (declare, state, confess, identify themselves) publicly to be Christians when asked what their religion is, either in government censuses, or in public-opinion polls.”** The glossary defines them as “Followers of Jesus Christ of all kinds: all traditions and confessions, and all degrees of commitment”.⁶⁸ **They “declare or identify” themselves as Christians in government censuses or public opinion polls as “I am a Christian, we are Christians”** when asked the question: “what is your religion”.
2. The second category of **“Affiliated Christians”** are those enrolled on the churches’ books or records. They are the so called **“church members”**.
3. The third category of **“Practicing Christians”** are those “affiliated Christians”, or “active Christians” also referred to as **“attending Christians”** or **“committed Christians”** that attend a church service or public worship **at least once a year**.⁶⁹ A fourth category are the **“Great Commission Christians”**, **“Believers in Jesus Christ [who] are aware of the implication of his Great Commission”**.⁷⁰ Many of the previous three categories are considered not necessarily “activists or zealots or enthusiasts or believers who take their faith seriously enough to practice specifically Christian values” nor are they church attenders who “live a specifically Christian lifestyle involving obedience to Christ as Lord.”⁷¹ **The Great Commission Christians are measured by scoring at least five out ten areas related to the Great Commission or by a simplified method of comparing the number of cross-cultural missionaries sent or supported”. No wonder that “measuring this phenomenon is quite difficult.”⁷²**

Definition of “Professing Christian”

1. Legal. The definition of a “Professing Christian” takes its **starting point in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** that **“everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”,** or to **“profess to be a Christian”**. Apart from this legal foundation,

⁶⁶ Kenneth R. Ross (editors) Todd M. Johnson, "The Making of the Atlas of Global Christianity," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 34, no. 1 (2010)., see also: Kenneth R. Ross, "Mapping Ecclesiology and Mission: Trends Revealed by the Atlas of Global Christianity," in *Walk Humbly with the Lord. Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, ed. Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (Aarhus, Denmark: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

⁶⁷ Johnson et al., 342.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 325.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 343.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 326.

⁷¹ Ibid., 343.

⁷² Ibid., 292.

2. the definition is justified from a **biblical perspective** in Mt. 10: 32: “If anyone declares publicly that he belongs to me, I will do the same for him before my Father in heaven” and **Romans 10:9**, “**a person is a saved Christian ‘if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord’**”⁷³.
3. Then **implicitly linked to concept of religious self-identification derived from the sociology of religion as self-identifying Christians**

Synonyms of “professing Christians” are therefore: “confessing Christians”, “declared Christians” or “self-identifying Christians”.

Thus the concept for a Christian used in the Atlas is **derived from** the legal concept of someone who has the right to profess to be a Christian, **justified from** a biblical perspective with someone publicly confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and linked to a sociological concept of religious self-identification.

Only the data of the first and broadest category are presented in the Atlas when speaking about “Christians”.

Applying this definition to a European context where belonging to a Christian tradition is often more closely linked to cultural and national identity than with “membership of a denomination” and with “confessing Christ” is curious to say at least.

Self-identifying as a Christian in a European context differs greatly from a North American context. This sociology of religion definition takes precedence over a theological definition, justified by legal and biblical arguments. A concept of voluntary adherence to a denomination, rooted in a North American worldview is applied to the European context with a completely different understanding of religious allegiance,⁷⁴ mixing up voluntary membership of a religious society, as church membership is understood in North America, with belonging to a mainline church in Europe that is rather conceived as an expression of cultural and national identity.

Another peculiar fact flowing from the “self-identification” principle as the central organizing principle⁷⁵, is that the **definition of Christians includes Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Christian science etc.** as they retain a Protestant ethos even as they differ from classical Christian doctrine,⁷⁶ referred to as “Marginal Christians”. Adding up of these “marginal Christians” to the total number of “Christians” might be acceptable from a methodological, sociology of religion perspective, from a theological point of view, it is rather problematic.⁷⁷

Limited variables presented in Atlas

Many of the variables of the data selected from the WCD for presentation in the Atlas are included in the country by country overview, but surprisingly not all. Is it remarkable and significant for our study of European Christianity, that **the four categories offering a**

⁷³ Ibid., 343.

⁷⁴ Berger et al. and Emanuel L. Paparella, "Toward a Post-Secular Europe? A Review Essay," *Metanexus* (2009). <http://www.metanexus.net/essay/toward-post-secular-europe-review-essay> (accessed 11 September 2015)..

⁷⁵ Todd M. Johnson, "The Making of the Atlas of Global Christianity."

⁷⁶ Johnson et al., 80.

⁷⁷ Brierley, "World Religion Database: Detail Beyond Belief!.", 19.

diversification of who a Christian is, important for understanding the statistical images used for Europe and European Christianity **are not presented in the Atlas, except for the Great Commission Christian category**. One wonders why. Did they not fit the overall philosophy of the Atlas? What is even more peculiar is that **no justification is offered for the overall choice of the categories**. Thus, the claim of the Atlas to offer a **nuanced picture of Global Christianity is clearly not fulfilled**.

The **statistical image of Europe that is now communicated only re-enforces the image of Europe as a Christian continent, by not giving insight in the internal diversification and erosion**. So **why is only this broad definition used?** Is it for **fear of losing power?** Or for maintaining the image of the numerically strong “World C” that provides the human and financial resources to “finish the task”? Are matters of Christian finance playing a role?⁷⁸ Out of a sense of empire building? **Or of a sense of hidden resistance to accept that Europe also is now also a mission field? Is it out of fear of becoming a minority? Fear for ending up statistically weaker than the Muslims? Or an attempt to cling to the influence of the “Western” over the “non-Western” world**, based on an image of Europe as still a massive Christian continent?

The image of European Christianity is less monolithic and more complex than has been hitherto recognized, as Davie has shown, and as is clear from the “interpretive essays” in the Atlas. The question is what this all reveals about the underlying missiological theories and perceptions.

Evangelization

A second definition that requires attention is “evangelization”. Evangelization is used as a **functional, measurable concept**, to define whether a language or people is evangelized, by “assessing Christian presence and evangelistic ministries at work among that language or people”.⁷⁹ **A formula with 20 elements, positive and negative factors is used**, each measuring a different aspect of evangelism. Evangelization is thus measured by assessing the extent to which a people or language has evangelistic resources in a mother tongue.⁸⁰

As we thus take a look at the conceptual and methodological problems of the Atlas, they can be summarized as that **sociological definitions take precedence over theological definitions**. Although diversified data of who is a Christian - albeit based on sociological definitions - are available in the WCD, only the broadest category is displayed, thus communicating a “Christian continent” image.

3. Underlying missiological theories and perceptions of these images and roots (15”)

When analyzing these images, the question is **what mission strategy is invoked** by them and what is the underlying missiological theory. The statistics are compiled with the goal in mind to offer “a striking visual representation of the numerical strength or weakness of

⁷⁸ Jonathan J. Bonk, “Christian Finances,” in *Atlas of Global Christianity 1910-2010*, ed. Todd M. Johnson, Kenneth R. Ross, and Sandra S. K. Lee (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 294-295 and Johnson et al., 296-297.

⁷⁹ Johnson et al., 349.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 310.

Christianity”,⁸¹ and thus a “comprehensive analysis” of Global Christianity. **Eric Friede’s sharp analysis points us to the fact that the Atlas is ultimately written from the perspective of the so-called Great Commission Christians**, Christians who engage in and support Christian missions⁸², as many essays address the issue of “how to grow Christianity”⁸³ in a particular region.

The **mission strategy invoked is then one of identifying within Global Christianity the resources needed for the task, the human resources**, the GCC Christians⁸⁴, as well as the **Christian finances that could make this enterprise work**⁸⁵.

An assessment of major tools needed for finishing this task is offered in subsequent sections, like Bible translation is followed by a section on Evangelization, with a **division of the world in A, B and C**, according to the level “being evangelized”. World C means at least 60% Christian. The aim of this division is to **focus on the unfinished task: the so-called unreached peoples in World A**, and to **address the unbalance in missionary deployment: over 85% of all Christian outreach being aimed at “professing Christians”, at world C**, resulting in most Christian outreach never reaching non-Christians, those in world A or B⁸⁶. **Individuals and people in world C should thus be encouraged to reach out to those still in world A and B**. This mission strategy is thus focusing on **individuals**, Great Commission Christians, **from World C being motivated to move to World A or World B, with still largely a geographical connotation. The statistical maps are also used to stimulate funding for this missionary enterprise**, pointing to where supposedly the greatest needs are.

The question is now how this mission strategy invoked by the statistical images in the Atlas at a global level, can be **applied to Europe**. As almost all of Europe (94%) falls in the category of World C, the message to European Christianity is in fact: **focus your attention on the unreached peoples in World A or on the evangelized non-Christian World B and/or provide funding for facilitating this missionary enterprise**. Strictly speaking it leaves **mission in Europe in a vacuum** due to reductionist, quantitative concepts and methodologies.

Statistics are used to motivate missionaries and national workers to mission action with Christian mission being reduced to a manageable enterprise with a dominant quantitative approach and a well-defined pragmatic orientation, “as a typical school of thought coming from modern United States”.⁸⁷

The underlying missiological theory is the sub discipline in missiology of “**missiometrics**” that seeks to “**assist the churches in planning for mission in the modern world**” **by offering**

⁸¹ Ibid., xi.

⁸² Eric Friede, "Book Review. Atlas of Global Christianity: 1910-2010, by Johnson, T.M. & Ross, K.R. (Eds.), 2010 Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.," *Theological Librarianship* 3, no. 1 (2010)., 55.

⁸³ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁴ Johnson et al., 290-291.

⁸⁵ Bonk., 294-295.

⁸⁶ Todd M. Johnson and Albert W. Hickman, "Interpreting Religion. Religious Demography and Mission Strategy " *International Journal for Frontier Missiology* 29, no. 1 (2012).

⁸⁷ J. Samuel Escobar, "Evangelical Missiology: Peering into the Future at the Turn of the Century," in *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue*, ed. William D. Taylor, Globalization of Mission Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000)., 109.

powerful tools that can calculate the complexity of today's world with thousands of people groups and languages.⁸⁸ This **importance on counting for mission strategy** was first developed by **Donald McGavran**, who pushed for a kind of strategizing that incorporated a sociological perspective, urging mission leaders to **"concentrate their resources on those initiatives with the greatest promise for numerical success"** over and against a strategy of Roland Allan who wanted missions to "stop over-planning, so that God's Spirit could do its work unfettered by human schemes."⁸⁹ In order to **make the mission task more manageable, the world's population is divided into three groups** based on their responsiveness to the Christian faith, and to focus thinking on the deployment of missionaries. The often implicit **goal of finishing the task is to trigger the second coming of Christ** by fulfilling the conditions of Mt. 24: 14⁹⁰. The concepts of "unreached peoples", "adopt a people" convey a **strong sense of urgency** and effort to use all possible means to get the job done.⁹¹ This Atlas could be considered as one of these means.

The **influence of missiometrics** with its **measurable goals and focus on output**, based on market principles, is **gaining ground in church and mission in Europe**, in an attempt to find a "solution" to the "problem" of European Christianity, probably **triggered by a general image in Europe of North America's vibrant and successful churches**,⁹² but also by a **general process of "McDonaldization" of Western society**.⁹³ For this reason, it is important to revisit the presuppositions of this missiology and to listen to the critical voices.

Critical voices from Latin America (Escobar)

(16")

Samuel Escobar has coined this **school of thought coming out of "Pasadena"** that seeks to reduce the evangelistic task to a process carried on following market principles **"managerial missiology"**.⁹⁴ A few years ago Escobar mentioned that much of the missiology from North America was an "application of the Harvard Business School method... especially true of the unreached people group missiology and so Christ would come again."⁹⁵ It is characterized by an **"avowed quantifying intention"**⁹⁶, and a **narrowly defined concept of mission as numerical church growth** and insistence on the unfinished task. It has been subject to severe criticism because its yielding to the spirit of the age. Another characteristic is the pragmatic approach, **de-emphasizing theological problems: tough questions are not asked** because they cannot be reduced to a management-by-objectives process. It is geared "to provide methodologies for a guaranteed success".⁹⁷

⁸⁸ David B. Barrett, "'Count the Worshipers!' The New Science of Missiometrics," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. October (1995).

⁸⁹ Stanley H. Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and Prospects of Missiology*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2012), 141-142 with reference to Newbigin (1995, 130).

⁹⁰ Robert T. Coote, "'Ad 2000" and the "10/40 Window": A Preliminary Assessment," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, no. October (2000), 160.

⁹¹ Escobar., 109.

⁹² Paparella.. Cf. Michael Chromartie, "Believing without Belonging: Just How Secular Is Europe?," *Pewforum*, 5 December 2005 2005..

⁹³ John Drane, "Resisting Mcdonaldization," in *Walk Humbly with the Lord. Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, ed. Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (Aarhus, Denmark: William B. Eermans Publishing Company, 2010)..

⁹⁴ Escobar.

⁹⁵ Paul Davies, "Managerial or Messy Mission " in *Missional Musings. Scattered Ruminations from a Mission Theologian* (2015).

⁹⁶ Escobar., 109.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 110.

The reductionist theological foundation of this missiology thus **eliminates anything that hinders numerical growth: suffering and persecution, holistic mission and participation in social transformation, and the costly and slow process of developing a contextual theology as it is easier to substitute them by pre-packaged theological extension programs translated from English.**⁹⁸

Some proponents of managerial missiology have **created suspicion** among Christians of the Global South about the underlying motivation. This suspicion is fueled by the **great amount of the material and technical resources** used to promote their cause, and the preoccupation with the quantitative increase of the missionary force without much debate about the quality.⁹⁹ There has also been **suspicion to be used as objects of missionary action** ultimately directed towards enhancing the financial, informational and decision-making power of mission centers in the Global North.

Critical voices from Central and Eastern Europe

(17")

This mission strategy with its quantitative approach to mission and church planting has raised critical voices not only in Latin America¹⁰⁰. Following 1989 Central and Eastern Europe experienced a massive influx of mostly North American missionaries.¹⁰¹ After the demise of the Berlin wall and a **period of euphoria (1989-1998)**, a **period of disillusionment (1998-2008)** followed with an ambiguous view on the role of western missionaries. Although Western missionaries were credited for positive contributions and it was emphasized that much good has come from the West¹⁰², there was a great sense of uncertainty regarding the direction of mission work. Copying "nostalgia" models did not work, and copying "imported" models from the "West" did not work either as they did not address the many shadows of the past that were still alive.

The disillusionment was strengthened by the increasingly high donor expectations, as more and more mission agencies and churches in West employed business models, focusing on short term, output oriented projects emphasizing success and results. It resulted in a **clash of a western paradigm of mission with the eastern European mindset**. A related point of general discontentment in post-Communist Europe was **"the way most Western missionary agencies handled their relationships with nationals."**¹⁰³

Concerning cooperation with local churches, there was general consensus that "many western missions were **building their own missionary empires** as if no indigenous churches existed in former Communist countries".¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Ibid., 111.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 112.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Anne-Marie Kool, "A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Eastern and Central Europe," *Religion in Eastern Europe* XX, no. 6 (2000).

¹⁰² Peter Penner, "Scripture, Community, and Context in God's Mission in the FSU," in *Mission in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. Walter Sawatsky, Peter Penner, and International Baptist Theological Seminary (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2005), 31.

¹⁰³ Danut Manastireanu, "Western Assistance in Theological Training for Romanian Evangelicals to 1989," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 14, no. 4 (2006), 7 and David Novak, "Czech Evangelicals and Evangelism," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 13, no. 1 (2005).

¹⁰⁴ Novak, "Czech Evangelicals and Evangelism," 7 and *ibid.*, 8-10.

Ubeivolc underlines the **negative connotation of the Western face of (evangelical) Christianity in Moldavia, Ukraine and Russia**, and captures the negative effect of this mission strategy in seeking to “offer [a] theologically rooted practical guide for Evangelicals in Moldova... The process of rethinking is a very hard and long process, but from my perspective there is **no way to continue to use the current ineffective mission approach, which demands a lot of spiritual, financial and emotional effort**, but does not bring the expected results, such as **continuation of church growth** and new planted churches in every settlement of Moldova.¹⁰⁵”. He adds the **importance of an holistic approach** to mission in the Moldovan context, emphasizing that if Evangelical Baptists would like to be salt and light, **they should be “servants for the sake of victims of social injustice, prophets for social justice, witnesses of the Good News and peacemakers among all the groups, which suffered from difficult conflicts”**.¹⁰⁶

These critical voices from Central and Eastern Europe also emphasize that **these strategies are a serious hindrance** in the development of contextualized theologies in the own context, and while being conceived as a product of Western Christianity, a **hindrance in the process of growing into an indigenous church**, addressing the complex missiological challenges of their own contexts from a biblical perspective.

Critical voices from Western Europe: Safety in numbers syndrome

(18”)

Also Werner Ustorf challenges the principles of managerial missiology by emphasizing that mission is hindering its own progress because of “its fixation with modernist conceptions of the task” and with ideas that have their origin in Western dreams of control and knowledge”.¹⁰⁷ His plea is for updating the concept of foreign mission by unlearning “bad memories”.

He addresses first the **“safety-in-numbers syndrome”** (ending up in the striking acronym of SINS) in that a set of statistics, a “piece of secular knowledge” is taking the place that was previously held by “faith in the unknowable ways of God”: **“Church growth” is interpreted as evidence of God’s intervention, and consequently as “evidence to counter competing truth claims”**.¹⁰⁸ He speaks about **“unacknowledged syncretism”**, when **historical facts in the foreign mission enterprise**, the growth of faith overseas, is **used as a proof “for or against the truth of Christianity”**, **compensating for the loss of faith at home, in Europe**.

This line of thought was extended earlier by Joseph Oldham, by assuming a relation between missionary success overseas and the survival of Christianity in the West. He stated (1930) that without the growth of Christianity in parts of Africa and Asia, Christianity would “not be powerful enough to maintain its hold permanently in the West”¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁵ Vladimir Ubeivolc, “Rethinking Missio Dei among Evangelical Churches in an Eastern European Orthodox Context” (University of Wales and International Baptist Theological Academy, 2011)., 230.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 272. See also: Joshua T. Searle and Mykhailo N. Cherenkov, “A Future and a Hope: Mission, Theological Education, and the Transformation of Post-Soviet Society,” (Wipf & Stock, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Werner Ustorf, “1910-2010: From Foreign Missions to the Home Policies of a World Religion,” in *Walk Humbly with the Lord. Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, ed. Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (Aarhus, Denmark: William B. Eermans Publishing Company, 2010)., 35.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰⁹ Oldham Quoted in *ibid.*, 38

Similar arguments are used by Visser't Hooft (1959), that Asian Christianity had become “the liberator” of Western Christianity from its “captivity to liberal culture and the capitalist mentality” and by Jenkins that Christianity in the South is the “essential antidote to liberalism and the missing ingredient in the reorientation and survival of Christianity in the North”¹¹⁰. This argument is clearly present in the Atlas with the image of Christian migrants to revitalize European Christianity.

Ustorf then emphatically states that we have to reject this rationale, as we allow so-called facts, “statistics, offered as incontrovertible evidence of “historical success,” the last word in matters of faith”.¹¹¹ The safety-in-numbers syndrome seeks to overcome the weakness of one’s own faith by creating “hard, indubitable facts” and is thus not simply drawing from the well of biblical sources, but is trying to offer a “Christian reinterpretation and resacralization of the modern consciousness of autonomy.¹¹²” Is there a connection with the “hesitance” of the Atlas to speak about a recession in North America?

Secondly Ustorf reminds us that the **spread of Christianity is not only about the giving or handing over of the message and “managing the faith of others”,** but also about how local people **receive it**. That implies that **indigenous Christians and their churches may now follow different intellectual maps than the ones used in the West**. As a result “Christians in the West are now asked to **update their theological repertoires and retune their cultural sensitivities in order to acknowledge the shift in the power structures of World Christianity**.¹¹³” The era of managing the faith of others is over, the challenge now is to **mutually learn from each other**. European Christians are now also challenged to reflect on how local people in their own continent receive the Gospel and challenged to learn from indigenous Christians of other continents that have migrated to Europe.

Thus Ustorf challenges us similarly as Escobar that mission strategies determined by the safety in number syndrome (SINS), based on Western philosophies rather hinders than advances mission work. This links to the appeal of Lee and Jeyaraj to shift from Western Christianity to Global Christianity.¹¹⁴

The paradox emerging is, that the statistical image of Europe, based on secularized methodologies results in a dominant image of Europe as still a Christian continent, albeit with decline due to agnostics and atheists, whereas the “interpretive essays” operating predominantly with the same secularization theory display a prevailing secularized Europe image. The question is what would both reconstructed images look like through an innovation of the methodology into a post-secular methodology and a redefining of the concepts, taking seriously the new attention for religion in sociology¹¹⁵. How would that effect the mission strategy invoked by these reconstructed images?

¹¹⁰ Jenkins quoted in *ibid.*, 38.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹¹⁴ Jeyaraj. and Lee..

¹¹⁵ Brandon Vaidynathan Christian Smith, Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Jose Casanova, Hilary Davidson, Elaine Howard Ecklund, John H. Evans, Philip S. Gorski, Mary Ellen Konieczny, Jason A. Springs, Jenny Trinitapoli and Meredith Whitnah, "Roundtable on the Sociology of Religion: Twenty-Three Thesis on the Status of Religion in American Sociology - a Mellon Working-Group Reflection," *Journal of the American Association of Religion* 81, no. 4 (2013).

Another paradox is thus that **the aim of the Atlas is to stimulate world mission** on the basis of this mission strategy, but **responses of the “South”, as well as of Central and Eastern Europe** that have been on the receiving end have been often quite **critical towards this western philosophy based, quantity focused business model**. Lee and Jeyaraj therefore emphasized the need to overcome the **western image of Christianity that is detrimental to the progress of mission,**¹¹⁶ the more, since the **“South” is considered to be more dynamic in terms of evangelism and mission**, which is also true in the European Bible-belt in Romania, Moldavia and the Ukraine, with **not only a quantitative focus but also a qualitative, incarnational, contextual and integral focus!** In business terminology, the market at which this mission strategy, this “product” is aimed, is developing another “product”, that is much more appreciated locally. It is mission as being rather than mission as doing.

4. Roots of the underlying missiological theories and perceptions **(19”)**

When reflecting on these critical voices from an image-formation theory perspective it is striking that the self-image of North-America Christianity serves as a “lense” that determines the definitions and methodologies, and thus the mission strategy. It also brings up the important issue raised by **Klippies Kritzinger on “nurturing missional integrity” in all levels of our methodology of missiology: at the praxis level, at the level of mission theory, but also at the level of worldview.**¹¹⁷ What then are the roots of the underlying missiological theories, concepts and methodologies of the statistical images in the Atlas? What worldview is employed in the social sciences, till recently dominated by the secularization theory?

Scholars of many disciplines now revise and **rethink their views of secularization and start questioning the assumptions** on which it was built, that there is an organic link between modernization and secularization, as a model for “the rest of the World”¹¹⁸. They now talk rather about **“Euro secularity”**. The “master narrative” of secularization has turned out to be inadequate. The concepts of “secularization” and “decline” are now considered problematic as they fail to take into account the alternative ways in which religiosity is expressed¹¹⁹, with the “Decline of Christendom” as a descriptive term of the peculiar Western European religious situation.

Managerial missiology has been dominated by the influence of the social sciences, to the expense of the transformative power of the gospel. It is stated that McGavrans “evolution and self-correction” have not always been noticed by his followers.

The dominance of the secularization theory in the social sciences and especially among its

¹¹⁶ Jeyaraj., Lee..

¹¹⁷ J.N.J. (Klippies) Kritzinger, "Nurturing Missional Integrity," (Paper given at the KRE-CIMS Seminar in Budapest in October 2011.: 2011).

¹¹⁸ Berger et al., 2.

¹¹⁹ Hugh McLeod and Werner Ustorf, *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

elites brings Casanova¹²⁰ to the remarkable observation that the **issue at stake** is not the fact of a steady religious decline in Europe, but the **interpretation of this decline through the lenses of the secularization paradigm**, considering this decline as “normal” and “progressive”, as a **consequence of being a “modern” and “enlightened” European**. It is this “secular” interpretation by the “elites” that turns “religion” into a perplexing issue in Europe, as it seeks to define its boundaries¹²¹.

One wonders whether this issue of interpretation of the decline through the lenses of secularization has affected the methodology of the Atlas. An argument in favor is that according to the Atlas Christianity in Europe is **declining through defections**, mainly to agnostics and atheists, considered “the evidence of secularization”.¹²² One gets the impression that the Atlas is trying to prove the evidence of the secularization of Europe. A second argument is the fact that **sociological concepts overrule theological concepts**. A third one is the **dominance** in the Atlas of the **secularized continent image**.

As this Atlas serves as an authoritative source of a significant segment of the missionary enterprise, it is important to continue the conversation on the limitations and flaws of its methodology rooted in a secular worldview and managerial missiology as it has a serious impact on the quality of the mission movement worldwide, and on the Gospel induced transformative power of our churches in our societies.

4. A missiological manifesto: Future perspectives and challenges (20”)

As we move on towards formulating a missiological manifesto for the decade as a statement of vision and values, seeking to contribute to the ongoing conversation on the future of the church in mission in Europe, it is important to take the assessment into consideration that in many European contexts the existence of the academic discipline of missiology, including that of ecumenism and evangelism is “fragile and precarious”.

(expand)

In this missiological manifesto I will offer a number of future perspectives and challenges to **help to stimulate critical and constructive discussion about the future of Church and mission in Europe**, divided along six key themes. Each theme encompasses a number of aspects, with statements and calls.

These key themes are chosen based on and related to the images in the *Atlas*. They should each be read in the context of an increasingly more diverse religious landscape in Europe in which the challenges of interreligious dialogue and witness play a key role. In identifying these key themes, I stand on the shoulders of well-known “giants”, that have greatly impacted my missiology: among them Wilbert Shenk and Lesslie Newbigin. This manifesto contains also autobiographical elements as it emerges from my privileged position of calling different parts of Europe my home, and from several decades of intensive interaction and deep friendship with students and colleagues in the Eastern part

¹²⁰ Casanova, "Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration."

¹²¹ Gregor Thuswaldner, "A Conversation with Peter L. Berger: How My Views Have Changed," *The Cresset*, no. Lent (2014).

¹²² Johnson et al., 156.

of Europe.

#1 *Impact of secular values on Church and mission*

(21")

1. "Business-ization" of mission organizations and churches

1. **Mission organizations and Churches in Europe operate increasingly on the basis of secular business principles instead of theological principles, focusing more on output and results instead of fruits growing in a hidden way, on value for money instead of free grace, on success stories instead of sacrifice and commitment, on quantity instead of quality, on superficial quick results instead of long-term transformation and incarnation, characterized by hanging on to power instead of commitment to offering humble service.**¹²³

The secularized Europe image does not only apply to European society but also to the European Mainline Churches. Secularization has impacted the **Church by embracing secular values or value systems that have "affected the church, obscured her mission, and have eroded her credibility in the world", as they are opposed to Christian values.**¹²⁴ Secular philosophy has intimidated the church to conform the Gospel to a system of "humanism", therefore a call to confess for a lack of discernment and discipline, as well as for an erosion of moral and social standards, with hypocrisy and dishonesty within the church is addressed. Also the leadership is **called to repent as it has more conformed to the world than acted like disciples of Christ, in bringing in the ways of the world and its systems rather than living out biblical principles.** This theme was taken up in the Lausanne movement first in 1980 and later in 2010.

2. Challenge of new religiosity and paganism

Lesslie Newbigin stated: "I have been forced to recognize that the most difficult missionary frontier in the contemporary world is the one of which the churches have been - on the whole - so little conscious, the frontier that divides the world of biblical faith from the world whose values and beliefs are ceaselessly fed into every home on the television screen. Like others I had been **accustomed, especially in the 1960's, to speak of England as a secular society.** I have now come to realize that I was the easy victim of an illusion from which my reading of the Gospels should have saved me. No room remains empty for long. If God is driven out, the gods come trooping in. **England is a pagan society and the development of a truly missionary encounter with this very tough form of paganism is the greatest intellectual and practical task facing the Church.**"¹²⁵

Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, the first GS of the WCC, in a very insightful paper on Evangelism among Europe's Neo-Pagans written in 1977, concluded with following words:

¹²³ Anne-Marie Kool, "Spiritual Transformation: A Reponse," in *The Mission of God. Studies in Orthodox and Evangelical Mission*, ed. Mark Oxbrow and Tim Grass (Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2015).

¹²⁴ *The Thailand Report on Secularists. Christian Witness to Secularized People*, ed. LCWE, Lausanne Occasional Paper Nr. 8 (The Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1980)..

¹²⁵ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (St. Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1993)., 236.

"... evangelization of Europe's neo-pagans is so urgent, so difficult that it ought to have the highest priority among the tasks of the church. How many of our theologians are working in this field? How many pastors? Far too few. What courses concerning neo-paganism are given in our theological faculties and in our lay training institutes?"¹²⁶

The question is: Do we live in a "Christian", a secularized or a neo-pagan context? Among nationalistic, extreme right ideologies pagan practices re-surge. A few years ago a special pastoral letter was sent out to warn against these practices. **My students tell stories of occult practices taking place among their peers, how they are attracted to worshipping the "Hungarian god", because it is Hungarian.** It is a form of over-contextualizing the Gospel. On the other hand, the way the gospel is presented in many churches is not conceived as relevant. It may be faithful to the Gospel, but not related to the context. We do not get any further to follow the advice of one of the bishops: "we should not deal with this nonsense". There is thus a huge missiological challenge in our evangelism to how relate gospel and culture.

3. Look afresh at our "chart and compass"

Lesslie Newbigin emphasized that **our missionary methods have been too much conformed to the world in which we live.**¹²⁷ We need to look afresh "to our chart and compass and to ask how we now use the new winds and the new tides to carry out our sailing orders".¹²⁸ It contains the **"costly, but exciting task... of fundamental theological thinking, of Bible study, and of discerning the signs of the times."**¹²⁹

Searle and Cherendov¹³⁰ recommend the creation of an **international learning community and professional theological society as a cross-pollution and meeting point between post-Soviet evangelical Protestantism, Western Protestantism and Russian Orthodoxy**, to undertake relevant research and to provide the churches with fundamental documents on current issues related to mission and missiology etc., to reflect together on theology of national evangelical authors, of the "Global North" and the "Global South", as well as to intensify publishing activities and construct a multi-tiered system of formal, non-formal and informal education. **It is the task of fundamental theological reflection combined with discerning the signs of the times.**

#2. *Issues of otherness and the reconciling role of Churches* **(23")**

4. From exclusion to embrace

One of the **burning issues** all over Europe is undoubtedly **that of „otherness” and exclusion, especially in Eastern Europe** with regard to the **10-12 million Roma (Gypsies), but also with**

¹²⁶ Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, "Evangelism among Neo-Pagans," *International Review of Mission* 66, no. 254 (1977).

¹²⁷ J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, "Bringing Our Missionary Methods under the Word of God," *Occasional Bulletin from the Missionary Research Library* XIII, no. 11 (1962)., 2.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁹ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today* (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958)., 11, cf. Anne-Marie Kool, "Changing Images in the Formation for Mission: Commission V in Light of Current Challenges. A Western Perspective," in *Edinburgh 1910: Mission Then and Now*, ed. Kenn Ross (Regnum, Oxford UK; William Carey, Pasadena, CA; SATHRI, Bangalore, India, 2009)..

¹³⁰ Searle and Cherenkov.

regard to e.g. migrants. The changing landscape in Europe and European Christianity will probably give rise to more exclusion. **Overcoming exclusion by transformation of the deep seated prejudices towards e.g. the Roma can only flow out of a clear focus on the message of incarnation, of reconciliation with God in Christ and the implications in everyday life for social reconciliation. Only the Holy Spirit can work out such profound changes in our lives.**

The categories of “otherness”, “the other”, “the rest”, “them”, “those”, etc., are applied not only to the Roma and migrants, **but also to Jews and Muslims.** From a Reformed angle, a Pentecostal or Catholic, from a rural vista, a city-dweller, a poor or a rich man, etc., will be deemed “the other”. Thus difference becomes the ground for considering the other to be inferior, rather than understanding the difference as something to celebrate, something that reveals yet something else of the mystery of God present in the world.

According to a recent study the stereotyped image of the impoverished gypsies that was created and repeated over the centuries defines the attitude of exclusion of millions of Europeans.¹³¹ Miroslav Volf has dealt extensively with the concept of „otherness” and ethnicity, dealing specifically with his own, Croatian, roots. He states that otherness should be placed at the center of theological reflection. **“The future of the whole world depends on how we deal with ethnic, religious and gender otherness.”¹³²** His response to otherness is a “theology of embrace”¹³³.

5.The emergence of reconciling communities needed

The role of pastors is to empower their local congregations to grow into open, welcoming and reconciling and missional communities, that embody and radiate the love of Christ to “indigenous” and “strangers” alike. To enable such communities to emerge, an emphasis should be placed on that we are all created in Gods image, on the unconditional love of God in Christ who died on the cross for our sins to reconcile us with God and on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Focusing on the future(s) of Pentecostalism in Europe, Raymond Pfister **calls for a "spirituality of reconciliation"** to face the challenges brought about by the "damaging effects of cultural and religious clashes". **The work of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation as the reconciling Spirit enables such a reconciling community to come to existence, defining the ministry of the Spirit as a ministry of reconciliation.** In a similar way as Volf, Pfister observes that God’s reconciling initiative in Christ is not limited to individual reconciliation, it extends to social reconciliation.¹³⁴

3. Ecclesiology and mission (missional church, church planting, emerging churches, fresh expressions) **(24")**

¹³¹ Bogdal.

¹³² ?

¹³³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1996).

¹³⁴ Raymond Pfister, "The Future(S) of Pentecostalism in Europe," in *European Pentecostalism*, ed. William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer, Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies (Boston: Brill, 2011).

6. From preoccupation with power and control to an attitude of humility

In Western culture, the starting point for mission and missiology is most often the reality of a widespread Christendom ecclesiology, characterized by a **preoccupation with power**, which is **heightened in modern culture by a confidence of being in control of our environment**, our life, and even our destiny.¹³⁵ In Christendom, the church has lived for 1500 years in a position of power. Her calling is now to **let go of power and control**,¹³⁶ accepting a minority position, and to **recover the redemptive power of the Gospel message** as defined by the cross. Nothing less than a metanoia of the church is needed, a re-formation¹³⁷, with an **attitude of waiting on God in deep humility**.

A widespread search for new, contextually relevant, missional ecclesiologies is going on in Europe.¹³⁸ The reality of institutional erosion within the European Churches, gives rise to probably the **greatest challenges of letting go of the high statistics**, often with related financial benefits from the State, **to accept a minority position and simultaneously be open to speaking with a prophetic voice in the public arena**. The question is whether the Christian churches in Europe are **willing to surrender their resistance and fear of change, accepting to be transformed as a missional church to impact their own culture as well as serving the rest of the world**. In this, non-Western churches have much to teach us.¹³⁹ At a slightly broader level, letting go of power and control is closely linked to a process of **de-Westernization of Christianity**. The **Global North is trying to hold on to power and control** also in terms of methodology, **while Global South seeks to communicate: we do not want your methods based on Western philosophy as it is detrimental to the evangelistic and missionary zeal and a hindrance for others to become a Christian**. We do not want to take up the Western cultural package that is often linked to your strategies. This would imply a **new take on partnerships between "South" and "North"**, not just on paper but in reality, with a focus on **mutual learning to "Walk humbly with the Lord"**¹⁴⁰ and with the **"North" to be ready to fulfill - only - a role of facilitator, enabler, in truly equal partnerships, ready to learn from the South, or from Churches in Post-Communist Europe, on their terms!** That would give birth to a framework of real Global Christianity.

On a practical level issues like **creating safe spaces, an open learning environment, where North and South could mutually ask each other honest and probing questions** without any fear for financial repercussions, should be given priority. It would require an attitude of **admitting one's weaknesses and strengths** and being ready to give and to receive from each other and **let go of triumphalism and self-importance. Ultimately, to accept the shift**

¹³⁵ Wilbert R. Shenk, "Training Missiologists for Western Culture," in *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series ; No. 28 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999)., 136-137.

¹³⁶ Drane., 164-165.

¹³⁷ Darrell L. Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, ed. Craig van Gelder, The Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000).

¹³⁸ Henning Wrogemann, *Den Glanz Widerspiegeln : Vom Sinn Der Christlichen Mission, Ihren Kraftquellen Und Ausdrucksgestalten : Interkulturelle Impulse Für Deutsche Kontexte* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 2009)., Harald Hegstad, *The Real Church. An Ecclesiology of the Visible*, Church of Sweden Research Series, vol. 7 (2013)., Michael Moynagh and Philip Harrold, *Church for Every Context : An Introduction to Theology and Practice* (London: SCM, 2012).. Michael Herbst, *Kirche Mit Mission. Beitrage Zur Fragen Des Gemeindeaufbaus*. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 2013).

¹³⁹ Kool, "Changing Images in the Formation for Mission: Commission V in Light of Current Challenges. A Western Perspective.", 174.

¹⁴⁰ Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen, "Walk Humbly with the Lord. Church and Mission Engaging Plurality," (Aarhus, Denmark: William B. Eermans Publishing Company, 2010).

from being in the center of Western Christianity to the periphery of Global Christianity. The question should be asked how this applies to North America!

7. Fresh expressions and mixed economy churches

The second statement related to ecclesiology and mission is “Fresh expressions of church”, based on a **serving-first journey rather than on a worship-first journey**. It is a process that starts with **listening to God and to the community** one feels called to serve, an act of love in itself. Out of the listening emerges service. Being the Good News precedes sharing the Good News, showing genuine concern for others. **The community begins to build loving relationships and engage in a variety of acts of service, as Jesus did, and a climate is created for sharing the gospel**. This is the start of “incarnational mission”, allowing people to explore becoming disciples of Christ. The last step to decide on is the nature of the worship service. “Fresh expressions are not about planting a congregation which worships the way the planters prefer and then hoping that other people like it! Listening come first, decisions about worship styles last.¹⁴¹”

The Church of England published in 2003 a report *Mission-shaped Church*¹⁴², out of which the “fresh expressions of Church” movement emerged. It is spreading from the UK to the European Continent, to Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, because of its solid theological and missiological rationale, and a clear contextual focus. Also because the movement is **open to keeping the old and the new together in a “mixed economy” church**¹⁴³, referring to a double strategy of making financial investments both in established churches and in the so-called ‘fresh expressions of the church’, also referred to as an **exploration into a “de-McDonaldized church”**¹⁴⁴.

Apart from the “fresh expression of church” initiative, Fuller Theological Seminary’s European partnerships and the Gospel and our Culture Network with its focus on the missional Church conversation had a significant impact on the search for new missional ecclesiologies, especially in Denmark¹⁴⁵. Also Tim Keller’s Redeemer Presbyterian Church has gained significant influence in Europe through the Redeemer City to City network, because of their openness to take the European context serious. Recently a European edition was published of Keller’s *Center Church*¹⁴⁶, as well as a Dutch edition¹⁴⁷. Still some responded: “Keller is very American”. From Anabaptist perspectives a wide range of post-Christendom ecclesiologies have been published.¹⁴⁸ They contribute to a greater religious plurality in

¹⁴¹ Moynagh and Harrold., 206-210.

¹⁴² Rowan Williams, *Mission-Shaped Church* (Church House Pub, 2003).

¹⁴³ Moynagh and Harrold., 433-434.

¹⁴⁴ Drane., 156ff.

¹⁴⁵ Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, "Missional Folk Church. A Discussion of Hans Raun Iversen's Understanding of the Danish Folk Church as a Missional Church," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 100, no. 1 (2012)., 30; Mogens Mogensen, "A Missiology of Listening for a Folk Church in a Postmodern Context," in *Foundations for Mission*, ed. Emma Wild-Wood and Peniel Rajkumar(Oxford, UK: Regnum Books International, 2013).

¹⁴⁶ Timothy J. Keller and Stefan Paas, *Center Church Europe : Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Franeker: Wijnen, Uitgeverij Van, 2014).

¹⁴⁷ Timothy Keller, Stefan Paas, and Zwany Kamerman-Bos, *Centrum-Kerk : Het Evangelie Midden in Je Stad* (Franeker: Uitgeverij Van Wijnen, 2014).

¹⁴⁸ Wilbert R. Shenk, "New Wineskins for New Wine: Toward a Post-Christendom Ecclesiology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29, no. 2 (2005).; Douglas John Hall, "Theology of the Cross: Challenge and Opportunity for the Post-Christendom Church

Theology of the Cross: Challenge and Opportunity for the Post-Christendom Church," in *Cross Examinations*(Minneapolis :

European Christianity, albeit mainly within the “indigenous” European Churches, under whose “wings” they operate.

4. Myth and reality of migrants as “outsiders” reaching out to the “insiders” in “reverse mission”

(25”)

The image of migrants as ‘outsiders’ reaching out to ‘insiders’ in ‘reverse mission’ and fulfill a factor in the revitalization of European Christianity could in many respects be considered as a myth. Most often the ethnic migrant churches are serving as diaspora churches to their own people. A remarkable new development is the Chinese churches’ interest in reaching out to the Roma of Eastern Europe. The second “mission” they fulfill is among their own ethnic people. Many charismatic/Pentecostal churches from African and Brazilian shape are focused on evangelizing the Germans, as they¹⁴⁹ consider the “unbelievers” in Germany, sometimes even the German Protestant Churches, as a mission field, still only very few migrant churches in Germany have German members.

For many countries in the Central and Eastern part of Europe the influx of migrants is a rather new phenomenon, causing similar distancing attitudes based on negative stereotyped images as vis-a-vis the “others”, the Roma, with whom they have co-existed for centuries. These attitudes are often fueled by a lack of adequate information and by historical factors.

9. Promote mutual learning

Speaking on the dynamics between the local and the migrant churches, Dawit Olinka Terfassa of the **Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Sweden**, emphasized: “In our multi-cultural context in Europe today, we need to **promote mutual learning between local and migrant churches**, contextualizing evangelistic approaches to the needs of our communities.¹⁵⁰”

The challenge of **promoting mutual learning** starts with **de-constructing the stereotyped images of the migrants**. Efforts to give the migrants a face, by creating **informal safe spaces for story-telling**, could serve as a first step. The role of theological education in teaching (future) pastors to develop innovative non-formal and informal training programs and to create **places for drinking “three cups of tea”** in their congregations in which both migrants and “indigenous” people participate, is crucial and can help **moving from stereotypes overcoming the wide-spread fear for these “unknown others”** that are “invading” us, “threatening our level of civilization” and endangering the future of our “Christian continent”, as the majority belong to a religion, Islam, we only know through **IS, to story, giving migrants a face.**

Fortress, 2006, 2006); Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002).

¹⁴⁹ Bianca Dümling, "Migrationskirchen in Deutschland," in *Die Zukunft der Kirche in Europa* (Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany: 2015).

¹⁵⁰ Avtzki et al.

10. Towards inclusive communities and creative local partnerships

Both indigenous and migrant communities face the quest to become inclusive communities reaching out to each other and joining hands in shaping the missional work of the church.¹⁵¹ The formation of such creative local partnerships contains many challenges.

“Indigenous churches” should encourage migrant churches to serve as a bridge, to assist the thousands of refugees to grow into “new Europeans”. The migrant communities are often strong, vital communities, with committed people, but they face challenges related to finding affordable facilities to hold their worship services, paying their pastor as the qualifications of migrants are often not recognized, so only the low-paying jobs are available to them. Also “indigenous” communities do face challenges. However, unlike the migrant churches they have strong organizational structures and access to a variety of resources. The reality is that there is only a small number of active members in the communities and the overall number of members decreases steadily.¹⁵²

How could migrant churches be strengthened in their needs and the indigenous churches be cared for? To strengthen the other does not mean to know everything better, to patronize him or her or to forget about oneself. The question is how then can a local partnership be lived out, in mutually strengthening each other, learning from each other? What theological clarification processes are important in such a local partnership? Which prejudices need to be overcome? Where is repentance and reconciliation needed?

5. *The Roma at Europe's periphery: an unknown "revival"?*

(26")

The religious landscape of Europe is changing significantly, also with the surprising growth of the “Independents”, that include the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches. **Many of Europe’s “out-casts”, the Roma, belong to this Christian tradition.** The reason why the Roma (Gypsy) occur only once in the Atlas could well be related to the fact that hardly any research has been undertaken to map the Roma churches. **They do not “fit” the official lenses...** Only recently sociology of religion studies has gained an interest in Gypsy Pentecostalism. Missiological and theological perspectives are still completely lacking. It is time to confess and to take steps to overcome this lacuna.

11. Periphery reviving the center?

The Hungarian theologian Ferenc Szucs stated more than a decade ago that involvement in **reaching out to the Roma may have a renewal effect on the church, because it compels the church to reflect on issues of Gospel and Culture.** It requires them to reflect on how to translate the Gospel in the mind-set of the Roma, whose culture is so far off from the Reformed Church. He anticipates that this would at least **“stir up the dead-waters of our Volkskirche”** (civil church), because it is the greatest mission challenge we face. If the churches do not involve themselves, this social bomb is going to go off right in our midst, and the consequences are unforeseeable.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Cf. Dümling,; Bianca Dümling, “Migrationskirchen in Deutschland : Orte Der Integration” (Lembeck, 2011).

¹⁵³ Ferenc Szűcs, "Az Elmúlt Tíz Év Teológiai Értékelése," *Théma* II, no. 4 (2000)., 41

Periphery reaching out to the center: Spain, also “Roma for the nations conference”.

12. Relevant research needed

Collaborate, relevant research is needed to find key Roma local figures that have played and play a role in the growth of Roma Christianity. We need to get to know them, writing up their life story, and honor their lives. They are virtually absent from the standard scholarly reference works.

We know little about the revivals going on, in France, Spain, but also in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Finland and Russia. little about the Roma Christian communities themselves, and their Roma pastors. **There are no dictionaries, encyclopedia or handbooks with descriptions of the Roma church fathers and mothers, similarly as till recently with African church history**, written exclusively from the perspective of the missionaries and their supporting churches, without giving attention to the role of the Africans themselves, in bringing the gospel to their people.

Giving the Roma Christianity a face, making steps towards getting to know Roma Church history, will not only be beneficial in teaching the Roma Churches, but also to help the majority society to **move from image to reality**. In this process a key notion should be: **Nothing about us without us**.

6. Role of Missiological education in revitalizing and transforming the European Churches and societies (27”)

Although the **academic discipline of missiology** was born in the context of Europe, the paradox is that the discipline is “currently ... **in a fragile state of existence...** [while] **application of basic missiological principles for our own ... context still is a great need and only very partially fulfilled and realized within the European context.**¹⁵⁴”

The Churches of Europe are in great need for leaders, who are willing to incarnate a Christ-like, serving attitude rather than clinging to power, who able to articulate a Christian worldview, and live accordingly. Agents of transformation and innovation are needed, well-equipped to deal with the burning issues of their contexts, like the churches’ response to otherness and exclusion, nationalism and ethnicity, revitalization of the churches into missional communities as well as communicating the Gospel in a relevant way to the de-churched (nominal) and un-churched people and radiating reconciliation in church and society. Jason Ferenczi’ s vision for theological education in the FSU is relevant for the whole of Europe, to “develop leaders who can articulate a Christian worldview in the context of extremely pluralistic societies in a way that answers the deep spiritual questions of a highly educated population.”¹⁵⁵”

The question is **what curriculum for missiological education is needed to play a role** in the

¹⁵⁴ Dietrich Werner, "Evangelism in Theological Education in Europe - 12 Considerations from Ete/Wcc," in *WCC-consultation on evangelism in theological education and missional formation in Europe, 28-31 October 2012* (Bossey, Switzerland: WCC, 2012).

¹⁵⁵ Jason E. Ferenczi, "Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union. Some Recent Developments," *Religion in Eastern Europe* XXI, no. 6 (2001), 1.

process of revitalizing and transforming the European Churches and societies and why, focusing on the **importance of relevant research of the context** as a basis for developing a truly contextually relevant dimension of missiology that can address the issues at stake in Europe and European Christianity. **Innovative, multi-tiered programs and teaching methods could stimulate and facilitate critical, missiological reflection** on the mission praxis as well as missional learning and formation. The challenge is to investigate **what kind of innovative structures could offer a safe space for acquiring knowledge and for facilitating learning processes to take place.**

13. A Missiological curriculum to face European realities

A **missiological curriculum** to face the current European realities should be **contextually relevant, theologically solid, and spiritually sound**, reflecting a multi-directional focus to prevent it from becoming either overly provincial or overly global. In addition, priority should be given to dealing with migration issues and with ethnic minorities - like the Roma in Hungary and Central Europe who many consider to be a “time bomb” under our societies - as well as with Islam in Europe.¹⁵⁶

The learning process should start with a **‘missiology of listening’**,¹⁵⁷ “a missional mind-set to listen to the context, to find ways to love and serve in an holistic and incarnational way”, a thorough contextual analysis of particular issues, e.g. issues related to the local European reality and modern culture, and the changing religious landscape or the institutional erosion of European Churches and then move on to exploring what biblical/theological themes address this issue. **An important challenge for a missiology for Europe is developing a contextual theology of evangelism.**¹⁵⁸ Rather than putting our trust fully in “horses and carriages”, in management principles and new strategies, **the focus should be on exercising great humility in using strategic planning and looking to the future with much hope, “trusting the ability of the gospel to incarnate in the midst of much chaos.**^{159”} Priority should be given to strategic thinking, rather than strategic planning, which means first of all “theologizing to go underneath the mere activity level.

The curriculum also should give attention to **practicing and strengthening personal and corporate spiritual disciplines like prayer and bible reading.** Furthermore, it should teach pastors and Christian leaders to empower the laity. Apart from formation for mission aimed at the local church and its leadership, it should focus on reminding the local congregation it is part of a worldwide community.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Kool, "Changing Images in the Formation for Mission: Commission V in Light of Current Challenges. A Western Perspective.", 173 and Anne-Marie Kool, "From Marginalization to Revitalization: Missiology's Contribution to the Renewal of Theological Curricula of Theological Institutions in Eastern European Contexts," in *Evangelical Mission in the Eastern Orthodox Contexts: Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Ukraine*, ed. Mihai Malancea(Chisinau, MD: Universitatea Divinita Gratiae, 2013)..

¹⁵⁷ Mogensen., 190.

¹⁵⁸ Avtzki et al.

¹⁵⁹ Birger Nygaard, "Strategic Reflections Coming out of the Present Predicament for Christian Mission," in *Walk Humbly with the Lord. Church and Mission Engaging Plurality*, ed. Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen(Aarhus, Denmark: William B. Eermans Publishing Company, 2010)., 44-45.

14. Stimulate relevant research on mission and evangelism related issues **(28")**

Coordinated efforts to strengthen relevant research and to develop joint European research projects on issues of mission and evangelism with **initiatives to assist young scholars and pastors to write up their research for publication in so called writing weeks** should be explored and implemented.¹⁶⁰

In Europe we need to embark on **painstaking contextual approaches**, that are not easy measurable, developing contextual educational programs, while keeping a clear theological and biblical focus. Relevant research is needed to make this happen. However, **the pragmatic bias and dominance of quantitative factors in church and mission, do not favor the slow and often costly production of contextual textbooks on mission and evangelism related topics and the financing of the research needed for it. Translating a book from English is often considered more efficient.** That is true in the Global South¹⁶¹, but also in Central and Eastern Europe. It is much easier to raise funds for short-term projects that are easily quantifiable, for emergency aid or for church planting projects, with a more or less clear output. The result is that **relatively little is known about dynamic and innovative initiatives in mission and evangelism taking place in the Eastern part of Europe (Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Moldavia)**. Those who have the experience, skills and qualifications to research and write up these mission practices to draw out the lessons for the own context, correct the existing images of European Christianity and enrich European and global Christianity, are overloaded in their ministries, and do not have the quality time and no access to the relevant e-resources, that are so easily available in the university libraries in the West.

15. Innovative teaching methodologies

Innovative teaching methodologies are important as we try to relate to the Millennial Generation or Generation Y. **This teaching methodology is all about teaching students first to ask questions and to listen, leading to understanding the (world) view of someone else instead of formulating quick judgments.** It also helps them to realize that there is more than one (often stereotyped) image to capture reality and that there are multiple images that can each have validity. Learning is more than just gathering information, it starts with reflecting on the teaching material and being changed by it. In this way students turn into agents of transformation of their churches and societies.

16. Develop international and interdenominational Learning Communities **(29")**

Develop international and interdenominational learning communities, places for missiological education and missional formation for people from different backgrounds, including migrants, where integrity in the way theology is done and lived out through spirituality is key and in which the art of honoring each other by asking questions is practiced. Important is that different cultural and theological perspectives be brought together for both the student body and faculty. **Innovative structures are needed to**

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Avtzki et al.

¹⁶¹ Escobar., 111.

provide a safe space for this process of acquiring knowledge and facilitating learning processes to take place.

A recent consultation on Evangelism in theological education and missional formation in Europe addressed urgent call to church leaders and leaders of theological institutions to give missiology and the teaching of evangelism a substantial place in the curriculum.¹⁶² The paradox is that the current academic and church climate in Europe does not favor responding to this call, despite the current challenges of Europe and European Christianity. **Time has come to establish innovative structures that rather resemble a “starfish” than a “spider” model¹⁶³: network organizations that maximize on flexibility, cooperation and sharing of resources.** Provision should be made for the establishing of a fund, that could offer stable, long-term teaching and research positions in missiology and evangelism, with the partners actively participating in the accountability structures.

Such **network organizations** should closely cooperate with established theological institutions as they are the place where the formation of missional leadership for the church takes or should take place, although often geared at achieving individual academic ‘success’. Alternatively, it should focus on the training of pastors, helping them to lead their church community and its members to live “worthily of the Gospel”, to disclose the idols of modern culture, to correct dichotomies, to reflect critically on the culture, and to be examples of love and grace of Jesus Christ in their families and in the market place. At the same time, it is important expose to the colorful worldwide body of Christ, to vital models of missional churches on other continents, with the persistent question in mind of how these experiences can be cross-fertilize their own European context.

Conclusion

In recent missiological literature there is a growing awareness about positioning Europe in the worldwide field of mission, which includes the construction and maintenance of images about Europe and European Christianity, that fuel and motivate specific types of missionary enterprises and strategies.

Using contemporary image-formation theory, the present article explored these images as well as the underlying missiological theories and perceptions using one of the most remarkable source of finding such images, the Atlas of Global Christianity.

We dealt with some of the conceptual and methodological problems and discovered that the images of the Atlas offered a distorted view of Europe and European Christianity because the lenses are affected by secularization theory, unable to capture institutionalized religion and a resurgence of religion and spirituality.

The Missiological manifesto attended to how these images relate to important current developments like: the impact of secular values on Church and mission; the myth and reality of migrants; the Roma “revival” at Europe’s periphery; ecclesiology and mission; otherness

¹⁶² Avtzki et al.

¹⁶³ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider. The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*. (London: Portfolio, 2007).

and the reconciling role of Churches; and the role of missiological education in revitalizing theological education, in the context of the changing religious landscape of Europe in which the existence of the academic discipline of missiology is "fragile and precarious".

I thank you for your attention.

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