

# Does Europe Matter? Towards a European Agenda for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** This article looks at a European agenda for the Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century from a Pentecostal-Charismatic perspective with reconciliation as the new paradigm for mission. Europe and the Church are facing similar issues in terms of challenges and ideals. Both are heirs of divisions, yet aspire for unity. Both share a history of wars, discrimination and dissensions and both are longing for peace, justice and solidarity. Because the ministry of the Spirit is a ministry of reconciliation, movements within the Church with a strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit have both the potential and the duty to reflect on their contribution to the making of Europe.

## *INTRODUCTION: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE*

How much do we understand about the world in which we live? The average European (Christian) has probably given very little thought to the nature of the society of peoples to which he belongs. One's personal experience with Europe (or lack of it) in a concrete local setting, in a particular village, town or city is likely to enable or disable somebody to address in a tangible way the European situation in the first place.<sup>1</sup>

### **In the Fifties and Sixties**

My childhood years were spent during the decades following World War II in the French province of Alsace (less than 20 km from the German border), at a time when the way one thought about Europe was greatly shaped by a series of wars (going back to the Franco-Prussian of 1870) between the *traditional enemies* France and Germany. Ill feelings, if not hatred, towards the German neighbour were prominent and omnipresent and the wounds of history had yet to heal. My life was not affected by the political climate that favoured the unification of Europe. Little did I realise that the European Coal and Steel Community (established in 1951) had become its first most significant expression. Since the focus was on *being French again*, realizing that I was indeed a French citizen was important and Europe did not really matter.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Fountain, *Living as people of hope: Faith, hope & vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe* (Rotterdam: Initialmedia, 2004), 7.

### ***In the Seventies and Eighties***

As a young Christian, my faith had been nurtured within European Pentecostalism<sup>2</sup> amid an *eschatology of despair* characterised by negativism and pessimism imbedded in a very detailed end-time scenario. It was rooted in the popular literature produced by conservative Evangelicalism and its prolific dispensational school of thought. Widely read books like Hal Lindsey's million best-seller *Late Planet Earth* strongly argued that the prophetic puzzle and the "ten nations" filter believed to be found in Scripture (in particular in the books of Daniel and Revelation) when applied to Europe could only see in a negative light – or at least with great suspicion! – any effort towards unity on the old continent.<sup>3</sup> The European Economic Community (founded in 1957), also known as Common Market, was even considered as being possibly one of "20 reasons why this present earth may not last another 20 years".<sup>4</sup> Modern European history was interpreted through the hermeneutical greed of a revived Babylon (or restored Roman Empire) and other perceived "demonic happenings" derived from an acute apprehension of Greek mythology.<sup>5</sup> Political, economical and social changes in Europe could not possibly be welcomed or even critically assessed in a constructive way. That I was a born-again, Spirit-filled Christian who "spoke in tongues" was important and Europe still did not really matter.

### ***In the Nineties***

Even though in 1993, the Maastricht Treaty made me – along with every citizen of a member state of the European Union – a "Citizen of the Union", there was not at first any obvious conscious engaging with this new acquired identity. I had moved to Hamburg during the summer of 1990 in the middle of Germany's life-changing re-unification process. I witnessed what is undoubtedly one of the most significant changes in the political geography of Europe in the second half of the 20th century. A new single German nation was being created at a surprising great speed, bringing together two ideologically opposite states, i.e. the Federal Republic of Germany (the West) and the German Democratic Republic (the

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, I am using the single term 'Pentecostalism' as a generic word referring to Classical Pentecostal churches (mostly founded during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.), Charismatic Renewal movements (within already established church traditions), Neo-Pentecostal and Neo-Charismatic denominations, organisations and networks (mostly founded during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.), as well as African and Asian independent churches.

<sup>3</sup> Hal Lindsey and C. Carlson, *L'agonie de notre vieille planète* [French translation of *The Late Planet Earth*] (Braine-L'Alleud, Belgium: Editeurs de Littérature Biblique, 1974), 116-120.

<sup>4</sup> Salem Kirban, *20 Reasons Why This Present Earth May Not Last Another 20 Years* (Huntingdon Valley, USA: Salem Kirban, 1973), 139.

<sup>5</sup> David Hathaway, *Prophetic Vision: Special Re-issue Europe in Prophecy* (Dewsbury, UK: Eurovision Publications, n.d.), 4.

East).<sup>6</sup> One might expect that such issues of cultural identity and social adaptation were greatly affecting the German population, both inside and outside the various ecclesial contexts. But it was not limited to them. My involvement in theological training for African community leaders<sup>7</sup> provided ample evidence that (mostly Pentecostal-type) migrant churches in Germany had been raising similar questions as they re-located in a new social context and attempted to provide stability to their *own people* (shared background of a defined ethnic group). They established through local, national and transnational networks a new framework for their incorporation and adaptation.<sup>8</sup> At this point, I was informed by my life's journey that my own French citizenship and Pentecostal spirituality were only telling part of the story, but not the whole story. I had to come to grips with the fact that my European experience had most certainly shaped – whether consciously or not – my European identity. I could no longer pretend that Europe does not really matter.

*THE EUROPEAN PROJECT AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR  
THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH*

The present article will attempt to disclose why Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality is believed to have a remarkable potential to help the Christian Church in Europe develop a distinct European agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>9</sup>. One might find ample reasons to be sceptical with the outcome of such an assignment. Pentecostalism as a global phenomenon is often introduced as the fastest growing segment of the Christian Church, but not only does Europe have a very different Pentecostalism than the rest of the world, there is also little evidence that “Europe” really matters for most of European Pentecostalism. There are obviously various Pentecostal organisations in Europe. There is the Pentecostal European Fellowship (PEF)<sup>10</sup>, the Pentecostal Europe Conference (PEC),<sup>11</sup> the

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<sup>6</sup> Wolfgang Becker's *Goodbye Lenin* (2002) is one of several German movies that attempt to portray the dynamic between the old world order and the new era, the tensions between the memory of the past and the uncertainties and challenges of the future in 21<sup>st</sup> century Germany.

<sup>7</sup> The ATTiG-Programm (African Theological Training in Germany) was set up in September 2001 in partnership with the Academy of Mission in Hamburg, the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions in Germany (EMW), the North-Elbian Centre for World Mission (Hamburg), the Bremen Mission, the theological faculty at Hamburg University, the ecumenical desk of the North-Elbian Lutheran Church and the Council of African Churches in Hamburg.

<sup>8</sup> Evangelos Karagiannis and Nina Glick Schiller, “Contesting claims to the land: Pentecostalism as a challenge to migration theory and policy” in *Sociologus*, 2006, vol. 56, n°2, 137-171.

<sup>9</sup> No claims made about Pentecostalism are meant to be exclusive and it is nowhere suggested that what is said about Europe cannot apply to other parts of the world.

<sup>10</sup> The head office of the Pentecostal European Fellowship is in Rhode-St-Genèse near Brussels (Belgium). According to its mission statement, it is a network of Pentecostal

European Pentecostal Theological Association (EPTA), and even a European Pentecostal-Charismatic Research Association (EPCRA). There is however no clearly defined European agenda for most Pentecostal congregations in Europe. The vast majority of them are more likely committed to a mere “introverted” national agenda with very little concern for a broader European, transnational and intercultural picture. A reluctance to be involved in political affairs coupled with an antipathy towards political affiliations have privileged a strong apolitical sense of mission which is declined as a *soul-winning* venture rather than as a socio-political course of action.

Because of its close association with Spirit-baptism<sup>12</sup>, it has become customary to view “speaking in tongues” as the hallmark of Pentecostal movements. Such a reductionist view of Pentecostalism is likely to underestimate the real significance of its soteriology and missiology. The Gospel witness itself points to the fact that “healing and saving, healing and mission are intimately and integrally related”<sup>13</sup>. The healing ministry of Jesus has always been an integral part of the Pentecostal message, as witnessed by one of the pillars of its classical “five-fold Gospel” motif: Jesus proclaimed as Healer of the body.<sup>14</sup> A closer look at Pentecostal churches will show – as it has been the case in the French Assemblies of God during the most part of its history – a consistent link between salvation and healing.<sup>15</sup> During his 2009 Cadbury Lectures on “Pentecostalism and Political Theology”, Amos Young pointed out that healing (rather than glossolalia!) may well define the heart of Pentecostalism as an embodied

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movements throughout Europe whose purpose is – in general terms – to promote unity and fellowship within, and help fulfil the Great Commission without, i.e. its evangelistic vision.

<sup>11</sup> The 2008 Pentecostal Europe Conference was held in November in Madrid (Spain). The chosen theme did focus on “*a new outpouring for a new Europe*”, yet the discourse pointed solely to the need of divine visitation and Europe’s need to turn back to Jesus (Juan Carlos Escobar, chair of the Spanish Assemblies of God). None of the speakers addressed socio-political issues which are affecting today’s European society nor suggested ethical and responsible solutions Christians might contribute to in light of its unresolved problems.

<sup>12</sup> The doctrine of initial physical evidence developed by Charles Parham has become a guiding rule in Pentecostal experience for those classical Pentecostals who see in glossolalia the objective evidence *par excellence* of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick J. Gaiser, “Your Faith Has Made You Well’: Healing and Salvation in Luke 17:12-19” in *Word & World*, Summer 1996, Volume XVI, Number 3, 299.

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Brandt-Bessire, *Aux sources de la spiritualité pentecôtiste*. Paris: Labor et Fides, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> The *Assemblées de Dieu de France* (French Assemblies of God) had developed during the 20th century an evangelistic strategy called “missions salut et guérison” (salvation and healing missions) which focused on the message that Jesus saves and Jesus heals. Prayer for the sick with laying on of hands and anointing of oil was mostly addressing physical illnesses.

experience.<sup>16</sup> A rediscovery of the trilogy of the Holy Spirit, healing and (its counterpart) reconciliation at the heart of today's ecumenical mission theology and strategy<sup>17</sup> must have significant implications for one's understanding of Pentecostal spirituality and its ecumenical relevance in the future.<sup>18</sup> Further evidence of the fact that it is a very timely subject, 2009 has been proclaimed International Year of Reconciliation according to the resolution calendar of the United Nations (UN).<sup>19</sup> This is certainly also an invitation to the Christian Church to promote in this broken world the concept of reconciliation in word and deeds. As this will obviously apply to many different contexts around the world, it is the purpose of this article to consider the more immediate context of the making of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The European puzzle is more than a constellation of various different cultural entities trying to create one new European identity; it is the heritage of divided societies that have suffered for centuries to various degrees from various situations of conflicts. It is therefore particularly necessary and urgent that the Christian Church in Europe sees itself as an agent of healing in a fragmented Europe through reconciliation processes. Facing critical identity issues of its own, the Church should be in a position to demonstrate both significant expertise and particular motivation to get actively involved in the exploration of "the complex and multifaceted nature of identity in Europe".<sup>20</sup>

Throughout history, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions have described peace as a dynamic force of holistic flourishing that inaugurates and sustains harmonious relationships between individuals, communities, and creation... The Church needs a new paradigm to help focus public discussion on proactive practices that work for justice and peacemaking.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Cadbury Lectures featuring Amos Young, Professor of Systematic Theology at the Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach (USA), were held at University of Birmingham (UK), 9-19 March 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Hugh McCullum, "Healing and reconciliation theme: a first for WCC", World Council of Churches press release, 31 March 2005. <http://www2.wcc-coe.org/pressreleasesen.nsf/index/Feat-05-10.html>

<sup>18</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article focusing on Europe to actually engage arguments used by views opposing ecumenical dialogue and/or cooperation. My own views on the ecumenical challenge of Pentecostal-Charismatic spirituality are developed in my article: "An urgent plea for a real Ecumenism of the Spirit" in *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, 2009, Volume XIX, No. 1, 8-25.

<sup>19</sup> On 20 November 2006, the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to proclaim 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation (resolution 61/17).

<sup>20</sup> Marion Demossier, "Introduction" in *The European Puzzle: The Political Structuring of Cultural Identities at a Time of Transition*, ed. Marion Demossier (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2007), 3-4

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas R. Brown, "Peace and Peacemaking" in *Cambridge Dictionary of Christianity*, gen. ed. Daniel Patte (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2009).

*RECONCILIATION, THE NEW PARADIGM FOR MISSION*

Over the past years, reconciliation has become the emerging new paradigm that defines the mission of the Christian Church in today's Global Village. Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant and Pentecostal voices from all over the world are increasingly speaking one and the same language.<sup>22</sup> As witnessed by various international conferences during the last five years,<sup>23</sup> a spirituality of reconciliation is called for in order to face the challenges brought about by damaging effects of cultural and religious clashes, of economical and political boundaries. Particularly significant has been the 2005 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) which met in Athens, Greece, for bringing together participants ranging from Roman Catholics to Pentecostal and evangelical churches. The resulting report contains a statement on mission as reconciliation "in the power of the Spirit" in the context of a broken world. Truth, memory, justice and forgiveness are understood as four essential aspects, needed both within the Church and in society at large, in the dynamics of the reconciliation and healing process.<sup>24</sup>

CMS<sup>25</sup> mission partner Joanna Udal is therefore no lonely voice when she articulates the Christian Gospel as a significant contributing force to the quest for justice, peace and reconciliation in general and among nations in particular.<sup>26</sup> Its basic thrust is to experience a Spirit-empowered work of recreation that replaces hostility with proximity, thus enabling a new kind of relationship both with the Creator and creation. Put in a biblical framework, one can say that from the initial promise to see "all the nations of the earth" blessed in Abraham (Genesis 18:18; cf. Romans 4:18) to its ultimate fulfilment when "the nations will walk by its light", referring to Christ Jesus (Revelation 21:24), the eschatological hope of the believer is indeed carried by the quest for healing and forgiveness, i.e. for fully restored relationships. The book of Revelation is painting the vision of a renewed creation described in terms of "new heaven and new earth" (21:1). This does not

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<sup>22</sup> Petros Vassiliadis, "Reconciliation as a pneumatological mission paradigm: Some Preliminary Reflections by an Orthodox" in *International Review Of Mission*, Vol. 94, No 372, January 2005, 30-42. Prof. Vassiliadis is the President of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI).

<sup>23</sup> As for example both the 2004 International Conference of the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS) in Malaysia that convened under the theme "The integrity of mission in the light of the Gospel: Bearing the Witness of the Spirit", and the 2008 IAMS Conference in Hungary around the theme "Human Identity and the Gospel of Reconciliation. Agenda for Mission Studies and Praxis in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Matthey, ed. *Come Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile! Called in Christ to be Reconciling and Healing Communities*. Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 9-16, 2006. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> The Church Missionary Society (CMS) is an evangelistic mission founded in 1799 within the Church of England, but which today is not confined to just Anglicanism.

<sup>26</sup> Joanna Udal, "Reconciliation among nations: the role of the church – Common Understanding and Vision" in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 49, January 2007.

however justify a theology of escapism which really expects only a *new heaven*, leaving consequently no room for a restored *new earth*.<sup>27</sup>

Just as the Spirit is the distinctive characteristic of the Christian community, says Kirsteen Kim, the reconciling Spirit enables a reconciling community, thus defining the ministry of the Spirit as a ministry of reconciliation.<sup>28</sup> The fact that the pneumatological dimension has become an essential component of a renewed ecclesiology that sees the Church as a healing and reconciling community leads to the question: What contributions does Pentecostal-Charismatic thinking and experience have to make to a theology of reconciliation? In what ways can the theology of the Holy Spirit further aid the practice of and reflection on reconciliation in particular in the European context?<sup>29</sup> Has Pentecostalism ever articulated a theology of reconciliation among the nations that could be helpful in defining a European perspective for today's construction of Europe?

#### *NORTH-AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN PENTECOSTALISM ON RECONCILIATION ISSUES*

About twenty years ago, when Pentecostal scholar Russ Spittler (now Senior Professor of New Testament at Fuller's School of Theology in California) first described some of the main characteristics of Pentecostal spirituality as implicitly found in the Pentecostal understanding of missions, he mentioned "other-worldliness" – as sustained by a futuristic eschatology and a sense of missionary urgency anchored in the belief in Jesus' imminent return – as one of them<sup>30</sup>. This was due to the fact that North American Pentecostalism (and its sphere of influence which also includes Europe) cultivated the notion that experiencing God was mostly concerned with eternity and the afterlife while remaining largely inattentive to the challenges of the present world. In short, the message was, There is hope now... for the life to come. The ministry of reconciliation as understood from Scripture (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18) was mostly an individualistic concern, translated in terms of restored relationships primarily between humankind and God, and secondarily between individuals who become separated

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<sup>27</sup> I am indebted to Pastor David Carr, Renewal Christian Centre, Solihull, West Midlands, for this insight mentioned in his Sermon on Sunday 15 March 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Kirsteen Kim, "Reconciliation, Integrity and the Holy Spirit: Ethic and Ethos of Mission", 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS), Port Dickson, Malaysia, 31 July 3 - 7 August 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Those are among the questions for further study and discussion found in the Preparatory Paper No 4, Statement on mission as reconciliation, Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens 2005 documents.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/cwme-world-conference-athens-2005/preparatory-paper-n-4-statement-on-mission-as-reconciliation.html>

<sup>30</sup> Russell P. Spittler, "Implicit Values in Pentecostal Missions" in *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 4, October 1988, 409-424.

from others by reason of dispute. This relational dimension was rarely perceived as between groups and communities, and even less between nations.

However, maybe too little attention has been paid to evidence that would show that God's reconciling initiative in Christ has not been limited to individual reconciliation, but that serious attention has indeed been given to the social meaning of reconciliation?<sup>31</sup> In the North American context, the Azusa Street mission has become identified as a symbol of ethnic reconciliation ("racial reconciliation" would be a more common designation in that context).<sup>32</sup> Church of God in Christ Bishop George D. McKinney speaks about such Pentecostal legacy as "the tragedy of the missed opportunities".<sup>33</sup> He refers to America's unresolved segregation problems and the untapped "potential for the demonstration of God's power for forgiveness and reconciliation".<sup>34</sup>

In the early days of European Pentecostalism, one can find (most likely isolated!) examples of major political and social contribution, with leaders like Lewi Pethrus (1884-1974), a most influential figure of the Swedish Pentecostal Movement.<sup>35</sup> Does preoccupation with spiritual matters still preclude Pentecostals from correcting social *injustices*?<sup>36</sup> Today one can observe a definitive shift of emphasis in the Pentecostal orientation toward the world i.e. society. Albrecht has pointed out that Pentecostal spirituality seems to produce a new and often keen sense of community, while providing a renewed context for both individual and social experience: experiencing God as "empowering Spirit and commissioning Lord" in this world.<sup>37</sup>

In the summer of 1998, the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) publish the inaugural (and only) issue of what was meant to become their official journal. Co-editor Harold Hunter's editorial was entitled "Reconciliation-Pentecostal Style", and is best understood against the background of racial and class divisions which have deeply marked the history of North American Pentecostalism. Facing such colossal challenge demanded a fresh approach to spiritual gifts, made possible within the context of a new mindset:

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<sup>31</sup> See Christian G. Romocea, "A Strategy for Social Reconciliation in the Ethnic Conflict in Transylvania" in *Religion in Eastern Europe* XXIII, 5 (October 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Byron Klaus, ed. *We've Come This Far: Reflections on the Pentecostal Tradition and Racial Reconciliation*. Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007.

<sup>33</sup> George D. McKinney, "The Azusa Street Revival". Lecture presented at Beeson Divinity School, Sanford University in Birmingham, Alabama on October 3, 2001.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Lewi Pethrus established the Lewi Pethrus Trust for Philanthropic Endeavour in 1959. In 1964, he spearheaded the founding of Sweden's Christian Democratic Party.

<sup>36</sup> Darrin J. Rodgers, Review of *We've Come This Far: Reflections on the Pentecostal Tradition and Racial Reconciliation*, edited by Byron Klaus. Springfield, MO: Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, 2007.

<http://ifphcseeninprint.wordpress.com/2007/12/12/pentecostals-and-racial-reconciliation/>

<sup>37</sup> Daniel E. Albrecht, "Pentecostal Spirituality: Ecumenical Potential and Challenge" in *Cyberjournal for Pentecostal-Charismatic Research* 2, July 1997. <http://www.pctii.org/cyberj/cyberj2/albrecht.html>

“We are empowered to be agents of healing”.<sup>38</sup> It is also worth noticing that the name given to the new publication was simply *Reconciliation*.

It is in Europe (Leuven, Belgium) that *The Pentecostal Charismatic Peace Fellowship* began in July 2001 when Paul Alexander presented a paper, "Spirit Empowered Peacemaking: Toward a Pentecostal Charismatic Peace Fellowship" to the European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association (EPCRA). Its purpose statement acknowledged that “the life and teachings of Jesus and his disciples exemplified reconciliation, forgiveness, and nonviolence as integral to the Good News”.<sup>39</sup> Alexander challenged Pentecostal theology to take seriously the biblical witness that supports “Spirit led peacemaking and reconciliation”.<sup>40</sup> At the very same EPCRA conference, Glen Stassen promoted the recovery of the “Way of Jesus” as the kingdom ethics rooted in the Sermon on the Mount. He wondered if the Pentecostal claim to restore New Testament faith and practice, has not been lacking a constructive ethic of peacemaking and reconciliation, greatly needed however in order to follow Jesus in a relevant way within the complexities of our contemporary context.<sup>41</sup> God’s way of righteousness does not support a tradition of evasion, but “transforming initiatives” towards a peacemaking process.<sup>42</sup> A biblical theology and praxis of reconciliation provides the framework for becoming in a tangible way, in Christ Jesus, the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). The experience of God’s presence discloses the meaning of justice for the poor and the powerless in a world plagued by evil and unrighteousness.

In his short survey on reconciliation initiatives within the charismatic movements (2002), Peter Hocken suggests that “charismatic Catholics have been led more towards reconciliation between divided churches and faith communities, while charismatic Protestants have become involved in reconciliation between divided nations and races.”<sup>43</sup> It is however the Catholic Charismatic Renewal which in 2006 published a booklet called “Hope for a New Europe: An aid to reflection on the papal document ‘Ecclesia in Europa’”.<sup>44</sup> It remains a unique source of meditation and daily prayer for Catholic believers in particular, helping

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<sup>38</sup> Harold D. Hunter, “Reconciliation-Pentecostal Style” in *Reconciliation*, Number 1, Summer 1998, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Website of Pentecostal Charismatic Peace Fellowship. [http://www.pcpf.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=116&Itemid=46](http://www.pcpf.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=116&Itemid=46)

<sup>40</sup> Paul N. Alexander, “Spirit Empowered Peacemaking: Toward A Pentecostal Peace Fellowship”. Paper presented at the 10th EPCRA Conference in Leuven, Belgium, July 2001.

<sup>41</sup> See Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

<sup>42</sup> Glen H. Stassen, “Recovering the Way of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount”. Paper presented at the 10th EPCRA Conference in Leuven, Belgium, July 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Hocken, “The Call to Reconciliation”, *Goodnews*, Issue 157, January-February 2002. <http://www.ccr.org.uk/archive/gn0201/reconcil.htm>

<sup>44</sup> “Hope for a New Europe: An aid to reflection on the papal document ‘Ecclesia in Europa’”.

them to think strategically and act responsibly in light of the opportunities and challenges of Europe in the making. Its pathway moves from historical-cultural reflections to a Christ-centred philosophical-theological vision: “Jesus Christ alive in His Church, the source of hope for Europe”.<sup>45</sup>

A similar position has also been advocated by Allan Anderson, Professor of Global Pentecostal Studies at the University of Birmingham (United Kingdom) in his discussion on Pentecostalism in relationship with Christian mission in Europe.

Pentecostalism emphasizes the freedom, equality, community and dignity of each person in the sight of God. The experience of the power of the Spirit can be a unifying factor in a global society that is still deeply divided. It can also be the catalyst for the emergence of a new society where there is justice for all and hope for a desperately violent world.<sup>46</sup>

#### *A DIVIDED CHURCH FOR A DIVIDED EUROPE?*

Historical developments within Europe have divided Europe along religious lines, as there are countries which are predominantly Catholic (Southern and Central Europe), countries that are predominantly Protestant (Northern Europe) and countries that are predominantly Orthodox (Central, Eastern as well as Southern Europe). Brent Nelson and James Guth think that the confessional culture of Roman Catholicism and its centralized transnational organizational structure have made it more supportive of European integration.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, Protestantism is suspected to be an important cause of *euro scepticism*.<sup>48</sup> Even though it also shared the catholic belief in a universal, invisible community of faith, Protestant theology had to make room for a visible divided church, thus legitimating separation and fragmentation.<sup>49</sup>

European history has been in many ways a history of discord and rivalry, a history of *divided nations*. Europe’s geopolitical fragmentation is demonstrated by internal borders – about 38,000 km in length – for the member-states of the

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Allan Anderson, “Pentecostalism, the enlightenment and Christian mission in Europe” in *International Review of Mission*, July 1, 2006, Vol. 95; No 378/379, 276-281.

<sup>47</sup> Brent F. Nelson and James L. Guth, “Roman Catholicism and the Founding of Europe: How Catholics Shaped the European Communities”, *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 28-31 August 2003.

<sup>48</sup> Initially a distinctively English phenomenon, *euro scepticism* refers since the 1990s to different, and occasionally contradictory, oppositions to the process of European integration but also to EU institutions and policies. Cf Robert Harmsen and Menno Spiering, “Introduction: Euro scepticism and the evolution of European political debate” in *Euro scepticism: Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration*, eds Robert Harmsen and Menno Spiering (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Brent F. Nelson, “The Reluctant Europeans: Protestantism, Nationalism and European Integration”, *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, Chicago, Illinois, 2-5 September 2004.

Council of Europe, 72% of which have been produced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore and because of the extremely regionalist nature of European society, “the same diversity which characterizes Europe as a whole is also characteristic of its parts”.<sup>50</sup>

Does the Christian Church in Europe see (1) the challenging situation of a continent in need of healing, peace and unity, and (2) its own responsibility for bringing faith, hope and vision for Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?<sup>51</sup> In the past, various nationalist and patriotic ideologies have torn apart our continent. Today, forging a new European identity for freedom, dignity, and solidarity will need the “grace of reconciliation”, to use Joseph Ratzinger’s expression (now Pope Benedict XVI).<sup>52</sup> After two devastating world wars within a century, it became increasingly important to bring the European nations to a more peaceful relationship and to prevent another world war from taking place. By establishing a European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 (Treaty of Paris),<sup>53</sup> as Pascal Fontaine (former assistant to Jean Monnet and Professor at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques in Paris) puts it, “the raw materials of war were being turned into instruments of reconciliation and peace”.<sup>54</sup>

What is the role of the Church in the making of Europe as we face situations of conflict among communities of different nations, ethnicity, religions, cultures and political or ideological affiliations? What is the role of the church in transforming conflicts toward building peace? What initiatives need to be taken in order to transform these conflicts and promote a spirituality of reconciliation? What can we, as European churches, contribute to the transformation of our European societies? Are Christians able to appreciate differences which plural community presents? Are they being equipped to live in a plural society?

One can often tell by the way Europeans talk about each other, how they actually look at each other. Far too many (even Christian) British, French and German people – to name only a few – consider it to be socially acceptable to make disparaging comments about each other. Speaking in such derogatory manner has at times become a *national sport* even in churches.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Christopher Dawson, *Understanding Europe* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1952), 49.

<sup>51</sup> See Jeff Fountain, *Living as People of Hope: Faith, Hope & Vision for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe*. Rotterdam: Initialmedia, 2004.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Europe Today and Tomorrow: Addressing the Fundamental Issues*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 114-117.

<sup>53</sup> The Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community was signed in Paris on 18 April 1951 and entered into force on 24 July 1952, with a validity period limited to 50 years. The Treaty expired on 23 July 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Pascal Fontaine, *Europe in 12 Lessons*, (Brussels: European Commission, 2006), 5.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Grant, “La Grande-Bretagne est-elle européenne ? ” in *Notre Europe*, eds. Michel Rocard and Nicole Gnesotto (Paris : Robert Laffont, 2008), 183. A revised version of this chapter has been published online in December 2008 by the Centre for European Studies, under the title: “Why is Britain eurosceptic?”; [http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/essay\\_eurosceptic\\_19dec08.pdf](http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/essay_eurosceptic_19dec08.pdf)

*THE EUROPEAN CHURCH IN NEED OF A PHILOSOPHY  
OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION*

A vast majority of congregations within European Pentecostalism (and no doubt many others as well) have no articulated philosophy of education and no comprehensive intergenerational strategy for faith formation. As part of the answers to all the questions that have been raised so far, the European Church is in need of a European Christian education advocating a *reconciliation model* of Christian maturity.<sup>56</sup> What kind of a model should it be? Will it be ecumenical reconciliation, church-state reconciliation, socio-political reconciliation, cultural reconciliation, spiritual reconciliation and/or personal reconciliation? Will it be brought about by the churches as *transformed* communities of faith or by *renewed* individual Christians? Since reconciliation needs to be a multi-faceted answer to a multi-faceted problem, a holistic approach (not an either/or) needs to be clearly favoured.

First, we need to look for a better theological understanding of the nature, function and task of a Spirit-led Church. One cannot affirm that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19), yet not take seriously the challenge of the church-as-beneficiary-of-reconciliation to become a witness in the larger European community. It is only by empowering and helping its members to become *agents of reconciliation*, and to be *peacemakers* and *peace-builders* among the peoples of the European community of fellow-nations that the “Europe of frustrations”<sup>57</sup> and conflicts will become the Europe that provides “freedom, security and justice”<sup>58</sup> for the peoples of its many nations (27 countries are now members of the European Union; 47 countries are members of the Council of Europe). The Church has an important role to play in helping the success of movements of people in Europe. This is only possible as one gets involved with the *broader picture* and is allowed to be empowered to be agents of God’s reign in order to see and understand what one has not seen and understood before... beyond one’s own margins.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ronald Habermas and Klaus Issler, *Teaching for Reconciliation: Foundations and Practice of Christian Educational Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 47-57.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Quatremer, « Est-ce Bruxelles qui nous gouverne ? » in *Notre Europe*, edited by Michel Rocard and Nicole Gnesotto (Paris : Robert Laffont, 2008), 76. [Avec] « la propension des Etats à communautariser les échecs nationaux et à nationaliser les succès européens, on comprend mieux la frustration qu’engendre la construction communautaire : elle semble être partout alors qu’elle n’est souvent nulle part. » (my translation: With “the inclination of the States to see national failures as Community related and European successes as Nation related, one understands better the frustration generated by the construction of the [European] Community: it seems to be everywhere whereas it is often nowhere”).

<sup>58</sup> Fontaine, 44-47.

<sup>59</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 228.

Secondly, in order to promote sustainable life in the context of plurality while encouraging a culture of peace with justice and overcoming all forms of evil, the church needs to raise awareness on issues of peace and reconciliation. This is the challenge that we must seriously take as our own. As a first step, the church, through its educational programs, can teach members of the congregation, especially young children, not only the traditional Bible stories, but also “the art of forgiveness”<sup>60</sup> and education about conflict and reconciliation. The educational ministry of the church should focus on teaching for Christ-centred reconciliation.<sup>61</sup> It should be given to children starting from early childhood until they become mature members of the congregation and the community. Young people as well as adults need also to be guided and empowered to deal with their own conflicts. The whole membership of the congregation needs to understand the significance of this peace education in their lives.<sup>62</sup>

Thirdly, the construction of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs the Christian Church in Europe as a strong ally, i.e. critically supportive with constructive pro-activities. The European Church needs to be Europhile and not Eurosceptic. With its de facto multicultural identity its priorities should be modelling integration instead of fighting it, promoting unity in diversity among the peoples of Europe and not linguistic exclusion and ethnic segregation. This means embracing rather than rejecting the stranger. Europe necessitates an ecumenical-minded Christian community that is enabled to contribute actively, by the power of the Spirit, to the answers that Europe needs in its quest for peace, justice and solidarity. Thus Europe needs Christians that are willing to learn to talk to each other even when at first they are separated by nationality, language, culture, tradition and doctrine.<sup>63</sup>

#### *EUROPE AND THE CHURCH, FROM A SHARED HISTORY TO A SHARED DESTINY*

In many ways Europe and the Church face similar issues of credibility: it is believed that Europe’s voice will only be heard as it is one, so will the voice of the Church. However, only intercultural and ecumenical education will equip the Church to experience unity in diversity. *Vive la différence* (as the French say)

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<sup>60</sup> Geiko Muller-Fahrenholz, *The Art of Forgiveness: Theological Reflections on Healing and Reconciliation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1997), 2-8. Cf. John W. De Gruchy, *Reconciliation: Restoring Justice* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 147-180.

<sup>61</sup> Ronald Habermas and Klaus Issler, *Teaching for Reconciliation: Foundations and Practice of Christian Educational Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Judo Poerwowidagdo, “Ministry of Reconciliation and Peace” in *CTC Bulletin*, Bulletin of the Program Area on Faith Mission and Unity [Theological Concerns] Christian Conference of Asia, VOL. XVIII, No. 2 -Vol. XIX, No. 2, December 2002 -August 2003.

<sup>63</sup> The present author is here concerned about vital and essential people encounter very much aware of real differences and not about trying to harmonize such (possibly irreconcilable) doctrinal differences.

may then echo one's generosity of heart when facing the reality all around us, locally and globally, diversity of individuals and/or diversity of groups of people. Just as Christians from various theological and spiritual traditions can learn to live together while sharing Kingdom of God citizenship, Europeans from various cultural and national backgrounds can learn to live together while sharing a European identity. The fall of the Berlin wall (1961-1989) did remove dreadful physical borders: a sign of division became over night an emblem of freedom. Yet many more walls of partitions are cemented in our hearts and minds that we are unable to cross, yet they need to be teared down and removed for the sake of our freedom.

Quo Vadis Europe? If one acknowledges that Europeans must learn to live together in diversity and so do Christians, then we realise that the continent of Europe and the Christian Church are facing very similar challenges. Parallels can be found between the Christian Community and the European Community: just as we need to move beyond looking at the Church as an optical illusion, we need to look beyond Europe as a mere visual deception. Real problems need to be faced in order to develop real answers.

<b>The Church as optical illusion</b> (The <i>trompe l'œil</i> effect)	<b>Europe as visual deception</b> (The <i>trompe l'œil</i> effect)
Territorial thinking	National borders
Ecclesiastical status quo	National status quo
Denominational preservationism	National protectionism
Denominational autonomy	National sovereignty
Monocultural dominance	Ethnocentric monopoly
Institutionalized separation	Geopolitical fragmentation
Pseudo-theocracy	Pseudo-democracy
Doctrinal wars	Ideological wars
Lack of empowering leadership	Lack of political cohesion
Dangers of spiritual ostracism	Dangers of social exclusion
Myth of Christian unity	Myth of a united Europe
Hostility to the Church and its institutions	Hostility to the EU and its institutions

Europe is in need of informed, responsible citizens who are well aware of the issues facing Europe in the making, such as for example integrating East and West, environmental problems, nationalism and racism, justice and solidarity.<sup>64</sup> Will Christians lead the way in that respect or will they be left behind? What kind of a testimony will be heard by those who are truly change facilitators? Do we hear the voice of the witness say, “for me personally, you have opened the door to

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<sup>64</sup> Michael I. Bochenski, *Theology from Three Worlds: Liberation and Evangelization for the New Europe* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 1997), 149-172.

Europe in a way that for many of us was not comfortable but which I know feel is a necessary challenge we cannot ignore”<sup>65</sup>

The Church needs to create a safe space for an intercultural experience which is truly transformative. For this reason it needs to be thoughtful to develop a concept of interculturality that allows for an active engagement among the various European cultures. If we really want to live a more sustainable shared life, we need to explore possibilities “to broaden our perspectives and change our own particular ways of thinking and living”.<sup>66</sup>

### THE ICHTHUS 21 PROJECT

Believing or just affirming that Europe matters does not in itself define or guarantee a European agenda for the Church. In order to support such developments, the present author is founding a European Institute for Conciliation and Reconciliation Studies<sup>67</sup> called ICHTHUS 21. The choice of the name has both a historical and a present significance. The fish is an ancient Christian symbol that serves as a visual representation of a shared faith in Jesus.<sup>68</sup> It refers to the core confession of the early church and of present generations of Christian believers (“21” simply being the present century). As a Christian (non-profit, non-denominational) organisation it will be devoted to the development (or construction project) of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century *within and through the various expressions and traditions of the Christian Church* in Europe by means of teaching, consulting, research and related activities. Its mission shall be to contribute to the deeper appreciation and processes of *conciliation* and *reconciliation*<sup>69</sup> needed at various levels, in order to foster the understanding and practice of peace, justice and solidarity within and between communities in Europe.

### General Objectives

ICHTHUS 21 will seek to develop a multidisciplinary approach to re/conciliation studies which is drawing on a broad range of fields of study, including (but not

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<sup>65</sup> Letter from Charles Bonsall to the author, December 2008.

<sup>66</sup> José R. Irizarry, “Toward an Intercultural Approach to Theological Education for Ministry” in *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu, eds (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 28-42.

<sup>67</sup> In short form referred to as *European Institute for Re/conciliation Studies*.

<sup>68</sup> The Greek word for *fish* is an acronym - **I**esous **C**hristos **T**heou **U**iou **S**oter - which translated means Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

<sup>69</sup> While *conciliation* (Latin *conciliare*, to bring together) refers more generally to the process of bringing into relationships of mutual benefit and enrichment various different parties in order to live in a model of unity in diversity, *reconciliation* refers more specifically to the healing of broken relationships, the resolving of conflicts and wrongs of the past in order to re-establish restored relationships, in both cases promoting peace, justice and solidarity. *Conciliation and reconciliation* in short form read as *re/conciliatin*.

limited to) arts and communication, anthropology and ethics, social and political science, and Judeo-Christian Scripture and theology.

It aims at promoting re/conciliation within the European life context based on Christian values and beliefs, with a special reference to the formation of European identity and a special focus on the transformation of modern European societies in a threefold manner:

- 1) Re/conciliation through Personal and Family Life Development
- 2) Re/conciliation through Cultural and Community Development
- 3) Re/conciliation through Unity and Diversity Development

It will endeavour to bring solid, interdisciplinary reflection in European theological education which is rooted in God's gift of restored relationships *as a new creation in Jesus* to bear on the work of reconciling individuals, groups, communities and societies within today's multi-cultural European context.

It will also work towards casting a vision for conciliation and reconciliation as spirituality and life-long journey for the Christian Church in Europe that is biblical, transformative and holistic, helping Christians to live as bridge-builders and agents of God's reconciling love in the fragmented world of 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe, in real places, at home and at work, at school or as a jobseeker, from congregations to communities.

Last but not least, it will seek to equip a new generation of leaders from various backgrounds and ages – preparing to be or already engaged in European churches and communities – with vision, resources, skills and virtues in order to pursue reconciliation, hope and healing in areas of brokenness, including the family, the city, the poor, the disabled, Christianity and Judaism<sup>70</sup>, Christianity and Islam, cultural and ethnic divisions, crises and conflicts, and the environment.

### *SPECIFIC AUDIENCE-RELATED OBJECTIVES*

#### **Bible schools, Theological Colleges, Seminaries and Theology Departments**

- Help develop the school's curriculum and extra-curricular activities with new and meaningful learning opportunities in order to implement intercultural theological education that will help understand past European history, present European developments and future European challenges (with a special reference to European institutions) in order to develop leadership that is enabled to support people in *building bridges*, i.e. dealing with diversity while learning to live together both within the Christian congregation and the community at large (locally, regionally, nationally and globally).

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<sup>70</sup> Jewish-Christian dialogue needs to re-examine carefully the vital relationship of Jewish believers in Jesus and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers in Jesus, and its implications in terms of synergy and mutual complementarity.

- Encourage inside and outside the classroom, on- and off-campus, intercultural experiences to promote unity in diversity, inclusion and participation, with a special focus on interaction between students living in Europe and coming from various cultural backgrounds and European nations – North and South, East and West. Special attention will be given to issues raised by the (so-called) *newer* Europeans from African, American or Asian backgrounds who have made Europe their home during this past century.
- Develop critical thinking and equip with appropriate knowledge, experience and skills in the areas of cultural and religious diversity, sociology, conflict resolution, spiritual disciplines, social and economic justice issues, and related topics.
- Offer students through re/conciliation studies an opportunity to become more proficient in recognizing injustice, addressing conflict, and engaging diversity.

#### **Local churches, congregations, denominations and Christian organisations**

- Interpret *the ministry of Reconciliation* to individuals, congregations and organisations in Europe so as to awaken them to the needs and problems of structural or institutional and interpersonal relationships with persons of other backgrounds; and to work toward the changing of basic attitudes of racism, unconcern and implanted or developed hatreds, prejudices and systemic procedure of discrimination.
- Stimulate congregations within a particular town, city or region to welcome *the stranger* and engage in *Reconciliation ministries* to help live in a world where differences (related to ethnicity, culture, gender, social status and/or religion) increasingly cause tensions between people, groups and nations.
- Encourage congregations to initiate and/or become involved in significant programs of Conciliation and Reconciliation by providing them with interpretative and promotional materials, suggested local Reconciliation projects.
- Enable congregations to become contextually more relevant by responding to clearly defined community needs.
- Establish policies, guidelines and priorities under which cultural integration can be experienced positively rather than being perceived as a threat.

### **Secondary Schools (Sixth form colleges or equivalent: Lycée – Liceo – Gymnasium – et al.)**

- Encourage schools to develop among students an understanding of European citizenship and a positive attitude toward the construction of Europe by developing critical attitudes able to move beyond stereotypes, biased information, and propaganda (in particular as found in the media).
- Encourage schools to promote understanding cultural differences as well as learning from differences.
- Encourage schools to create situations in which students can experience the meaning of democracy, the importance of dialogue, and the value of different abilities, perspectives and legacies.

### **Specific programme activities carrying out the outlined objectives**

- 1) Develop and implement (preferably university validated) undergraduate and/or postgraduate degrees in *European Re/conciliation Studies*.
- 2) Develop and help implement Church educational ministries through workshops and seminars.
- 3) Develop opportunities for intercultural encounters and experiential learning through exchanges, visits, web-based communication and projects.
- 4) Develop a *Church-Twinning* network across Europe based on a concept whereby congregations in geographically and confessional distinct areas are paired, with the goal of fostering human contact, holistic personal growth and cultural links between their members (at all age level).
- 5) Develop an e-learning platform.
- 6) Develop and organise in-service teacher education and training programmes in secondary schools.
- 7) Develop and organise workshops and/or activities for students in secondary schools.

### *SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS*

Europe is an increasing mobile, living society of peoples and there is undoubtedly an urgent need for a better understanding of Europe.<sup>71</sup> In years to come it will become increasingly important for Europeans to address questions related to identity and mission, such as “Why Europe?”<sup>72</sup> or related to orientation and

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<sup>71</sup> British Catholic historian Christopher Dawson made already in 1952 a very lucid plea for the study of the European question in his preface to the first edition of his now classic work on *Understanding Europe*, v.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Ferenczi, *Pourquoi l'Europe?* (Bruxelles: André Versaille, 2008), 251-260.

purpose, such as “Where is Europe heading?”<sup>73</sup> Gordon Showell-Rogers, General Secretary of the European Evangelical Alliance, raises another fundamental question, “Where is the Church in Europe going?”<sup>74</sup> Depending in which direction one looks for answers, the question may lead to very different positions. The persistent myth of a monocultural, homogeneous and ethnocentric view of Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>75</sup> needs to be replaced by a non-complacent view that will do justice to Europe’s own inter- and multicultural agenda. Such reality will not overlook the challenges of the global South, but it will not see its legitimacy merely anchored in a dialogue – however important it may be – with geographically distant cultures and theologies. The future task of European theology should not be limited to redefining its relationship with the rest of the world (i.e. African, Asian and/or Latin American theology).<sup>76</sup> The European Church needs to learn how to refocus on Europe in both a local and a global perspective.

In 2009 the *Conference of European Churches* (CEC) is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding, while the newly integrated *Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe* (CCME) commemorates its 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>77</sup> Its member churches consist of representatives of the Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches in Europe. The declared aims of this year’s Assembly are “to offer hope and vision for ecumenism in Europe, to contribute to a just, sustainable and participatory Europe, to give account of the hope which is in us in the Europe of today”.<sup>78</sup> Even though a vast majority of European States are represented in the CEC<sup>79</sup>, its aspiration to develop a common voice for European churches in the European society may well suffer from a yet limited – therefore partial – representation of European church traditions (the Roman Catholic

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. Kjell M. Torbiörn, *Destination Europe: The political and economic growth of a continent* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 236-290.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon Showell-Rogers, “Where is the Church in Europe going?”, *Lausanne Reports*, April 2008, online publication: <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/lausannereports/932/04-2008>.

<sup>75</sup> The present author would argue that Eurocentrism is neither synonymous with Western cultural predominance nor a variant of ethnocentrism.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Rolf Hille, “European Theology” in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, eds. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 285-294.

<sup>77</sup> After having signed a Memorandum of Agreement in 2007, the integration of the CCME within CEC will be completed at this year’s 13<sup>th</sup> CEC Assembly in Lyon (15-21 July 2009).

<sup>78</sup> As expressed (April 2009) on the website of the Conference of European Churches: <http://assembly.ceceurope.org/index.php?id=121>

<sup>79</sup> The CEC member churches represent presently the following 38 States: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

Church, various church fellowships within Evangelicalism, as well as most Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and movements remain absent from that platform). One needs to hope for a more successful, wider grass-root level ecumenical space and European agenda for the churches in Europe.

A reconciled Europe will be found in a multiplication of European men and women from all horizons – children, youth and adults – learning how to live with one another (not just side by side). A reconciled Europe will not be a mere development of institutions and organisations whose primary purposes and chief objectives to start with should be to help people live together in a meaningful way while entering a life-transforming journey – ultimately – for the glory of God Almighty. A reconciled Europe is a new Europe<sup>80</sup> in which transformed men and women who follow Jesus demonstrate in real life – as meaningful neighbours – that in him they have become the *righteousness of God* (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21, NRSV). A reconciled Europe is a society in which the *promise of difference* is displayed more than the *problem of difference*.<sup>81</sup>

**As the ideas and opinions expressed here are work in progress and in need of dialogue, both with convergent and divergent views, feedback from readers of this article is welcomed and can be emailed to: [contact@ichthus21.eu](mailto:contact@ichthus21.eu)**

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<sup>80</sup> For a good introduction to various contemporary missiological approaches to Europe, see Friedemann Walldorf, *Die Neu-Evangelisierung Europas: Missionstheologien im europäischen Kontext*. Giessen: Brunnen, 2002.

<sup>81</sup> I am indebted to Kenneth Sawyer for this formulation in his chapter on “Libraries and Multicultural Theological Education: Beyond Nostalgia” in *Shaping Beloved Community: Multicultural Theological Education*, eds. David V. Esterline and Ogbu U. Kalu (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 73.