



CHURCH PLANTING & CHURCH RENEWAL

In Western Europe a gap has grown between Christianity and the general culture. This is what we usually call 'secularization'.^[1] It results in the marginalization of the church, repression of the Christian narrative, an increasing alienation of our culture from its Christian past, and a great deal of timidity within the church. We are facing a crisis of mission in Europe.

This situation is not irreversible. Secularization is not a natural law. Neither is it an unavoidable historical destiny. Secularization is related to "particular historical and social conditions, which can be countered or utilized by human ingenuity and imagination".^[2] History shows that traditions, especially religious traditions, are resilient, and may recover in new forms when conditions change.

Of course, this will not happen automatically. There are real choices to be made. The church is not a passive victim of anonymous processes in the world. It can make choices about its institutional life, its

commitments, and its core values, and all this can greatly affect its appeal.^[3] This is why the subject of renewal, or innovation, is so important. In this article I will, first, set out what innovation is. Then I will explain the relevance of church planting for ecclesial renewal. Part of this will consist of a theological defence of church planting. I will conclude with some points which are, in my opinion, strategically important if we want to promote innovation by church planting.

Adaptation and Renewal

There is an important difference between adaptation and innovation.^[4] Adaptation leads to questions like: how can we change the morning worship service to make it more welcoming to teenagers? Innovation asks: why do we have morning worship services in the first place? Adaptation asks: how can pastors preach more effectively? Innovation leads to questions like: is a public monologue really the best way to minister the Word in our culture?

Adaptations deal with what is predictable and under our control. And nothing is wrong with that, as long as the situation is indeed as we assume. But when our context begins to change rapidly, as is the case now, adaptation will not help us. We must no longer find better answers to old questions; we must find better questions. This is what innovation is about. The Christian tradition must, once again, be reformed.

Now, there is a paradox here, as has often been remarked. It is impossible to *plan* real innovation. As soon as you can make a project out of it, with clear outcomes, the whole thing will probably not be very innovative. This is one of the reasons why hierarchical and bureaucratic organizations, such as many churches in the West, find it so difficult to be really creative. They know how to adapt (to some extent, that is), but they are unable to look behind the horizon – the very place where innovation is found. We are looking for new answers, rather than answers that we can see from where we stand. If you want to be in control, you will have no innovation. It is as simple as that.

So, how does innovation take place? Only by not concentrating on results, but in the arrangement of stimulating processes. Radical renewal will only happen when people can escape the power of existing structures, the tendency to conform that is present in every organization.^[5] Renewal comes from the margin, and not from the centre. So, in a sense we must create our own critical margin. This is what local governments do, for example, in our big cities. They create environments for creative people, because they know how important such places are for cultural innovation. In innovation theory three of such environments are usually distinguished: free havens, laboratories, and incubators.^[6]

Places of Innovation

A *free haven* is an unregulated, countercultural place of mild anarchy. This may happen where a group of artists, for example, takes hold of an abandoned building in a city (“new ideas need old buildings” – Jane Jacobs). Usually, in places like these there is a large distance from the centre of power. All

emphasis lies on the free production of art, not hindered by laws or external control. The closest parallel within the Christian tradition may be the sect. Take for example the early Anabaptists in Switzerland and Germany. Within a Christianized Europe they rejected infant baptism; they declared all Europeans 'pagans'; they wished to return to the 'pure' church of the New Testament; and they embraced Jesus' Great Commission, even though all leading theologians thought that this Commission had been fulfilled.^[7] As a consequence they were severely persecuted, to the point of extinction. Today we may think of extreme charismatic groups. Sects are always rejected by those in the centre, and they reject them back. Mutual rejection belongs to the very definition of sects! But despite all the suspicion, and despite all the objections we can have, it must be said that sects are often sources of radical innovation. Today, the Anabaptist tradition is one of the great sources of missionary reflection and practice. It seems that in this particular tradition the art of living in the margins has been kept as a treasure for the entire church.^[8] So, while it is difficult for the church to embrace sects (after all, they do not *want* to be embraced), this may be a good historical reminder to be not too judgmental.

Laboratories are environments where creative people from different backgrounds work together to solve shared problems. Often these initiatives are partly subsidized by the government, and sometimes they work within a framework that has been set by an organization or by the government. The basic idea is that innovation is born out of unexpected encounters, not just between professionals from the arts of the world of business, but also between these professionals and people from the neighborhood. Again, innovation cannot be planned, but it can be stimulated by cross-fertilization between very different people who share some values, and who recognize each other as partners in a common quest. An interesting historical example is the birth of mission organizations at the end of the 18th century. The great missionary movement of those days did not start in the church, and it was not led by theologians or church leaders. It started when lay people from different churches joined together, because they felt challenged by the fate of millions who had never heard of Jesus. Together they worked out inspiring, pragmatic solutions to this problem.^[9]

Today I see the same thing happen in many new Christian communities in Europe. They are environments for people with a burning missionary heart, and often places of great creativity. A friend of mine in Amsterdam has started a theatre workshop in which Christians and non-Christians work together to produce a performance around a shared theme – like 'peace' or 'suffering'. As he explains in an interview with one of my students:^[10]

The people I work with will only get convinced when they get in there themselves. It's a different way of doing church. (...) They think church is a place where you know things and try to convince people [who don't know things]. I try to create a workplace where people can explore what Christianity means. I didn't think the church would be a safe environment to do it. They always feel that they are outsiders.

So, the cross-fertilization here is one between believers and people outside the church. In order to create a safe place of freedom and a sense of 'ownership', he has decided to start a new context altogether, removed from what many people would easily recognize as a church. In this context there is no self-evident one-way communication, and some of you may wonder what is

‘missionary’ about a project like this. To be clear, he wants it to be missionary: he wants the project to impact people, to change them with the gospel. His role is that of the ‘gospel-bringer’; in every shared project he gives input from the gospel. But he wants to let this happen in a completely equal, non-threatening, authentic setting.

It has to be the story itself and not my ideas about what the story means (...). We are both looking from different perspectives, but neither of us is inside the story. I am following Jesus and I am quite sure I don't understand everything about him. So I try and bring people into contact to help me understand what Jesus is.

This is extremely challenging. He has brought himself into a situation where none of the old answers and old definitions seem to work – with the inclusion of our definitions of ‘church’. He is not so sure anymore what a church is:

It's a community around Jesus. People I work with are not believers, but they are looking into it. I am trying to find a place for communion and baptism. I don't want an inner circle for Christians and an outer circle for non-believers. If people don't think it's a church, then don't let it be a church. On the other hand, I am a church planter.

So far this example of a ‘laboratory’ church (or is it?). It may be a little daring for most of us, but it gives a good impression of what it may mean to go the path of missionary innovation – without knowing what will happen next. It also shows why this is difficult to do in the more balanced, stable setting of an ‘ordinary’ church.

Incubators, finally, are usually more dependent on support by ‘mother firms’ and external finance. They are the closest thing to what ‘programmed innovation’ would look like if it existed. Incubators are organized and supported by the centre in order to create innovation. This will happen, for example, when creative people are brought together in a separate unit within the organization, or when they are encouraged to start a new organization. A good example in the context of a national church is the Fresh Expressions Initiative in the Church of England.^[11] According to the ‘official’ definition, a “fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church”.^[12] Here, the basic idea is – in the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury – “a principled and careful loosening of structures”. This means, among other things, an expansion of the variety of church forms to complement the ancient territorial parish system. It means, perhaps, a new approach to membership: what does it mean to ‘belong’ to the church? It certainly means different leadership structures: working in teams for example. Only a “mixed economy of church” will be able to reach out to the huge variety of groups and subcultures in our modern society.

It seems therefore that there are three conditions for innovation. First, one needs *distance from*

the centre. Do not try to create innovation as a project, with annual reports and fixed targets. It is better to select people whom you trust, and give them free rein, rather than to control them too much. Trust creates spaces of freedom. A second condition of innovation is allowing *unexpected encounters* to happen. Only a mixture of gifts, characters and theologies will help to start up innovation. It is important to think in teams (like Jesus did, and the apostle Paul). And a third condition is: *support* these people in terms of training, money, research, and good networks. In a late modern missionary context we must maintain the catholicity of the church by having good mutual relations of support and accountability.

Church Planting

Can this be done in an established church setting? Yes and no. I believe that we should not accept the dichotomy between renewal of established churches on the one hand and church planting on the other. Both are necessary. However, church planting^[13] can teach us two very important lessons about mission. First, church planting helps the church to be there where people are. And second, church planting points to the connection between the church and mission. Let me discuss these lessons separately.

Be Where the People Are

The American church growth apostle Peter Wagner has become quite famous because of his claim that, “[t]he single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches”.^[14] In my opinion this statement is highly exaggerated, and it lacks empirical support. One of the problems with the data concerned is that the majority of growth figures come from research in the United States, particularly among Southern Baptists. Baptist theology tends to count every new baptism as evidence of conversion from non-Christianity to Christianity, which is evidently untrue. As a consequence, it is virtually impossible to establish how many of these newcomers were Christians already.

However, despite all the justified criticism that can be levelled against it, there is some logic that lends plausibility to Wagner’s claim.^[15]

For a starter, new churches *want* to grow. If they do not draw new people, they will not survive. So, a new church will usually go to great lengths to connect with new people. It will do research in the neighbourhood, it will evangelize, it will make itself accessible, and so on. Also, new churches usually are *more flexible and informal*, so they have fewer barriers for newcomers. Moreover, new churches have *fewer differences in status* between long-term members and newcomers. In other words, newcomers have more possibilities to influence the church, and therefore they will feel more empowered. Yet another reason is that planting new churches will *extend the range of options* for religiously interested people. In our complex society there is a wide range of spiritual interests, and we need many different churches to meet those interests.

As far as I can tell, there are indeed some indications that young churches generally receive more

converts – new members with a non-Christian or a nominal Christian background. I must underline, though, that there is little good research in this area, and a lot of missionary rhetoric. But if my own Dutch Christian Reformed denomination (ca. 180 local congregations) may serve as an illustration: about half of the converts we receive annually are newcomers in only a handful of congregations. All these local churches were planted in the last decade.

Empirical data suggest, however, that *location* may be even more important than age. At both sides of the Atlantic growing churches are mostly inner city churches, immigrant churches and suburban churches. In suburbia this growth can be explained out of the presence of new housing projects. As for the cities, it is interesting to see that the most declining and the most flourishing churches can be found there. But some churches, younger as well as older ones, seem to profit from the renewed attractiveness of the cities for young professionals.^[16] What this says, is that it is important for churches to be responsive to demographic shifts. Church planting helps the church to be flexible, viz. to renew its presence where it is needed. This is, I think, another reason for any national church or denomination to take church planting seriously.

Church and Mission

During the last decades many churches have found out that the classic approach of evangelism, rooted in the revivalist heritage, did not work anymore. It simply assumed too much knowledge and belief. Evangelism 2.0 entailed a more extended period of communication, usually through a course. The *Alpha Course* was introduced in the 1990s, and many others followed, such as *Christianity Explored* and *Emmaus*. But already early in this millennium it was recognized that something was going wrong. Although many people went through these courses, only very few found their way to the church. Usually, they preferred to remain in the group where they had started.^[17] The most natural consequence of evangelism, it seemed, was the formation of a *new* community. Apparently, as soon as you start with evangelism, you will encounter the question of the church. In my opinion, this leads us to a set of theological (instead of merely pragmatic) arguments for church planting.

In the modern history of missions, the role of the church has often been neglected. Traditionally, evangelicals tended to focus on individual conversions, while disregarding the church. Ecumenicals, on the other hand, claimed that God is working his mission in and through the dynamics of the world, transforming it in the direction of his kingdom. As far as the church plays a part in this, its role is to witness to this work, and support it wherever it can. Church planting sends a wrong message; it suggests that the church rather than the world is central in God's mission. By drawing people within its community the church emphasizes the gaps within humanity, and it distracts people from the real task of transforming the world in a place of justice and peace.

Against this Tim Chester points to the eschatological character of the church in the New Testament. Across barriers of race, sex and class, Christians are united in Christ (Galatians 3:28). The unity of the church is a foretaste of God's purposes for all creation (Ephesians 1:9-10, etc.). The church is the place where God reigns in peace and justice. Therefore, initiating people into the church is not drawing them

away from service in the kingdom of God. On the contrary, the church is the community of the kingdom, and everyone who is initiated into the church must be initiated in the service of the kingdom.^[18] Stuart Murray says that programmes that anticipate the coming of the kingdom of God through social transformation should “consider how such transformation can occur, or be sustained, without communities of the kingdom to model alternative ways of living”.^[19]

Of course, we should not turn this argument around by saying that the essential place of the church in God’s mission proves that mission must always lead to church planting. It merely says that church planting, whatever we think of it, reminds us of the importance of the church in God’s purposes.^[20]

Second, in post-War missiology the missionary nature of the church has been rediscovered. There is a widespread consensus that the church is not there for itself but for God and his mission in the world. Church planting, if it is to be more than a simple reproduction of existing models (as is often the case), can be an opportunity for churches to think through their identity as a people called for mission.^[21] When a denomination commits itself to church planting it is continually forced to consider profound questions of ecclesiology, mission, and contextualization. This is especially important on ‘old’ ground, since, according to Tim Chester the church tends to accommodate to a culture when it has settled there long enough.

Through mission the church is able to break free from external conformity to culture and internal conformity to tradition and rediscover the vitality of the gospel. Church planting is vital for the health of the wider church. Good church planting forces us to re-ask questions about the gospel and church.^[22]

Thus, church planting puts on the agenda the important issue of the continuing reformation (*semper reformanda*) of the church.

A third argument pertains to size. When churches attract new members they tend to accept without further consideration that they will grow bigger. However, by an increase of size the internal dynamics of church life will change. In most social contexts this process will begin already when communities have more than 50 members. Relationships will be stretched, because many members will not know each other. This will make it more difficult to maintain naturally New Testament directions for church life, such as mutual love, comfort, correction, forgiveness, and so forth. Leadership will become more distant, formal and bureaucratic. It will be more difficult to apply church discipline in a loving, personal atmosphere. Large churches tend to be run by a relatively small percentage of its members, thus turning the majority into more or less passive consumers. Of course, there are advantages to size, such as the capability to offer more programs, while small churches are more susceptible to sectarianism and suffocating relationships. But generally small churches are able to reflect the communal life of the New Testament church much more naturally. It is remarkable that theological questions are seldom asked when churches *grow*, but that they abound when churches *reproduce*. Would it not be a wiser course to split the church when it grows, and create two smaller human-scale communities instead of one large congregation? Without turning this into a new law, I believe

that there is good theological ‘circumstantial evidence’ to advocate church planting as a strategy for growing churches.^[23]

Finally, a good theological defence of church planting can be found in reconsidering the relationship between evangelism and church formation. One could ask whether evangelism does not normally presuppose the existence of a Christian community. Let us remember that neither Jesus nor the apostles used to go to people alone.^[24] Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs (Luke 10). Paul used to travel together with companions. The idea of the solo evangelist, so deeply rooted in our modern Western history, is not an image that we find very often in the New Testament. It is interesting that the first evangelization of Europe also happened by two different ‘models’. Those who were sent by the Church of Rome would present the Christian message, invite pagans to believe in Christ, and would then welcome them into the Christian community. A different model was practiced however by the monks from Ireland. They would first establish a community that accepted everyone who was interested. Within this fellowship people could see the gospel ‘work’ in conversations, ministry, prayer and worship.^[25] In this way they would hear a message that was much more complete (or ‘incarnate’) than just a verbal address. The life of the community, together with (spontaneous) verbal invitations, would move them into a decision for or against Christ. This practice reminds us of the famous dictum by Lesslie Newbigin, that the congregation is the ‘hermeneutic of the gospel’.^[26] As Jim Wallis says, “[t]he power of evangelism today is tested by the question, What do we have to explain to the world about the way we live?”^[27]

Again, all this does not mean that church *planting* is the only course to take. Existing churches are addressed as well by this call for reformation. But whenever we try to find ways into new groups or locations in our pluralistic societies, it may not be the best course to send a ‘talking head’. For theological and contextual reasons the formation of a community of Christians committed to live out what they preach should be the first step to undertake.^[28]

What Next?

Finally, what must be done if we want to give church planting the place it deserves? I want to conclude with a brief list of recommendations, based on my own experience in the Netherlands.^[29]

Find leaders. As I have said, it is better to select people whom you trust, than to rely on institutional control mechanisms. How do you find these people? In my experience, some of them may be found in seminaries. But usually, apostolic pioneer types do not have the patience to be in an academic environment for years and years, nor do they have the reflective attitude that this environment requires. So, it is important to have different recruitment mechanisms. In our situation, a bi-annual assessment for missionary pioneer ministry has helped us a lot. This helps us to find the people with the proper spirituality, experience, and attitude to be sent out in church planting.

Relax structures. My own denomination, which normally requires its pastors to follow a six year academic training, has opened the possibility for missionary pioneers to be recognized as a pastor, even if they do not have the right diplomas. Basically, if you have proven that you can start a church,

evangelize people, disciple them, and be a pastor to them, you have proven enough. It does not mean that you are done learning, but it certainly means that you have the right qualifications to start.

Training and mentoring. It is important to have different types of training. In my experience, academic education is important, especially for those apostolic pioneers who have come into a more reflective stage of their ministry. However, we also need shorter training, more practically oriented, to help people get started. Connecting beginning pioneers with more experienced people in a mentorship has also appeared to be very helpful.

Build networks. In small countries, such as the Netherlands, it is not so difficult for pioneers all over the country to know each other and to meet each other on a regular basis. That is what we do, and we use those encounters for sharing vision and peer review. They are wonderful opportunities for training and reflection. To these networks we add denominational representatives, academic professors, and mission board members. It is important to keep people in conversation, as much as possible. Only if people learn to trust each other, will they resist the temptations of sectarianism or conservatism.

Research. Finally, research is needed. In a challenging missionary context like Western Europe, we need people who look deeper into missionary initiatives, and ask what can be learnt from them. Usually, the people who produce innovations are the last to talk about them. Often, they are simply not aware of the fact that they have produced an innovation! Much true renewal remains within innovative projects, as ‘tacit knowledge’. Researchers must find this knowledge and make it accessible for the wider church.

For centuries Christianity has been a change agent, a radical and subversive teaching from the margins. Then it became the central ideology of our Western nations, and it lost much of its innovative power. Christianity became implicated in all the politics and power plays of human social life. Now, after a thousand years of Christendom, Christianity may reveal “within itself sources of criticism which can infiltrate the social order just as two hundred years ago the philosophers of the Enlightenment infiltrated the social order of France”.^[30] I pray that we will live to see it.

-
1. See Stefan Paas, “Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences”, *Mission Studies* 28 (2011), 3-25. ¹
 2. David Martin, “Believing without Belonging: A Commentary on Religion in England”, in: *Idem, Christian Language and Its Mutations: Essays in Sociological Understanding*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 156. ¹
 3. Thus, Linda Woodhead, “From Christendom to Christianity: Beyond Secularisation Theory”, in: Martin Reppenhagen, Michael Herbst (eds.), *Kirche in der Postmoderne*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008) 109. ¹
 4. Of course, other terminology may be used, such as “technical problems” vs. “adaptive problems” (Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, (Cambridge: HUP, 1994) 71), or “incremental change” vs. “transformational change” (Paul M. Dietterich, “Why Incremental Changes Won’t Work”, *Transformation* 2.2 [1995], 1-7). The crucial question remains, however, whether we deal with short-term problems that can be solved by working harder and by applying available remedies, or whether we encounter long-term challenges for which solutions are still unknown. See further Robert J.A. Doornenbal, *Crossroads: An Exploration of the Emerging-Missional Conversation with a Special Focus on ‘Missional Leadership’, and Its Challenges for Theological Education*, PhD Dissertation,
-

- (Amsterdam: VU University Amsterdam, 2012) chapter 8. ¹
5. More on this in Stefan Paas, "Church Renewal by Church Planting: The Significance of Church Planting for the Reformation of Christianity in Europe", *Theology Today* 68.3 (2011), 467-477. See <http://tj.sagepub.com/content/68/4/467.full.pdf+html>. ¹
6. Martijn Arnoldus, "A Discovery of Creative Talent in the Margins of Urban Development", *Built Environment* 30.3 (2004), 204-212. References via Idem, 'Pioniersplekken: De broedplaatsen van de kerk', unpublished paper 17 June 2011. ¹
7. See e.g., Wolfgang Schäufele, *Das missionarische Bewußtsein und Wirken der Täufer: Dargestellt nach oberdeutschen Quellen*, (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1966); Wilbert R. Shenk (ed.), *Anabaptism and Mission*, (Eugene: Wipf&Stock, 2001). ¹
8. For example, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Alan Kreider, and (on a more popular level) Stuart Murray. See also www.anabaptistnetwork.com. ¹
9. Cf. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) 262ff; Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions: From Hudson Taylor to Present Day Africa*, (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1994). ¹
10. Eric Pickerill, unpublished paper. ¹
11. See www.freshexpressions.org.uk, and Louise Nelstrop and Martyn Percy, eds., *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church*, (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 2008). ¹
12. Joint definition by Anglicans and Methodists, May 2006. ¹
13. The term 'church planting' can cause misunderstanding, since it is packed with assumptions about Sunday morning worship services, annual budgets, buildings, etc. Here, I use the term simply as shorthand for 'Christian community formation'. ¹
14. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Planting for a Greater Harvest*, (Ventura: Regal, 1990) 11. ¹
15. See for example, Stephen Timmis ed., *Multiplying Churches: Reaching Today's Communities Through Church Planting*, (Tain: Christian Focus, 2000) 15-18; Roger McNamara, Ken Davis, *The Yes, But How Handbook of Church Planting: A Practical Guide to Church Planting*, (Xulon, 2005) 52-56. ¹
16. C. Kirk Hadaway, *Facts on Growth: A new look at the dynamics of growth and decline in American congregations based on the 'Faith Communities 2005' national survey of congregations (2005)*, 2: "Using census data for 2000 and population estimates for 2005 confirms the strong relationship between population growth in the community and church growth. In fact, the strongest demographic correlate with growth is increase or decrease in the number of households". See <http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/all/themes/factzen4/files/CongGrowth.pdf>. As for the Netherlands, see Niels de Jong, *Young Urban Protestants: Een onderzoek naar 20-35 jarigen in een aantal stadskerken binnen de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*, Inwendige (Amersfoort: Zendingsbond, 2011). UK: see e.g. Peter Osborne, "The Return to Religion", *The Telegraph*, 1 Jan. 2012. ¹
17. I have reflected on this more extendedly in *De werkers van het laatste uur: De inwijding van nieuwkomers in het christelijk geloof en de christelijke gemeente*, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2003). ¹
18. Tim Chester, "Church Planting: A Theological Perspective", in: Timmis, *Multiplying Churches*, 27-35. ¹
19. Stuart Murray, *Church Planting: Laying Foundations*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) 61. ¹
20. One could disagree with this on the ground that the empirical church hardly qualifies as a place of peace and justice, and that outside the church far better examples of a kingdom life can be found. This may be true, although it is hard to prove (after all, who has compared all church communities with all other communities?), but that should be a cause of repentance rather than indifference towards the church. ¹
21. Murray, *Church Planting*, 48-53. ¹
22. Chester, 'Church Planting', 26.& ¹
23. Or course, there are several models to put this into practice. One model that tries to combine the advantages of a large church with the advantages of small churches, is the so-called 'mission-shaped community'. See Mark Stibbe, Andrew Williams, *Breakout: One Church's Amazing Story of Growth Through Mission-Shaped Communities*, (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008). Cf. Tim Chester, Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community*, (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007). ¹
24. Of course, there are some exceptions, as in John 4:1-26 and Acts 8:26-40. ¹
25. John Finney, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1996). ¹
26. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 227. ¹
27. Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion: Why Faith is Always Personal but Never Private*, Rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 2005), 21. Similarly, Graham Tomlin, *The Provocative Church*, (London: SPCK, 2002). ¹

28. I take it as completely self-evident that the formation of such a community will always happen in a catholic way, i.e. in close mutual cooperation with other churches (as far as possible). A purely sectarian attempt of church planting is not a hermeneutic of the gospel at all. ⁺
29. See for example my chapter on leadership in Gerrit Noort et al., *Als een kerk opnieuw begint: Handboek voor missionaire gemeenschapsvorming*, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2008). ⁺
30. David Martin, "Enlightenment: Dialogue and Conflict", in: Idem, *Christian Language*, 169. ⁺



Stefan Paas

Stefan Paas (1969) is married with Dorret, and they have three children. Stefan has worked as a missionary consultant and as a church planter for many years. Currently, he is the J.H. Bavinck Professor for Church Planting and Church Renewal in a Secular Context, at the VU University Amsterdam. He is also a lecturer in missiology, at the Theological University of the Free Reformed Churches, in Kampen, the Netherlands.