

Evangelism, its World Impact, and Challenges from Pentecost through the Periods of Church
History

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Introduction

If we are going to have an impact on the world today, it is because, as Christians, we are not attempting to force an ideology or ideas on others but sharing our testimony of what God has done in our lives and sharing his grace and mercy, with sincere love, and humble hearts before a guilty world in sin.

In his research on evangelism in the 20th century, George Barna asked: Is it a fading reflection? Each new generation of Christians must communicate the gospel to its peers, and those sharing Christ must understand those with whom they work and clearly relate to them. One of the greatest dangers facing the Church in evangelism is the lack of concern for the lives of others without Christ.¹

What is Evangelism?

Evangelism means announcing the good news of Christ's **death, burial, resurrection,** and **ascension. Discipleship** is the task of training believers to become mature followers of Christ, growing in their knowledge of, love for, and obedience to the Lord. Evangelism and discipleship are foundational and essential elements of the Christian mission—making God's glory known among all peoples (Ps 96:3). In the Great Commission, Jesus said to his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:18–20 ESV). Because

¹ Elmer R. Towns, *Evangelize thru Christian Education: Mandate for Church Growth Today* (Wheaton, IL: Evangelical Teacher Training Association, 1981), 5.

making disciples is the heart of the command, the relationship between Evangelism and discipleship is organic.²

Twenty centuries have passed since Jesus said, “Go ye” and countless thousands of builders have been incorporated into His Mission. As God’s resource full people moved the “Good News” from people to people, from culture to culture, from country to country, across oceans, mountains, and deserts, Christians have been willing to die to deliver the one thing needful to people the world over.³

As the early Church passionately asserted, suppose there is one God, Creator, Redeemer, and Judge, in that case, those who have been brought back from rebellion against Him into fellowship with Him cannot but pass on the knowledge of that rescue to others, and the new life cries out to be shared. If Evangelism were to be mentioned as the metaphor for the Church in 1 Corinthians 12: 12-31, it would be the heart of the body. The Church cannot function effectively or survive without evangelizing.⁴

Its Impact after Pentecost

Immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter stood God. As they moved out of the room where they were, they took the gospel with them. In his writings on Early Christian Mission, Eckhard J. Schnabel stated, "The effective origins of the early Christian missionary activity lie in the Easter events, in the encounter of the disciples with the risen Christ, and the events of Pentecost."⁵ As we read from the book of Acts, we learn the

² Ed Smither, “The Church’s Work of Evangelism and Discipleship,” in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

³ Paul J. Foust and Richard G. Korthals, *Reach Out: Evangelism for the joy of it* (St. Louis, IL: Concordia Publishing House, 1984), 10-11.

⁴ Thom Rainer, *Effective Evangelistic Churches: Successful Churches Reveal What Works and What Doesn’t* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 11.

⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol.1 (Downers Gove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 389.

success of the early evangelistic work in Jerusalem, as men and women came to faith in the message of the Gospel and even some priests became believers, people from the neighboring villages and towns brought their loved ones to be healed.

Its Main Proponents

The leading proponents of the evangelizing team after Pentecost were Peter, James, and John. Their message angered the High Priest, Annas, with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and their families, along with the leadership of the Sadducees. They were arrested, thrown in jail, and forbidden to preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4). As the Church grew, they appointed six men to take care of the affairs of the Church. Stephen, Phillip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. We learn when the leaders prayed for these men to serve in their capacity, the Word of the Lord grew (6:6-7). Stephen became a great evangelist. His testimony and preaching cost him his life as one of the early martyrs. God chose the man who was instrumental in the death of Stephen. And he became the greatest evangelist in that period of the Church—Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, the missionary who went throughout the Biblical world in the East and West and established churches. He appointed trained leaders to evangelize the world with the message of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul and his companions did not see themselves as followers of a new religion. All their lives, they were Jews. Their faith was not a denial of Judaism but was instead the conviction that the messianic age had finally arrived. Paul admitted he was being persecuted for the hope of Israel Acts 28:20.⁶ Their passion came from the revelation of the risen Savior. Their evangelizing message was Jesus was the Messiah as promised by the prophets. He died and rose again, and we are eyewitnesses with a testimony. Some developed leaders were

⁶ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol.1 (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 27.

John Mark, Timothy, Silas, Barnabas, Luke, and Onesimus, the saints at the Church in Rome, Thessalonica, and Corinth. He evangelizes before kings and peasants. This period of Church history was known as the Church of the Apostles.

Its Challenges

In Acts 6:7, the Word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased significantly in Jerusalem, and many priests became obedient to the faith. These conversions and especially with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, who was the chief persecutor at that time, no doubt was a cause for alarm among the religious leaders, and the political leaders. "The first persecution, instigated by the authorities in Jerusalem against the followers of Jesus in AD 31-32, led to missionary expansion that brought the gospel to the coastal regions, to Samaria, and Antioch, the capital of the province of Syria."⁷

The mission work of the Apostle Paul was very influential at this period. He was a master builder. He believed Christian living was an example of what followers of Jesus should be and do. He preached the Gospel, gain new converts, and gather believers to start churches, instruct new believers in the faith, and appoint leaders.⁸

From Acts 8-15, we witness a significant shift of the Church to the gentile world. The Hellenist group, who were Jewish believers, did the evangelistic work. Peter visited Christian communities in Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa, the work of Phillip in the conversion of Simon Magus, and his work in Samaria. Stephen had traveled to Phoenicia and Cyprus, the conversion

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve*, vol.2 (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 1533.

⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove: IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 37.

of the Ethiopian eunuch, then the settling of the controversy that gave blessings to the Gentile Church that they should receive salvation by grace through faith by repentance for sin.

The challenges of those who opposed the Gospel caused it to spread. Robert D. Linder, in the article, *Introduction: The Christian Centuries*, in *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity*, acknowledges the following: "One other vital element in the growth of early Christianity was the persecution and Martyrdom. Early persecution was sporadic and local." The first intensive effort by the state to eliminate Christians came after the burning of Rome during the reign of the Empire Nero in AD 64. Nero made the Christians the scapegoats for the disaster, and they were savagely tortured and burned, at least in and around Rome. Empire-wide persecution came sporadically in the third and early fourth centuries. Untold numbers of Christians died heroically for their faith. So impressive were the many who died gladly for Christ that fresh converts more than replaced them." The Christian writer Tertullian observed: "The blood of the martyrs is seed."⁹

The religion of the Romans was a challenge. They initially practiced an agricultural religion, worshipping a mysterious impersonal force that pervaded nature. Some of their leading gods were Jupiter, the best and greatest; Juno, responsible for women and marriage; Neptune, the God of the sea and rivers; Mercury, the God of merchants and thieves. The days of the weeks and most of the months of the year are named for a Roman god.¹⁰ The gospel message presented one God and His Son, Jesus Christ, the world's Savior. The last period of the Church at this time was called the age of shadows, by Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, between 68-100 AD. This is because of the gloom of persecution over the Church and the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 because the Jews had broken out in open rebellion toward Rome. In the fall, few Christians were killed, and there

⁹ Tim Dowley et al., eds., *Eerdmans' Handbook to the History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing co.,1977), 72.

¹⁰ Dowley, *Eerdmans' Handbook*, 46-47.

was a strain between Judaism and Christianity, a small section of Jewish believers came to be known as Ebionites. After 90 AD, the cruel emperor Domitian began a second imperial persecution of the Christians. The persecution continued by Trajan to Antonius Pius, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius. Thousands were slain, and they faced death with their testimony. John was exiled to the Patmos, and during this time, numerous books of the New Testament were written. Despite the persecution, the Church grew and expanded to the Gentile world, and enslaved people were accepted as equals in the Church.¹¹ Even though the Roman Empire tried to eliminate the faith of the early Church, we are reading today how God preserves the Church by His promise and power the gates of hell shall not prevail against her—this is the Church triumphant.

Evangelism during the period of the persecuted Church 100-313 AD

The persecution of the Church became a hidden blessing. It is like Joseph explaining to his brothers that "you meant it for evil in selling me, but God converted it to our good." In his writing about the history of the Church, Eusebius said, with the powerful cooperation of heaven, the sunshine of the saving word suddenly lighted the whole world. At once, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures, the voice of its inspired evangelists and apostles went forth into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world. In every town and village, like a well-filled threshing-floor, churches sprang up, bursting with eager members. Men who, through the error they had inherited from generations of ancestors, were in the grip of the old spiritual sickness of idol-worship, by the power of Christ, and through the teaching of his followers and the miracles they wrought were freed, as it were, from cruel masters and found release from galling fetters. They turned their backs on devilish polytheism in all forms and acknowledged that there was one God

¹¹ Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1970), 34-35.

only, the fashioner of all things. Him they honored with the ordinances of true religion through the divine, reasonable worship of which our Savior sowed the seed in the life of men. The divine grace was now being poured on the other nations.¹²

Its Main Proponents

Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, born in Asia Minor and studied under Polycarp, challenged the Gnostics' belief about the creation of the world and the doctrine of God. He fully developed the idea that Jesus Christ was God and Man. It was said he combined the zeal of an evangelist with the skill of a finished writer. Tertullian, who worked in Carthage, Alexandria, was known as a critical intellectual. Origen, Cyprian, and Pantaeus, who taught Christians in Alexandria and may have traveled to India, was known to be an able thinker. He said, "A second birth created me a new man by means of the Spirit breathed from heaven." He dedicated himself to celibacy, poverty, and the Bible. Ignatius was Bishop of the Church at Antioch. He strongly opposed Docetism, which taught that Jesus was only a man. He was ordered to Rome to be executed. Polycarp was a Bishop of Smyrna. It is believed that he was the pastor of the said Church who received the letter addressed to the angels of the churches in Revelation. His martyrdom was celebrated in Smyrna yearly. He was made famous for some of the statements attributed to him at the time, when he was asked to recant his Savior, he replied. "Therefore, you threaten burns for a time, and is soon extinguished: there is a fire you know nothing about – the fire of the judgment to come and of eternal punishment, the fire reserved for you the ungodly. But why do you hesitate? Do what you want."¹³

Many other Christians lost their lives in this period of Church history. However, with their dedication and passion for the truth of the Gospel, some of these men helped spread

¹² Eusebius, *The History of the Christian Church*, trans. G.A. Williamson (New York, NY: Dorset Press, 1984), 76.

¹³ Eusebius, *The History*, 76-84.

evangelism to the world by teaching and training others. And as they fled from one area to the next, they took the gospel message with them. We saw this method in Acts as persecution came, and they left Jerusalem. They seek refuge in places like Antioch which at one time became the unofficial headquarters of the Church away from home in Jerusalem. God's hand was all over life's events, even when we do not understand or cannot comprehend them.

Its Major Challenges

The Gnostics attempt to interpret Christ in terms of heathen philosophy. One of their teachers taught that one Father, utterly unknown, made angels, archangels, virtues, powers, and the world. The Savior he declared unborn, incorporeal, and without form, asserting that he was seen as a man in appearance only. Docetism taught that Jesus only seemed to be a man and a pure spirit being, uncontaminated by the world.

Its End Results

The Church grew in that period tremendously. Doctrines were formulated, and most of the New Testament was completed. The saints had schools where they could learn about the faith. That which the evil government taught for evil, God used it for His good.

The persecution of the Church ended when Constantine came as a great conqueror. He was favorable to Christianity. However, some scholars debated whether Christianity had the freedom to evangelize and spread, but at a compromise cost. However, history taught us some of the good things that came out under Alexander the Great, which we will discuss under the Imperial Church.

Evangelism during the period of the Imperial Church 313-476 AD.

According to Hurlbut, this period of Church history saw significant changes. In 305 AD, Diocletian abdicated the Imperial throne, the Christian religion was prohibited, and the punishment was torture and death. Alexander the Great conquered the Empire, the persecution of Christianity ceased, and there was no persecution for the next two hundred years. Church buildings were restored, and Christians were free to build places of worship and were allowed to worship freely. The first day of the week was proclaimed a day of rest and worship (to this very moment in history, the Seventh-Day- Adventist teaches that Constantine changed the Sabbath). The courts were forbidden to meet on Sundays except for the freedom of enslaved people. They were now free to join the Church. Church councils were encouraged, and doctrines were debated and settled.¹⁴

The Main Proponents

The following are the main proponents:

- The council of Chalcedon set the order on how a complaint could be brought against a member of the clergy.¹⁵
- Ambrose Bishop of Milan attributed these words to him. “God ordered all things to be produced so that there would be common food for all, and so that the earth would be the common inheritance of all. Thus, nature has produced a common right, but greed has made it right of a few.” He was instrumental in the spreading of the Gospel in Milan.
- Basil the Great was one of the Cappadocian brothers. They were instrumental in evangelizing Caesarea, parts of Egypt, and areas in Palestine against Arianism. They were fundamental proponents for the divinity of the savior.

¹⁴ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 60-62.

¹⁵ Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, eds., *Documents of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 86.

- John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople, was a monk who suffered tremendous persecution for his faith and powerful preaching. He challenged the organized clergy in his time. “How to think that you obey Christ’s commandments, when you spend your time collecting that you obey Christ’s commandments, when you spend your time collecting interest, piling up loans, buying slaves, like livestock, creating injustice and multiplying poverty.”¹⁶ Long after his death, he was named the Golden mouth.
- The council of Nicaea gave us the Nicene creed, settling the deity of Jesus Christ.
- The council of Constantinople decreed that the bishop of Constantinople have the same privilege as the Bishop of Rome. Constantinople is the New Rome.
- The council of Ephesus where Nestorius was deposed.
- Christian leaders like Martin of Tours in his mission to Northern France
- Athanasius was present at the council of Nicea. He was described as young, short, and dark. He was none later as the champion of the Nicene Creed.
- Leo, the great Bishop of Rome.

About Augustine of Hippo, Latourette stated no other Christian after Paul was to have so wide, deep, and prolonged an influence upon Christianity of Western Europe than what stems from the faith of Augustine. He started as a Manichaeism group member, later becoming its greatest opponent. His writing stirred debates, and some of his topics were useful for Evangelism. His famous work, the confessions of Augustine and the city of God, was outstanding.¹⁷

The Political Problem

¹⁶ Gonzalez, *The Story*, 199, 209-210, 225-227.

¹⁷ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500*, Vol.1 (Peabody, MA: Prince, 2007) 97-98.

The Church got involved too closely with the political affairs of the state. The Church in America is too involved politically, and sometimes it appears as though the social issue is the priority. The Apostles taught us how to handle these issues: choose seven men from among you who are filled with the Holy Spirit and have a good character reference among you so they may take care of these affairs. Still, we must give ourselves to prayer, study, and ministry.

The Challenges

Listed below are some of the challenges:

- Some viewed this period with a question mark
- Christianity became a state religion.
- Everybody sought membership and was accepted.
- The moral tone of Christianity suffered in comparison to the time of persecution.
- Public funds were enriching the church.
- The ministers of the Church became a privileged class, and as a result, evangelizing to the lost had its setbacks.

The period of the medieval Church can easily be attributed to the period of darkness. It was a period of power and anarchy in the Roman Church. It was the period of marriage and divorce with secular authorities, Islam's rise, and the Arab revolution. Christianity was seriously challenged, losing some famous establishments, the Roman Empire, rising and falling from within, and severe opposition between the Latin and Greek Church, the crusades, and their serious challenges for the Church, the development of Monastic orders, with some positive and negative results. However, there was a glimmer of hope coming to the end of this period. It was

the beginning of religious reform. It appears evangelism suffered during this turbulent time. God appointed some leaders to take a stand because He will not leave himself without a witness.¹⁸

Evangelism During the Period of the Reformed Church 1453-1648 AD

This period of the Church came as a restoration, revival, or resurrection coming from the disasters of the Medieval period, with the rise of papal power in Rome, the revolution of the Arabs that gave the world Islam, the capturing of numerous Christian lands, and famous monuments, with the killings of many, the separation of the Eastern and Western Church, then came the crusades, which eventually checked the forward march of Islam. And started to usher in a period of calmness, and with that came the Monastic orders with some benefits in hospitality, centers to help refugees, agriculture, literature, education, and missions started to rise. The Church began to evangelize again. Religious reform started with able leaders like John Wyclif, John Huss, Jerome Savonarola, Anselm, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Thomas Aquinas. These facts we learn in the History of Christianity class lectures here at Alliance University with Dr. DeCaro. There are lessons to understand. Although there were controversies, the Church always seemed to find a way to correct what was wrong.

According to Hurlbut, this period saw Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. The first book that was printed was the Bible. This brought the scriptures into everyday use. The people could now read the scriptures in their language, essential and valuable information was now available in print. Evangelism was once again becoming prominent, and discussion was taking place about salvation, grace, faith, and other disciplines. The word protestant became the rallying cry. The leaders started the movement to preach Justification by faith alone in Christ

¹⁸ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 78-80.

alone. Hundreds of protestants suffered martyrdom, and hundreds took up the evangelizing passion. With persecution in Scotland, despite the thirty years of war in this period, the Church grew, theology was developed and discussed, and biblical knowledge rose. The saints had what they needed to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

The Reformation of Biblical Truth and Evangelism

As the Church developed strong leaders who took the Scripture as the word of God and developed institutions for learning, the knowledge of Christianity spread, and evangelization became more accessible. As the Church grew despite the challenges, one cannot miss the work carried out by the power of The Holy Spirit.

The Main Proponents

- John Wycliff, who came to be the morning star of the reformation, was a student at Oxford University in London. He left school to work for the crown as a polemist. He became a pastor; he championed putting the Bible in the hands of the people. He started to translate the Bible from the Latin Vulgate to English.
- John Huss is known as the Father of Moravians. His fiery preaching was aimed at the corruption of the clergy.
- Savonarola was a Dominican Friar whose lectures turned into sermons. Anslem, Bernard of Clairvaux, Thomas Aquinas,
- Martin Luther, who nailed his thesis on the Church door in Germany, and marrying a nun was an anathema to the Catholic Church. His challenge to their teachings and edict was a tremendous evangelizing tool for the saints. Ulrich Zwingli.

¹⁹ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 122-132.

- John Tyndale translated the New Testament. Thomas Cramer, John Knox is known for his work in England and stood up to Mary Queen of the Scots.
- John Calvin was known as one of the great scholars after Augustine. He will always be associated with the doctrine of Eternal Security and his writings, which helped the evangelization process. Desiderius Erasmus and countless nameless saints who stood for the faith with their lives.²⁰

The Main Opposition

Justo Gonzalez quoting John Huss states, "Therefore, the pope is not the head, nor are the Cardinals the whole body of the holy, Catholic and Universal Church. Only Christ is the head, and his predestined are the body, and each is a member of that body."²¹ The Roman Catholic Church was a great threat to the Church. As the church leaders mentioned above, the proponents in this period got more robust, especially on the continent of Europe that challenged the Pope and his Cardinals; Evangelism was encouraged and conveyed more substantially, emphasizing biblical truth.

The Modern Church 1648-1970

This period of the church continued some of the advancements made during the Reformation period. The Roman Catholic Church pursued its own way. England, Germany, and North America came under the strong influence of the twin powers of missionary and evangelistic movements and the Puritans, who declared the Westminster Confession of Faith.

²⁰ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 117-134.

²¹ Gonzalez, *The Story*, 407.

The Calvin wing of the Presbyterian, the congregation, and the Baptist all sent mass evangelistic teams to share the gospel.²²

Main Proponents

The leading proponents of this period were John and Charles Wesley with George Whitefield, known as a great pulpit orator. They composed and sang many hymns that are still songs of the great hymns of the church today. They were known for their great outreaches in Ireland. They were the founders of the Methodist churches today, and there was another body known as the Wesleyan Holiness church. They were instrumental in the outreach that saw the growth of the Methodist church in America. The growth of the Wesleyan tradition was also manifested in several 'Holiness Churches "with the Wesleyan theme of Sanctification. The charismatic trail and the 1906 Azusa Street revival that created the modern Pentecostal came out of the Wesley movement." Some of these groups had a passion for evangelism and lively worship. The American Methodist Episcopalian church came out of the Wesleyan movement. Schleiermacher was one of the strong leaders for orthodoxy in that period.²³

Neander, who called for strong theologians and biblical interpreters, caused the Bible's contents and doctrines of Christ to be widely studied and more intelligently understood. These disciplines assisted greatly in the evangelizing of the faith. John Newman and Keble from St. Mary's Oxford started "Tracts for the Times" They were supported strongly by the able scholar Canon Edward B. Pusey. This was used to disseminate information about worship and doctrines. Biblical tracts have been used for the last three hundred years to propagate the gospel message of salvation.

²² Hurlbut, *The Story*, 138-142.

²³ Justo L. Gonzalez, *Church History: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 83-84.

Missions and Evangelizing are twins. We cannot have one without the other, even though they are given different definitions. The Moravians began missionary work during this period, especially in North America and the West Indies. The founder of the modern missionary movement is attributed to William Carey, who led the Baptist Missionary Society and went to India.²⁴ The American Missions from Williams College, Massachusetts, got its inspiration from *The Haystack Prayer Meeting*. They sent out Newell and Hale and Judson and Rice. In its various denominations, the North American Protestantism was a missionary that made itself felt throughout the globe. As a result of their endeavors, newly found churches were established in various parts of the world. This period gave the world The Scofield Study Bible, with its promotion of Dispensationalism.

Richard Hooker was the author of the most famous and influential work on the constitution of the Church of England. Thomas Cartwright is the father of the Puritan movement. He was a professor of divinity at Cambridge University, and he was also a pastor. Oliver Cromwell is believed to be the greatest Puritan.

Jonathan Edwards was considered in North America as the greatest theologian of the eighteenth century on either side of the Atlantic. The Great Awakening started from his pulpit, a revival that spread throughout all the American colonies. These leaders all contributed to spreading the gospel throughout the world. Despite the tremendous challenges thorough out the history of the Church from Pentecost, the promise of God stands, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel; those who believe will be baptized. And I am with you always, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church."²⁵

²⁴ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 143.

²⁵ Gonzalez, *Church History*, 83-84.

Their Opposition / Challenges

Johann Semler who claimed that nothing received from tradition was to be accepted without proof, that the bible was to be judge like any other ancient writing, and Jesus was just a man. The teaching of rationalism grew and culminated in the publication of Friedrich Strauss' *Life of Jesus*, in 1835, undertaking to show that the gospel accounts were myths or legends.²⁶

The Power of the Printing Press and Evangelism

Evangelism in the 21st Century

From the middle of the 20th Century to the beginning of the 21st Century, no other evangelistic ministry impacted world evangelism more than The Billy Graham Evangelistic ministry. Evangelism in this period of Church history is still being written. However, from observation, it appears that evangelism is not a passionate priority. Our mega Churches localize the activities and are centralized around a charismatic leader. Evangelism is based on a world view of attracting new believers through marketing strategies. The influence is music, choirs, titles of leaders, raising funds to buy airplanes, an obsession with racism without a solution through repentance and redemption without Christ, political correctness, and teaching without an adequate biblical foundation. In the mid-eighties, the Messianic group, Jews for Jesus, led by Moshie Rosen, was instrumental in doing evangelism in New York City by distributing broadsides, a biblical track. During this period, they also did the same thing at Los Angeles airport in California. Some of these workers were arrested, the matter went to the supreme court, and they won. The Jewish evangelism case became a standard for religious freedom. In 1998 a young believer from the New Testament Church in New Rochelle was given a citation by the police for distributing broadsides in a meeting with the Police Commissioner, Mayor Tim Idoni,

²⁶ Hurlbut, *The Story*, 139.

a few clergy, and politicians, the Jewish case from Los Angeles Airport. California was cited, it was accepted, and the citations were thrown out.²⁷ To evangelize the world is a command from God. It will always be opposed, but God's ways and word will always prevail.

Is There a Secular Challenge

There is a severe secular challenge. Tolerance is being preached without a disciplined set of fundamental doctrines to guide it. The acceptance of same-sex marriage. The promotion of diversity without repentance for sin. To accept all and any except Christianity. We are witnessing the splits in the worldwide Methodist Church. And now, with the great controversy with the Episcopal Church in England and America, the African arm of this group is planning to separate itself from the head Church. These events create a distraction from Evangelism. In the seventy's, the Church was organized for world evangelism by unity with diversity with the Lausanne Conferences in Switzerland.

Is There a Multi-Diversity Acceptance Challenge

The problem here seems to be some ethnic congregations are under pressure, especially in some of the White churches, and are being challenged to apologize for slavery. Some have made statements, and others may or may not do that. We learn from Scripture each person is responsible for their sins. The heart of man can only be changed by the grace of God. It is offensive and considered legal to sue if you are offended by someone saying Jesus in most public forums. In some countries, sharing your faith with Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists is a severe crime. Evangelism is challenged today not by extreme violence or physical persecution, even

²⁷ "Jews for Jesus, Inc. v. Board of Airport Commissioners," <https://casetext.com/case/jews-for-jesus-inc-v-bd-of-airport-comrs>.

though we read about the jailing of Christians in China. In the Western world, the intense violence in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Northern Nigeria is a social, cultural, and liberal challenge. One can have serious legal problems for mentioning Jesus, citing the wrong gender, or saying marriage is for a man and a woman or a male and a female.

Is There a Biblical Doctrinal Truth Problem

Paul Little shared some of the significant challenges we will likely face today in evangelizing in the Western world. Most adults:

- Are struggling for financial security.
- Make pleasure and leisure priorities.
- Will resist high pressure from any group.
- If single may flock to bars for human contact and solace.
- See science as more reliable than religion.
- Consider Christianity's claim to uniqueness to be bigoted in the extreme.
- Find moral certainty has either shifted downward or vanished entirely.
- View God as a stern judge or a benign, distant grandfather.
- Believe God is irrelevant to their existence.
- Does not consider the Bible as a source of help
- See Christians as judgmental killjoys²⁸

I will quickly point to the hypocrisy of so-called people of God on TV who only bilk money from supporters.

The Problem with Evangelism Today, as Cited by Barna Research Group

²⁸ Paul E Little, *How to Give Away Your Faith* (Downers Grove, IL, InterVarsity Press, 1988), 17-18.

Gospel tracts, sidewalk evangelism, street preachers with bull horns, all of these seem like evangelistic efforts of yesteryear. Where does that leave the state of Evangelism today? Is faith sharing a fading practice? When asked if they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others, 73% of born-again believers said yes. What stands out with the data is that evangelicals have among the highest rates of failure to follow through. What is promising is that millennials have the highest percentage rate of those who are willing to share their hope.²⁹ This final statement is encouraging. In the later part of the 20th Century, Chuck Smith took a group of what was known as misfits and gave birth to Calvary Chapel, which produced Greg Laurie and Raul Reiss, who received a dishonorable discharge from the army. We had Maranatha Music and the Second Chapter of Acts. This was a work of the Holy Spirit. In the eighties, Dr. D. James Kennedy launched Evangelism Explosion in a Presbyterian Church in Florida, creating an impact. Evangelism is the work of God by His Holy Spirit; it will not fail. The scripture referred to those who spread the good news with words like, fishers of men, apostles, workers, laborers, evangelist, herald, proclaimers, partners, witnesses, helpers, and assistant. (Early Christian Missions, Eckard J. Schnabel p.36) these names all represent those who created an impact in evangelizing in this world.

Suggested Strategies for Today

According to Eckhard, The Oxford English Dictionary defines Strategy as the art of a commander-in Chief in "the art of projecting and directing the larger military movements and operations of a campaign." 'More generally as defined, for example, in a business context or politics, strategy is the plan for successful action based on the rationality and interdependence of the moves of the opposing participants."

²⁹ "Is Evangelism Going out of Style," <https://www.barna.com/research/is-evangelism-going-out-of-style>.

Did Paul have a missionary strategy? A final answer can only be given after a review of the exegetical evidence in the letters and the book of Acts. As an initial answer, the judicious words of J. Herbert Kane deserve to be repeated. If by Strategy is meant a deliberate, well-formulated, duly executed plan of action based on human observation and experience, then Paul had little or no Strategy; but if we take the word to mean a flexible *modus operandi* developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and subject to His discretion and control, then Paul had a strategy.³⁰

The Strategy Needed in the 21st Century

First, the Church must understand that evangelism is the response to a direct command given by the Savior to all believers. Go into all the world and preach and teach the gospel. Throughout the History of the Christian Church, we have read, researched, and studied the impact of evangelism on the world in each generation or period of Church history. The practical and fruitful work has always been the movement of the Holy Spirit. Even before the Church started from Pentecost, Jesus modeled the process for us. He trained twelve men, went with them to teach them how, then sent them out two by two. He declared in Luke 4:18 the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, quoting Isaiah 61. In His hour of temptation, the Holy Spirit minister to Him. The mission work of Paul and Barnabas was done after the Holy Spirit separated them for specific task. The work of Phillip in Samaria and with the Ethiopian Eunuch was by the Holy Spirit. The testimony of Stephen in the moment of death was by the Holy Spirit, and it had a great impact on those who heard him including Saul of Tarsus at the time. Let no church today

³⁰ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 29-30.

believe we can do this work by human committees, conferences, workshops, seminars, or any other human initiative without the power of the Holy Spirit. The leaders of the early Church, in the areas they went they were led by the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul went to the gentiles, and Peter went to mostly the Jewish people.

The Apostle gave an outline for his Strategy to the Gentiles. If I have reason to boast in Christ Jesus it will be of things that pertain to God. I will not speak of things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word, and deed to make the Gentiles obedient. From Jerusalem to Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel. I will not preach where Christ is already known. I want to come to Rome, but on my Journey to Spain I will come to you. I am on my way to minister at Jerusalem.

Summary

Evangelizing from Pentecost to the modern era has always been a work of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. From Peter's sermon to the call of Paul and Barnabas, the direction of Phillip to the Ethiopian Eunuch, the numerous souls that were lost in the preaching of the gospel, to the various scholars in every period of church history, the development of doctrines and training schools, the printing press, with new literature becoming available, the numerous missionary groups and strategies, it was because of the power of the risen Savior. We have to acknowledge that some of the activities by some church leaders and by today's standards would not be accepted. However, we should not judge the past by our standards today. We will be judged tomorrow by that generation standard. There is always room for mistakes whenever man judges by their will and sometimes invoke God's name. Let us learn from the past what to do and what not to do. If the Church of Jesus Christ is on earth, there will be challenges by humans' self-will and the evil one who hates the church.

Conclusion

I have witnessed the impact of Evangelizing. In 1984, I was part of a team led by the late Rev. Phillip Walker, Richard Christie, and Marchellion Jarett. There were two weeks of evangelistic crusade in Epworth, Jamaica, and with personal witnessing. As a result, there is a vibrant church at that exact location today where the tent was set up for the crusade. Rev. Marchellion Jarett started United Life Line Ministry on Main Street in St Ann's Bay, Jamaica, in a dilapidated building with a series of evangelistic services. Today 2023, there is a church in Keith, pastored by Rev. Elaine Shaw, one in Alexandria, pastored by Rev. Paulette Barnes, one in Browns Town, pastored by Pastor Philbert Wynn, one in Ocho Rios, and the main church pastored by Rev. Jarett and his wife. All came out of evangelist work in those areas of Jamaica West Indies. In 1989, Rev. Cecil Henry started a prayer meeting and Bible study in a basement on Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn. A year later rented space from a building on Park Avenue in Brooklyn and started a series of evangelistic meetings in the various parks in Brooklyn during the summer months, with corroborated help from the New York School Of Urban Ministries, led by Peter De Arruda, Teen Challenge the primary substance abuse program in our area, Anchor House, also a substance abuse program led by Henry Lopez, and Soul Release Prison Ministries, led by Willie and Barbara Jarrell, with their office located at the same site for the hooding ceremony of Alliance University in 2023. As the result of the evangelistic outreach, a striving church, Calvary Community Church, is located at 1575 St, Johns Place in Brooklyn today—the impact and effect of evangelism among us.

The book of Acts is our model, textbook, and strategy showcase to evangelize our community and this world. From Acts 2:36-42, Peter's address on the day of Pentecost, chapter

6:1-7, dealing with the priorities of spreading the word, the conversion of Saul, and God's revelation to Ananias with Paul's Job description in chapter 9, Cornelius delegation to Peter, and Peter's reaction, Barnabas, and Saul in Antioch on their missionary journey, from chapter 11 to their approval by the church in chapter 13, and the rest was missions, new believers and new churches established. The answer to the question about evangelizing the world is settled in Romans 10:14-21. The Divine passion and obligation are found in Romans 1:14-17. And we glean from the Godly experiences of those who set examples for us from history.

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