EUROPE YESTERDAY: RECOVERING THE PAST
33AD-1000 – Apostles & Storytellers *How the story of Jesus spread across Europe and shaped western society.*

1. What do we mean by 'Europe'?

The name of *Europa* is of uncertain etymology. One theory suggests that it is derived from the Greek roots meaning broad (*eur-*) and eye (*op-, opt-*), hence "wide-gazing", "broad of aspect". Another theory suggests that it is actually based on a Semitic word such as the Akkadian *erebu* meaning "to go down, set", see Phoenician '*ereb* "evening; west" and Arabic Maghreb, Hebrew *ma'ariv*.
In ancient Greek mythology, Europa was a Phoenician princess whom Zeus abducted after assuming the form of a dazzling white bull. He took her to the island of Crete where she gave birth to Minos, Rhadamanthus and Sarpedon. For Homer, *Europa* was a mythological queen of Crete, not a geographical designation. Later, *Europa* stood for central-north Greece, and by 500 BC its meaning had been extended to the lands to the north.

A cultural definition of Europe as **the lands of Latin Christendom** coalesced in the 8th century, signifying the new cultural entity created through the confluence of Germanic traditions and Christian-Latin culture, defined partly in contrast with Byzantium and Islam, and limited to northern Iberia, the British Isles, France, Christianized western Germany, the Alpine regions and northern and central Italy.

The concept is one of the lasting legacies of the Carolingian Renaissance: "Europa" often figures in the letters of Charlemagne's cultural minister, Alcuin.

The problem of redefining Europe was finally resolved in 1730 when, instead of waterways, the Swedish geographer and cartographer von Strahlenberg proposed the Ural Mountains as the most significant eastern boundary, a suggestion that found favour in Russia and throughout Europe

2. Is Europe really a continent?

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3. Who were the Europeans?
> • *migrants from the east*
> • *speaking Indo-European languages*
> • *worshipping many gods/goddesses (polytheists)–Celtic, Germanic, Nordic, Roman, Greek, Slavic and more.*

A quick google search of the Nordic gods and goddesses alone will reveal: *AESIR, principal race of gods in Norse mythology; ANDHRIMNIR, the cook of the Aesir; ANGRBODA, goddess and wife of Loki, ASTRILD, goddess of love; ATLA, water goddess; AUDHUMLA, the primeval cow, formed from the melting ice; BALDER, fairest of the gods; BEYLA, the servant of Freyr; BORGHILD, goddess of the evening mist or moon, she slays the sun each evening; BRAGI, god of poets and the patron of all skaldi (poets) in Norse culture; BRONO, son of Balder, god of daylight; BYLGIA, water goddess;* and so on, alphabetically to: ... *THOR, thunder-god and the protector of men and gods; TYR, the original god of war in the Germanic culture; ULL, god of justice, duelling and archery; VALI, son of Odin, and the god born to avenge the death of Balder; VALKYRIES, the battle-maidens, who choose the best warriors; VANIR, a group of fertility and nature gods; VAR, goddess of contracts and marriage agreements; VIDAR, son of Odin and the god of silence and vengeance.*
The Europeans' identity was rooted in the east.

4. When did these tribes develop a distinct identity?
Whatever happened to all these old gods and goddesses?
Answer: when storytellers like Paul & Silas, Patrick & Columba, Martin & Servatius, Willibrord & Boniface, Cyril & Methodius, Ulfilas & Anskar introduced tribes, races and people groups to the story of Jesus, and the loving, merciful, compassionate, forgiving God of the Bible.
This transformed their understanding of reality, of the spiritual world, the physical world and of God, man and society.

This story was told to Greeks, Romans, Gauls, Celts, Scots, Picts, Angles, Saxons, Franken, Friesians, Allemani, Bavarians, Suevi, Slavs, Rus, Balts...
& eventually to the Vikings.

Kings were tamed, enemies reconciled, communities renewed...

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5. <u>What then are Europe's roots?</u>
Pope John Paul II admitted freely that Europe, in a sense, had multiple cultural roots: "Multiple are the cultural roots that have contributed to reinforce these values (of European humanism): from the spirit of Greece to that of Roman law and virtue, from the contributions of the Latin, Celtic, Germanic, Slav and Finno-Ugric peoples, to those of the Jewish culture and the Islamic world."

Yet he concluded that "***these different factors found in the Judeo-Christian tradition the power that harmonised, consolidated and promoted them***." In other words, the diversity of cultures making up Europe's heritage found their unity in the biblical tradition.

> From his message to the Congress *Towards a European Constitution*
> organised by the European Federation of Catholic Universities, 20 June 2003.

Popes are expected to say this kind of thing. Yet secular historian Norman Davies agrees that 'Christendom' was the foundation of European civilisation, birthed from the interaction between the ex-Roman and the ex-barbarian worlds.

> *Europe,* Norman Davies, Oxford 1996, p216

6. <u>What constitutes her 'soul'?</u>

The 'soul' is what gives life, what animates the body. The physical aspects of the peninsular we call Europe existed long before the entity 'Europe' emerged.
After the westward migration of such people groups as Visigoths, Suevi, Ostrogoths, Franks, Vandals, Huns, Vikings and others populated the peninsula with their various cultures, encountering those already there such as the Celts, Romans, and Greeks, it was the common experience of all of these peoples–embracing some form of Christian gospel–that gave them a common sense of belonging to this entity which became known as 'Europe'.

In 1992, Jacques Delors challenged religious leaders in Europe to help recover the soul of Europe. This was his very last official task as president of the European Commission. His actual words were: "if in the next ten years we haven't managed to give a soul to Europe, ***to give it spirituality and meaning***, the game will be up." *(Brussels, 14 April 1992)*. A devout Catholic, Delors believed the EU would not succeed solely on the basis of legal systems and economics. So how can we recover Europe's lost 'soul'? Delors hinted at his own definition of what this task would mean: ***to restore spirituality and meaning***. But not just any spirituality. Europe had spirituality before the messengers of Jesus arrived: pagan spirituality.

The task calls for a new generation of messengers of hope to spread the Book and tell the Story. Why shouldn't the Story that gave Europe her soul in the first millennium restore her soul in the third millennium?

Nothing else can.

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7. A.33AD-410. The early church: *promising start/missed opportunities!*

1. **The Pauline Missionary Society:** a "new" structure for missions?

2. **Rapid expansion resulted:**
    So long as a mission vision was passed on to the new converts,
    the early church continued to grow at a phenomenal pace.
    (Note: self-propagation clause built-in to Matt 28:19,20)
    Paul's example: wrote about his plans for Spain (Ro 15)
    a) Christians in course of daily life and witness - traders, soldiers,...
    b) missionary bands, targeting new regions, following Paul's model
    c) spread to the west, east, south and north
    d) persecution & martyrdom
    e) poised to reach the ends of the earth!

3. **From movement to Christendom:**
    a) Rome's choice - eradicate or embrace
    b) test of popularity
    c) new definitions of "Christian" and "church"

4. **Constantine:** *the beginning of the Millennium??*
    a) East-West axis - Constantinople
    b) barbarians at the gate

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7. B. 410-1000 New beginnings in unlikely places! *Monks, Celts & Vikings*

1.   Monasticism: a dynamic movement is born in the Egyptian desert: *Anthony* (c250-356), *Pachomius* (c290-346)
- Syria: *Simeon Stylites* (c390-459)
- Cappadocia (Turkey): *Basil the Great* (330-379)
- Gaul: *Martin of Tours* (c335?-397)
- Lerins (French Riviera): an escaped slave named *Patrick*

2.   The Galatian connection: key to the British Celtic church?
     Patrick (389-461): apostle to the Irish
     • 432-> confronts druidic spirituality, by 447, mostly evangelised: 'island of saints'; plants 200 churches, baptises 100,000 converts
     • Christianity adapted to tribal kingdom system: *"tuath"*- unlike Roman world, no urban centres; monastic communities   mushroomed; centres of culture and learning; popular among the young
     • missions vision: now the tide flows eastwards

3.   *Columba* (521-597): apostle to the Scots and Picts/ Iona
     Columbanus (543-615): apostle to the Franks, Suevi and Alemanni
     • eastern Gaul (Burgundy) - 1000's entered communities; St Gallen - Switzerland; Bobbio - Italy

Meanwhile, back in Rome:
4.   *Augustine's* mission to Canterbury: 596 (Rome's counterthrust)
     Pope Gregory attempts standardisation of western monasticism around **Benedictine order**; establishes RC mission policy for centuries - Christmas, Easter, St Valentines,...

5   *Aidan*: (d.651) 635 > Lindisfarne (2nd Iona); King Oswald; *Council of Whitby*: (663) Rome absorbs the Celtic church

6.   *Wilfrid, Willibrord* (c658-739)(apostle to the Frisians), *Boniface* (c675-754) (apostle to the Germans)
     - "greatest of all missionaries of the middle ages" ; "had deeper influence on the history of Europe than any Englishman who has ever lived"; Geismar sacred oak; mobilised women in missions. His mission helped pave the way for the emergence of the 'Holy Roman Empire' of the Carolingian dynasty.

7.   *Charlemagne (Karel de Groot)* (742-814**)** grandson of Charles the Hammer who turned back the Muslims at Tours in 732, was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the pope in 800; his reign from Aachen represented the consolidation of a Christian empire wiht strong emphasis on educational development carried out by the Anglo-Celtic monk, Alcuin.

8.   The dragon ships at Lindisfarne! the Vikings go souvenir hunting

Book list: **33AD-1000 – Apostles & Storytellers**

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Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, 410
Bosch, David   *Transforming mission*, Orbis, 1991
Cahill, Thomas   The gifts of the Jews, Doubleday, 1999
                                    How the Irish saved civilization, Doubleday, 1998
                                    Sailing the wine-dark sea, Doubleday, 2003
Davies, Norman   *Europe, a history*, Oxford, 2006
Dawson, Christopher, *The making of Europe*, Sheed & Ward, 1932
                                    Religion and the rise of western culture, Doubleday, 1957
Ellis, R & Seaton, C   *The new Celts*, Kingsway, 1998
Finney, John   *Recovering our past*, SPCK, 1996.
Jenkins, Philip,   *The lost history of Christianity*, Lion, 2008
MacCulloch, Diarmaid   *A history of Christianity*, BBC (DVD and book)
McNeill, John T.,   *The Celtic Church*, 1974
Newman, Keith   *A world full of gods*
Newbigin, Lesslie   *The Gospel in a pluralistic society*, SPCK, 1989.
Wessels, Anton   *Europe: was it ever really Christian?* SCM 1994