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## Die Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich

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2014

### **document version**

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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### **citation for published version (APA)**

Hinkelmann, F. (2014). *Die Evangelikale Bewegung in Österreich: Grundzüge ihrer historischen und theologischen Entwicklungen von 1945 bis 1998*. [, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

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# 11. Fremdsprachige Zusammenfassung

## 11.1 Summary in English

The dissertation *History of the Evangelical Movement – characteristics of its historical and theological development from 1945 until 1998* highlights a subject which has received practically no attention in scholarly research.

Beginning with a detailed discussion of the term and meaning of *evangelical* in its international and in its historical context, the author then presents his own definition of *evangelical* from a historical and theological perspective.

Following from this, it will be shown that pietism and the early free churches (mainly Baptist and Methodist) from the 18th century onwards were the forerunners of the *Evangelical Movement* in Austria. The years between the wars (1918–1938) also show growth in the movement, although the national-socialist dictatorship caused a temporary pause in its growth.

In this thesis, development in religious thinking will be shown in the greater context of its socio-political relationships. Each chapter will present socio-political developments in the areas of politics, business, culture and society, as well as in the denominational and religious environment. A thorough study of the historical development of the *Evangelical Movement* will follow in a second stage.

We can speak of an *Evangelical Movement* in Austria since 1945. This particular date is a result of the rise of the “new evangelicals“ in the USA during the 1940s, which had a significant influence on the *Evangelical Movement* in Europe. This was characterized in the following decades by the large evangelistic crusades of Billy Graham, and by an increasing number of American mission groups coming to Europe. This was also felt in Austria soon after the end of the Second World War, when the first American missionaries arrived.

The beginnings of the *Evangelical Movement* in Austria (1945–1961) were characterized by a hitherto unknown diversity of denominations. Alongside the churches, fellowships and organizations already existing before the 2nd world war, there appeared a collection of new fellowships, or denominations, mostly established by foreign missionaries. This stage is also characterized by an amazingly widespread permeation of the land with the gospel. Evangelistic events occurred in many places, and Bible and house groups were established. One encountered a general public religious awakening, which made many listeners receptive to the gospel. Yet even more open than the Austrian people themselves, were the huge numbers

of German speaking refugees from former Yugoslavia. There was an amazing amount of social-missionary work done amongst them, often by their own people. A third aspect must be added – the growing and intensive cooperation of evangelical groups across denominational borders. This functioned partly within the framework of the *Evangelical Alliance*, and also through the conferences of the *Reich-Gottes-Arbeiter Tagung*, formed in the mid-1950s, which linked full-time workers from many different churches and works.

The 1960s and 1970s are characterized by an internationalizing of the Evangelical Movement. European and especially North American missionary societies looked on Austria increasingly as a mission field, and often started their own works. The 1960s were a time of large evangelistic events, especially in towns, while in the 1970s, the emphasis moved more to the provinces, and also to specific target groups. Amongst the free churches, the emphasis was increasingly on church planting, while the longer established evangelical groups concentrated on building up the church.

The third and last phase described in the history of the Evangelical Movement (1981–1998) is characterized by the denominationalizing and institutionalizing of the movement. On one hand the movement started to form denominations. This was partly due to a reduction in the number of leading Lutheran personalities willing to support the evangelical movement. On the other hand the free churches themselves formed associations such as the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich* (ARGEGÖ) and later the *Bund Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich* (BEGÖ). These gave a new meaning to the word *evangelical*, moving it from being purely theological, to now being denominational.

The Lutheran Church played a leading role in this overall development, in that it held firmly to its sole right to call itself *evangelisch* (protestant). All free Churches were forbidden to use this as part of their name, so with time, most fellowships choose to use the term *evangelikal* to describe themselves. The 1980s and 1990s were again years of vigorous growth for the Evangelical Movement, especially amongst the free churches. While the growth in the 1980s was mainly amongst the churches in the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Gemeinden in Österreich* (ARGEGÖ), in the 1990s it was characterized mainly in the establishing of charismatic churches. Alongside the denominationalism and expansion of this period, an institutionalizing of the movement also developed. Various charities and institutions were established which could be seen as rivals to those offered by the already existing historic churches.

The first sign of a new openness and desire by the *Evangelical Movement* to come out of denominational limitations and return to a cross-denominational and theologically based movement appeared around 1995. However it is outside the boundaries of this thesis to present this development.

To summarize, the *Evangelical Movement*, between 1945 and 1998, can be seen as a cross-denominational, theologically based movement, with its greatest priority being mission and evangelism. Amongst the free churches, this missionary activity resulted in many church planting initiatives.

The disintegration of many years of traditional ties (including religious), due to a growing modernism, secularization, and individualism, linked to a de-institutionalizing of society, have given the evangelical movement many points of contact, which they have learnt to use, and their call to the individual to personal conversion has often met with openness. Yet in spite of the social influences on the evangelical movement in Austria, it is best understood at its theological level (piety, conviction of faith and lifestyle).