

## MLA Style: Notes

The MLA Handbook and MLA Style Manual describe two kinds of notes that may be used in conjunction with MLA style parenthetical citations. Content notes and bibliographic notes differ in their purpose. Content notes can provide additional information or explanation about a topic. Bibliographic notes can provide evaluations of sources or further references for the reader to consider. Here is an example of each.

Content note:

**THE QUESTION MARK** in the title pertains not to a qualification of the Marcan text under study but to the subtitle. Ever since the international Synod of Catholic Bishops found it possible, in the fall of 2012, to devote four weeks to discussion of “the new evangelization,” the phrase has become something of a *passe-partout* in Catholic ministerial and educational endeavors. It might cause some discomfort to biblical scholars, however, who are probably not numerous among Vatican phrase-makers. After all, every evangelization worthy of the name is *new*, so the phrase is tautological. The term expresses a privileged moment of the *spoken* word, since the “evangel”—the “gospel”—is primarily and essentially *oral*, involving a unique exchange between speaker and listener, initiated by the Holy Spirit, of which St. Paul wrote memorably in Rom 10:17: “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing is of the word of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, “evangelization” does not mean the top-down indoctrination that the phrase-maker might have had in mind,

This note contains further information about the topic. It continues the argument made within the body of the paper.

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<sup>1</sup> The *locus classicus* supporting the oral character of the gospel is Rom 10:14-21, part of Paul’s diatribe indicting Israel for its failure to obey the word that was being preached. The rhetorical questions “How will they believe in him of whom they have not *heard*?” and “How will they *hear* without someone to preach to them?” (v. 14) are answered with appeal to Isa 52:7—celebrating the appearance of the εὐαγγελιζόμενοι—and Ps 18[19]:5, even though the complaint persists that “not all have obeyed *the gospel*” (v. 16), reinforced by Isa 53:1: “Lord, who has believed *what we have heard*?” (τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν). From this emerges the principle: ἀρα ἡ πίστις ἐξ ἀκοῆς . . . (v. 17). See, *inter alios*, Gerhard Friedrich, εὐαγγελίζομαι, εὐαγγέλιον, κτλ., *TDNT* 2:707-37, esp. 729-35; and Georg Strecker, *History of New Testament Literature* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997) 94: “In the New Testament neither the substantive [εὐαγγέλιον] nor the verb have a literary significance.”

Bibliographic note:

such that a new method should replace previous ones that have faltered. To speak of an “old evangelization” would be, in fact, to commit a *contradictio in adiecto!*

Let us take Paul’s cue and pay homage to the nameless poet who introduced the language of “evangelization” to the Bible. This was, of course, Isaiah’s successor, who admired the graceful step of the “herald” (*mēbaššēr*) on Mount Zion (Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15) and characterized his “good news” with God’s own words in Isa 43:18-19: “Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a *new thing*; right now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?”<sup>2</sup> It was the prophet’s Greek translator who introduced the participle εὐαγγελιζόμενος and the infinitive εὐαγγελιζεσθαι to capture his exemplar’s thought about the messenger and the message (Isa 52:7; 61:1). The indispensable novelty of every subsequent transmission of “good news” is reflected in Paul’s practice, for in the several instances where he gives capsule expression to his “gospel,” he never repeats the same formula twice (e.g., 1 Thess 1:9-10; 1 Cor 15:3-5; Rom 1:3-4).<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, when early Christian *books* came to be called “gospels”—hardly before the mid-second century—the Fathers consecrated *four* of them and not one, *pace* Marcion and Tatian. Thus, even when literary fixation was sought for the tradition about Jesus, the church recognized that no single book could carry the official apostolic message, any more than a single formula could suit all the contingencies of the Pauline missions.

As the varied “evangelizations” of the NT demonstrate, the differences of the verbal formulas reflect the different “life situations” (*Sitze im Leben*) to which the gospel was addressed. Even the fourfold Gospel *books* were as many responses to this diversity.<sup>4</sup> It is my purpose here to illustrate the decisive importance of this *audience factor* at the beginning of the literary process. What written version of the gospel better illustrates its inevitable “newness” than the Gospel of Mark,

<sup>2</sup> See Klaus Koch, *The Prophets* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983–84) 2:147-48.

This note contains a reference to an additional source the reader could consult for further discussion on the topic at hand.