



Newsletter of European Christian Mission Ireland

Spring, 2019

EUROPE

a place where confidence in a future of material prosperity is shaken...



Stats and Stories.

Find out how God is using His people to change statistics in Europe



Good News for Europe.

by Jim Memory, ECM missionary based in Spain and also a lecturer in European Mission at Redcliffe College. (1)

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There was a time when Europe was considered the Christian Continent, yet through the 19th and 20th centuries, Europeans increasingly looked to science and progress, economics and secular politics, for the answers to their problems. In effect they put their faith and hope in 'another gospel'. **Today however, that confidence is being shaken by the economic, environmental, political, social and spiritual realities of 21st-century Europe.**

This article reviews the crucial issues that Europe faces today from a gospel perspective, in full conviction, that the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be the one genuine hope, for Europe.

Economic Crisis

The global financial crash in 2008 had a devastating impact on many European countries, leading to economic recession, severe public sector cutbacks and rising unemployment. Most European economies

remain in the doldrums, and unemployment in Greece and Spain is stubbornly high at 24% and 20% respectively. For those under the age of 25 the situation is even more agonising. Nearly half of all Greek and Spanish young people are without a job.

The uncertainty surrounding the economic implications of Brexit only exacerbate the depressing outlook. Europe almost certainly faces a long period of economic stagnation. **Yet across Europe churches are responding to rising levels of poverty by demonstrating the good news in action through food banks, free debt counselling and employment initiatives.**

As Europeans' confidence in a future of material prosperity is shaken, **the church has a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate that our confidence is not in the treasures of this world but in the riches of the Kingdom.**

Good News for Europe.

Political Instability

Europe's economic situation is complicated by political instability on three fronts: Euroscepticism, nationalism and independence movements.

Euroscepticism used to be a British peculiarity, however, it can now be found almost everywhere in Europe. Anti-austerity, anti-European Union (EU) parties have emerged in Greece, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere. Britain's decision to leave the EU introduces a new level of uncertainty. **Brexit is an existential threat to the EU itself and is likely to dominate European political discussions for years, even decades, to come.**

A further threat is the rise of nationalism. **Nationalist, populist and xenophobic movements are gaining strength in many parts of Europe.** They tap into popular discontent at soaring unemployment and point the finger at migrants as those to blame. The refugee crisis of 2015-16, and the terrorist attacks in Belgium and France, have only fuelled these movements. As a result, even in European heartlands, xenophobic parties like Front National (France) and Alternative für Deutschland (Germany) have significantly increased their popular support.

There are also regional independence movements. During 2014 the EU faced unprecedented attempts by two regions to form new independent states: Catalonia and Scotland. In the east, a perceived threat to the Russian-speaking minority led to Russia's annexation of Crimea and 'occupation' of southeastern Ukraine.

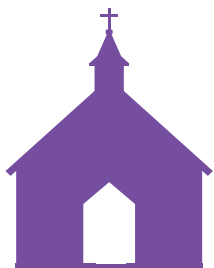
The gospel is a message of peace and reconciliation with God, but also with our neighbour. As God's new society, the church is called to demonstrate a different way of relating to one another that sees beyond our national identity to our identity in Christ: 'Here there is no Gentile or Jew...but Christ is all and is in all' (Col. 3:11).

As our political context is shaken, **we have an opportunity to take the Christian voice into the public square to speak for justice, peace and solidarity, not as political slogans but gospel realities.**

Many churches are doing this as they respond to the third crucial issue, we face in Europe today - migration.

Part two next time...

1. For more information on Redcliffe College MA courses see: www.redcliffe.ac.uk/courses/cross-cultural-mission-training/contemporary-missiology-ma



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