EUROPE 2021

A Missiological Report

Jim Memory

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Combining fascinating and timely analysis of social, economic, and political trends, with insightful and forward-looking missiological reflection, this report should be essential reading for all those who, in any part of the world, are concerned about mission in, from and to, the continent of Europe. Thoroughly documented from secular sources and theological expertise, this is the kind of resource that is increasingly needed for intelligent Christian engagement in our alarmingly changed world.

Chris Wright, PhD, Global Ambassador and Ministry Director, Langham Partnership

Jim Memory has offered the European church a great gift, the gift of synthesis. His work will serve as a road map for future missional engagements.

Raphael Anzenberger, PhD. Director imagoDei

Jim Memory's missiological report starts by providing an excellent overview of the general and the spiritual context Christians are facing in Europe, taking into account the Covid-19 pandemic, before moving on to trends in European mission and the implications for mission in Europe. This paper should be a must-read for all those interested in missions in and to Europe.

Rev. Dr. Frank Hinkelmann, President of the European Evangelical Alliance

This is a timely and relevant tool for all Christian leaders that have a heart for Europe. I am convinced it will be a great blessing within the body of Christ. It comes at a strategic moment for the post Covid-19 church as we have to re-think the way to fulfil our God-given mission in today's Europe.

Daniel Costanza, Executive Director, Pentecostal European Fellowship

Reverse missionaries and indigenous missionaries will find this report very helpful for understanding the European scene in order to contextualise their mission.

Rev Israel Oluwole Olofinjana, Director of One People Commission of the UK Evangelical Alliance

Jim Memory's Missiological Report on Europe is one of the most relevant x-rays completed in recent years. Let us all pray that many discussions and actions will flow out of this research as we become "sons of Issachar" for our generation, for the benefit of the Gospel.

Alexandru Vlasin, Ph.D Associate Professor of the Baptist Theological Faculty at Bucharest University

In his Europe 2021: A Missiological Report, Jim Memory has captured some of the major challenges of our era, not only for Europe but for the entire Western-influenced world. The report covers a lot of territory in condensed fashion, but it is by no means reductionistic. I highly recommend that everyone interested in reaching the industrialised world invests time in reading, pondering, and talking about this report with their colleagues. As you do so, ask God for wisdom and be willing to move with the Holy Spirit in innovative ways. It will yield great reward.

Jay Matenga, PhD. Director, WEA Global Witness Dept.

Jim has many years of experience of teaching on mission in Europe and of hands-on ministry. He is simply the best person to compile this thorough and insightful report on Europe. It is a must read for any leader passionate about Europe.

Evi Rodemann, CEO of LeadNow e.V

Insightful, thorough, relevant, and succinct! This report is a gift to our continent, and a must-read to any leader who wants to have a 'bird's-eye view' of mission in Europe today.

Sarah Breuel – IFES Revive Europe Director

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PREFACE

Before starting our theological and missiological studies at All Nations Christian College in 1991, my wife Christine and I took part in a three-month mission trip to the Philippines. We were passionate about church planting and wanted to explore if this was the place for us to serve God on the mission frontier. Yet on our return to the UK, we became increasingly convinced that the most challenging frontier for mission was right here in Europe. Whereas in the Philippines we saw the church breaking new ground, establishing new Christian communities, and serving the poor, in Europe it appeared that the church was in retreat. That realisation ultimately led to us giving the last thirty years of our lives to mission in Europe. We joined the European Christian Mission (ECM) and from 1994-2008 were part of ECM´s church planting team in Spain. We then got involved with leadership in ECM International, alongside mission training and research at Redcliffe College.

Europe is a dynamic and tremendously diverse context for Christian mission. Any perspective on what is happening in Europe is likely to elicit the response, "well, that's not the way it is here." Yet as I have researched and reflected, travelled, and listened to friends and colleagues across the continent, certain crucial issues always come to the fore. Those who have taken the European Mission courses at Redcliffe College or have read a copy of Vista, the journal which I co-edit, will be familiar with some of the topics I explore in these pages.

This report was originally prepared as part of a strategic review for ECM. It has been substantially rewritten to make it available to a broader constituency. It has also hugely benefitted from the critique of others and I want to place on record my debt of gratitude to: Kent Anderson, Raphaël Anzenberger, Eddie Arthur, Paul Bendor-Samuel, Dave Benson, Mike Betts, René and Sarah Breuel, Thomas Bucher, Jon Burns, Daniel Costanza, Lars Dahle, Chris Ducker, Colin Edwards, Joel Forster, Jeff Fountain, David Goodhew, Christian Kuhn, Frank Hinkelmann, Harvey Kwiyani, Jaume Llenas, Johan Lukasse, Simon Marshall, Jay Matenga, Kosta Milkov, Israel Olofinjana, Martin Robinson, Evi Rodemann, Peter Rowan, Andrew Symes, Daniel Trusiewicz, Evert van de Poll, Alex Vlasin, Hannes Wiesmann and Chris Wright.

Finally, as throughout all these years in mission together, immense gratitude is due to my wife Christine for her encouragement, patience, love, and on this occasion, proofreading.

Jim Memory
25th June 2021

INTRODUCTION

Any treatment of Europe must begin with definitions. Perhaps the easiest way to do that is to clarify what I do not mean. When I talk about Europe, I am not talking about the European Union. Neither am I talking about the nation states that form the patchwork of countries on our European maps. Indeed, although we immediately recognise the outline of the continent, if we look at Europe from space it immediately becomes clear that there is no uncontested geographical feature that separates it from the rest of the great landmass of Eurasia. So, what is Europe then?

The story of the idea of Europe is a fascinating one but that falls outside the scope of this report. I want to suggest that the most useful definition of Europe is a sociological one. Without its people, Europe would not exist, for it is the shared history, culture, languages, and ideas which most meaningfully distinguish Europe from other parts of the globe.

One of our favourite European pastimes is to contrast our own country or region, with that of our neighbours. "Oh, but we are very different from them!", we say. And there is some truth in that. This incredible diversity means that even neighbouring towns may have significant cultural differences. Yet at the same time, there are tremendous commonalities of culture across the Continent. Just ask an African or a Latin American and they will tell you that Europeans are more similar than they are different.

Between those general Europewide similarities, and the local unique cultures of each city and town, are mid-level commonalities of culture which distinguish Eastern from Western Europe, and the countries that border the Mediterranean Sea from those of Scandinavia. History, and particularly Europe's religious history, has so shaped these cultures that the labels of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox are often used as shorthand for Europe's regions.

When it comes to looking at Europe as a whole, we need to hold these things in tension. We need to look for the big issues which all European cultures are wrestling with, but also remember to look for the differences from region to region, country to country, and locality to locality.

This report seeks to identify the crucial issues and trends which are shaping the context for Christian mission in Europe in 2021. I can only say that I truly know two European contexts: the United Kingdom and Spain. These countries are sufficiently different, being representative to some degree of Northern Protestant Europe and Southern Catholic Europe. However, my knowledge and understanding of Central and Eastern Europe is more limited. For this very reason, I have asked friends from other parts of Europe to help me by giving their critique of this report. Thankfully, they affirmed the relevance of much of the analysis for their part of Europe too.

The report has four main chapters:

- Chapter One looks at the general context for mission in Europe today. It provides an analysis of key political, economic, social, environmental, and technological trends.

- Chapter Two focusses on the religious or spiritual context. It contains a description of the trends of secularisation and desecularisation, of the growth of Islam, but also of three realities which are contributing to the re-evangelisation of Europe: diaspora churches, church planting movements and the Next Generation.

- Chapter Three explores four fundamental shifts in mission thinking which are impacting the practice of Christian mission today. I have summarised these as: mission redefined, mission relocated, mission redistributed, and mission reoriented.

   However, any evaluation of our contemporary situation that does not consider the impact of Covid-19 is going to be inadequate. Covid-19 is probably the most significant shared experience in Europe since WWII. So across the three chapters, at the end of my analysis of a given issue, I will also discuss how the pandemic might have impacted the trends. Whilst this may seem to date the report, in most cases, the impact of Covid-19 has been to highlight or accelerate trends that were already underway.

- In Chapter Four, I set out some of the implications that each of these trends has for those who are involved in mission in Europe. Of course, as indicated above, the implications may well be different in Eastern Europe than they are in the Mediterranean countries, for example. As I often say, "no-one actually lives in Europe." We all live in a local situation, with its own unique context. So, you will have to think about the implications of this report for yourself, for your situation, your church, or your organisation.

Finally, I would really encourage you to use this report as the basis for a discussion about how you might respond to this dynamic European reality, and as fuel for your prayers. Many of the issues in these pages just seem so enormous. We may be tempted to think that anything we do is just a drop in a bucket. Yet as we pray, we call upon the Lord who reigns of whom the Psalmist says:

The mountains melt like wax before the Lord,
Before the Lord of all the earth.
Psalm 97:5

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All Scripture quotations are from the NIV unless otherwise stated.

1
Europe Today – General Context

1.1 Political Trends

The political context in Europe has changed beyond all recognition over the last fifteen years. Back in 2008, the European Union project was "full steam ahead". The Lisbon Treaty, which sought to end the constant wrangling about the European Constitution, had just been signed. Ten Central and Eastern European states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) along with Cyprus and Malta, had recently gained accession to the Union, and talks to include Croatia were well advanced. Soon the EU would have 28 members. The answer to almost every challenge that member states faced was "More Europe", that is, more financial and political integration, more unification of institutions, and further enlargement.

Yet under the surface Euro-optimism was already waning and being replaced by a Euro-scepticism evidenced by the failed referenda for the Constitution in both France and the Netherlands in 2005. And as citizens of the new accession countries took advantage of the EU principle of Free Movement, unprecedented numbers moved from East to West, such that by March 2016, 6.3 million East Europeans were resident in other EU states.

Nationalism, the very thing which the post-war European structures sought to eliminate, is once again a reality in many European countries. It is a complex phenomenon, but it can be found across the whole political spectrum from left to right. In some parts of Europe, the nationalists are xenophobic parties of the far right (Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Spain), whilst in others particularly in Eastern Europe, politicians that had been communists in Soviet times are now nationalists (Romania, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria). Then there are the nationalist movements calling for greater national or regional autonomy, and some for full independence (Catalunya, Scotland). Lastly, there is the more subtle nationalism of apparently solid democratic states whose power is concentrated at the centre, to the detriment of other regions of the same country.

Figure 1

Rise of nationalism in Europe

% of votes won by nationalist party in most recent national elections
■ 1-8   ■ 9-16   ■ 17-24   ■ 25+

In many countries nationalists got higher scores in European Parliament elections and opinion polls

1. **Hungary** Fidesz **49%** Jobbik **19%**
2. **Austria** Freedom Party **26%**
3. **Switzerland** Swiss People's Party **25.8%**
4. **Denmark** Danish People's Party **21%**
5. **Belgium** New Flemish Alliance **20.4%**
6. **Estonia** Conservative People's Party **17.8%**
7. **Finland** The Finns **17.7%**
8. **Sweden** Sweden Democrats **17.6%**
9. **Italy** The League **17.4%**
10. **Spain** Vox **15%**
11. **France** National Rally **13%**
12. **Netherlands** Freedom Party **13%**
13. **Germany** Alternative for Germany **12.6%**
14. **Czech Republic** Freedom & Direct Democracy **11%**
15. **Bulgaria** United Patriots **9%**
16. **Slovakia** Our Slovakia **8%**
17. **Poland** Confederation **6.8%**
18. **Greece** Greek Solution **3.7%**
19. **Cyprus** ELAM **3.7%**

Last updated: May 2019   BBC

Fundamentally, nationalism is built on an opposition between those who consider that they belong to the nation, and those who these same people consider do not belong. This allows nationalists to justify their political programmes in defence of "us" against an imagined "other", whether the "others" in question are migrants, Roma, regions within the state who are calling for greater autonomy or independence, or the state government itself who is seen to be oppressing them. Even if we only consider the voting share of right-wing nationalists across Europe, as illustrated in Figure 1, we can see that this is a widespread phenomenon.[1]

Brexit is an issue that has completely dominated political debate in the UK for the last six years and, to some degree, the broader European conversation as well. Yet Brexit is, in many ways, a symptom of a separate yet related phenomenon to nationalism: populism. If nationalism is a horizontal opposition between those who are seen to belong to a nation and those who are seen not to belong, populism is a vertical opposition between "the people", however they are defined, and "elites" who are seen to be oppressing them. These elites can be actual political elites within their nation, but also faceless global corporations or unelected eurocrats in Brussels. And the United Kingdom is not alone in seeking to recover some of its sovereignty from the European Union. In Central and Eastern Europe, certain countries have sought to resist the liberal and progressive social agenda of the EU where it clashes with traditional national values, or where the EU has tried to convince states to receive refugees against the will of their governments.

It is impossible to talk about the political context of Europe without mentioning Russia. The Russian occupation of south-eastern Ukraine in 2014 has largely dropped out of the news, and since then many former Soviet republics and some others have looked more warily toward their Russian neighbours. Sweden has reintroduced national service, has increased funding for the armed forces, and many Swedes are advocating joining NATO.[2] What is sometimes forgotten is that EU and NATO enlargement to the East over the last twenty years is part of the problem. What is seen from the West as extending democracy and protecting freedom is interpreted in Russia as encroachment into their interests and parking our tanks in their front garden. The Cold War ended thirty years ago but relations between Russia and the West are not warm, despite the dependence of many EU countries on Russia's gas supplies.

Finally, further to the East, there is the growing challenge of China. Beijing's economic and strategic goal is to overtake the United States as the world's biggest economy. European countries are already heavily indebted to China and dependent on Chinese investment for their infrastructure projects.[3] This helps to explain the timidity of many European countries in denouncing human rights violations in Tibet or against the Uighurs. The influence of China on the lives of Europeans is only likely to grow further in the decades to come. As the European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen said recently, "Those that write the global rules are the ones who are shaping the future of their societies …None of us wants China to do that for us."[4]

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1 BBC News, Rise of Nationalism in Europe, 13/11/2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006, Accessed 9/6/2021

2 BBC News, Sweden brings back military conscription amid Baltic tensions, 2/3/2017 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39140100 Accessed 25/6/2017

3 European Commission, Foreign Direct Investment in the EU, 13/3/2019, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2019/march/tradoc_157724.pdf, Accessed 25/6/2021

4 Politico, Missing: Has anyone seen Europe's China plan?, 3/3/2021, https://www.politico.eu/article/missing-europe-china-diplomacy-economic-plan/, Accessed 25/6/2021

Impact of Covid-19

Nationalism has arguably become an even more significant political reality since the arrival of Covid-19. Borders have been closed and free movement within the Schengen Area suspended or restricted. More recently, vaccine nationalism has set countries against one another even within the European Union. Governments have seized the opportunity to introduce unprecedented controls on their populations. Cherished civil liberties have been removed or heavily restricted, and some European leaders may be in no hurry to reverse these measures once Covid-19 is under control.

More positively, the agreement to support economies by means of direct loans from the European Central Bank can be considered a sign of greater collaboration and solidarity. However, the initial slowness of the vaccine rollout in mainland Europe relative to the US and UK, in part related to the lack of manufacturing capacity, led some to call for a relocation of strategic industries.[5] That Hungary and Poland would look to China, and Slovakia to Russia, for vaccine supplies before they were authorised by the European Medicines Agency, is just one sign of European vulnerability.

1.2 Economic Trends

The financial crisis that began in 2008 with the collapse of Lehman Brothers precipitated a sovereign debt crisis in many Eurozone countries leading to emergency bailouts in some countries and drastic public spending cutbacks in others. Since then, most Europeans would probably say that things have been relatively stable but, under the surface there is much to be concerned about. The situation can be summarised in two charts.

Figure 2 below[6] shows the Eurozone GDP growth rate over the last ten years. GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is how economists have traditionally measured the general health of the economy.[7] It is a bit like blood pressure - you certainly do not want it swinging up and down suddenly.

Figure 2

GDP growth rates over the same quarter of the previous year
% change, based on seasonally adjusted data

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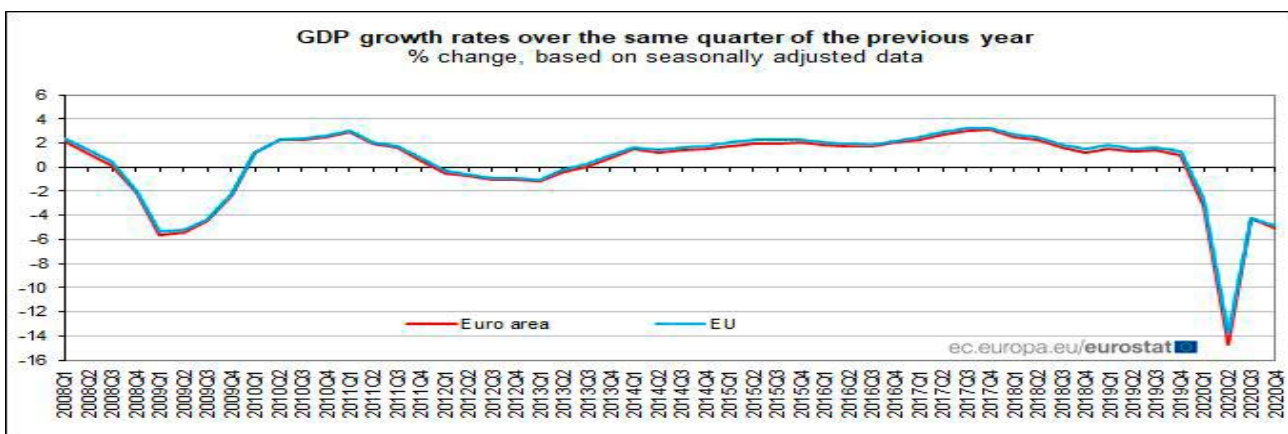
5 European Parliament 2021, Post Covid-19 value chains: options for reshoring production back to Europe, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/653626/EXPO_STU(2021)653626_EN.pdf Accessed 10/6/2021

6 Eurostat, GDP Growth 2008-2020, 2/2/2021, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/portlet_file_entry/2995521/2-02022021-AP-EN.pdf/0e84de9c-0462-6868-df3e-dbacaad9f49f, Accessed 12/2/2021

7 Over the last twenty years there has been much debate around the usefulness of GDP as a measure of the health of an economy, not least because many things are not included in GDP calculations - like unpaid labour. Further income inequalities are hidden - changes in income distribution (the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer) may yield exactly the same GDP figure. See Smith, Financial Times, 25/7/2018, https://www.ft.com/content/750bc555-036b-38b5-9b32-ac3c4244e449; Grice and Williams, Economia, 5/3/2014, https://www.icaew.com/technical/business-and-management/economy-and-business-environment/debate-gdp-as-a-measurement; Kapoor and Debroy, 2019, Harvard Business Review,4/10/2019, https://hbr.org/2019/10/gdp-is-not-a-measure-of-human-well-being; Accessed 10/6/21

Three dips in the chart can be observed. The first corresponds to the global financial crisis of 2008/9, the second to the sovereign debt crisis of 2011-13. The third and largest dip corresponds to the economic impact of Covid-19. I will comment on this more later, but for now, note the y-axis. Even during the years of stability, the economies of the Eurozone have been growing very weakly.

The growth that has been achieved was only possible because of the huge amount of money that the European Central Bank has pumped into the European economy every month through the Quantitative Easing (QE) programme (Figure 3). Returning to the blood pressure analogy, QE is a bit like a regular blood transfusion. The last few years up to 2020 might have appeared to have been stable economically, but that was only possible thanks to a monthly injection into the European economy of sometimes 30, sometimes 60 and at points 90 billion euro, just to keep our economic blood pressure up.[8] That is 100 and sometimes 200 euros a month for every single Eurozone citizen. You do not need to be an economist to realise that if you have to borrow 100 euros a month for every member of your family just to keep putting food on the table, then something is not quite right. And in the real world, unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, is still a huge problem. Across many parts of Central, Eastern and Mediterranean Europe a generation of young people are missing because they have gone abroad to find work.

Figure 3
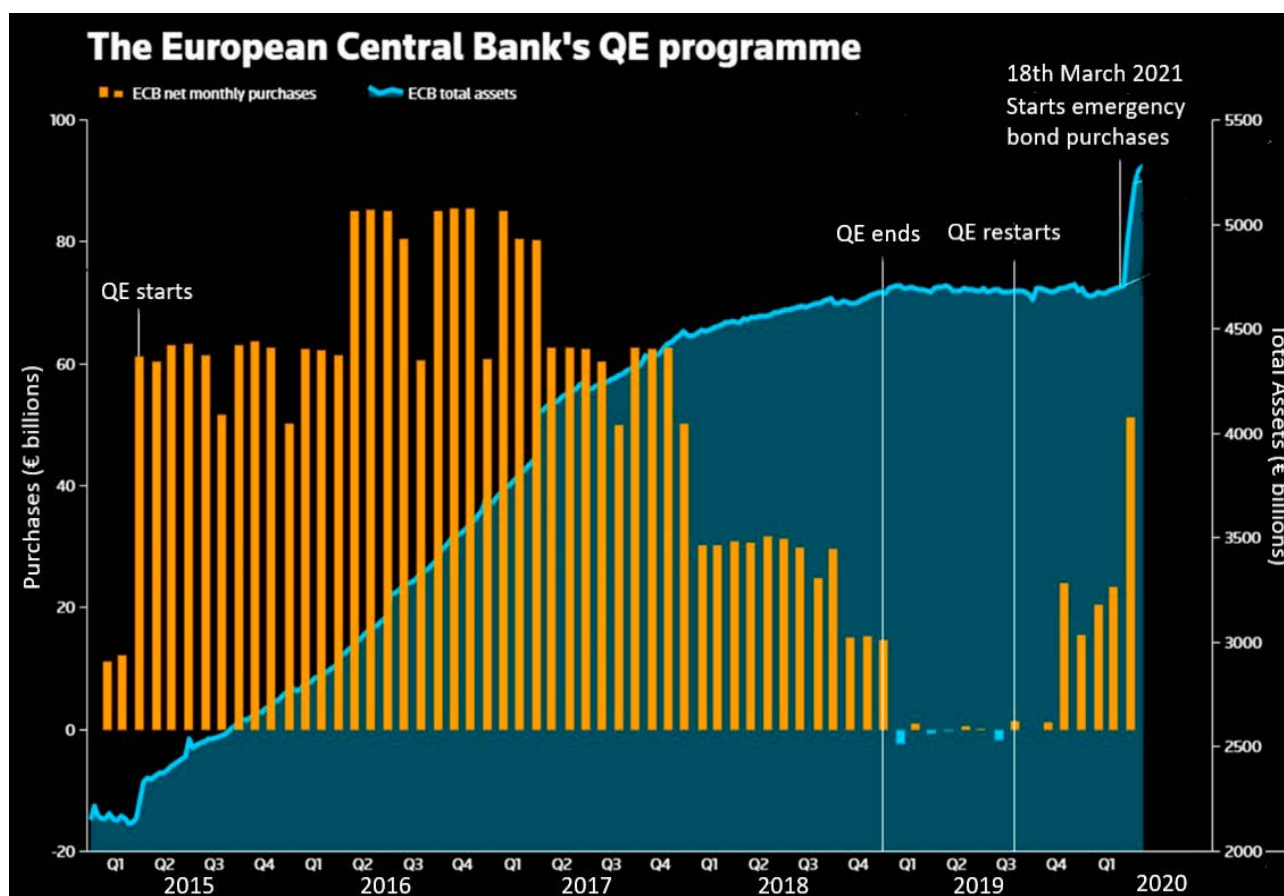
High levels of sovereign debt and the intergenerational tension between an asset-rich elderly population whose state pensions are largely being paid by a younger adult population burdened by student debt and less favourable employment prospects, are likely to dominate the European economic situation for the foreseeable future.

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8 Ritvik Carvalho, Reuters, 27/4/2020 https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-eurozone-markets-ecb-graphic-idUKKCN-2290HN, Accessed 12/2/2021

Impact of Covid-19

As we have seen, sovereign debt is a feature of most European states. Covid-19 has taken that to a whole new level. The UK's national debt has reached its highest level since the early 1960s reflecting the huge cost of pandemic support measures such as the furlough scheme. The annual total for government borrowing, the amount the government borrows to make up for the gap between what it spends and what it raises in taxes, has reached £278.8bn, which is £230bn more than a year ago.[9] Debt as a percentage of GDP is now at 99.4% in the UK and 97.3% in the Eurozone. No-one can say how many years, or even decades, it may take us to pay off the sovereign debt we have built up over the last year.

In the real world, many Europeans have fallen behind on their mortgage payments and are struggling to pay their personal debts because of lockdown measures. Wealth inequalities between the richest and the poorest have been rising for some decades.[10] The pandemic has brought that into even sharper relief. Many of those in secure well-paid employment have been able to continue working from home. Some have saved money since they were not commuting nor going on holiday. Many others have lost their jobs, particularly those in the hospitality and tourism sectors, often the first rung of employment for young people. Overall, it is estimated that some 7 million jobs have been lost across the EU.[11]

1.3 Social Trends

In respect to the social context of Europe, there are many issues that could be singled out, but I want to highlight three: migration, low birth-rates, and gender issues, more specifically the growing numbers of people identifying as LGBT+.

The so called "European migrant crisis" of 2015/16 saw the arrival of more than 1.5 million refugees, principally from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, into South-eastern Europe, mainly by land and sea. However, in 2016 many European countries changed their refugee policies and strengthened border controls and the EU agreed a "one in one out" policy with Turkey which in effect shut off the Eastern route to Europe. Unsurprisingly, desperate migrants have sought other routes. According to the International Organization for Migration: 110,669 arrived by sea in 2019, the last full year of data, marking the sixth successive year of 100,000+ arrivals. Most of these now arrive by the Central and Western Mediterranean routes rather than through Greece and the Balkans.[12]

People trafficking is another, often invisible, form of migration. The most recent EU report, which still includes the UK data, records that 26,268 people were registered as victims of human trafficking in 2017-18.[13] However, this is a huge under-estimation. An Alliance 8.7 report estimates that there

9 UK Government, Public Sector Finances: February 2021, 19/3/2021, https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/governmentpublicsectorandtaxes/publicsectorfinance/bulletins/publicsectorfinances/february2021, Accessed 22/6/2021
10 European Commission, Widening Gap Between the Rich and Poor, 28/9/2015, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/widening-gap-between-rich-and-poor-european-cities , Accessed 17/5/2021
11 European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, Coronavirus Impact on jobs in EU sectors and occupations, 10/3/2021, https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news-and-press/news/coronavirus-impact-jobs-eu-sectors-and-occupations-skills-forecast-analysis, Accessed 10/6/2021
12 International Organization for Migration, Mediterranean Arrivals 2019, 1/3/2020. https://www.iom.int/news/iom-mediterranean-arrivals-reach-110699-2019-deaths-reach-1283-world-deaths-fall , Accessed 15/2/2021
13 European Commission, Data collection on trafficking in human beings in the EU, 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/default/files/study_on_data_collection_on_trafficking_in_human_beings_in_the_eu.pdf , Accessed 21/6/2021

were 3.6 million victims of modern slavery in Europe and Central Asia in 2016.[14] As I have written elsewhere, "The difficulty in handling the statistics must not blind us to the reality that right here in Europe many tens if not hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are living in slavery."[15] However, migration is not only a matter of refugees or victims of people trafficking. People migrate for all sorts of reasons. EU citizens have the right to reside and work in any other EU country so normally do not appear in migration statistics.   And, whilst the focus is on immigration, emigration is also a real challenge in many countries.

Globally, the ten countries with the fastest shrinking populations are all in Europe: Bulgaria, Latvia, Moldova, Ukraine, Croatia, Lithuania, Romania, Serbia, Poland, and Hungary.   Some Central and Eastern European countries have suffered enormously from the emigration of their youngest and most talented. Since 1989 Latvia has lost 27% of its population, Lithuania 23%, and Bulgaria 21%. In total eleven Central and Eastern European countries have lost more than 10% of their population. That level of population loss is unprecedented during times of peace and the future projections indicate that trend is likely to continue.[16]

Migration is one reason for these collapsing populations, but another is the stubbornly low birth-rate across Europe. Not a single European state has a birth-rate sufficient to maintain its population: 2.1 live births per woman. As is shown in Figure 4, in certain countries in Eastern Europe and along the Mediterranean the birth-rates are frighteningly low. [17] The UK rate for 2018, no longer shown in Eurostat reports since its exit from the EU, stood at 1.70.[18]

Figure 4

Fertility rates in the EU Member States
(live births per woman, 2018)

ec.europa.eu/**eurostat**

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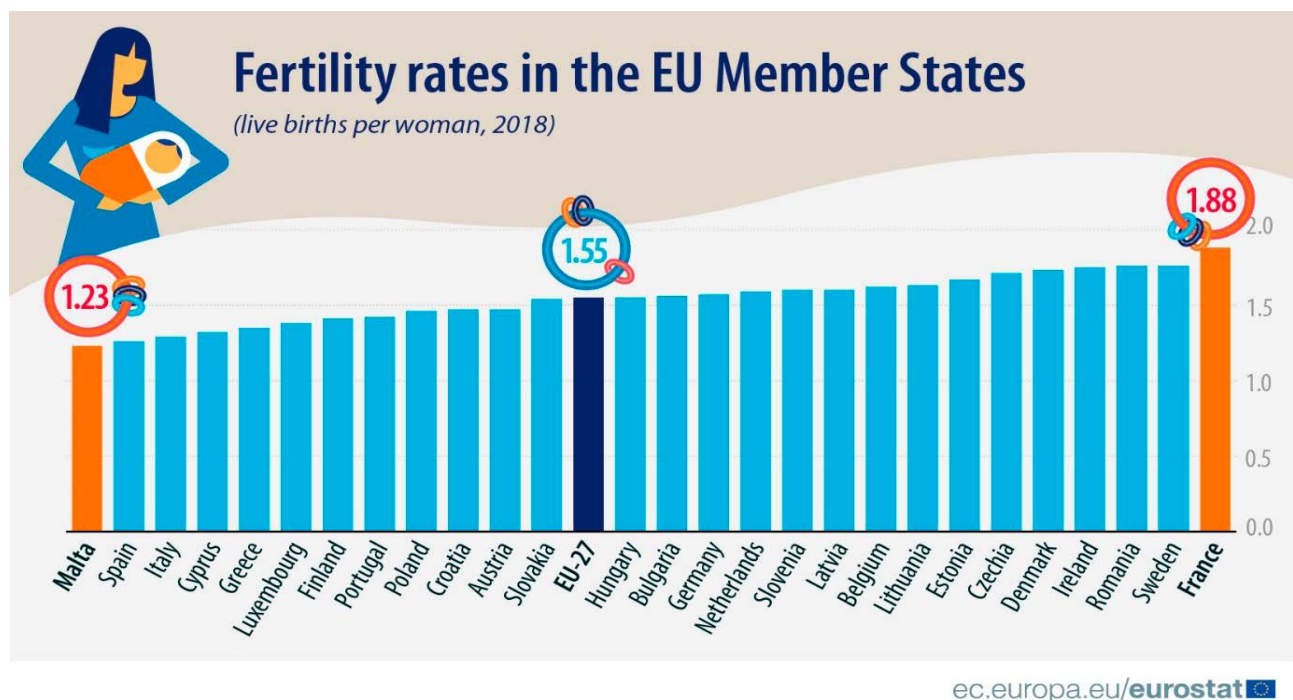
14 Alliance 8.7, Global Estimates of Modern Slavery and Child Labour: Regional Brief for Europe and Central Asia, 2017, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@ipec/documents/publication/wcms_597874.pdf Accessed 21/6/2021
15 Memory, Measuring People Trafficking, *Vista* 20, Jan 2015, 5 https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/s/vista_issue_20_jan_2015.pdf, Accessed 21/6/2021
16 European Commission, Demographic Scenarios for the EU, 4/2019, http://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/15942/1/demographic_online_20190527.pdf, Accessed 10/6/2021
17 Eurostat, Fertility rates in the EU Member States, 10/4/2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20200410-1, Accessed 20/6/2021
18 UK Government, ONS, Births in England and Wales 2019, 22/7/2020, https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/livebirths/bulletins/birthsummarytablesenglandandwales/2019, Accessed 20/6/2021

The combination of East-to-West migration and differential birth-rates means that, if current trends continue, Europe's demographic future is clear: a continued decline of population in Central and Eastern Europe yet significant population growth in some Western European countries. The combined effects of these trends can be seen in the Figure 5. [19]

It is not a neat East-West split though. Germany is on course to shrink by between eight million and thirteen million by 2060 as deaths continue to outpace births. The resulting shift in demographics will see the German working population decline from 60pc to 50pc of the total. That is likely to have huge implications for the cost of pensions and healthcare, the consumer base, and economic participation rates. Similar challenges will be faced by many other countries.

Figure 5

Projected Population Change in European Countries 2017 to 2050

	Population (thousands) in 2017	in 2050	
Luxembourg	583	865	+48.37%
Ireland	4,761	6,334	+33.04%
Iceland	335	407	+21.49%
Sweden	9,910	12,012	+21.21%
Norway	5,305	6,365	+19.98%
Cyprus	1,179	1,393	+18.15%
Kosovo	1,900	2,223	+17.00%
Spain	46,354	52,491	+13.24%
Switzerland	8,476	9,540	+12.55%
Belgium	11,429	12,773	+11.76%
UK	66,181	71,154	+7.51%
France	64,979	69,485	+6.93%
Netherlands	17,035	17,907	+5.12%
Austria	8,735	9,108	+4.27%
Italy	59,359	61,416	+3.47%
Finland	5,523	5,476	-0.85%
Denmark	5,733	5,576	-2.74%
Albania	2,930	2,825	-3.58%
Portugal	10,329	9,934	-3.82%
Czech Rep.	10,618	10,210	-3.84%
Macedonia	2,083	1,991	-4.42%
Croatia	4,189	3,865	-7.73%
Malta	430	396	-7.91%
Montenegro	628	578	-7.96%
Romania	19,679	18,061	-8.22%
Bosnia Herz.	3,507	3,217	-8.27%
Russia	143,989	129,909	-9.78%
Greece	11,159	10,036	-10.06%
Slovakia	5,447	4,851	-10.94%
Belarus	9,468	8,340	-11.91%
Hungary	9,721	8,490	-12.66%
Germany	82,114	71,542	-12.87%
Poland	38,170	32,739	-14.23%
Ukraine	44,222	37,149	-15.99%
Serbia	7,040	5,870	-16.62%
Bulgaria	7,084	5,532	-21.91%
Slovenia	2,079	1,597	-23.18%
Estonia	1,309	924	-29.41%
Latvia	1,949	1,250	-35.86%
Lithuania	2,890	1,802	-37.65%
Moldova	4,051	2,262	-44.16%

Source:
International Data Base,
International Programs Center,
U.S. Census Bureau,
U.S. Dept. of Commerce,
The World Factbook,
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)
The World Almanac and Book of Facts

FactsMaps.com
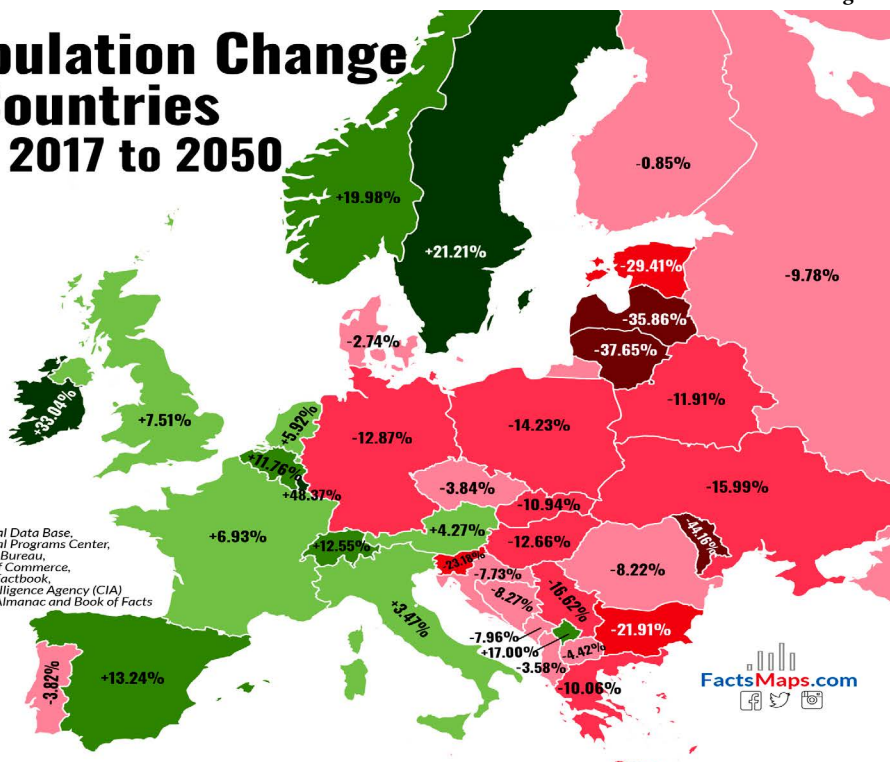
The third significant social trend in Europe is the increased number of those self-identifying as LGBT+, particularly among the younger generation. A 2016 survey by Dalia Research found that 5.9% of Europeans identify as LGBT, ranging from 7.4% in Germany to 1.5% in Hungary.[20] Among 14- to 29-year-olds, 16% described their sexual orientation as something other than heterosexual. This correlates closely with a recent study by Gallup in the US which found that 5.6% of the US population identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer, up from 3.5% in 2012.[21] Among the under-23s the US percentage went up to 15.9%. And 2020 research by Ipsos MORI in the UK found that, whilst nine in ten Britons identify themselves as heterosexual, only about half (54%) of Generation Z say they are exclusively attracted to the opposite sex.[22]

19 FactMaps.com, Projected Population Changes in European Countries 2017-2050, 2018, https://factsmaps.com/projected-population-change-european-countries-2017-2050/, Accessed 2/2/2021
20 Dalia, Counting the LGBT population: 6% of Europeans identify as LGBT, 18th Oct 2016, https://daliaresearch.com/blog/counting-the-lgbt-population-6-of-europeans-identify-as-lgbt/, Accessed 13/4/2021
21 Gallup, LGBT Identification Rises to 5.6% in Latest U.S. Estimate, 24/2/2021, https://news.gallup.com/poll/329708/lgbt-identification-rises-latest-estimate.aspx, Accessed 13/4/2021
22 Ipsos MORI, Sexual orientation and attitudes to LGBTQ+ in Britain, 26/6/2020, https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/sexual-orientation-and-attitudes-lgbtq-britain, Accessed 13/4/2021

Recently, the specific issue of transgender rights has come to the fore, not least because of the striking rise in the number of young people identifying as transgender (Figure 6).[23] Should people be allowed to change the legal markers of their gender simply by saying so? Trans-rights groups in some European countries have campaigned strongly that they should, and laws have recently come before the Spanish and German parliaments, only to be voted down. The debate has split the so-called LGBT+ community, as some lesbians have argued that such laws could endanger women.[24]

Referrals of children and adolescents to the UK Gender Identity Development Service by birth-registered gender, April 2011–April 2017.[25]
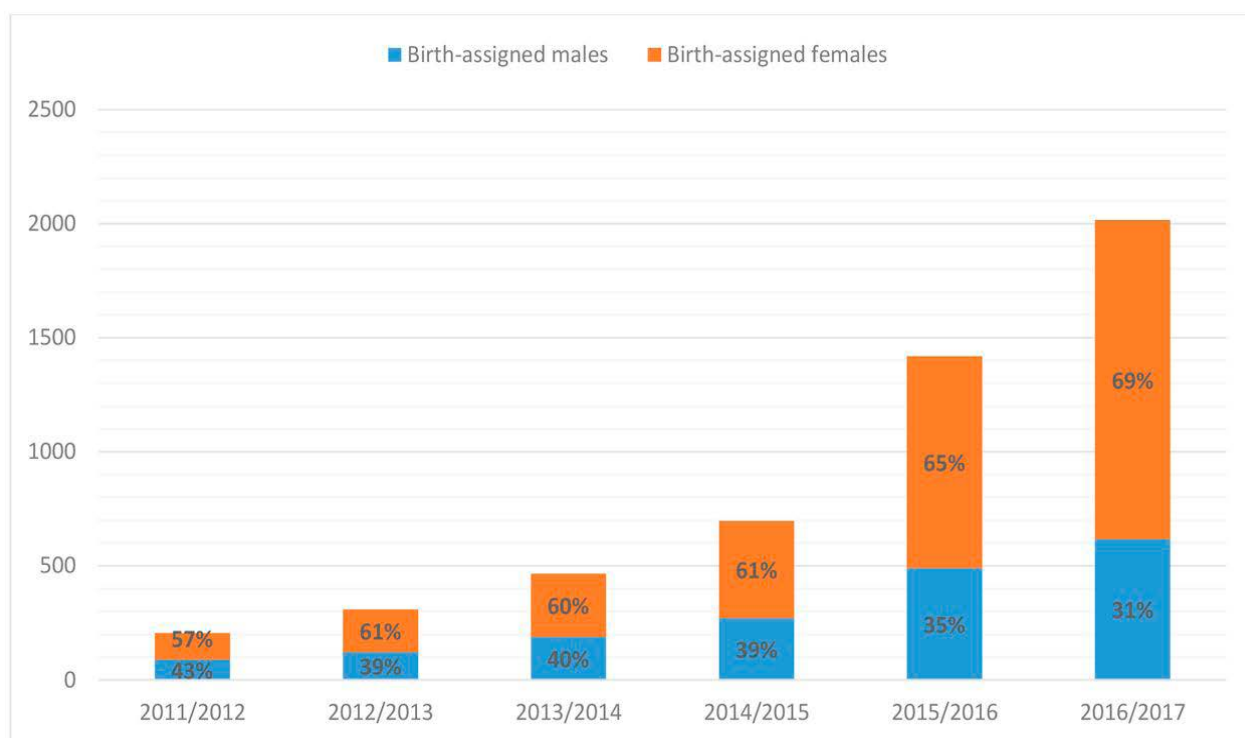
We should not forget that LGBT+ people suffer terrible hate crimes in many European countries. Yet in others, like the UK, the tables are turned. Feminist speakers who question the trans agenda are deplatformed at universities[26], authors like J.K.Rowling are labelled transphobic for voicing support for someone who lost their job after tweeting that transgender people cannot change their biological sex,[27] and Christians are accused of hate speech because they challenge the affirmation-only approach to gender identity.[28]   Together with migration and birthrate, the gender wars are reshaping European society before our eyes.

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23 Butler, et.al., (2018) Assessment and support of children and adolescents with gender dysphoria in *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, Vol.103 Iss.7, 2018 https://adc.bmj.com/content/103/7/631#ref-1, Accessed 23/6/2021
24 The Economist, Continental Europe enters the gender wars, 12/6/2021, https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/06/12/continental-europe-enters-the-gender-wars, Accessed 21/6/2021
25 Butler et al., *ibid*.
26 The Guardian, If feminist Linda Bellos is seen as a risk, progressive politics has lost its way, 6/10/2017, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/06/feminist-linda-bellos-women-trans-male-violence, Accessed 21/6/2021
27 BBC News, JK Rowling responds to trans tweets criticism, 11/6/2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-53002557, Accessed 21/6/2021
28 The Times, We are treated like the Uighurs, claim evangelical Christians, 4/2/2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/we-are-treated-like-the-uighurs-claim-evangelical-christians-k2v32btpp, Accessed 21/6/2021

Impact of Covid-19

Migration has clearly been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Movement between countries for whatever reason has been limited by border controls, and the imposition of testing protocols and vaccine passports may continue to supress migration for some time to come. In fact, 2020 saw a great reverse migration as unprecedented numbers of Central and Eastern Europeans returned to their home countries.[29] It is estimated that 1.3 million Romanians went back to Romania, and more than half a million Bulgarians returned to their homeland, an extraordinary number for a population of only 7 million.[30] As employment has returned after lockdown, some of these workers have now returned to Western Europe but certainly not all.

However, migrant flows of refugees and asylum seekers have continued at more-or-less pre-pandemic levels. UNHCR figures indicated that 123,633 refugees crossed the Mediterranean Sea during 2019. In 2020 this reduced to 95,031.[31] However, the economic impact of Covid-19 on countries that neighbour Europe has generated new drivers for migration. And since control of these flows depends on the cooperation of security forces on both sides of the border, when there are political reasons for non-cooperation, desperate humanitarian situations can occur as they recently did on the border between Morocco and Ceuta.[32] We must not forget the 3.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, many of whom are desperate to get to Europe but are stuck there due to the aforementioned 2016 deal. Nor the 16,000 who are in refugee camps on the Greek islands because they arrived since the deal was signed.[33] Nor can we forget the victims of human trafficking who "face additional risks due to the Covid-19 outbreak, as a result of isolation, economic instability, and reduced access to support services."[34]

Whilst some predicted that Covid-19 lockdowns might leave couples with little else to do than procreate, the data is showing that rather than a baby boom we are seeing a baby bust. Preliminary results from Spain[35] indicate a 23% fall in registered births in the December-January period compared with the previous year. In Italy births were down 22%. In France, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania monthly birth figures for December or January were at their lowest in more than 20 years. [36]

It is unlikely that Covid-19 will have affected the numbers of those self-identifying as LGBT+, but various reports have highlighted the impact of the pandemic on LGBT+ people in Europe, in limiting access to targeted mental health services but also noting a rise in reports of discrimination

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29 The Economist, How the pandemic reversed old migration patterns in Europe, 28/1/2021, https://www.economist.com/europe/2021/01/28/how-the-pandemic-reversed-old-migration-patterns-in-europe, Accessed 13/4/2021
30 ECFR, The Grand Return: COVID-19 and Reverse Migration to Bulgaria, 11/2020, https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/Remigration-Report-ECFR-EN.pdf, Accessed 13/4/2021
31 UNHCR, Mediterranean Situation, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean, Accessed 10/3/2021
32 BBC News, Migrants reach Spain´s Ceuta enclave in record numbers, 18/5/2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57150051, Accessed 11/6/2021
33 The Guardian, What happened to the Syrian refugees who got stuck in Turkey?, 17/3/2021, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/17/what-happened-to-the-syrian-refugees-who-got-stuck-in-turkey, Accessed 11/6/2021
34 University of Nottingham Rights Lab, The Government's response to COVID-19: human rights implications related to modern slavery, 2020, https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2020/april/submission-to-the-joint-committee-on-human-rights-and-modern-slavery.pdf Accessed 21/6/2021
35 El Pais, The Coronavirus Effect, 8/3/2021, https://english.elpais.com/economy_and_business/2021-03-08/the-coronavirus-effect-spain-sees-sharp-decline-in-births.html, Accessed 10/3/2021
36 BBC News, Covid: From boom to bust – why lockdown hasn´t led to more babies, 18/3/2021 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-56415248, Accessed 11/6/2021

and domestic violence.[37] More broadly, it is recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a rise in domestic violence towards women and children across Europe.[38]

1.4 Environmental Trends

With economic, political, and social challenges to the fore, not to mention Covid-19, environmental issues have not exactly been at the top of the European political agenda recent. However, the hard facts have not changed. Globally, nineteen of the warmest years on record have occurred since the turn of the millennium.[39] Europe is warming faster than the global average as indicated in Figure 7. The four warmest years in Europe since records began were 2014, 2015, 2018 and 2019.

Global average temperature anomaly

European average temperature anomaly
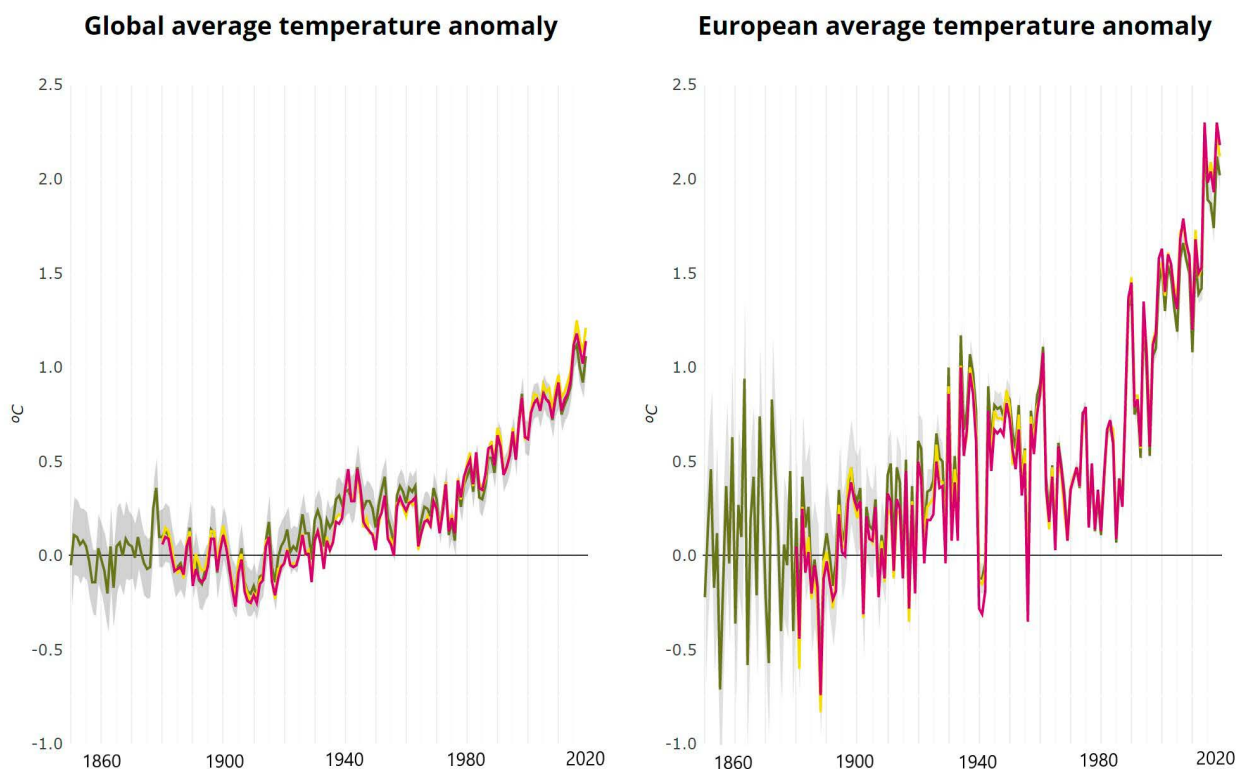
The year 2018 saw an extraordinary number of extreme climate events in Europe. Northern Europe saw thermometers hit all-time highs. In Denmark, June 2018 was the warmest year for three decades and July the sunniest of all time. In Finland, areas north of the Arctic Circle reached 33°C while the northern province of Lapland was hit by disastrous fires.

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37 Council of Europe, Covid-19 impacts on LGBTI communities in Europe and Central Asia, 19/6/2020, https://www.coe.int/en/web/sogi/-/report-by-ilga-europe-covid-19-impacts-on-lgbti-communities-in-europe-and-central-asia-a-rapid-assessment-report, Accessed 14/4/2021

38 European Institute for Gender Equality, The Covid-19 pandemic and intimate partner violence against women in the EU, 5/3/2021, https://eige.europa.eu/publications/covid-19-pandemic-and-intimate-partner-violence-against-wo-men-eu, Accessed 22/6/2021; Unicef, During the pandemic, women and children are at greater risk of domestic violence, 10/12/2020, https://www.unicef.org/romania/press-releases/during-pandemic-women-and-children-are-grea-ter-risk-domestic-violence, Accessed 22/6/2021

39 NASA, Global Temperature, https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/global-temperature/, Accessed 11/6/2021

However, extreme weather is not limited to heatwaves. Flooding is becoming a regular problem in many European countries. Europe is now experiencing more frequent and more serious floods than at any time in the last 500 years according to research published in Nature in July 2020.[40] Just as this report was going to press, on 15th and 16th July 2021, the West of Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, suffered the worst flooding in a generation with the loss of almost certainly hundreds of lives.

Climate change is one of the factors which is driving inward migration to Europe, but it may also become a reality within Europe in the next generation as certain regions and cities become inhospitable places to live. Many agriculturalists consider that these extreme weather events are already putting the continent's food security at risk.[41] Other recent research suggests that chemicals in the environment may also be associated with plummeting fertility rates not just in Europe but around the world.[42]

Impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 initially appeared to have short-term positive benefits for the environment. The severe lockdown improved air quality in many places, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and lessened water pollution and noise.[43] Yet when the data was in, 2020 turned out to be the joint warmest year on record.[44] Experts predict that, as global economic activity returns, the pandemic will prove to have shown only a very small impact on emissions in 2030 and beyond.[45]

What is still unclear is if Covid-19 will have caused lifestyle changes that may affect the environment. Many employers and employees have become aware of the advantages of home working and may never go back to the office. International tourism, and the airlines which facilitate it, may not return to the pre-pandemic levels. Conversely, the financial impact of dealing with the pandemic may seriously condition the responses of governments to the environmental crisis.

The recent G7 summit could have made much more ambitious commitments to handling the climate crisis but, rather than learning the lessons of Covid-19, that such issues must be fought together, there appeared to be little appetite to promise more money to address the global environmental challenges at the present time.[46] The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in early November will be another crucial opportunity to act.

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40 Blöschl, et.al., (2020), Current European flood-rich period exceptional compared with past 500 years, *Nature* 583. 560-566, 22/7/2020, https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2478-3, Accessed 10/3/2021
41 Sustainability Times, Frequent extreme weather events are increasing crop losses in Europe, 2/4/2021, https://www.sustainability-times.com/environmental-protection/frequent-extreme-weather-events-are-increasing-crop-losses-in-europe/, Accessed 11/6/2021
42 Levine, et.al., (2017), Temporal trends in sperm count: a systematic review and meta-regression analysis, *Human Reproduction Update*, Vol.23, Issue 6, Nov-Dec 2017, https://academic.oup.com/humupd/article/23/6/646/4035689, Accessed 18/3/2021
43 Kumar, et.al (2020), With Corona Outbreak: Nature Started Hitting the Reset Button Globally, *Frontiers in Public Health*, 24/9/2020, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2020.569353/full, Accessed 11/6/2021
44 NASA, 2020 Tied for Warmest Year on Record, NASA Analysis Shows, 14/1/2021, https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/2020-tied-for-warmest-year-on-record-nasa-analysis-shows, Accessed 11/6/2021
45 Reilly, J.M., et.al (2021), The COVID-19 effect on the Paris agreement. *Humanit Soc Sci Commun* 8, 16 https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00698-2 , Accessed 12/3/2021
46 TIME, The G7 want to save the world from climate change. But are they willing to pay for it? 10/6/2021, https://time.com/6072651/g7-climate-finance/, Accessed 15/6/2021

1.5 Technological Trends

At the end of 2015, the World Economic Forum produced a report called *Deep Shift: Technology Tipping Points and Societal Impact*. [47]The report outlined six technological megatrends that are shaping the future:

i. People and the internet. How we connect with others and share information is being transformed. Wearable and implantable technology will become a normal part of life.

ii. Computing, communications, and storage everywhere. Cost reductions will give nearly everyone almost limitless access to computing power and digital storage.

iii. The Internet of Things. Clothes, accessories, transport, our homes, and the manufacturing processes that supply them, will all be enabled with technology.

iv. Artificial intelligence (AI) and big data. Exponential digitalisation is creating exponentially more data – about everything and everyone. This will have a huge impact on decision-making and employment.

v. The sharing economy and distributed trust. The internet supports new economies and shared assets. Blockchain technology[48] becomes an alternative and ultimately a replacement for central banks.

vi. The digitization of matter. Physical objects are increasingly being "printed" in 3D, allowing for simple items to be manufactured at home, and even homes themselves to be built.[49] In the medical sector, unique surgical instruments, custom-made prosthetics, and even 3D-printed human skin are already being developed.[50]

Even a cursory consideration of these six shifts gives us an idea of just how much our context and means of communication are being transformed by technological innovation, and not always for the better.

At the most basic level, these technologies depend on access to the internet and, even in Europe, this is far from uniform. Not everyone has equal access to information technology, and those of us that do are less in control of it than we think. Algorithms control what we can and cannot see on social media. Artificial intelligence may soon make decisions on our lives: what educational opportunities or jobs are available to us, what medical or life insurance we are able to get, and so on.

Rather than painting a dystopian future, it is more instructive to consider the impact that technology has already had on society. Technology has already transformed and liberalised the global labour

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47 World Economic Forum (2015), Deep Shift: Technology Tipping Points and Societal Impact, 9/9/2015, https://www.weforum.org/reports/deep-shift-technology-tipping-points-and-societal-impact , Accessed 20/5/2021

48 A blockchain is a time-stamped series of immutable records of data that is managed by a cluster of computers rather than any single entity. Each of these blocks of data is secured and bound to each other in a chain using cryptographic principles.

49 Guardian, Dutch couple become Europe's first inhabitants of a 3D-printed house, 30/4/2021, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/apr/30/dutch-couple-move-into-europe-first-fully-3d-printed-house-eindhoven, Accessed 11/6/2021

50 Sculpteo, Medical 3D Printing: How 3D-printing is saving lives, https://www.sculpteo.com/en/3d-learning-hub/applications-of-3d-printing/medical-3d-printing/, Accessed 11/6/2021

market creating a whole new class of labourer which some call the *precariat*.[51] These workers survive on short-term, zero-hours contracts with few rights beyond the salary they receive for the hours they work. They are often victims of debt, often because in the absence of formal work contracts, they are unable to borrow money on favourable terms. Many see links between the emergence of the precariat and the rise of populism.[52]

Yet one of the most profound impacts of the digital revolution is its impact on knowledge and truth. In a digital world, information whether true or false, spreads rapidly. Whether in the form of media reports, data or social media posts, information can be used to manipulate behaviour whether or not it is real or true. Cyberspace analyst Laura Galante observes that, "our realities are increasingly based on the information that we're consuming in the palm of our hand, and from the news feeds that we're scanning, and the hashtags and stories that we see trending", so that our minds have been turned into "the most exploitable device on the planet". [53]

Research is revealing that our vulnerability is the result of the "illusory truth effect", a phenomenon where people rate repeated statements as more truthful than non-repeated ones. The more times we see a piece of information repeated, the more likely we are to believe it is true. Whether it is factually true or not is almost irrelevant. If it produces the desired result, whether that is the purchase of a certain product, a vote for a given party, or a more radical political response, that is all that matters. The digital revolution is also an epistemological revolution.

Finally, a word on social media and mental health. The last ten years have seen many of us move to an entirely new means of human interaction – social media on our mobile phones. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram enable us to be connected 24/7 right around the world. It is estimated that there are currently 3 billion active monthly users of social media. Yet this greater connectedness does not translate into life satisfaction. "Social media addiction" is thought to affect around 5% of young people and this is mainly due to its compulsivity. "The desire for a 'hit' of dopamine, coupled with a failure to gain instant gratification, may prompt users to perpetually refresh their social media feeds."[54] Studies have found that a prolonged use of social media platforms may be related to depression, anxiety, and stress. Whilst recognising that further studies were necessary, one metareview of the literature on the effects of social network usage on mental health came to the firm conclusion that "social media are responsible for aggravating mental health problems."[55]

Impact of Covid-19

Processes of digitalisation that might have taken years under normal circumstances, took place in a matter of weeks as a result of the pandemic. Church meetings moved online and even the elderly became familiarised with using information technology to connect with others. The more significant consequences of increased digitalisation may only become evident in the years to come. Previously,

51 Standing (2018), The Precariat: Today's Transformative Class, *Great Transition Initiative*, 10/2021, https://greattransition.org/publication/precariat-transformative-class, Accessed 25/6/2021
52 World Economic Forum, Meet the precariat, the new global class duelling the rise of populism, 9/11/2016, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/11/precariat-global-class-rise-of-populism/, Accessed 15/6/2021
53 KUB, The Illusory Truth Effect on Social Media, 6/2020, https://www.kub-uk.net/insights/illusory-truth-effect/ Accessed 26/5/2021
54 Edmonds, Anxiety, loneliness and Fear of Missing Out: The impact of social media on young people's mental health, Centre for Mental Health, 18/9/2018, https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/blogs/anxiety-loneliness-and-fear-missing-out-impact-social-media-young-peoples-mental-health, Accessed 25/6/2021
55 Karim, et al. (2020), Social Media Use and Its Connection to Mental Health: A Systematic Review, *Cureus* 12(6): e8627. https://doi:10.7759/cureus.8627 Accessed 25/6/2021

Artificial Intelligence was mainly used to engage customers and influence choices, whether in the purchase of a product or the choice of an electoral candidate. During the pandemic, with time at an essence, AI helped health services model infection rates and predict capacity problems.[56,57] Covid-19's longer term impact will be to accelerate the use of AI and robotics in many jobs that currently involve human contact. Distance working has become normal for many employees and some businesses may never return to the Monday-to-Friday office routine.

Covid-19 has also exacerbated the technological inequalities in society. Whilst children from privileged backgrounds have been able to continue their schooling online, many children from less wealthy backgrounds have missed out on schooling which, unless it is addressed, will have a life-long impact. Research from Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK indicate both "learning losses" and increases in inequality because of the pandemic.[58]

The technology developed for contact tracing may be applied more broadly. The location data from smartphones can be used to track people's movements, allowing levels of personal surveillance that would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. Whilst in many countries such measures are voluntary, the need for digital vaccine passports when crossing borders, or even the requirement to activate such applications to retain or obtain employment, will drive this technology into the mainstream, with all the civil liberties consequences that accompany it.

If we had any doubts about "the illusory truth effect", the pandemic has shown just how vulnerable we are to the epistemological revolution of the digital age. Misinformation and conspiracy theories around Covid-19 and, more recently, about the vaccines that have been developed, have undermined prevention measures, popularised dangerous treatments, and frustrated the possibility of achieving immunity in some countries. Most of us will know people who have refused the vaccine because of a video, a post, or a story they have seen on their phone.

Finally, Covid-19 has also had an extraordinary impact on popular ideas about science. From the earliest days of the pandemic, politicians sought to justify their decisions about lockdowns and the removing of restrictions by saying that they were being "led by the science". Unfortunately, it seemed like the scientists of different countries (and of different political persuasions) had different ideas of what the science was saying, and this was fertile ground for the aforementioned conspiracy theories. The application of scientific research has produced a set of vaccines in record time, but the narrative of the last year has sown doubt and fear about science and technology that may extend far into the future.

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56 Council of Europe, Artificial Intelligence and the control of Covid-19, https://www.coe.int/en/web/artificial-intelligence/ai-covid19, Accessed 17/5/21
57 Qian, et al (2021) CPAS: The UK's national machine learning-based hospital capacity planning system for Covid-19 *Mach Learn* 110, 15-35, https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10994-020-05921-4, Accessed 17/5/21
58 World Bank, The Impact of Covid-19 on Education – Recommendations and Opportunities for Ukraine, 2/4/2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/opinion/2021/04/02/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-education-recommendations-and-opportunities-for-ukraine, Accessed 15/6/2021

2

Europe Today – The Spiritual Context

2.1 Secularisation and Desecularisation

In many ways, Christianity is what made Europe *Europe*. No other continent has been exposed to Christianity for such a prolonged period and in such an extensive way. Yet just as Europe was the first continent to be Christianised, it was also the first to be de-Christianised. Of course, some parts of Africa and Asia saw Christianity become dominant and then lose that dominance to Islam long before any European country became thoroughly evangelised. The difference is, whereas during the first 1500 years of Christian history, de-Christianisation was the result of the loss of "Christian lands" to invaders, the de-Christianisation of Europe over the last 500 years has occurred from within.

The story of how we went "from a society in which it was virtually impossible not to believe in God, to one in which faith, even for the staunchest believer, is one human possibility among others"[59] is far beyond the scope of this report. Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, from which that quote is taken, runs to 896 pages.

This process of de-Christianisation or, as it is more commonly known, secularisation, has been the subject of much study and debate. Again, a full treatment is not possible here, but it is important to understand that secularisation is not a single process. Taylor considers that secularisation has three aspects or modes:

i. The secularisation of public spaces: that is, the so-called "emancipation" of public domains (state, economy, science) from religious institutions and norms, with the concomitant relegation of religious belief to the private sphere.

ii. The decline of religious belief and practice: that fewer and fewer people say that they believe in God and/or attend a church service on a regular basis.

iii. Changes in the culture such that unbelief is seen as a viable option: that is, "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and, indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace."[60] Slowly but surely, the idea that life can be lived without reference to God has taken root in the European mind.

Data from the most recent edition of the European Values Survey (EVS 2017-20) indicates that 61% of Swedes, 53% of Dutch, 51% of Brits and Norwegians, and 50% of Czechs say they do not believe in God. When it comes to church attendance only one in twenty Swedes, Norwegians and Finns are in church on a given Sunday, and one in forty Danes! 63% of French, 61% of Czechs and 60% of Britons never attend a religious service.[61]

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59 Taylor (2007), *A Secular Age*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 3
60 *Ibidem*.
61 Memory (2021), Secularity and Irreligion in Europe, *Vista* 38, 5/2021, https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/latest-articles/secularity-and-irreligion-in-europe, Accessed 19/5/21.

Statistics like these are frequently used to argue that Europe is now thoroughly post-Christian, yet the very same data highlights the complexities and contradictions. With the exceptions of France (23%) and Sweden (19%), in every other European country less than 15% of the population declares themselves to be "a convinced atheist". Even in the most secular countries, around one in every six or seven people pray at least once a week: Czechia (15.1%), Sweden (15.7%) and Denmark (13.5%).

These statistics illustrate one of the paradoxes of Europe. In many European countries the Church has lost its dominant role in the public sphere and yet there is a reluctance by many Europeans to abandon Christianity altogether. Even as traditional measures of religious identity and engagement wane (membership or church attendance), belief in God and the practice of private prayer continue, highlighting Grace Davie's famous dichotomy of *Believing without Belonging*.[62]

Furthermore, the presence in Europe of thriving communities of believers, both Christians and those of other religious traditions, together with the emergence of de-institutionalised Christianity and of people who describe themselves as "spiritual but not religious", have led some to suggest we are moving towards a post-secular society.[63] And if we look to Central and Eastern Europe, particularly but not exclusively at those countries with a strong Orthodox state church, rather than the collapse of Christendom, we find revitalised Christendom-style churches that are favoured by nationalist politicians because of their powerful unifying potential.

Finally, different trends are evident in urban and rural environments. Traditionally, cities have been seen as centres of secularisation whereas the countryside was where traditional religious ideas endured. In recent times however, researchers have noticed the opposite trend as migration has contributed to the desecularisation of the city.[64] As David Goodhew has observed in the conclusion of *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present*, "Britain has grown more secular and more religious in the last 30 years. It all depends where you look."[65] That could be said of many parts of today's Europe.

We live in a Europe of multiple modernities,[66] one that is both secularised and multireligious (SMR).[67] This phenomenon of secularisation and desecularisation taking place in the same country, and sometimes even in the same city, is a reminder that we should not presume that what is happening where we are is also happening elsewhere.

Impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic is the closest thing to an existential threat that most Europeans have experienced in their lifetimes. Not since the Second World War has something so profoundly and simultaneously affected the lives of all Europeans. Both individually and as societies, when faced with such existential challenges, we tend to use a set of coping strategies to reduce our sense of insecurity and one of those is the practice of religious faith. In short, it is in moments of crisis that we remember God, and there is already some evidence that Covid-19 has had an impact on secularisation in Europe.

62 Davie (1994), *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believing Without Belonging*, London: Wiley
63 Habermas (2008), Notes on a Post-Secular Society, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 13/10/2008, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5842.2008.01017.x Accessed 21/6/2021
64 Goodhew and Cooper, Eds. (2020), *The Desecularisation of the City*, London: Routledge
65 Goodhew (2012), *Church Growth in Britain*, Farnham: Ashgate, 253
66 Casanova (2011), Cosmopolitanism, the clash of civilizations and multiple modernities, *Current Sociology*, 59(2) 252-267, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0011392110391162 , Accessed 21/6/21
67 Van de Poll (2019), Secular and Multi-religious: Welcome to the SMR Society, *Vista* 32, Jan 2019, https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/latest-articles/secular-and-multi-religious-welcome-to-the-smr-society, Accessed 19/5/21.

During the first wave of the pandemic, researchers[68] observed an upsurge in Google searches for prayer. In the UK, the number of people signing up for Alpha courses tripled. [69]Sociologists of religion, first in Italy[70] and more recently in Poland, found striking evidence supporting a revival in religious interest. The Polish researchers noted: "Around one-fifth (21.3%) of people declared that they spent more time praying and engaging in other religious practices than previously. As many as 61.3% of people who previously practiced religion several times a week spent more time on these practices, and, more interestingly, religious observance also increased among people who had previously practiced only once every few years (15.9%) and those who had not previously practiced at all (7.4%). … Overall, religious practices increased during the Polish spring lockdown. Although these increases are unlikely to be long-lasting, changes in religiosity caused by Covid-19 appear to be a real phenomenon." [71]

De la Supervivencia a la Misión (From Survival to Mission), a series of online gatherings of Spanish Evangelical leaders to reflect on the effect of the pandemic, observed both positive and negative effects of Covid-19. [72] During the lockdown, some people who had disengaged from church did reconnect through online services, but they also observed that some previously active members disengaged completely. Many of these have not returned once face-to-face services have begun. Anecdotally the percentage of those who may have been lost over the past year may be as much as 30%. Some may still be fearful of public gatherings and may yet return but the pandemic has broken habits of all kinds, including spiritual ones. Only time will tell if it has proved to be an accelerator of secularisation or desecularisation, or most likely from all I have written above, of both.

2.2 Islam

The 2017 Pew Research Centre Report *Europe's Growing Muslim Population*[73] estimated that one in twenty Europeans identifies as "Muslim" giving a total population of around 26 million (Figure 8). It should be said that Pew's definition of Europe only includes the then 28 member states of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland, and both asylum seekers and the significant Muslim populations in the Balkans, are missing from those numbers.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the report are the projections of Muslim populations in Europe in 2050 under three different scenarios. In the zero-migration scenario, no migration of any kind takes place to or from Europe. In the medium-migration scenario, regular migration continues but refugee flows cease. In the high-migration scenario, 2014 to mid-2016 refugee inflow patterns continue in addition to regular migration.

68 Telegraph, Pandemic prompts surge in Google prayer, 22/5/2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/pandemic-prompts-surge-interest-prayer-google-data-show/ Accessed 16/3/2021
69 Evangelical Focus, Alpha Course Registrations Triple, 11/6/2020, https://evangelicalfocus.com/europe/6462/alpha-course-registrations-triple-in-the-uk-due-to-the-lockdown, Accessed 19/3/2021
70 Molteni, F., (2020) Searching for comfort in religion: insecurity and religious behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, *European Societies*, Vol 22, Issue 4, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14616696.2020.1836383, Accessed 19/3/2021
71 Boguszewski, et al. (2020) The Covid-19 Pandemic's Impact on Religiosity in Poland, *Religions* 11(12), p. 646 https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/12/646, Accessed 19/3/2021
72 Alianza Evangélica Española, De la Supervivencia a la Misión, 16/12/2020 https://alianzaevangelica.es/wp-content/uploads/RESUMEN-CONSULTA.pdf, Accessed 21/6/2021
73 Pew Research, Europe's Growing Muslim Population, 29/11/2017, https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/ Accessed 19/3/2021

The growing numbers of Muslims in Europe, combined with the shrinkage of the non-Muslim population (as described in 2.3 above), are expected to result in a rising share of Muslims in Europe's population under all three scenarios. Even if all countries were to close their borders to any further migration (the zero-migration scenario), the Muslim share of the population in the 30 countries is estimated to rise from 4.9% in 2016 to 7.4% in 2050.

Figure 8

The medium-migration scenario would see the share rise to 11.2% of the population by 2050, and if refugee flows were to continue at the rate they were in 2014 and 2015, the share would be 14%. Even in the most likely medium-migration scenario, many countries are expected to experience significant increases in their Muslim population: Sweden (+12%), UK (+10%), Finland (+9%), France (+9%), Norway (+8%), Italy (+8%), and Belgium (+7%).

Muslims make up 4.9% of Europe's population in 2016

Estimated % of Muslims among total population in each country

% of population that is Muslim
- > 18.0%
- 12.0-17.9
- 6.0-11.9
- 3.0-5.9
- < 3.0

Finland 2.7
Nor. 5.7
Sweden 8.1
Est. 0.2
Lat. 0.2
Lith. 0.1
Denmark 5.4
Netherlands 7.1
Ireland 1.4
Belgium 7.6
UK 6.3
Poland < 0.1
Germany 6.1
Czech R. 0.2
Slvk. 0.1
Lux. 3.2
Austria 6.9
Hungary 0.4
Romania 0.4
France 8.8
Switz. 6.1
Slovenia 3.8
Bos./Herz.
Croatia 1.6
Serb.
Bul. 11.1
Portugal 0.4
Spain 2.6
Italy 4.8
Mac.
Alb.
Greece 5.7
Malta 2.6
Cyprus 25.4

The problem with all these statistics is that they lump all Muslims together. Here we are not only talking about the differences between different strands of Islam (Sunni, Shi'a, Ahmadiyya, and so on) but rather their different life experiences. There is a world of difference between an indigenous Muslim from the Balkans and that of a refugee or asylum seeker from Syria, Iran or Iraq. That experience is different again from that of the second and third generation communities from Algeria, Pakistan or Bangladesh, for example, in many European countries. Then, of course, we have the amazing stories of Muslim Background Believers who are coming to Christ in extraordinary numbers, particularly Iranians, and this is expected to increase.

Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016		% of population that is Muslim
REGION	25,770,000	4.9%
France	5,720,000	8.8
Germany	4,950,000	6.1
United Kingdom	4,130,000	6.3
Italy	2,870,000	4.8
Netherlands	1,210,000	7.1
Spain	1,180,000	2.6

Note: Europe is defined here as the 28 nations of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland. "Estimated size of Muslim population in 2016" column lists only countries with at least 1 million Muslims. Estimates do not include those asylum seekers who are not expected to gain legal status to remain in Europe, including roughly 320,000 Muslims in Germany and 140,000 Muslims in France. Source: Pew Research Center estimates. See Methodology for details. "Europe's Growing Muslim Population"

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Finally, it is important to note that these are national statistics. Diaspora communities tend to clump together, and Muslims are no exception. There are cities like Birmingham, Brussels, Marseille or The Hague, with higher Muslim populations than the national average, and zones within cities with much higher percentages still. In these zones, Muslim influence can be very strong, even dominant.

In short, we need great wisdom to interpret these statistics.

Impact of Covid-19

The impact of the pandemic on Christian gatherings has been mirrored in Muslim communities. Friday prayers, Ramadan observance and Hajj were all seriously affected, and this has accelerated the
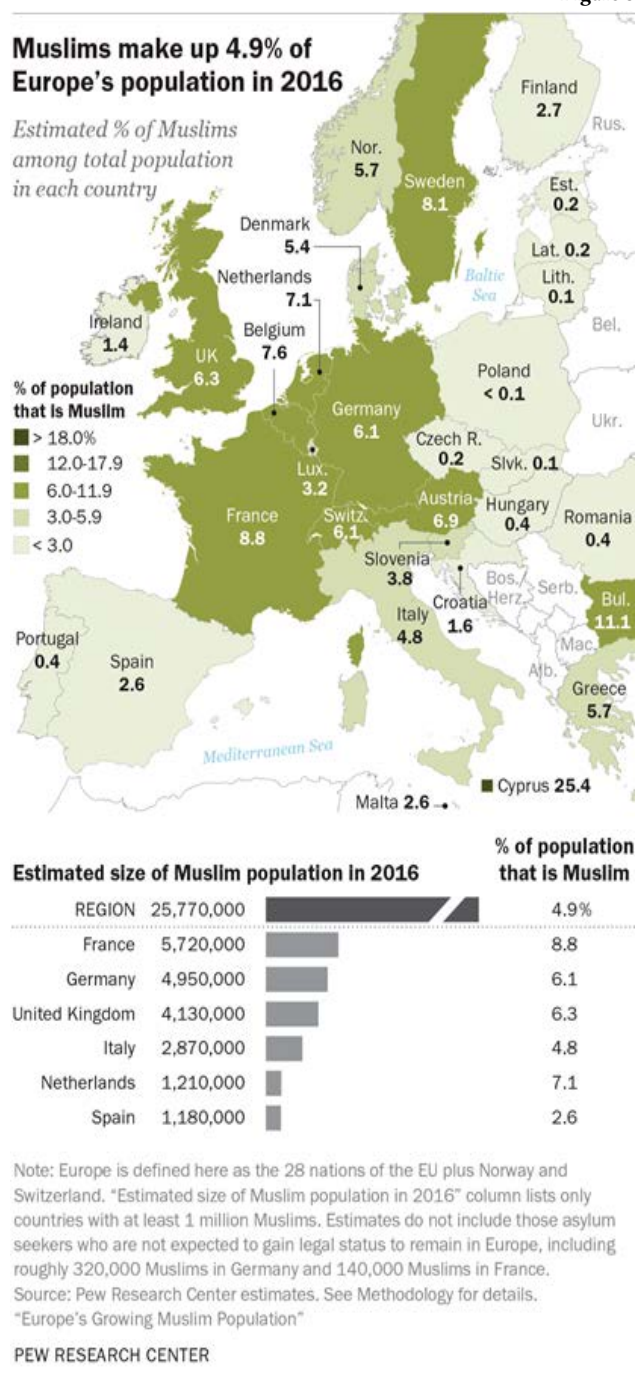
emergence of Virtual Islam with prayers and sermons streamed over the internet just as they were in many churches. Muslim scholars have raised questions about the legitimacy of online religious practices, the validity of virtual Friday prayers, and whether vaccines would be halal or not. As one Islamic academic put it, "It is a transformative moment in some respects because the traditional religious establishment within Islam is having to rapidly adapt to modernity in its fullest sense, not just because of Covid-19, but of where human society is." [74]

2.3 Re-Evangelisation

Secularisation and desecularisation, and the growth of Islam, are not the only features of the spiritual context of Europe. In our day, an extraordinary re-evangelisation of our continent is taking place. Three dimensions of this can be identified: diaspora churches, church planting movements and platforms, and the next generation.

2.3.1 Diaspora Churches

Migration has already been highlighted as a significant social trend of the general European context. As He has done throughout history, God is using people on the move to re-evangelise the continent of Europe.

I have entitled this section "diaspora churches" because I think that is the best term to describe the complex phenomena of churches in Europe that have resulted from the migration of Christians from other locations, whether in this generation or generations past. A diaspora is, strictly speaking, a population that has been dispersed but that retains linguistic, cultural, and other connections with its homeland. Some prefer to speak of "ethnic churches" or "migrant churches", but these are even more problematic. Categorising people on the basis of their ethnicity is prejudicial, and to continue to use the language of "migrant churches" when the members of those churches are the grandchildren of the migrants, not the migrants themselves, is arguably even more so. Yes, it is true that not all migrants are "diaspora". Some do assimilate into their new country and join existing churches. However, where meaningful cultural differences exist, the term "diaspora church" recognises the essential distinctions of the "place of origin" but without prejudice. [75]

It is worth saying too that diaspora churches are nothing new in Europe. European diaspora churches are part of European history. Many towns and cities across Europe have substantial European diaspora communities and historic diaspora churches. Even in recent years, the East-to-West migration in Europe has seen the establishment of many Romanian churches in Spain, or Polish churches in the UK, for example. Whilst many of these churches are small, some like the Romanian *Betania Church* in Dublin, Eire, have grown to the extent that they are constructing a large purpose-built worship

74 Salaam Gateway, Virtual Islam, 15/12/2020, https://www.salaamgateway.com/story/in-2020-as-more-of-life-went-online-we-started-asking-what-are-the-limits-to-virtual-islam, Accessed 22/5/2021
75 Wan, Diaspora Missiology, *Global Missiology*, 7/2017, http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/303/848, Accessed 18/6/2021

space.[76] However, it is migration from the Majority World[77] that is seeing the most significant number of new diaspora churches being planted across Europe today.

Latin-American migrants have planted thousands of churches in Spain, Portugal and beyond over the last thirty years. It is difficult to find a major European city that does not have a large Spanish-speaking and/or Brazilian congregation. Similarly, Chinese churches can be found almost everywhere. The *Chinese Overseas Christian Mission* lists over 120 Chinese-speaking congregations in the UK and a further 150 in the rest of Europe, though that is certainly only a fraction of the actual churches that exist.[78]

However, it is the Black African churches that are the most numerous. African-initiated Pentecostal churches number in the thousands in Britain alone. *The Redeemed Christian Church of God* has over 750 congregations today and continues to plant 25 new churches in Britain every year.[79] And that is just one of many denominations: *Church of Pentecost, Christ Embassy, Christ Apostolic Tabernacle.* If you have an African population in your city, there will almost certainly be an African diaspora church, even if you are not aware of it.

Although the statistics are promising, the presence of diaspora churches in Europe does not automatically lead to the effective re-evangelisation of Europe, as Kwiyani has observed:

> African churches in Europe have so far been very successful only in evangelising fellow Africans. A very small portion of them have made any inroads reaching Europeans. Many say it is too difficult to reach out to Europeans. Many have told me, "It forces us to do things differently, and that is too uncomfortable." By "doing things differently," they mean such things as having shorter worship services or having to embrace relational evangelism. For these pastors who at least want or try to engage in mission among Europeans, their presence in Europe makes them believe they have to be missionaries to Europeans. As such, they try to contextualise their ministries for Europeans, experiencing very little success along the way. Most of them lack the training that would enable them to understand what cross-cultural mission to Europeans should look like.[80]

Israel Olofinjana, another authority on African diaspora churches in the UK, is more hopeful saying "there is evidence, albeit small that some have managed to reach Europeans through various avenues".[81] However, not all the responsibility of this failing is down to diaspora church leaders. Many native European churches have either not wanted, or not known how, to help diaspora Christians to reach the local population. I will return to this topic later in this report.

76 Betania Dublin, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jcg-E8HBaX0, Accessed 18/6/2021
77 Throughout this report, I have decided to the use the expression Majority World to collectively refer to Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and South America. Alternatives such as *"Third World"*, *"developing world"* or *"emerging economies"* imply inferiority. The expression *Global South* is less problematic, but not all these countries are in the southern hemisphere, and some which are not considered as *Global South*, like Australia or New Zealand, evidently are. *Majority World* at least corresponds to a demographic reality since the majority of the world's population is found in these regions. In the end, I have allowed diaspora leaders themselves to have the final word since they have grouped themselves together under this label: *Centre for Missionaries from the Majority World* https://cmmw.org.uk/ Accessed 25/6/2021
78 Chinese Overseas Christian Mission, https://www.cocm.org.uk/churches Accessed 22/5/2021
79 Kwiyani (2017), "Blessed Reflex: African Christians in Europe", *Missio Africanus*, Vol 3, Issue 1, 2017 https://decolonisingmission.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Harvey_Kwiyani_Blessed-Reflex-African-Christians-in-Europe.pdf, Accessed 20/5/21
80 Ibid., 45
81 Olofinjana, personal communication, 21/5/2021

Nevertheless, the weakness of historic churches in many European countries has generated a need and a desire for collaboration. Furthermore, as second and third generation diaspora Christians come into leadership, they increasingly seek to establish intercultural churches which can more easily reach out to native Europeans. The missionary historian Andrew Walls has observed that "the movement of Christianity is one of serial, not progressive expansion"[82], that is a decline in the heartlands but rapid growth at the periphery. The future of the church in Europe may well depend on the emergence of a truly European Intercultural Christianity.[83]

Impact of Covid-19

In one way, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on diaspora churches in Europe has been less than that experienced by native churches. Diaspora churches remain, by definition, connected to their communities of origin. Many are part of church networks where the senior pastors are in Nairobi or Hong Kong or Bogota. They have been connecting transnationally and participating in virtual meetings in their home churches for many years.

However, in other ways, the impact of the pandemic on diaspora churches has been more severe. Research in the UK found that people from an ethnic minority background were at higher risk of death from Covid-19 due to their concentration in high-risk occupations (the health and care sectors), their dependence on public transport, and a reluctance to press for care and personal protective equipment.[84]

The economic impacts have also fallen more harshly on them. Furthermore, their experience of church engagement is more intensely communitarian than that of more individualistic native Europeans, so the disruption of Covid-19 has a huge impact on their spiritual and mental well-being.

More positively, there are signs that diaspora and native European church leaders in towns and cities across the continent have been supporting one another. These connections may prove to be an important stimulus to further collaboration going forward.

2.3.2 Church Planting Movements

Ten years ago, *the Nova Research Centre* based at *Redcliffe College* tried to take the pulse of church planting in Europe. One of the most striking findings of the research was the number of organisations that were involved in church planting in one way or another – 342 – and as the report stated, that represents "only the tip of the iceberg". Alongside the many international mission agencies listed, were many denominations or church networks that were seeking to plant in their own nation and sometimes internationally: "Baptist churches, unions and missions totalled 50, Evangelical churches 31, Methodist churches 18 and Church of England…13. National evangelical alliances also appeared 8 times."[85]

82 Walls, The Expansion of Christianity: An Interview with Andrew Walls, *Religion Online*, 2000, https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-expansion-of-christianity-an-interview-with-andrew-walls/, Accessed 18/6/2021
83 Moyo, An Intercultural Church Perspective on Mission in Europe, Lausanne Europe Conversation, 9/2020, https://www.lausanneeurope.org/an-intercultural-church-perspective-on-mission-in-europe/ Accessed 18/6/2021; Memory, God's New Society: Multicultural Churches in Today's Europe, Vista 26, 1/2017, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3426c42a9bf131f7073b78/t/5e35ab52216623779652bf29/1580575579495/vista+issue+26+january+2017.pdf, Accessed 18/6/2021
84 Public Health England, Beyond the data: understanding the impact of Covid-19 on BAME groups, 6/2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf Accessed 1/5/2021
85 Jackson and Herbert (2012), *Missions and Church Planting in Europe*, Eurochurch.net p.iii

Since then, church planting has accelerated across Europe, in part, because of the emergence of national church planting platforms. The vision of the CNEF[86] (*National Council of French Evangelicals*) "1 pour 10,000", meaning one evangelical church for every 10,000 people, has spurred on church planting in France and has seen, on average, one church planted every seven days or so over the last few years. Similar platforms have emerged in many European countries, some as a result of processes to facilitate church planting like *M4* and *Multiplication Network*[87], some as the result of catalytic/apostolic individuals like *Relational Mission*[88] or the *Lausanne Catalyst for Church Planting*[89], and some through international networks like *City-to-City*[90] or *Acts29*.[91] Either way, the gathering of 170 platform leaders from nearly thirty nations in Berlin in early 2018 indicated the arrival of a new dynamic in Europe: National Church Planting Processes (NC2P). [92]

Denominational church planting initiatives like the *Visión Alcance 2020* project of the *Assemblies of God* in Spain[93], or the *Mission Partnerships of the European Baptist Federation*[94], have both seen hundreds of churches planted over the last few years. Mission agencies with a focus on church planting like the *European Christian Mission* (ECM), *Greater Europe Mission* (GEM), *Operation Mobilisation* (OM), and *Communitas*, continue to play their part in initiating new Christian communities, often in partnership with national churches.[95] It would be remiss not to mention the importance of centres for church multiplication like the *Institute for Evangelism and Church Development* in Germany and the *Gregory Centre* in London, or of events like the *European Leadership Forum*.[96] And the *ICP* and *Mosaik networks*[97] are planting churches that explicitly reach out to different ethnicities.

Alongside church planting, we have seen the emergence of new forms of Christian community that do not always look like conventional churches. They may be called "*Fresh Expressions*"[98], missional communities, or they may resist classification altogether, but the innovation of new communities of Jesus followers that reach those who might never engage with "conventional" churches, is one of the ways the Holy Spirit is renewing and growing the church in Europe. Then there are disciple-making movements like *The Navigators*, *The Turning*, or the *Go Movement*, that focus on evangelism and the discipling of new Christians.[99] In short, the re-evangelisation of Europe through church planting movements has many actors.

Impact of Covid-19

Evidently, Covid-19 has had a drastic impact on church life and new church planting across Europe. Many pastors have died, sixty in the Ukraine alone, according to one anecdotal source.[100] Many projects have been put on hold and many smaller church plants have found this last year to be particularly

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86 Conseil National des Évangéliques de France, https://www.lecnef.org/page/170867-le-cnef
87 M4 https://m4europe.com/; Multiplication Network https://www.multiplicationnetwork.org/
88 Relational Mission https://www.relationalmission.org/
89 Lausanne Movement, Church Planting Catalyst https://lausanne.org/networks/issues/church-planting
90 City to City https://www.citytocityeurope.com/
91 Acts29 https://www.acts29.com/
92 NC2P, http://nc2p.org/
93 Asambleas de Dios de España, https://visionalcance2020.asambleasdedios.es/
94 European Baptist Federation, http://www.ebf.org/mp
95 ECM www.ecmi.org; GEM https://gemission.org/; Operation Mobilisation https://www.om.org/ca/en/region/europe ; Communitas https://gocommunitas.org/
96 IEEG https://ieeg.uni-greifswald.de/en/; GCCM https://ccx.org.uk/ ; ELF https://euroleadership.org/
97 ICP Network https://icpnetwork.eu/; Mosaik Network https://mosaikkirche.jimdofree.com/englisch/
98 Fresh Expressions https://freshexpressions.org.uk/
99 The Turning http://theturning.eu/; Go Movement https://www.gomovement.world/en; The Navigators https://www.navigators.org/navigators-worldwide/;
100 Kool (2021), personal communication

challenging. However, the necessity of building Christian community in new ways has forced many churches and church plants to face up to their dependence on buildings. This forced innovation may really prove to be part of how God is renewing His church in Europe.

Like many others, the leaders of *NC2P* had to cancel their *Exponential Europe* conference for 2020, but national church planting platforms are networks so they quickly reconceived the event as a virtual roundtable for 100 cities around Europe.[101] Virtual and/or hybrid conferences are likely to be the future and may enable even more dynamic collaboration for the re-evangelisation of Europe than ever before.

The long-term impact of the pandemic on the shape of tomorrow's churches will become clear in the years to come. The flexibility and lack of infrastructure of missional communities has meant that they have been able to adapt more readily to the new reality, but they have also suffered some of the same issues as diaspora churches in regard to the loss of intense community life. Nevertheless, there is hope that all kinds of churches may have learnt vital lessons about the true essence of Christian community from this past year.

2.3.3 The Next Generation

In May 2018 Steven Bullivant, a professor at *St Mary's University* in London, published an analysis of the religious attitudes of 16-29-year-old young people from across Europe. It found that 70% of British young people say they have "no religion", but that was only the fifth highest percentage, behind the Netherlands on 72%, Sweden on 75%, Estonia on 80% and Czechia on 91%. As far as Bullivant is concerned, "Christianity as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good — or at least for the next 100 years."[102]

However, God is raising up a new generation of Jesus followers who are taking on the challenge of reaching Europe's secularised youth. Much of this is taking place in the youth ministries of local churches across the continent, sometimes supported by organisations like *Josiah Venture*[103] who work alongside churches across Central and Eastern Europe.

Some parachurch ministries have been focussed on the next generation for decades: *YWAM*, *The Navigators*, and *IFES Europe*, to name but three.[104] In more recent years, new movements[105] such as *24/7 Prayer* or *Steiger* have brought new energy and fresh ideas about how to reach "the largest unreached culture today: global youth culture."[106] And charismatic initiatives like *Awakening Europe*, *Holy Spirit Nights*, and *The Send*, are calling on Europe's young people to seek revival.[107]

In support of all of this, *Youthscape* is producing ground-breaking research on youth ministry, and a new centre for youth research has opened at the *Free Theological University of Giessen* in Germany.[108]

101 Exponential Europe, https://exponential.eu/
102 Bullivant (2018), Europe´s Young Adults and Religion, https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/benedict-xvi/docs/2018-mar-europe-young-people-report-eng.pdf, Accessed 19/3/2021
103 Josiah Venture https://www.josiahventure.com/
104 YWAM http://www.ywam.eu/; IFES Europe https://ifesworld.org/en/region/europe/
105 24/7 Prayer https://www.24-7prayer.com/; Steiger https://steiger.org/
106 Greenwood, *Global Youth Culture*, Steiger International, 2019
107 Awakening Europe https://www.awakeningeurope.com/ Holy Spirit Nights https://holyspiritnight.com/ The Send https://thesend.no/en/
108 Youthscape https://www.youthscape.co.uk/; Free Theological University Giessen https://www.fthgiessen.de/

Impact of Covid-19

Even before the pandemic hit, the *World Heath Organisation* were reporting "a high and increasing rate of mental and behavioural health problems in adolescents … 29% of 15-year-old girls and 13% of 15-year-old boys in European countries reported "feeling low" more than once a week."[109] The report also found that suicide was the leading cause of death among adolescents (10-19 years old) in low and middle-income countries and the second leading cause in high-income countries across Europe.

The impact of Covid-19 on the next generation has already been enormous and it could have implications for decades to come. Those in education have suffered school and university closures in some cases for weeks or months and much of the teaching continues online. The long tail of the last recession means that many European young people are in precarious employment at best, and the pandemic has only exacerbated this situation. Their career prospects, the hope of emancipation from their parents, and of one day starting a family, seem to have receded even further into the distance. Unsurprisingly, all this disruption and uncertainty has had a further heavy toll on the mental health of young people.[110]

More positively, the young are "digital natives" who are better placed to make the most of their technological skills in a post-pandemic world. They have also found it easier than older adults to relate online. Youth ministry leaders were able to move their ministries online seamlessly in most cases, yet this only emphasised what had been lost during lockdown. As one youth ministry leader put it in an article on the impact of Covid-19 on young people: "if we do not visit everyone now in their homes or outside somewhere, we will have lost this current generation in church."[111]

Covid-19 has raised huge questions for those who are thinking deeply about the formation of faith among Europe's youth. Yet as Phoebe Hill of *Youthscape* observes, perhaps for the first time in generations the church is not playing catch-up:

> I feel like there's this narrative about 'the Church has always been behind culture', you know, 'it's always been slow to respond, always been slow to adapt, we need to be different, we need to embrace technology, we need to embrace the digital life, we need to be ahead of the curve this time.[112]

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109 World Health Organisation, Adolescent mental health in the European Region, 2018, https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/383891/adolescent-mh-fs-eng.pdf, Accessed 18/6/2021
110 New Europe, COVID-19 lockdowns taking a heavy toll on the mental health of young people 8/1/2021, https://www.neweurope.eu/article/covid-19-lockdowns-taking-a-heavy-toll-on-the-mental-health-of-young-people/ Accessed 19/3/2021
111 Rodemann (2020), Mission in a Covid Crisis: Youth Implications, WEA Mission Commission, 6/8/2020, https://weamc.global/covid-youth/ Accessed 19/3/2021
112 Hill (2020), Time for Tech? Youthscape Blog, 1/12/2020, https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/news/time-for-tech, Accessed 13/3/2021

3
Trends in Mission

3.1 What? – Mission Redefined

We use words to communicate but we are often unaware of how their meaning changes over time. When we talk of "mission" we assume a meaning that stretches back to the apostles, yet in truth the word only came to be used for the spread of the Christian faith as recently as the sixteenth century.[113] Furthermore, as David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* describes, the church's understanding of mission has passed through no fewer than six paradigm shifts over the last two thousand years. One of these new paradigms of mission has emerged in our lifetime as "during the past half a century or so there has been a subtle but nevertheless decisive shift toward understanding mission as *God's* mission."[114] Today, mission is most frequently defined as participation in the mission of the Triune God, or as Kirsteen Kim puts it, "joining in with the Spirit".[115]

The transformation of mission understanding over the last fifty years has many dimensions to it. At the 1974 *Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization*, the late Latin American missiologist René Padilla challenged the dichotomy between evangelism and social action in the evangelical understanding of mission that had developed in the mid-20th Century.[116] As he put it elsewhere:

> The proclamation of the gospel (*kerygma*) and the demonstration of the gospel that gives itself in service (*diakonía*) form an indivisible whole. One without the other is an incomplete, mutilated gospel and, consequently, contrary to the will of God. From this perspective, it is foolish to ask about the relative importance of evangelism and social responsibility. This would be equivalent to asking about the relative importance of the right wing and the left wing of a plane.[117]

This argument, that both evangelism and social responsibility are essential aspects of the Christian gospel, saw the Spanish phrase *"misión integral"* come into the language of mission. Though the concept of integral mission is not accepted by all evangelicals[118], mission is broadly understood to include serving the poor, speaking out on justice issues, and concern for the environment. Sadly, sometimes it is the proclamation of the gospel that is left out.

During the eighties and nineties, Lesslie Newbigin brought a fresh challenge to those who were engaged in mission in the West. He argued that the church needed to rethink how to communicate the gospel in secular Western cultures; that the reality of post-Christian Europe requires that we think

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113 Bosch (1991) *Transforming Mission*, Orbis: Maryknoll, 1
114 *Ibid.*, 389
115 Kim (2009), *Joining in with the Spirit*: Connecting World Church and Local Mission, SCM Press: London
116 Padilla (1974) Evangelism and the World, LCWE, https://lausanne.org/content/evangelism-and-the-world, Accessed 20/5/21
117 Padilla (1970) Teología Latinoamericana: ¿Izquierdista o Evangélica?, *Pensamiento Cristiano* xvii/ 66 (1970), 133–40
118 DeYoung and Gilbert (2011), *What is the Mission of the Church?* Crossway: Wheaton

like missionaries trying to reach our own culture. Ultimately this led to the invention of a new word, missional, and new definitions of mission such as, "mission is not something the church does as an activity; it is what the church is." [119] So today, we are challenged to live a missional lifestyle, where proclamation and demonstration of the gospel are lived out whatever our job might be. Mission is no longer only about what happens in far-flung parts of the world, it is about whole-life discipleship in the here and now, or at least it should be.

Alongside reflection on mission practice, there has been deeper reflection on the theology of mission. Chris Wright´s magnum opus *The Mission of God* sought to demonstrate that the mandate for mission was not only to be found in the Great Commission of Matthew 28, but in the whole of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. [120] *The missio Dei*, the self-giving life of God, is revealed to us in all of Scripture, and therefore all mission practice, from church planting to creation care, from campaigning for justice to youth ministry, flows from that.

Finally, any discussion of contemporary concepts of mission must consider the critique of Michael Stroope. His thesis, argued compellingly in his book *Transcending Mission*, is this:

> Mission, birthed and developed in the modern age, is itself inadequate language for the church in the current age. Rather than rehabilitating or redeeming mission, we have to move beyond its rhetoric, its practise, and its view of the world. The task is one of transcending mission. [121]

Stroope raises important questions about the latent colonialism that conditions the language and structures of mission today and argues that we must reconceive it in terms of the more biblical language of pilgrim witness.

Whilst Stroope´s argument is a radical one, as we come to the end of this section, we would do well to heed his challenge. The language we use shapes our ideas, our identity, and our purpose. As migration into Europe, and within Europe, changes the face of the church, we may need a new language of mission to truly engage with what God is doing in our midst.

Impact of Covid-19

It is probably too soon to comment on the impact of Covid-19 on our understanding of mission, but we can make some observations. The pandemic has disrupted our patterns of worship and communion, but it has not changed the essence of what the church is, nor the task of mission. It is about disciples faithfully following Christ in every sphere of life, and communities of Jesus-followers who together witness to His life, death, and resurrection. We are called to follow as whole-life disciples and to gather and go forward together as witnessing communities. None of that involves a building. As Jason Mandryk of *Operation World* puts it: "Covid-19 is demonstrating all around the world that the essence of the Church is not in the physical structures, but in the people who abide by His word and are filled with His Spirit." [122]

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119 Roxburgh and Boren (2009), *Introducing the Missional Church*, Baker: Grand Rapids, 45
120 Wright (2006), *The Mission of God*, IVP: Nottingham
121 Stroope (2017), *Transcending Mission: The Eclipse of a Modern Tradition*, IVP Academic: Grand Rapids, 26
122 Mandryk (2020), *Global Transmission Global Mission*, Operation World, 29, https://operationworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Global-Transmission-Global-Mission.pdf Accessed 22/5/2021

Some are asking if it really makes sense to have invested so heavily in huge buildings? At the very least, social distancing restrictions have forced many churches to think about how to make small gatherings work, not just big ones. Outreach and evangelism must continue, yet our adoption of more digital means of communication is both an opportunity and a threat. We may have the opportunity to reach more people virtually, to have more people engage with our online gatherings, but does that constitute community and discipleship? And what does discipleship for the workplace look like in a post-pandemic world where many no longer go to the office five days a week?

The Covid-19 pandemic is an opportunity for European churches and mission agencies to reflect deeply once again on the meaning of mission in today´s world.

3.2 Where and who? – Mission Relocated

The 20th Century saw a significant shift in the location of mission. In 1910, over 80% of the world's Christians were from the global North. Today, 85% of all people and 66% of all Christians are to be found in the Majority World. Fewer than one in four Christians today is to be found in Europe.[123]

Where mission takes place, and who it is done by, has undergone a complete transformation. Gone are the days of "From the West to the Rest". As Dana Robert puts it, "by the end of the 20th Century the most significant development in the structure of missions was not the end of the missionary movement but its transformation into a multicultural, multifaceted network."[124] Global mission today is polycentric, polydirectional and polyphonic. We are living in an age of World Christianity where mission is done by "Everyone to Everywhere." [125]

In Europe, there are still many countries where the number of Evangelical Christians is vanishingly small. Pioneer church planting is still necessary, and mission agencies who send church planters transnationally will still have a part to play, but increasingly those pioneer church planters are nationals or diaspora missionaries who are already living in the location. That is how it should be. As Kim and Kim have observed, "the work of the missionaries who originally carried the message is only the catalyst for the local activity of its reception, dissemination and transformation in a new cultural and social context."[126]

The nationalisation or indigenisation of mission activities is a global trend.[127] Jay Matenga, the Executive Director of the WEA Mission Commission, goes as far as saying that "the future of missions is indigenous."[128] Someone who is indigenous to a particular place has a special connection to the location and community. They understand the culture, the values, and the shared convictions of the people who live in that place. As a result, the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel will more easily take on local forms. This goes further than the contextualisation of a foreign message. As Matenga writes elsewhere, "Indigenisation… allows the knowledge of God to grow within a group of

123 Johnson, et. al. (2013), *Christianity in its Global Context*, 1970-2020, Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 6/2013, https://archive.gordonconwell.edu/ockenga/research/documents/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf, Accessed 20/6/2021
124 Robert (2009), *Christian Mission: How Christianity became a world religion*, Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, 73
125 Yeh (2016), *Polycentric Missiology: 21st-Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere*, IVP Academic: Downers Grove
126 Kim and Kim (2016), *Christianity as a World Religion: An Introduction 2nd Ed.*, Bloomsbury: London, 12
127 Matenga (2020), WEAMC Leaders Review 2020 No.2, 21/8/2020, https://weamc.global/lb2020-2/, Accessed 20/6/2021
128 *Ibid.*

people, governed by them and their growing relationship with Christ in their context, and in dialogue with Scripture and the rest of the global Church." [129]

An indigenous understanding of Christian mission will be inherently communitarian, owned by the local community rather than under the control of a foreign church or mission agency. It will focus on the sending of the whole people of God right where they are, every day of the week, where they live and work, shop and play. Of course, it must be balanced with a vision for the world. Mission is "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), but at the point of contact, all mission is local.

Impact of Covid-19

The paradigm that conceives mission as essentially the sending of missionaries from Christian strongholds to unevangelised fields around the world, is being replaced by one which emphasises the polycentric nature of the global church and the importance of indigenous witness. In some ways, this shift is nothing new. The call to trust the Spirit of God and allow the indigenous churches to grow free from external control, was one which Roland Allen was making over a hundred years ago.[130] Perhaps Covid-19 will finally give us the opportunity to reconceive mission mobilisation for the 21st Century. As Paul Bendor-Samuel puts it, "Covid-19, far from being a frustration to the mission of God, could be just the restraint to the global mission industry we need if we are to reimagine how different parts of the Body of Christ act together to support faithful, holistic, local witness."[131]

In the case of mission agencies in Europe, Covid-19 has highlighted some of the fundamental weaknesses of our sending paradigm such as, our dependence on favourable geopolitical conditions (free movement, visas, cheap and easy air travel, etc.), our costly models of missionary support (allowances, health insurance, children's education, pension, training, administrative quotas, etc.), and our reliance on sending churches who are also undergoing significant changes themselves.[132]

Though I am arguing that mission is rightly being relocated or reassigned to the local indigenous Christian community, we must maintain a vision for global mission. God is on the move around the world, and there are still parts of the world that are unreached by the gospel, both here in Europe and further afield. Europe still has a part to play in global missions. Much of mission today is about building networks so that God's resources in one place can extend His Kingdom in another. There will always be a place for the transcultural missionary, but that cannot be the normal mode of mission in an age of World Christianity. Rather than conceiving mission as *Everyone to Everywhere*, perhaps Covid-19 has made us realise that we would do better to understand it as *Everyone, Everywhere*.

3.3 How? – Mission Redistributed

Part of the redefinition of mission referred to above, is about reconceiving the mission of the church as part of the mission of God. As Chris Wright puts it, "It is not so much the case that God has a mission for his church in the world, as that God has a church for his mission in the world."[133] So, as

129 Matenga (2021), Post-pandemic Possibilities, 24/4/2021, https://jaymatenga.com/pdfs/MatengaJ_PostPanPoss.pdf, Accessed 20/6/2021
130 Allen (1912) *Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?* Eerdmans: Grand Rapids; Allen (1927) The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church, Lutterworth Press: Cambridge
131 Bendor-Samuel (2020), Covid-19, Trends in Global Mission and Participation in Faithful Witness, *Transformation* Vol 37(4) 255-265, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0265378820970225 , Accessed 24/6/2021
132 Arthur (2020), *The Way Forward*, 37-40
133 Wright (2006), *The Mission of God*, IVP: Nottingham, 62

we engage in mission in a given location, we do so on the understanding that God is already there and may well have others who are also participating in His mission.

The Apostle Paul rejoiced with the believers in Philippi for their "partnership in the gospel" (Phil.1:5). Unfortunately, the choice to translate κοινωνία ὑμῶν εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, literally "fellowship in the gospel", as partnership in the gospel, has its problems. The word partnership has legal connotations associated with the "parts" that each agrees to perform. Fellowship is broad and fundamentally relational. Partnership is specific, utilitarian, contingent and frequently paternalistic, with one party (generally the one controlling the money) dominating the other. The history of mission in the 20th Century is littered with sad stories of failed partnerships.

I believe there is a need to reconceive partnership as collaboration, a relationship with the other and with God that echoes the biblical concepts of covenant and fellowship (*koinonia*). This sort of collaboration is a sharing in God´s mission that is characterised by reciprocity and mutuality, not merely the fulfilment of contractual parts. We need to move from talking of partnership to talking of collaboration, which is much closer to Paul's language of "co-workers" or "fellow labourers" (Rom. 16:21; Phil. 2:25, 4:3; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 3:2; Philemon 1, 24).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is fundamentally about relationships, the restoration of our relationship with God and with each other, "for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:27,28) We are called to unity, to break down the walls of hostility that separate us, for Christian mission is a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). Sadly, all too often in our partnerships, we put the product, the purpose, the objective, or the results, ahead of the relationship. We should never forget the link between unity and mission: "I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23)

The European Evangelical Alliance and Lausanne Europe have key roles to play in this.[134] Reaching today's Europeans will require us to find new ways to work together, across the generations, across national and cultural boundaries, and to find ways that native Europeans and diaspora church leaders can collaborate. We need a redistribution of mission, a pooling and sharing of our spiritual commonwealth. For we are all co-workers with God in His mission in Europe today.

As missiologist Andrew Walls put it:
> …the (mission) societies were designed for one-way traffic; all the assumptions were that one party would do all the giving and the other all the receiving. Now our desperate need in the West is to be able to receive, and we have also an "obligation to use means" for the sharing of all the gifts that God has given to all his people.[135]

The challenge that this redistribution of God´s resources poses is illustrated by this comment from a missiologist from Eastern Europe:
> I have lived in a country that mainly received (missionaries), and I tried to challenge my nation for years to give and send. Now we live in the UK that only sends and has no skills to receive. I need to change my message to help the West to know how to receive while helping the East to send. It is a difficult task.[136]

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134 European Evangelical Alliance https://www.europeanea.org/; Lausanne Europe https://www.lausanneeurope.org/
135 Walls (1988), *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, Orbis: Maryknoll
136 Vlasin (2021), personal communication

Impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 has exposed Western Christians to the fragility of life that Christians from the Majority World know only too well. Though it is true that diaspora communities have been particularly hit by the pandemic, all churches have faced challenges. This shared experience may prove to be fertile ground for collaboration in the years to come.

However, just as we were coming to terms with the first Covid-19 lockdown, the killing of George Floyd by a US police officer sparked global outrage and brought the issue of racial justice into sharp focus. The legacy of colonialism might seem an irrelevance to most native Europeans but the injustices and inequalities that it engendered are a recent memory for many diaspora communities. They continue to experience marginalisation and sometimes outright racism in many European countries. As Israel Olofinjana, an authority on diaspora churches in Europe, told me recently:

> The murder of George Floyd and the exposure that our world is not post-racial means that issues of racism are now taken more seriously than ever before. People are now suddenly realising that they have to work with diaspora churches and leaders they have ignored before or pay more attention to what they are saying. Let's just say, issues of racial justice are now compulsory for churches! They can no longer be ignored or separated from mission.[137]

This report makes a strong case for greater collaboration between diaspora and native churches in Europe. For that to happen, more concerted efforts must be made to build mutual understanding. As Stefan Paas has observed:

> The lack of mutual understanding is deep. Interestingly, the gap is interpreted differently. Europeans, Christians and non-Christians, typically construct this gap in terms of culture. Africans, however, generally deny that culture is the problem. The real cause of the gap, according to Africans, is not culture but social and racial distance. Racism is an evil most immigrant Christians meet almost daily, in subtle and less subtle forms.[138]

Covid-19 has revealed the need for a more robust theology of suffering in our discipleship. Is this not an opportunity to learn from our brothers and sisters from the Majority World and their experience of historic and contemporary suffering? As Olofinjana says, "this ready template of suffering is an essential ingredient in decolonising Western models of discipleship and mission."[139]

If we truly believe in the mission of God, and that God has redistributed his people for the re-evangelisation of Europe, then building bridges of understanding and collaboration across national, denominational and racial divides is an essential task of mission in Europe today.

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137 Olofinjana (2021), personal communication
138 Paas (2015), Mission from Anywhere to Europe, *Mission Studies*, 32 (2015), 15, https://frt.vu.nl/en/Images/Mission_from_Anywhere_to_Europe_%28proof%29_tcm239-597271.pdf, Accessed 22/6/2021
139 Olofinjana (2020), Decolonizing Mission, *Lausanne Global Analysis* vol.9 Issue 5, 9/2020, https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2020-09/decolonizing-mission#post-177392-endnote-2, Accessed 21/6/2021

3.4 Why? – Mission Reoriented

The first clause of the Lausanne Cape Town Commitment makes clear that mission is an expression of the love of God:

> The mission of God flows from the love of God. The mission of God's people flows from our love for God and for all that God loves. World evangelization is the outflow of God's love to us and through us. We affirm the primacy of God's grace and we then respond to that grace by faith, demonstrated through the obedience of love. We love because God first loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.[140]

Mission begins in the love of God, the love that He has for all His creation and all His creatures. If we love God, then mission is part of our response to that love, as we participate in His love for the world. Mission is not principally about "what we do" but "why we do it", and the why of mission is love. The motivation of love is what makes mission *mission*, for only then can it be said to be participation in the mission of God.

Sadly, as many have recently observed,[141] the language of mission still draws heavily on ideas from the colonial era and an Enlightenment-influenced mindset. It is not only that terms such as "fields" or "mobilisation" are anachronistic or even militaristic. They also hinder us from making the most of the new reality. Does it make any sense to speak of "mobilisation" when the majority of those who are engaged in God's mission are already here? Can we speak meaningfully of a geographic "field" in which we operate strategically and seek to control, when there are already others there who are toiling and harvesting?

Our concepts of mission also draw heavily on the Industrial Revolution with its focus on planning, systematization, goals, objectives, strategies, and measurable outcomes. This language may be effective in motivating giving, and even mobilising workers, but does it really correspond with a concept of mission as "joining in with the Spirit"?[142] We would do well to remember, as I have written elsewhere:

> The Spirit of God is not subject to human control. As Jesus himself said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases" (John 3:8). And the Spirit's missional movement is no different. It is unpredictable. It is not subject to strategic analysis.[143]

So much of what God is doing escapes our control and planning. We cannot engineer "success" through the application of strategic planning, the targeting of resources, or the mobilisation of more workers. Of course, we need plans, goals and objectives. Paul had plans and so did Jesus. We know that God too has plans for His people and ultimately is working towards a purpose and goal for the whole of creation (Jeremiah 29:11; Ephesians 1; Colossians 1, etc.). The challenge is to plan in a humble and flexible way that is always listening for the voice of the Spirit to guide us. Paul's dream of the Man of Macedonia in Acts 16 is a reminder to all of us who are working in Europe of who is really in control.

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140 Lausanne Movement, Cape Town Commitment, Part I Section I, https://lausanne.org/content/ctcommitment, Accessed 21/6/2021

141 Smith (2003), *Mission after Christendom*, DLT: London; Matenga and Gold (2016), *Mission in Motion*, William Carey Library: Pasadena; Stroope (2017), *Transcending Mission*, Apollos: London

142 Kim (2010), *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission*, SCM Press: London

143 Memory (2016), "Movements of the Spirit: Church Planting and the Church in Mission" in Eckstrom (ed.) *The Church in Mission*, William Carey: Pasadena, 164

Perhaps the time has come for us to stop trying to motivate people into mission based on results, targets, and success, but instead to seek to motivate them on the basis of love. Since the 18th Century, the modern missions movement has motivated for evangelisation on the basis of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19,20. In the age of Global Christianity, is it not time to reorient mission in terms of what Jay Matenga[144] calls the Great Commitment in John 17:18-20? Jesus prays to the Father, "Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world". What would it mean for our understanding and practice of mission in Europe if it were reoriented to a motivation of love, with its origin in the loving mutuality between Father, Son and Spirit?

Impact of Covid-19

The pandemic has revealed the fundamental weakness of Western mission strategy – it only works when we are not in a crisis. At times like this, we would do well to listen to voices from the Majority World like Jehu Hanciles:

> Fundamentally, the factors and considerations that framed the Western missionary movement—including the idea of Christendom, imperial expansion, political and economic dominance, and technological supremacy—are strikingly absent from the emerging non-Western movement. Where enlightenment certitudes (including the universal relevance of Western ideas and ideals), militarist triumphalism, and a rather secular emphasis on means and human calculations framed the Western movement, it is the experience of colonial domination, marginalization, and an intensely spiritual worldview that will provide the defining elements in the non-Western movement. . . The New Testament emphasis on 'weak things of the world' (1 Corinthians 1:27) will inform the thinking and outlook of non-Western missionaries.[145]

We do not know what the world will look like after Covid-19. No one does. So how can we do strategic planning? Well perhaps it is time for us to let go of our secular gods and learn from our brothers and sisters from the Majority World about how to thrive in the midst of disruption. As Nussbaum puts it,

> The Christendom mindset assumes that we are holding power and can live our whole lives in planning mode. The next time we wish our "weaker" partners were better at planning and implementing, let us remember that we are as culturally crippled in coping as they are in planning.[146]

The contours of the new mission paradigm are still being shaped, but recent developments and the impact of Covid-19, suggest the following changes are underway:

1. Mission is being redefined as missio Dei, God's mission in which whole-life disciples and witnessing communities participate.
2. Mission is being relocated to the local and indigenous.
3. Mission is being redistributed as a shared task for the commonwealth of God's people.
4. Mission is being reoriented to a motivation by love not strategies for success.

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144 Matenga (2021), Kotahitanga and Koinonia, *International Review of Mission*, Issue 110.1 (412), 5/2021, https://jay-matenga.com/pdfs/MatengaJ_KotahitangaKoinonia.pdf, Accessed 24/6/2021
145 Hanciles (2008), *Beyond Christendom*, Orbis: Maryknoll, 289-390
146 Nussbaum (2020), Gethsemane and Beyond: Mission Disruption as Mission Advancement, *Global Missiology*, Vol.3, No.17, 4/2020 http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/view/2327 , Accessed 22/6/2021

4
Implications for Mission in Europe

In what follows, I will discuss the implications of these trends for mission in Europe. When Christian leaders talk about the big challenges in the world today, it is not uncommon for them to refer to the "sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). Consideration of the exegesis of this text and its applicability to a European context, is beyond the scope of this report, but I will make one observation. Even in David's times, discernment of the context involved more than one person. We might even imagine the "sons of Issachar" sitting down together to discuss what they were seeing, debating about what it meant, praying that God would give them discernment, and then deciding together what counsel they would give as to what Israel should do. This report is offered up in that same spirit, not as the final word on the missiological state of Europe, but as a contribution to a conversation. It has drawn on a very wide range of sources and has benefitted hugely from the missiological thinking of others.

Given that I do not know your context, I have limited myself to broad and general implications. The implications for your church, your organisation, your situation, will be more specific and perhaps unique, so you will have to do some thinking for yourself. This final chapter is not the end of the matter but rather where you take over. As you read, be thinking of questions to help you and others to reflect further on these implications.

I would also encourage you to use these points as a focus for your prayers. I quoted from Psalm 97 at the end of the Introduction: "The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth" (Psalm 97:5). Only the Lord can make these "mountains" melt, but He can. He can, and He will. So let us work and pray for that every day, for we know how this story ends: with the Lord on His Throne:

> The kingdom of the world has become
> the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ,
> and he will reign for ever and ever
> Revelation 11:15b

4.1 Implications of the Political Context

Resurgent nationalism poses a particular challenge for Europe's churches and mission agencies. Many nationalists, particularly those of the populist variety, present themselves as the defenders of traditional culture, of Christian heritage and values. They claim to defend their Christian nation against the imposition of liberal social values, multiculturalism, or Islam. For Christian who grieve the loss of Christendom, this message is very appealing. Sadly, some evangelicals have lined up behind nationalists and far-right political parties for this very reason.

Today's European Christians need to be reminded of the danger of wrapping the cross in the flag. Churches must recover their prophetic voice to speak boldly not only against racism, but also the more insidious forms of "othering" that are associated with nationalism. The church is called to be a

community for us and for the other, one that is true to its fundamental identity, not in the nation but in Christ, for "there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

At the same time, we must not be naïve about the progressive political agenda of the Left. It too creates idols of "tolerance" and "freedom". According to Julia-Doxat Purser of the EEA, "there are growing numbers of cases where the rights of members of the LGBT+ community not to be offended are now prioritised over the freedom of conscience of Christians."[147] Europe needs Christians who will engage in the public square and training in public theology to equip them. Church leaders must encourage Christians to think and pray more into the political environment in which we live.

More pragmatically, tighter restrictions on movement associated with Brexit and Covid-19 pose specific challenges. Established paradigms for the sending of transnational Christian workers from outside the EU may no longer be feasible. There will almost certainly be extra bureaucracy and expense. Short-term mission mobilisation may be a particular challenge. More positively, this may encourage mission agencies to move on from the old paradigm, and to mobilise and support more first-culture workers (nationals of the country in which they work), though true collaboration will require a different model to one party providing the funds and the other the personnel.

4.2 Implications of the Economic Context

Churches and mission agencies across Europe have responded to the economic challenges of the last ten years with many social initiatives. However, if debt and Covid-19 precipitate another global recession it will have a huge impact on churches and on international mission mobilisation. As Eddie Arthur has observed, many churches feel overwhelmed by the constant demands for support from mission agencies.[148] Their own economic survival may take priority over mission support. Giving to mission is dependent on economic prosperity to some degree and we may need to urgently rethink the funding model of many mission workers and projects. Employment creation and entrepreneurship training may need to become part of the required training of future workers for Christian mission in Europe.

More broadly, "Mission Redefined" requires us to locate Business as Mission, wealth creation, and work in general, as all part of the Mission of God. As Dallas Willard put it, "Business is a primary moving force of the love of God in human history."[149] This too is part of bringing the gospel into the public square, so that we might address the pressing social, economic, environmental, and spiritual needs of society through work and business. Business as Mission may become one of the primary ways for Christians to give hope to tomorrow's Europeans.

The pandemic has reminded us of the importance of simple things. If recession is just around the corner, simplicity and sustainability will be key values in the years to come. Churches, organisations, and mission agencies would do well to evaluate the lessons learned over the last year, and seek to re-set their operations more simply, more sustainably and more relationally.

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147 Doxat-Purser, Freedom of Religion or Belief – An Introduction, Lausanne Europe Conversation, 2/2021, https://www.lausanneeurope.org/freedom-of-religion-or-belief-an-introduction/, Accessed 24/6/2021. For a more detailed treatment on how populist movements are changing the face of European politics and the danger of their appeal to Christians see Kerr (Ed.), I*s God a Populist? Christianity, Populism and the Future of Europe*, Frekk Forlag: Oslo, 2019
148 Arthur (2020), *The Way Forward*, 38
149 Business as Mission, What is Business as Mission? https://businessasmission.com/get-started/ Accessed 24/6/2021

4.3 Implications of the Social Context

Migration poses huge challenges and opportunities for European churches and mission agencies. Some of these issues are explored in more detail below (4.7 and 4.8), but I cannot overstate the impact of migration on European society. Jackson and Passarelli's new edition of *Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches' Responses in Europe* is an important contribution to our understanding of migration and the church in Europe.[150] The face of European Christianity is changing. The next European generation will be the most ethnically diverse in its history.

Reaching the growing number of ageing Europeans is one of the greatest challenges for mission in Europe today. God has brought to Europe millions of Christians from the Majority World, many of whom find employment in caring for our elderly. Should we not be reflecting more deeply about how to partner with diaspora churches to support them on this mission frontier? Many of them have daily opportunities to show and tell of their love for Jesus.

More broadly, as Europe faces increased intergenerational tensions, the church may be one of the few places where people can find a truly intergenerational and international community. In itself, that could be a powerful demonstration of the truth of the Gospel. However, many churches have adopted a compartmentalised industrial model of church, with silos of children's ministry, young adult church, church for seniors, and this works against this sense of an intergenerational family. Whole-life discipleship is not only discipleship in all areas of my life, but also discipleship for the whole of my life, and for that I need to be in relationship with every generation of God's family.

The growing numbers of young people identifying as LGBT+ cannot be ignored. Glynn Harrison, Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, University of Bristol, and author of *A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing*[151], recently commented:

> One possibility is that we are witnessing real increases in rates of same-sex attraction in the context of the cultural changes brought about by the sexual revolution. Another is that people are simply now more honest about their feelings. But it is also the case that young people today are more likely to use fashionable sexual identity labels that enable them to feel 'cool' and to fit in. It is hard to know, but I suspect all three factors play some part. The bottom line is that our human sexual attractions appear to be much more fluid that we thought hitherto, and powerful cultural and social changes are likely to be influencing patterns of self-identification.[152]

Olof Edsinger, a Swedish theologian, observes that postmodern philosophy has fuelled scepticism about the binary concept of gender "which fosters the idea of our biological sex as a problem to overcome rather than an asset in building up of our own identity."[153] At this time when sexual orientation has become one of the most important available identity labels, churches need to reflect deeply on these issues. We need to teach a theology of the body that shows "how the gospel is

150 Jackson and Passarelli (2021), *Mapping Migration, Mapping Churches' Responses in Europe, 3rd*. Ed., CCME-WCC: Geneva, https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/mapping-migration-mapping-churches-responses-in-europe Accessed 25/6/2021
151 Harrison (2017) *A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing*, IVP: London
152 Evangelical Focus, Why are so many Gen Z self-identifying as LGBT?, 17th March 2021, https://evangelicalfocus.com/life-tech/10673/why-are-so-many-gen-z-self-identifying-as-lgbt, Accessed 13/4/2021
153 *Ibid.*

good news for our physical selves."[154] However, perhaps even more importantly, we need to remind ourselves of the love that Jesus had for those who were broken. We must remember that one of the first non-Jews to be reached by the gospel was the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). Transgender people expect the church to be a place where they will be judged and rejected. How can we lovingly and graciously welcome transgender people into our circles (staying near the chariot (Acts 8:29)) whilst unflinchingly teaching a Biblical theology of the body and sexuality? That is one of the key challenges for the church in Europe right now.

4.4 Implications of the Environmental Context

If mission flows from the love of God for his creation, then Creation Care should be at the heart of the Christian message. We should not forget that God's ultimate purpose is to reconcile "all things" in Christ (Colossians 1:15-20). Some parts of the church have developed their theology of mission to take this onboard. The Anglican Communion is one example with their formulation of The Five Marks of Mission.[155]

> The Five Marks of Mission:
> The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ
>   1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.
>   2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.
>   3. To respond to human need by loving service.
>   4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.
>   5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Sadly, ecological concern is still met with suspicion among some evangelicals. However, the younger generation see it as a vital issue. Research by *Tearfund and Youthscape* in the UK found that 92% of Christian teenagers are "concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about climate change, and 84% agreed that "it is important that Christians respond to climate change".[156] The report concluded: "Christian teenagers want the Church to act with greater urgency, and to support them in taking action for the climate. If the Church doesn't follow the example of its young leaders, there is a chance it could lose them altogether."

What we have not done out of environmental concern has now been forced on us by Covid-19. We have learnt how to do many things virtually and have saved money by not travelling and therefore cutting down on our carbon footprint. Let us not miss this opportunity to rethink how we do church, conferences, and training. If the impact of climate change on life in ministry in Europe is as predicted, then environmental concerns and initiatives will move from the margin to the mainstream of mission in Europe as the century progresses.

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154 Allberry (2021), *What God has to say about our bodies: How the gospel is good news for our physical selves*, Crossway: Wheaton

155 Anglican Communion, Marks of Mission https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx Accessed 24/6/2021

156 Youthscape, Burning down the House: How the church could lose young people, 2020, https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/burning-down-the-house Accessed 25/6/2021

4.5 Implications of the Technological Context

The digital revolution does present opportunities for Christian mission, and we should encourage those who work in information technology to help the church to be more creative in this regard. However, there are also some significant challenges, not least the fundamental epistemological challenge detailed in this report. How can we present the truth of the gospel to Europeans who are so susceptible to digital deception? Is this not a moment to ensure that church leaders and mission workers are better equipped with the basic tools of digital theology?

I have also highlighted the impact of these new technologies on the world of work with a mainly younger generation stuck in precarious employment. What does it mean to "preach the good news of the kingdom" to the *precariat*? And what about the impact of social media on the mental health of today's young people? Are our churches preaching and teaching about that? Our young people are being discipled by their mobile phones. How can we help them to navigate this new world?

We can take advantage of the technological upskilling that has resulted from Covid-19, but we must also recognise the downsides of virtual gatherings and virtual working. What have we learnt about building community over this year that can be carried forward?

4.6 Implications of Secularisation and Desecularisation

The evidence of the ongoing secularisation in many European countries is a challenge to us all. Yet, as authors like Kasselstrand[157] have observed, the most secularised countries are characterised not by widespread atheism but rather by indifference to religion. As I put it in my recent Vista article:

> Secularity and irreligion are not the same thing, and this has significant consequences for Christian mission. Apologetics that is targeted on atheism is only reaching a tiny proportion of Europe's population. The much greater challenge is reaching the huge number of unbelieving Europeans who are indifferent to Christianity and consider religion an irrelevance in modern life.[158]

As secular Europeans face an uncertain future post-pandemic, we must make the most of this season of opportunity to preach the gospel of hope. However, it must be a hope that is authentic and honest. Over this year, many of us have learnt something of the importance of lament and the need to incorporate much more of a theology of suffering into our discipleship. As Israel Olofinjana observes, "if our discipleship programmes and events do not prepare Christians to understand and live with suffering and sacrifice, they will only follow Jesus when all is going well. The result is that when things get really tough, they will walk out on God." [159]

Putting the numbers and trends of secularisation and desecularisation to one side, we should never lose sight of the power of one-to-one discipleship. Every encounter with another person is an opportunity for the hope of Christ in me to be passed on, more often than not, as I share my life and my suffering.

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157 Kasselstrand (2019), Secularity and Irreligion in Cross-National Context: A Non-Linear Approach, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 58(3):626-642

158 Memory (2021), Secularity and Irreligion in Europe, *Vista* 38, 5/2021, https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/latest-articles/secularity-and-irreligion-in-europe, Accessed 19/5/21.

159 Olofinjana (2020), Discipleship in a Context of Suffering and Loss, Lausanne Europe Conversation, 11/Nov 2020, https://www.lausanneeurope.org/discipleship-in-a-context-of-suffering-and-loss/ Accessed 19/5/21

The re-evangelisation of Europe starts right here with my discipleship in Christ, and with those around me who I seek to encourage to follow Him. Far from an eschatology of despair, these are times for us to be faithful in hope and expectant for the signs of resurrection and revival in Europe today.

4.7 Implications of Growing Islam

The growing Muslim population in Europe suggests that training in Muslim-engagement should be made as broadly available as possible. We cannot just rely on specialists. Recognising that this a "transformative moment" for many Muslims, now is the time to talk to our Muslim neighbours. As Bert de Ruiter affirms:

> The presence of Islam in Europe should be high on the agenda of the Church in Europe. What happens to Europe and Islam is not something that the Church can ignore. I believe we should speak of and with Muslims with attitudes that are influenced by the way God deals with us. Our thinking, attitude, behaviour with regard to Islam in Europe should be guided by God's self-giving love manifested at the cross of Golgotha. I suggest that Churches and Christians across Europe respond to the presence of Muslims in Europe with: a) a compassionate heart; b) an informed mind; c) an involved hand; d) a witnessing tongue.[160]

Colin Edwards, a specialist in Muslim-Christian relations, considers that the presence of significant Muslim communities in Europe undermines the secular assumption of religion being private. "Islam makes religion public. This will change the tenor of society and allow the body of Christ to be much more public in its faith than in the past"[161], he suggests.

4.8 Implications of Re-evangelisation: Diaspora Churches

How should European churches respond to what has sometimes been called the Blessed Reflex?[162] Christians from the Majority World bring many gifts with them to share with their brothers and sisters in Europe: their vibrant spirituality, their evangelistic zeal and, perhaps more than anything else, their unshakeable confidence in the agency of God. Furthermore, their theology recognises the reality of spiritual forces which often have little or no place in Western thought, what Paul Hiebert calls "the flaw of the excluded middle".[163] Given the seemingly irrepressible advance of secularisation in Europe, these are blessings from God to the churches of Europe.

However, our brothers and sisters from the Majority World also need us. Most diaspora churches find evangelising Europeans really difficult. Kwiyani writes:

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160 De Ruiter (2018), Muslims in Europe and the Response of the Church, *Vista* 29, 2/2018, 4 https://www.euro-peanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/latest-articles/2018/05/24/muslims-in-europe-and-the-response-of-the-church Accessed 12/4/21
161 Edwards (2021), personal communication
162 Ross (2003), Blessed Reflex: Mission as God's Spiral of Renewal, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27, No.4; Kwiyani (2014), *Sent Forth: African Missionary Work in the West*, American Society of Missiology, Maryknoll: Orbis, 70-72
163 Hiebert (1982), The Flaw of the Excluded Middle, *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol.10 Issue 1, 35-47, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F009182968201000103 Accessed 25/6/2021

This is one area in which missional partnerships between Africans and Europeans could be of much help. The Africans have the zeal to pray and evangelise, while the Europeans may have a better grasp of the cultural gap that needs to be bridged in order to connect with the people. If we put these two together, we may have what we need for European Christianity.[164]

Just last month, the leader of a network of 29 Filipino churches across Europe contacted me about helping their leaders to know how to understand and reach Europeans. Transnational mission agencies like *ECM*, who have a long experience of contextualising their work for different European contexts, may be uniquely placed to serve God's mission in this way.

More broadly, churches in every town and city where there are diaspora congregations should be extending the hand of fellowship to their brothers and sisters from Africa, Latin America and Asia, and by that, I mean doing much more than just renting out their church buildings for services. Many are already doing more than this, but in some parts of Europe church leaders have simply not woken up to the potential of collaborating with diaspora churches. To do that, European church leaders may need to face up to their unconscious racism and colonial attitudes.

Finally, we need to consider the implications of this for mission training. When I was studying at All Nations Christian College in the early nineties, Hiebert's concept of "the excluded middle" was seen as vitally important for those who were going as missionaries to Africa, Asia and Latin America. What concepts of European thought do diaspora church leaders need to learn for them to successfully engage in mission to Europeans? Conversely, what changes must be made in the curriculum of theological and missiological training colleges in Europe in the light of this new reality of World Christianity in the old continent?

Are we really willing to listen and learn from leaders from the Majority World? Or will we reject the gifts they bring as part of the Blessed Reflex of the Spirit of God?

4.9 Implications of Re-evangelisation: Church Planting Movements

Church planting will have a critical role as Europe emerges from its Covid-19 lockdown. Many Europeans may well seek out the security of the "known", the church buildings that remain a powerful symbol of Christian continuity and normality. Many others may be open to new forms of Christian community and there is some evidence of "fresh expressions" emerging even in these challenging times. [165] However, our creativity must be balanced with biblical orthodoxy if these new Christian communities are to really make a difference.

New churches are so much nimbler at adapting to a rapidly changing context and we can thank God that, in a time of apparent church decline, there are burgeoning church planting platforms and movements as well as diaspora churches in towns and cities from Dublin to Dubrovnik. However, we must reflect deeply on the lessons we have learned about the essence of Christian community over the past year. Church, work, and life in general will continue as hybrid realities, being digitally and

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164 Kwiyani (2017), Blessed Reflex: African Christians in Europe, *Missio Africanus*, Vol 3, Issue 1, 2017 p.47 https://de-colonisingmission.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Harvey_Kwiyani_Blessed-Reflex-African-Christians-in-Europe.pdf, Accessed 20/5/21

165 Moynagh (2020) Christian Communities for Every Context, *Lausanne Global Analysis*, Vol.9, Issue 5, 9/2020 https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2020-09/christian-communities-for-every-context Accessed 20/5/21

physically present for perhaps years to come. One of the priorities in this area is to connect European and diaspora church planting networks so that the gifts of God can be shared between them for the re-evangelisation of Europe. That is certainly one of my prayers for the upcoming *Lausanne Europe Conversation and Gathering: Dynamic Gospel – New Europe*.[166]

4.10 Implications of Re-evangelisation: Next Generation

Most of the revivals in history have been among the young. More to the point, they have been led by the young. The mission agency I work with, European Christian Mission, was founded in a prayer meeting in Estonia in 1903 by Ganz Raud when he was just 25.[167] *YWAM, OM, 24/7 Prayer* were started by people in their 20s. As Brian Stanley observed, "in Asia, Africa and Latin America also, the key actors in mission were frequently young people or women."[168]

Europe's younger generation seems so fragile and confused, and their future so uncertain. Yet perhaps this is precisely what God needs: a younger generation who are willing to look beyond human politics for the answers to what abundant life looks like. They need our prayers, our encouragement, and the freedom to use their gifts for God's glory. It will not have escaped your attention that most of the Christian diaspora community in Europe are young. The re-evangelisation of Europe depends on this next generation. We must release them into leadership.

However, we must face up to another hard truth. Many of the leadership responsibilities of our existing structures are simply not that attractive to the Next Generation. As Christian Kuhn, the Director of the Swiss Evangelical Alliance puts it, "the Next Generation is not interested in maintaining these governance models….(they look for) participative leadership, consulting leadership, self-managed leadership." Yet if we can harness their entrepreneurial potential in mission, "it could become a powerful launching ramp for thousands of church planting or discipleship projects."[169]

4.11 Implications of Mission Redefined

The new definitions of mission have not changed the fundamental task of mission, that is, faithful witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all things, or as the preface to the Cape Town Commitment put it, "to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas."[170]

We bear witness in word but also in deed, for mission in Europe today must be integral. Participation in the Mission of God encompasses proclamation and social action, care for creation, and being a prophetic voice for justice. Truly our calling is to whole-life discipleship, one that rejects the dichotomy of sacred and secular, and embraces our calling to live out our faith in the entirety of our everyday lives.

166 Lausanne Europe Conversation and Gathering https://www.lausanneeurope.org/
167 Butterworth (2010), *God's Secret Listener*, Monarch: Oxford, 52
168 Stanley (2013), *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, IVP Academic: Downers Grove, 91
169 Kuhn (2021), personal communication
170 Lausanne Movement, Our Legacy for the Future, 2010, https://lausanne.org/gatherings/related/our-lega-cy-for-the-future Accessed 20/5/21

4.12 Implications of Mission Relocated

Global mission has, for some years, been polycentric, polydirectional and polyphonic. Yet it has taken a global pandemic to open our eyes to the reality that mission is primarily local. Of course, it was ever thus. As Eddie Arthur reminds us, "for the most part it has been unnamed local people who have done the lion's share of evangelism and disciple making - not expatriate missionaries."[171]

Covid-19 has made us much more conscious of our local community and the physical neighbourhoods we inhabit. Mission to our locality in Europe today does mean contextualising and proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and forming local Christian communities, but it also means broadening our vision to encompass our environment. As Carol Kingston-Smith puts it, "wherever possible, we need to affirm the local and work to sustain the dignity and integrity of both the land and her inhabitants which are bound together in the covenant. This is indigenous wisdom which many of us in mission have overlooked."[172]

4.13 Implications of Mission Redistributed

Europe is perhaps the greatest challenge in world mission today. Most Europeans appear to have been inoculated against the gospel by the vaccine of cultural Christianity. However, I believe the weakness of the Church is also God's opportunity. More than ever before, European Christians are collaborating, networking, and planting churches together, and into that mix, God has brought the vitality of Christians from the Majority World.

Mission is for the whole of the people of God: women and men from all peoples and all generations. However, collaborating with diaspora churches may require a more fundamental reassessment of our unconscious prejudice if we are to truly work together. As Harvey Kwiyani puts it, "we cannot really begin to move in what God is doing unless voices from other parts of the world, voices different from the voices where we have always heard, are present at the table."[173]

Listening is challenging. We would much rather be the ones talking and, for too long, the dominant voice in European mission has been the voice of Northern European men of a certain age. Their voice will continue to be heard, but right now they need to listen to voices from the South and East of Europe, to women, to young people, and to diaspora church leaders.

Leaders from the South and East of Europe have vital perspectives to bring to our understanding of mission in regions where cultural Christianity remains tremendously influential.[174] The voice of women is simply missing from many conversations. As Evi Rodemann explains:

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171 Arthur *ibid.*, 10
172 Kingston-Smith (2020) Hungry for Good News in Pandemic Times, *Lausanne Global Analysis* Vol.9 Issue 5, 9/2020 https://lausanne.org/content/lga/2020-09/hungry-for-good-news-in-pandemic-times Accessed 21/5/21
173 Kwiyani (2021), Intercultural Mutuality as Innovation in Missions, On Mission Conference, 10/3/2021 https://missio-2021-onmission.s3.amazonaws.com/Transcripts/Harvey+Kwiyani+Final.pdf, Accessed 18/5/2021
174 Vlasin (2019), A Romanian Perspective on Mission in Europe, *Vista* 34, 10/2019, 8-9 https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/s/vista-issue-34-final.pdf Accessed 25/6/2021

When mentoring and talking with women in ministries across Europe, they often mention that their voices are not taken seriously, or they don´t feel heard. If they sit in meetings, they are not expected to contribute. If a leadership position becomes open, in many cases a man is chosen. Not necessarily because he is more qualified but because he has the "right" gender.[175]

The young also struggle to get a hearing, yet their understanding of secularised global youth culture will be invaluable to our mission reflection going forward.[176] And we need to listen to the voice of Christians from the Majority World. We need to hear their passion for evangelism, their uncompromising stance on abortion, euthanasia, sexuality and gender issues that some European Christians have given up fighting for, but more than anything we need to hear their challenge about the power of prayer. As Kwiyani puts it:

Revivals happen – I am sure about this – but they happen because of prayer. We need prayer when we plant churches, when we run our food banks, when we distribute tracts on the high street, when we visit the sick in the hospital, and when we visit those in prison. We need prayer in everything we do.[177]

4.14 Implications of Mission Reoriented

Covid-19 has highlighted just how much our mission paradigm continues to be dominated by what Jay Matenga calls Industrial Values, ideas that are drawn from the Enlightenment and applied to all of life including mission.[178] It was Peruvian missiologist Samuel Escobar who warned of the dangers of "managerial missiology" that sought to turn mission into a predictable and controllable strategic process with measurable goals and a focus on results.[179] This might motivate some churches to give, and some people to be mobilised, but it fundamentally takes God's mission into our own hands. Is this moment not an opportunity to look inside and reflect on our motivations in mission? Is love for God and for his world really our chief motivation?

Crises, like that through which we have come this past year, have a way of showing us who we really are and what we really believe. It has changed our European context, but it has also changed us. Are we willing to let God continue to shape us according to His purpose that the gospel of Jesus Christ might transform this continent again?

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175 Rodemann (2019), A Women's Perspective on Mission in Europe, *Vista* 34, 10/2019, 6-7 https://www.european-mission.redcliffe.ac.uk/s/vista-issue-34-final.pdf Accessed 25/6/2021
176 Greenwood (2019), The Spiritual Hunger of a Secularised European Youth Culture, *Vista* 34, 10/2019, 4-5 https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/s/vista-issue-34-final.pdf Accessed 25/6/2021
177 Kwiyani (2019), Rethinking Mission in Europe: An African Contribution, *Vista* 34, 10/2019, 11-12 https://www.europeanmission.redcliffe.ac.uk/s/vista-issue-34-final.pdf Accessed 25/6/2021
178 Matenga (2021), Centring The Local: The Indigenous Future of Mission, WEAMC, 1/2021, https://jaymatenga.com/pdfs/MatengaJ_CentringLocal.pdf Accessed 21/5/21
179 Escobar (1991), Three approaches to world evangelization stand in tension with one another, *Transformation* 8 (4):7-13, https://doi.org/10.1177%2F026537889100800409 , Accessed 22/6/2021

4.15 General Conclusion

It is my conviction that we need to treat Europe seriously as a missiological context. That is what I have tried to do in this report.

In one sense, the context and the time in which we live is secondary to the task of Christian mission. Our task is "to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas."[180] Paul encouraged Timothy to "preach the word in season and out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). Whatever our context, or moment in history, the task is the same.

Neither should our context influence our motive for mission. Some parts of the world are more receptive to the gospel and the results are more evident. However, as we have seen, love not success should be the motive of mission. Faithfulness is the prime measure of a servant's effectiveness; "… well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23)

Nevertheless, the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13; Mark 4; Luke 8) points to the importance of the soil (the context) for the reception of the gospel message and the propagation of the Kingdom of God. For that very reason it is sometimes called the Parable of the Soils. A wise farmer would avoid sowing among weeds, in rocky ground, or on the path, but we are not fully in control of where the gospel seed lands. The preparation of the heart is the domain of the Spirit and that points again to the importance of prayer. The main point of the parable, however, is the power of the gospel in the receptive heart. The following parables of the Growing Seed and the Mustard Seed (in the case of Mark's gospel) drive that message home. Though almost invisible at first, the seed of the Kingdom grows irresistibly.

Though Europe's soil today might appear arid and unyielding, the seed of the Kingdom is being sown and will produce fruit. Our task is to sow. Our motivation is our love of God and of His world. Our field is Europe. So, "let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)

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180 Lausanne Movement (2010), *ibid.*

Jim Memory is a member of the International Leadership Team of the European Christian Mission.

He is lecturer in European Mission at All Nations Christian College (UK) and co-editor of Vista, a journal of research-based information on mission in Europe. He is also part of the planning team of Lausanne Europe 20/21 - Dynamic Gospel: New Europe.