EUROPE 2021: A MISSIOLOGICAL REPORT

Posted on July 30, 2021 by Eddie

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Category: Observations

My friend Jim Memory has recently published Europe 2021: A Missiological Report, which you can download from here. The report runs to around 50 pages of A4 and if you haven't downloaded it yet, you should.

The introduction gives a picture of what the report contains:

> ***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.*
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> *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.*
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> *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, â€œno-one actually lives in Europe.â€ 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.*
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> *P. 8*

I regard this publication as important for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it includes Britain as a part of Europe (this is not a political/Brexit statement). For too long, British Christians have tended to think of the mainland of Europe (or parts of it, at least) as a mission field, whereas the UK is a mission sending country. This report places the UK in its proper context as part of post-Christian Europe

which has a complex relationship to God's mission. To my mind, the biggest task facing churches in the UK is getting to grips with the fact that we are in a missionary situation at home and adjusting our approaches to meet that reality.

The second reason that I believe that this report is important is its breadth. I'm sure that many readers will find parts of the report somewhat superficial and you can certainly find deeper analyses on all of the issues raised elsewhere. However, I am unaware of any publication which covers this breadth of material in such an accessible form. Missiology is by its nature a multi-disciplinary discipline and this report is an excellent reflection of this.

Essentially, what you have here is an introduction to the social, economic and political situation in Europe, combined with a look at the state of the church and religion. This is then combined with an overview of current thinking in mission and a set of conclusions that draws all of the aspects together. All of this, set against the impact of Covid-19. I can't imagine why any Christian leader in Europe who had access to this report would not read it.

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So the bottom line is that I believe that all British church leaders should get hold of this report and read it. I think it would make an excellent resource for ministry groups or home groups to work through together (perhaps Jim could draw up some discussion questions on each chapter - hint). While the report doesn't focus on other parts of the "Western world", it only takes an hour or so to read and may well be helpful in other Western contexts. I'd also suggest that church and denomination leaders in other parts of the world who have a vision for the gospel in Europe, would do well to get hold of this.