NOT THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

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Category: Politics

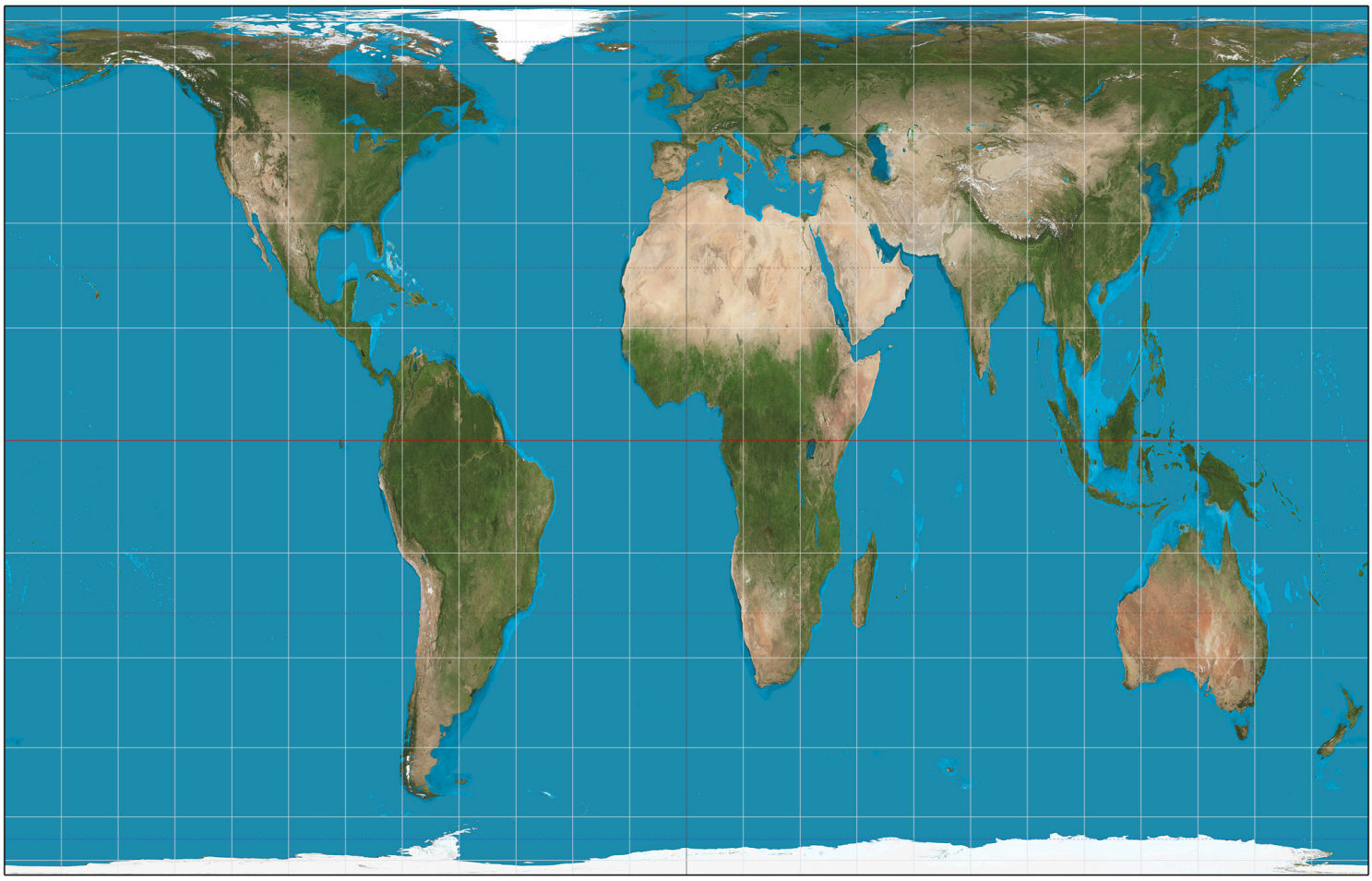
We Europeans know that we live in the centre of the world; we must do, the maps prove it!

See what I mean? There we are, right in the middle, just above Africa.

Of course, there are good reasons for the Mercator map being drawn the way it is; it showsÂ the shape (if not the area) of the continents pretty accurately. This map is undoubtedly eurocentric, but it was developed in Europe for use by Europeans.

However, as life in the UK is being dominated by discussion about Europe, I thought that it would be good to take a broader look at the world and Europe's place in it.

Perhaps the most interesting way to look at the world map is the Peter's equal area projection. This, as the name suggests, shows the size of the continents accurately, though it does rather distort their shape.



This gets even more fun, and somewhat disorientating, if you turn it upside down.

Of course, this isn'tÂ *really* upside down. There is no real reason to view the earth one way up or the other - it's only convention and familiarity that makes us choose the normal view. However, what

the Peter's projection does clearly show is that Europe is actually quite small. This small, in fact!



Another way of illustrating this is to look at the way in which the world's population is distributed. This is a fascinating picture.

We in the UK are spending a lot of time, energy and emotion debating the EU referendum and it's right that we should do so. Whichever way you are inclined to vote, this is something of major significance to us and to the countries around us. However, it is also good to be reminded, that in, global terms, this is aÂ local debate; one which preoccupies the people of a small island close to a peninsula on the western edge of the Asian landmass.

The vast majority of people in the world are not debating whether Britain should leave or stay in the EU. In fact, most people are probably only vaguely aware that the referendum is happening. If you are a labourer in a Chinese megacity, the position of the UKÂ with regard to a few other foreign countries is hardly likely to keep you awake at night.

If my experience in Africa is anything to go by, Euro 2016 will be gaining far more popular attentionÂ than the referendum. I very much doubt that crowds of people are gathering in Abidjan bars to watch Boris Johnston and David Cameron slug it out; but Ronaldo will be pulling them in.

Some believe that Britain will be best equipped to relate to the broader world as a member of the EU, others think that EU membership is a problem in this regard. I can see sense in both points of view, to be honest. However, the important thing is that we have a balanced view of the situation. There is a big old world out there and when this referendum is (thankfully) over, we will need to interact with it.

This is especially true for those of us who are Christians. The fastest growing churches and the biggest concentrations of unreached people groups all lie outside of the borders of the EU and we need to pay attention to both.