

EUROPE MISSION 2010

Europe must be one of the most spiritually needy continents on earth. The secularisation and paganisation of large sections of Europe is tragic. Yet there are surprisingly dynamic pockets of spiritual vitality and life amidst the general atheism and hedonism.

Denmark

Lenora and I have returned from almost three weeks of ministry in Europe. We were invited to speak at the **Reformation Resurrection Conference** in Denmark. Australian missionary Cameron Buettel is involved in church planting in Denmark and he heard of our work through Way of the Master radio.

Reformation Conference

Participants for the Reformation Conference came from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany and even from Finland. The families from Finland included a missionary from Northern Ireland who drove his family and members of his congregation across Finland, Sweden and Denmark to take part in this conference. One German family now lived in Denmark to be able to continue home schooling their children. Home schooling is being outlawed in Germany.

Biblical Femininity

The church planting ministry in Denmark was evidently healthy with numerous young married couples with children. There was lots of excitement over Lenora's presentation on **Biblical Femininity**. The men were all sent out to care for the many energetic children during this session so that all the women could participate. The men were evidently quite concerned as the women's meeting went on for over two hours with vigorous open discussion, especially over child-rearing.

Foundations for Reformation

The conference was set in a beautiful forested area and was blessed with generally good weather. My presentations were on: **The Heart of the Gospel, Justification, the Reformer Martin Luther, the Reformer John Calvin, Reforming the Family, Transforming Nations, Missions, Honouring the Lord's Day, Understanding the Threat of Islam to Europe** and **Practical Steps to Reformation**. Question and Answer sessions were vibrant and could last for hours. Each evening after the final session I would answer more questions in **Table Talk** sessions. These intense sessions could last until midnight. The interest in the Book table and audio visual Reformation resources was intense and enthusiastic.

After the Reformation Conference I had the privilege of preaching on **Christian Courage** at the Back to the Bible Congregation. In the afternoon I presented **Animals in the Bible** to the children and then a mission slide presentation of **The Persecuted Church in Sudan**.

Culture and Conflict

Denmark is famous for being the home of the LEGOLAND and of children's author Hans Christian Anderson. Many beloved children's stories such as *The Little Mermaid* originated in Denmark. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was centered on Denmark. More recently, Denmark hit the news when Muslims staged violent demonstrations against a Danish newspaper that published cartoons on Muhammad.

Resistance to the New World Order

The independent spirit of the Danes is seen in how their people have a tendency to vote No in referendums. Danish voters have repeatedly rejected the European Union constitution and Euro currency. Denmark continues to use the Kroner as its currency.

Muslims in Denmark

Although numerous Muslims have come into the country, no mosques have been able to be built yet, due to opposition by local municipalities. The Turks, Arabs, Iranians, Albanians, Somalians and other Muslims present a special challenge for cross-cultural missions in Denmark.

A Lutheran State

Denmark is a stable parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy. There is religious freedom but the Lutheran Church is recognised as the national church and is supported out of a state levied church tax. Although over 70% of Danes would identify themselves as Lutherans, church attendance is below 4% and much of the national church is dry and formal. Liberal theologies and secularisation have devastated the theological colleges. Although Denmark used to be a major missionary sending country, the country has now become a mission field. Few of the 3,000 churches in the country proclaim the Gospel.

A Desperate Need

Many of the young people are disillusioned by the prevailing secularisation and post-modernism in society. They present a tremendous challenge to the Christian church to win the young people to Christ. Denmark desperately needs a strong Back to the Bible movement to lay foundations for a new Reformation and for a fresh spiritual Revival.

Sweden

On Monday we were off by car and ferry to Sweden, arriving at the coastal town of Varberg. Then off by road to collect a missionary family from an airport en route. It was a full day of travelling and it was almost midnight when we got settled into our new home in Sweden.

Back to the Bible for Reformation and Revival.

The next day we began the **Back to the Bible for Reformation and Revival Conference**. Participants included Christians from Holland, Nigeria and America. The Swedish members of the congregation informed us that the government was enforcing severe education legislation

that outlawed home schooling. Some were considering moving to nearby Norway where home schooling is legal.

My presentations at this conference in Sweden included: **Revival in the Bible and in History, The Greatest Century of Reformation, Martin Luther – Captive to the Word, The Greatness of the Great Commission, Understanding Islam and Evangelising Muslims, Faith Through the Fire in Sudan** and **Working for a New Reformation**.

Liberalism

Most of the Swedes are nominally Lutheran, although church attendance is very low. Many of the Church of Sweden ministers are very liberal and few people in Sweden understand the Reformation, or know much about Martin Luther and the Gospel he proclaimed.

Socialism

Over 60 years of socialism and nearly 200 years of neutrality have had a deadening impact on Sweden. Even dedicated Christians in Sweden struggled with Biblical Worldview applications to everyday life. Some discussion times were intense.

Technology

Sweden is the largest of the Scandinavian countries, a land of mountains and forests. It has a highly developed industry and information technology most famous of which would be its Volvo cars, Scania trucks, and SAAB aircraft – all the fruit of free enterprise.

Welfare

However, the extensive social welfare system requires extremely high taxation which has lowered the international competitiveness of Swedish products. Sweden is also famous for the Nobel prizes which the king of Sweden announces.

Revivals, Repression and Emigration

Until recently the Church of Sweden was the state church. During the 19th Century Sweden was blessed with a series of Spiritual Revivals. A vigorous Free Church movement developed and a tremendous missionary vision. The Lutheran Church of Sweden and all the Free Churches have sent out many thousands of missionaries to over one hundred countries in the world. State restrictions on Free Churches in the 19th Century led millions of Swedes to emigrate, particularly to America. Although Sweden now enjoys religious freedom, twenty-one denominations and religious groups are given state funding.

The Church of Sweden

The Church of Sweden has many serious problems. There is a widespread rejection of the Bible as the literal Word of God. Feminism and homosexuality are openly promoted in the state church, along with relativism and universalism. There are still some Evangelicals in the Church

of Sweden but all conservative views are marginalised. Feminist pastors and homosexual “weddings” make a mockery of what used to be a dynamic Protestant church.

Secularisation

As the 19th Century was the century of great Revivals, the 20th Century has seen a devastating secularisation with postmodern, egalitarian and New Age worldviews predominating. Any Biblical values are condemned as “intolerance!”

Islamic Invasion

Along with the growing anti-Christian hostility from secular society, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from Turkey, Iran, North Africa and former Yugoslavia had moved into Southern Sweden.

Sweden desperately needs a new Biblical Reformation and a fresh Spiritual Revival.

Belgium

Belgium is often called the crossroads of Europe. Its capital, Brussels is the capital of the European Union and the headquarters of NATO. The territory of Belgium has straddled the cultural divide between the Latin and Germanic worlds for 2,000 years. It is long been oppressed and fought over by surrounding nations.

A Battleground

At one time Belgium was part of the Spanish Netherlands. Although the Reformation was once strong in Belgium the Counter-Reformation and Inquisition crushed the Protestants in ferocious persecution and with much loss of life. The final battle of the Napoleonic wars, Waterloo, was fought on Belgium soil. Some of the bloodiest battles of the First World War were fought in Belgium.

Yper

Our host, Lionel Rosemont runs Frontline Tours and he gave us fascinating insights to World War 1 as he took us to key battle sites. Within ten kilometers of the strategic fortress town of Yper there are over one hundred and forty war cemeteries for British and Commonwealth soldiers alone. It was in Belgium that poison gas and flamethrowers were first used. Rudyard Kipling’s son, Jack, died in the battle for Yper. ***All Quiet on the Western Front*** was written by a German soldier who was wounded at the windmill of death near Yper. The Christmas Truce of 1914 began on Christmas Eve in Belgium, near Yper as German soldiers sang Silent Night and Australian soldiers joined in. Soon opposing armies were meeting in no-mans-land. They prayed together and played soccer.

A Spiritual Battlefield

Just as Belgium has been a military battlefield for centuries, it is a spiritual battlefield today. The Protestant church is only now recovering from the destruction of its six hundred congregations by the Spanish Inquisition in the 16th Century.

Catholicism and Secularism

The population is culturally Catholic, but increasingly secular. While 90% would be classified as Catholics, 71% have been baptised, but attendance at mass is less than 10% of the population. The Catholic church faces declining commitment, waning influence, lack of students at seminaries and mass defections. The number of priests has more than halved since 1960 and most of them are over 60 years of age.

The Toughest Mission Field in Europe

The Protestants regard Belgium as one of the toughest and most resistant mission fields in Europe. Few of the Flemish speaking congregations have an indigenous pastor.

The Muslim Challenge

Approximately 10% of the population of Belgium is made up of Muslims. The Moroccans, Turks and Kurds have proven to be very resistant mission fields. Before one can even think about working for Reformation in Belgium, the church needs to recognise the country as a primary mission field and one of the most spiritually needy in all of Europe.

Muslim Evangelism Workshop

In Belgium I conducted a **Muslim Evangelism Workshop**. Some participants drove from as far north as Amsterdam and from as far South as Paris. When some opposition was expressed I received strong support from a Zambian pastor, who is receiving further theological training in Holland. He was very positive about our work in Zambia and forthright about the threat of Islam.

England

We travelled to England by Eurostar through the chunnel, a high speed train which goes under the channel between France and England. Before flying out from Heathrow our good friends and previous co-workers, Rob and Christine McCafferty, organised a public meeting near Oxford.

Uganda

At this meeting one of the participants identified herself as a survivor of Idi Amin's Holocaust in Uganda. Many of her family members were murdered by the Muslim regime of Idi Amin and she herself had been tortured and imprisoned.

Nigeria

A Nigerian man identified himself as from the Ibo tribe and was a twin. He observed that had it not been for the Scottish missionary, Mary Slessor, who ended the killing of twins in his land, he and his brother would not even be alive.

Set Free to Serve Christ

Another Nigerian from Yorubaland mentioned the debt that her people had to Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who was rescued from slavery by the English Navy and pioneered much of the missionary work to evangelise and disciple her people.

King Alfred the Great

The next morning, before flying out from Heathrow, Christine took Lenora and I to Wantage, birth place of King Alfred the Great. It was King Alfred the Great who rallied the Saxons of Wessex to resist the savage onslaught of the Danes in the 9th Century. Throughout his life King Alfred fought in fifty four pitched battles and succeeded in defeating the previously unbeaten foe. It was after the battle of Ashdown, near Wantage, that King Alfred compelled the defeated Danish King Guthrum to be baptised as a Christian, along with thirty of his nobles. This marked the beginning of the conversion of the Vikings.

Reformation MP3 and Articles in Danish

As a result of the Reformation Conference organised in Denmark, we can now offer an audio MP3 on fourteen of our Reformation presentations, translated from English into Danish. On the same MP3 are some of the Muslim Evangelism Workshop presentations translated from English into Flemish and the presentations given in Sweden. Many of our Reformation articles have already been translated into Danish and are accessible on the www.ReformationSA.org website.

Pray for Europe

Please continue to pray for the dynamic church planting projects in Scandinavia and Belgium.

How the Vikings were Won to Christ

For those who are interested, I have also produced a short article on **How the Vikings were Won to Christ**. This you can access on our www.frontline.org.za website.

We are most grateful for your prayers and partnership.

Yours for the fulfillment of the Great Commission

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