



I love Europe.

By Europe I mean the geographical area, and all the countries it contains – with the mountains, the lakes, the coastlines, the forests, the valleys, the islands, the great cities, the rural towns and villages, and above all, the diverse peoples with their distinctive cultures and their rich heritage of language and history.

Perhaps you're like me, and you have friends in various parts of the continent. I can think of at least 15 countries where I know people: Ireland, Holland, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Greece, Cyprus, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

One of the big questions at the moment is, of course, what next for Europe? Whether the UK leaves or stays in the European Union, the question remains. How will Europe fare in the future?

I'd like to suggest that, no matter what happens after the UK referendum on the 23rd June, Europe is at a turning point.

That the whole world is approaching a crisis of some sort is a well-documented theory. For example, the respected Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Žižek, comments in his book *Living in the End Times*, "Today, we do not know what to do, but we have to act now, because the consequences of inaction could be catastrophic"¹. His reference is to the inability of the Western world to face up to the end of society as most of us in Europe know and enjoy it. Žižek sees this in terms of a coming crisis of global capitalism and as a kind of Armageddon. The back cover of the paperback edition of his book describes its content in biblical imagery: "Slavoj Žižek has identified the four horsemen of this coming apocalypse: the worldwide ecological crisis; imbalances within the economic

system; the biogenetic revolution; and exploding social divisions and ruptures”. All of these concepts affect Europe as well as the rest of the world.

You would probably agree that in Europe not many people know exactly what to do. So many voices on so many subjects make it difficult to accept any opinion without niggling reservations. You only need to listen to the confusing rhetoric of politicians. No one leader stands out as the voice of reason as we look at the whole European scene. Perhaps it’s an inherent problem with democracy itself. One of the problems with democracy is that it gives us the freedom to choose mediocrity. Decisions often come to a standstill because of “hung” parliaments in which no one political party has a clear majority. Look at what happened in the Welsh assembly over the past weeks when there was a deadlock over the election of the First Minister due to, one might argue, the democratic process. On the one hand, it may seem fair and good for it to be that way, but, on the other hand, it’s difficult to reach and implement decisions at critical moments.

All this talk of impending doom excites many people who want to see an end to the existing world order. Maybe a new era of peace and love will come out of it in the end. “We could build a future where people are free to live and love”², sang the 2016 Eurovision Song winner, Jamala (pictured below), in the Ukraine’s controversial entry, *1944*. But, some may ask, is a Europe without oppression likely or even possible? How can it be achieved?



Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, whose political ratings have fallen due to her stance on accepting migrants into not only Germany but also the rest of the EU, commented recently about the Christian values that have shaped many parts of Europe. “We all have the opportunity and the freedom”, she said, “to have our religion, to practice it, and to believe in it. I would like more people to have the courage to say ‘I

am a Christian believer’. And more people to have the courage to enter into a dialogue”. She also suggested that in Germany it would be good for people to return to the “tradition of attending a church service now and then, and having some biblical foundation”³.

For Christians her remarks must surely hit home. Perhaps it is the time for Christians to be bold and to stand up and be counted.

The first century Christian leader, Paul, lived in a European empire that was dominated by commerce, by rules and regulations, and, as far as faith goes, by strange customs and superstitions. He advised believers to be good citizens, and also focussed their attention on a better world to come. He preached Jesus and the kingdom of God. Later he would be martyred for his belief in Jesus Christ.

Paul’s historian, a doctor called Luke, recorded how Paul spent two years in Rome before his execution. Paul was “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him”⁴.

As far as Europe goes, no one is forbidding us from witnessing to Jesus Christ.

None of us knows what lies ahead for Europe. It may be heading for a crisis that will unsettle us all. Only God knows.

The question is not, “What is next for Europe?”. It’s rather “Who is next for Europe?”

The biblical answer is Jesus – sooner or later.

And right now, for you and me in whatever part of Europe we Christians live, the answer is still Jesus... let’s bring him and his values with us wherever we go.

No one is stopping us.

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1 Quoted from page 480 of the 2011 paperback version of Slavoj Žižek’s book *Living in the End Times*, which was first published by Verso in the UK, 2010.

2 Quoted from <http://genius.com/Jamala-1944-lyrics>

3 Quoted from page 47 of Winter 2015-16 edition of *Solas* magazine, published in the UK by Buxton Press Ltd.

4 Quoted from the Bible, Acts 28:31 NKJV.

THE WAY

BY CLIFF NEILL

Several years ago my daughter-in-law hiked the pilgrim way across northern Spain. It is called, *El Camino de Santiago*; in English "The Way of Saint James," and is a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in north western Spain, where it is believed that the remains of Jesus' apostle James is buried.

The Camino has existed for well over 1,000 years as one of the most important of Christian pilgrimages. Nowadays it is undertaken each year by many thousands of people of differing races and creeds for various reasons, all of them, I would imagine, very personal and private. The Way stretches for 800 kilometres along the northern coast of Spain.

The word "pilgrim" comes from the Latin "*Peregrinus*," which means stranger or pilgrim, and St. James is known as the patron saint of pilgrims. Christian tradition has it that when the biblical Apostles divided the known world into missionary zones, the Iberian Peninsula fell to James. Some seventh and eighth century historical documents suggest that he spent a number of years preaching there before returning to Jerusalem where, in the year 44AD, he was beheaded by the order of Herod Agrippa 1.

There is a film called "The Way" starring Martin Sheen as a father whose son dies on the Camino during his first day. He travels to Spain to recover the body and bury it in California but, in his grief, he finally decides to have it cremated. It is because he has his son's backpack and guide book that he also decides to travel the pilgrim way – the Way of St.

James – for his dead son. Throughout the course of this journey this father comes to really understand his son and along the road finds himself as well. He faces the conflict we all have within ourselves of *choosing a life versus living a life*. As a result of this revelation of who he really is, he begins to understand that his actions affect not only himself but also others as well: family, friends, community and also his faith.

The Camino, by its nature, serves as a metaphor for life. Footsteps along a well trodden path leading to a destination somewhere over the horizon, a goal to be achieved but also somewhere along the way

an understanding of a life that embraces others; a way, that our busy every day lives prevent us at times from recognising fully. The process of life is on whichever road, path, Camino, or Way we find ourselves.

It's interesting that the Apostle Peter refers to fellow Christians as "strangers and pilgrims" and we are also on a "Pilgrim's Way," a journey that

leads onward – not to a physical destination but to a spiritual one in the Kingdom of God, and, like all journeys, there are steep places, pitfalls, and rocky, boulder-strewn stretches along the way and perhaps even mountains to climb.

There's a great little story about an explorer in a dense jungle somewhere in south East Asia. His guide is out in front hacking at the mountain of foliage that is blocking their way. He is so frustrated that he yells, "What is happening here? Where is the path? His guide stopped hacking at the undergrowth, turned around, and replied, "I am the path!"



Jesus tells us that he is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father but by travelling that journey or pilgrimage via him.

Actually, it's the difference between someone giving us directions to our destination and, on the other hand, saying; "Come with me, I'll take you there." For us, that person becomes the way and we can't get lost!

Jesus, however, does much more than that. He takes

us by the hand, and leads us; he strengthens us and guides us every day. He alone is the way to God, and in him alone we see what God is like.

During this pilgrimage – this Way – we find out just who Jesus is and, when we do, we finally understand just who we are and where we are headed.

You're welcome to journey with us if you want – just think about it please – and, by the way, "*Buen Camino!*"

The House of Squatters

by Jeff Fountain

Many Europeans are living like squatters in a house built on biblical concepts and revelation yet denying their debt to such foundations.

'Having ignored its inheritance, Europe wonders why its house is falling apart'.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article with this subtitle claimed Europeans no longer believed in the things from which their beliefs sprang: Judaism and Christianity; liberalism and the Enlightenment; martial pride and capability; capitalism and wealth. Still less did they believe in fighting or sacrificing or paying or even arguing for these things, it said. Having ignored and undermined their own foundations, they wondered why their house was coming apart.

Was this just a 'typical American' perspective on Europe or was there a kernel of truth to these claims?

I put this question to a gathering of Euro-parliamentarians at a **prayer breakfast in Strasbourg**, adding my own proposition: *that the House of Europe was fast becoming a house of squatters.*

The squatters I was referring to were not the migrants and refugees presently putting Europe's values to the test. No, they were the members of the dominant secular subculture of political, academic and media elite who claim the freedoms and privileges of the European house without being willing 'to pay the rent'.

I had been asked to share some thoughts about the foundations of our 'European values' for this annual

gathering. Talk of 'foundations', I began, suggested an architectural analogy: on what foundations was the European house built?

SLIPPERY

There is no definitive **list of 'European values'**, although *human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity* and *democracy* are often cited. Behind me as I spoke was a large banner declaring the EU's motto—*united in diversity*—in each of the 24 official EU languages.

So where did or do these values, and this motto, come from? Often they are presented as first articulated in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, of 1789, the fundamental document of the French Revolution. Inspired by Enlightenment philosophers, the Declaration was indeed to influence the development of freedom and democracy in Europe and worldwide. Supposedly in the spirit of 'secular natural law', not based on any religious doctrine or authority, such values were deemed universal and self-evident. But where had these ideas sprung from in the first place?

So I invited my listeners to take a closer look at these values, and to ask **how sustainable they were without biblical foundations.**

Was *equality* really a self-evident and universal value, as claimed in the American Declaration of Independence? Then why didn't all civilisations recognise this? And did we Europeans really believe in equality, or did not the rise of nationalism and populism betray a belief in the superiority of our own sort? Was there any founda-

tion for equality without the recognition that we were all creatures of the One Creator, children of the same Father, members of the one human race?

At what point did the idea of *human dignity* creep into European consciousness? Greece? Rome? Both of those societies had slaves. Neither had a view of human beings which could sustain the concept of universal human dignity. If humans were merely accidental products of 'slime plus time', how could we speak of dignity? Based on noble deeds of men and women? The awful events of last century discredited that idea. Was there any real alternative to the Judeo-Christian teaching that the only basis for human dignity was that humans were created in God's image?

Freedom too was a slippery concept. Freedom for whom? for all, or just for Europeans? The paradox of freedom was that it demanded sacrifice, self-restraint, boundaries, faithfulness in relationships to be sustained. I quoted Jonathan Sacks' warning that historically freedom led to license, led to chaos, and eventually led to order under tyranny.

CHATTER

Could ***unity with diversity*** be sustained on the foundation of monism, as in eastern religions which swallow up diversity into unity; or of dualism, as in yin-yang in which two opposites are maintained in balance? Did

not the EU motto betray the biblical presupposition of trinitarianism, which viewed ultimate reality as the unity of the three diverse Persons of the Trinity?

Many Europeans were living like squatters in a house built on biblical concepts and revelation, I proposed, yet denying their debt to such foundations. Often enjoying rights without accepting responsibilities, Europeans needed to return to the life-source of their society and culture, biblical truth, for these values to be sustainable.

Even the renowned secular philosopher **Jürgen Habermas** admitted there were no alternative foundations, as follows: *Universalistic egalitarianism, from which sprang the ideals of freedom and a collective life in solidarity, the autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights and democracy, is the direct legacy of the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love. ... To this very day there is no alternative to it... We must draw sustenance now, as in the past, from this substance. Everything else is postmodern chatter.* (Habermas, J, Time of Transitions, Polity Press, 2006, p150)

Jeff Fountain is Director of the Schuman Centre for European Studies and speaks on issues facing Christians [today](http://www.WeeklyWord.eu) in Europe. He writes at [WeeklyWord.eu](http://www.WeeklyWord.eu)

Source: [EvangelicalFocus.com](http://www.EvangelicalFocus.com)



Photo: wikicommons

A PLACE TO CALL “HOME”

BY FRASER HENDERSON

This article is from Fraser Henderson, one of the pastors in GCI's Ottawa, Canada, congregation.

It's hard to describe what it's like arriving in Canada in the dead of winter. The -13 degree Fahrenheit weather is likely to elicit a curse even from those with robust reigns on their tongues. For the refugees, despite the blistering cold and stark landscapes, there is one thing they can say about this new location they haven't been able to say for years and sometimes even decades: *they are home*. Many of those we have helped to immigrate to Canada chose to make the sponsoring GCI congregation their spiritual home as well.

One cannot help but notice the sense of belonging they have found in GCI's congregation in Ottawa. The members who donated many of their clothes and furniture along with much of their time have become family to our ever-growing community of refugees. There is a distinctive buzz when you walk into the sanctuary, one reflective of the usual conversations we had in our church, now punctuated by the joyous sounds of children playing.

Our congregation has been revitalized by the presence of many refugee families. We now have a vibrant youth ministry. Another area that has seen a surge of new life is our worship ministry. Once a month we are now led in worship by the Hope Choir, a group composed almost entirely of refugees. They also sell CDs and perform outside the church to raise money for orphans in Uganda. Their contribution has been an inspiration to many in the congregation.

The contributions we've received from the refugees far outweigh the work needed to help them acclimatize. They have become a core part of our congregation and continue to help us grow through their eager participation in evangelism. Most refugees that have attended have reached out to friends, many of whom now also attend our congregation.

Perhaps the greatest inspiration I've received from the

refugee community has been their desire to share the grace they've been given with other refugees out there. They've worked hard to help people who have been through similar situations adjust to the new life they have here in Canada. Heading up the work we do with refugees is Nova Musafiri (see the article in this issue). His story demonstrates so clearly both the ordeals refugees have to go through but also the incredible gratitude they have in being welcomed into their new family.

At a time when rhetoric, even amongst Christians, is trending towards the extreme, it's important to remember the roots of Christianity. Christ himself was a refugee in Egypt and every Christian was once a refugee fleeing enslavement to sin. Christ said "Come to me all who are weary and I shall give you rest." Let us emulate him by welcoming in the weary refugees of the world.

Editorial comment:

Since this article was written, four more refugees from our congregation in the [Kakuma refugee camp](#) in Kenya have been allowed to relocate to Ottawa, Canada. The four refugees (shown arriving in Canada at right) are members of a family of eight. The rest of the family will arrive later. The Canadian government allowed the family to

immigrate due to their established relationship with Nova Musafiri, who previously pastored GCI's congregation in the Kakuma refugee camp.

According to Gary Moore (GCI-Canada director and mission developer) the family is temporarily housed in a government reception house and is already attending GCI's Ottawa congregation where they recently performed special music with Nova's wife Joseline (singing a song with the appropriate title, *Oza Malamu*, meaning *God Is So Good*). As Gary noted, "This family has many adjustments to make, but with prayer, hard work and support from others, I'm sure their hopes for a better life for both themselves and their children will become a reality."



“I WAS A STRANGER, AND YOU INVITED ME IN”

BY NOVA MUSAFIRI NYENYE

The following story was written for our church in Canada, and, in light of the migrant crisis here in Europe and of the UK's government's intention to re-settle a number of unaccompanied Syrian child refugees, the author's account of his journey as a refugee may be of interest to our Because readers

I left my country in April 1993 because of security issues: students were arrested, tortured, and sometimes beaten to death by a dictatorial régime that reigned for over 30 years. I had no choice but to escape in order to save my life.

I went to Kenya to seek protection and was accepted as an asylum-seeker and refugee under the auspices of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). At that time in Kenya refugees were not allowed to stay in the capital city, move freely within the country, work, study, or do business. I was sent to live in a desert refugee camp called Kakuma near the southern Sudanese border. Life in the camp was too difficult – no shelter, not enough water, not enough food to eat, and, in the sun, it was 104 to 117 degrees Fahrenheit. Nothing

could be grown because it was so dry, with sand everywhere, lots of wind and no trees. The camp was full of poisonous scorpions and snakes, but God's protection was always there for me. I stayed there from 1993 to December 2008. Many refugees were killed in the camp by armed people. Others died from malnutrition, and children suffered from severe sicknesses due to lack of proper medical treatment.

Despite a hard life in the refugee camp, God did not leave me alone, and he guided me to be part of Grace Communion International (WCG) in 2002. I decided to start a congregation through this church, and we received prayerful support from leaders around the world,

particularly in the UK, Nairobi, and Canada. God connected us with some of his people. For example, our church's Mission Director for Africa at the time, James Henderson, and his wife, Shirley, visited us in spite of the security issues in and around the camp.

When I was in a refugee camp, I did not have any hope or future, and did not know what would happen to my life since there was no peace in my country and I could not go back. But God knew, and, by his grace, I was chosen out of 70,000 refugees to come to Canada as a permanent resident. I did so in December 2008 along with my wife and child.

Life in Canada was a shock to me with its new culture, new food, different weather, and with its public transportation system in Ottawa on strike; but the sup-

port and love we received from the GCI members in Ottawa was beyond our understanding. The dedicated people of God, with God's love, helped us settle in Canada. Small contributions made a big impact; thank you GCI-Ottawa for your support!

Living in Canada has changed my family's life. We can move

freely, I can work, and we have peace. Helping a refugee get out of the refugee life is an unforgettable gift to someone's life. Please remember in prayer the 300+ GCI church members who are still in the Kakuma refugee camp—they have been living there since 1996 with little to no hope of getting out.

May God grant his mercy and protection to the refugees of the world!

By Nova Musafiri Nyenye (who is now an elder in the GCI Ottawa congregation)



Speaking of Life:



Making the Unseen Seen

Last year, Dulles Airport hosted a microphotography exhibit that focused on cell imagery that was magnified 50,000 times the normal size. These wall-sized images included everything from the individual hairs that sense movement in the inner ear, to cross-sections of the brain's movement sensors. The exhibit provided a rare and beautiful glimpse into an unseen world, and it reminded me of an integral part of our daily lives as Christians: faith.

In Hebrews, we're told that, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1, KJV). Just like those pictures, faith indicates our response to a reality that isn't always directly experienced by our five senses. Faith comes by hearing about the reality of God and, by the Spirit, results in a conviction of its truth. Hearing about



God's nature and character as demonstrated in Jesus Christ invites us to place our trust in him and to rely on his promises, even if we haven't yet seen them all come to fruition. By faith in God and his Word to us, love for him is made visible. We become reminders one to another of the hope we have in God's ultimate rule and reign that will overcome evil with good, wipe away every tear and make everything right.

As much as we might know that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord, we also know that this day hasn't arrived just yet. None of us has seen God's coming kingdom. So in the meantime, God asks for our faith: faith or trust in his promises, in his goodness, in his justice and in his love for us as his children. It's by faith that we obey him, and thus, it's by faith that we can make the "unseen" kingdom of God, seen.

By trusting God's promises and putting Christ's teachings into action through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, we can become living signs of God's coming rule and reign here and now – simply by what we do, what we say, and how we love those around us.

I'm Joseph Tkach,
Speaking of LIFE.

Speaking of Life is now on TV! It is used by UCB (United Christian Broadcasters) in between longer programmes and is aired on UCB on Thursdays and Fridays between 7.15 - 7.30 am and between 1.45 and 2.00pm, on Saturdays between 6.45 and 7.00 am., and on Sundays between 1.45 and 2.00 pm. These timings may vary.

Photo: istockphoto.com



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