

“If My people who are called by my name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

2 Chronicles 7:14

The European project was an attempt to overcome the nationalist conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century, especially the rivalry between **Germany** and **France** that had contributed to both world wars. After 1945, there was a strong will to ensure that war between Germany and France could never again occur.

Winston Churchill, advocated a radical new form of cooperation between European states after World War Two, based on a partnership between a spiritually revived France and Germany. This would ensure an end to the seemingly unending conflicts on the continent and produce “blessing instead of cursing”. Many of the early leaders of the fledgling European movement were Christian Democrats such as **Robert Schuman**, but as the EEC grew and became the EU (with its own Commission, Council and Parliament); the spiritual vision declined and was replaced with more utilitarian economic and political concerns. Britain’s relationship with this developing super-entity has always been ambivalent and this is now being brought to a head with the stark choice facing voters at the forthcoming Referendum.

As Christians arguably whether we decide to vote “in” or “out” in the June referendum should be influenced not just by self interest and economic concerns, but understanding of “the mission of God to redeem his creation”. Is to ask “will I be better off if we remain or leave?”; the wrong priority for Christians? The Gospel of Jesus Christ is “the only hope for today’s half a billion Europeans”. In light of this should Christians in Britain rather be asking “what is the best way for the church to make a difference again in Europe”?

Britain had a strong heritage of being a missionary sending nation. In the words of Chris Wright, “mission” is what the Bible is “all about”. What does it mean to be “British”? Is it possible to talk about Britishness only as distinct and different from being European, or should we recognize more that we are culturally European and regarded as such not just by Americans but Africans and Asians as well? While Britain can leave the EU, it cannot “leave Europe”.

There is a current crises affecting Europe: the economic situation, political tensions which have seen the rise of far right and far left parties, and a social crisis in which the continent is having to absorb millions of migrants while facing critically low indigenous fertility rates and a massive increase in elderly people dependent on care. However most serious of all is a spiritual crisis. The Christian basis of European culture is receding, because of a growth in Islam (predicted to be 10% by 2050) but much more significantly by secularism and a consumerism that sees salvation only in economic growth and material comforts.

One reason why making a choice is so difficult, is the way that the arguments are presented on both sides. They are presented as “Project Fear v Project Fantasy”. One side argues that terrible things will happen if we leave, while the other tells us that all our problems are caused by the EU and makes “fantastic promises about what might be possible...by leaving the EU”. The figures and projections produced by both sides are questionable – so how are ordinary people to make a decision?

Jim Memory gives a brief “missiological reflection”. As Christians our heritage is the amazing history of Christian mission in Europe. The church is now in decline and people have turned to other gods, “yet that does not have to be the future...faced with the godlessness of today’s Europe we should respond as the Celtic missionaries once did, by recommitting ourselves to sharing the message of hope in Jesus Christ among all of Europe’s peoples whether we are in the EU or not...”

The prayer below is taken from that recommended by **Marananatha** on its website

- **In unity with the whole Body of Christ** – as in the world, the EU debate is a divisive issue for the Church. Our unity does not come from or depend upon all Christians holding the same view. Let us pray for strengthening of the bonds of unity with brothers and sisters in Christ across national boundaries, between England, Scotland, Wales and all of Ireland as well as with Christians of all traditions throughout Europe.
- **Using the prayer that Jesus taught us** – this prayer has been prayed by believers for the last 2000 years. Many have prayed it at midday over recent years as an offering of united prayer for our nation. Let us pray for the coming of God’s Kingdom and for His will to be done as children united in His one Family.
- **For true humbling of ourselves, God’s people, called by his Name** – this requires us to lay down our understanding and convictions, simply asking for God’s mercy on our nation as we seek His face and pray for His will to be done.
- **In confession and repentance** – for our apathy and indifference as God’s people in Britain, for our sin and the sin of the church in Britain.
- **For the Church to lead the way of righteousness** – that we, as God’s people, would demonstrate the Love and Grace of God in all relationships, especially in our attitude towards other people groups. Let us pray for the elimination of xenophobia and anti-Semitism throughout Britain and Europe.
- **For the proclamation of the Gospel and a new move of God’s Spirit** – that the vision of God’s Kingdom will be effectively communicated by the Church. Let us pray that it will captivate the hearts and minds of the people, especially the young.
- **For the Church to be seen to be offering a positive vision for the future** – that the Church will be inspired by, and receive the grace to communicate a vision for society, communities, and a healthy nation.