

Opportunities for Church-Planting Arising from Post-Modernity?

Some have described the situation of Europe as “post” in every aspect of our life. We seem to be post-colonial, post-industrial, post-Christian, post-modern and now even post-secular. The condition of being “post” produces its own unique puzzles and questions. How can we identify and connect with the positive elements of a post-modern culture in Europe in term of mission and church planting?

Martin Robinson is Principal and Chief Executive of Springdale College: Together in Mission. Martin was born in India of missionary parents and then brought up in Scotland where his father was a church planter. When Martin was in his early twenties he trained for the ministry, and his first church was in the inner city of Birmingham. This multi-ethnic congregation was engaged in church planting, and Martin together with his wife Lynda led one of the new church plants. After thirteen years in local ministry, Martin went to work for the Bible Society in the UK in a variety of roles. In a period he was the Director of Mission and Theology. Martin has written many books on the broad theme of mission, including *Faith of the Believer* and *Invading Secular Space*. In 2002 Martin became national director of Together in Mission. In 2008 he became Principal of Springdale College. These two organizations (Together in Mission and Springdale College) became one organization in 2009 and will soon take the name ForMission.

1. The Church and its Culture

- a. Something transformative took place in the 1960’s
- b. The baby boomers have defined each generation that they have lived in
- c. The Death of Christian Britain – Callum Brown
- d. The religious crisis of the 1960’s
 - i. “The 1960’s were a period of decisive change in the religious history of the Western world – including not only Western Europe, but the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand...in the 1950’s the great majority of the people in all Western countries were at least nominal members of one of the Christian churches...In the ‘long 1960’s’ all of this was changing. Nearly every Western country saw a drop in church-going, and in some cases the drop was dramatic.” Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960’s*, OUP, 2007.

2. A Cultural Shift

- a. All institutions being questioned
- b. Modernity, science and reason also under suspicion
- c. Other world views and religions being explored
- d. Consumers not producers
- e. Social, political, cultural and religious change

3. Cultural Themes

- a. Me, myself and I
- b. The self actualization movement
- c. The importance of freedom
- d. The rights of the individual are stressed
- e. A process of individuation (Ulrich Beck)

- f. A narrative underlies this process and these themes
- g. It is this narrative that creates a missionary challenge for Christians in Europe
 - i. Freedom
 - ii. Happiness
 - iii. The autonomous self – free of personal commitments to others
 - iv. Spirituality as a consumer product

4. Making Disciples

- a. The priority of discipleship
- b. The catechumenate
- c. Habits of the heart
- d. Key themes
 - i. The Cross
 - ii. Community
 - iii. The New Creation

Suggested Readings:

McLeod, Hugh, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960's*, OUP, 2007.

Beck, Ulrich, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, SAGE publications, 1992

Rowlands, Anna (Ed), *Together for the Common Good: Towards a National Conversation*, SCM, 2015

Hays, Richard, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*, HarperOne, 1996.

Hull, Bill, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*, NavPress, 2007.