

The Mountain of Religion and the Church

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RELIGION



Every society has some form of belief in one or more superior beings. In the East, there is polytheism and paganism (like Hinduism and Buddhism). Although these religions are thousands of years old, they still thrive today. In the West, **Christianity** is predominant, but postmodernism is growing and the traditional concept of God is rejected. This is of course the case in Europe.

In Belgium, the (once predominant) Catholic Church has lost much of its power and influence due to secularization and recent scandals. There is, for example, a crying lack of priests and vocations. **Catholicism** has also basically weakened. There are many liberal influences in traditional churches, including Protestant churches. The Bible has lost its authority again.

According to **postmodernism**, "everyone has their own truth": there can be no unique definition of truth. There are many mixed forms of religion (syncretism), oriental, pagan influences ... Everyone can "create their own religion". The Christian heritage is openly attacked and ridiculed. Pluralism also creates many tensions: for example, how to manage Islam in Europe, in particular RADICAL Islam?

Some want to remove any presence of religion from the public sphere (**secularism**): all religious symbols must disappear, no subsidies for churches or mosques, no religion classes at school, no religious broadcasts on television ... It's almost a taboo to talk about religion. But instead, secular gods are put forward: money (materialism), sports (football), recreation, idols (stars), health, climate religion, etc.

In our Belgian constitution, there is freedom of religion (it was very modern in 1830). In Belgium, **seven religions or philosophies** of life are officially recognized and subsidized (salaries of ministers and restoration of buildings): Catholic, Protestant evangelical, Islamic, Orthodox, Anglican, Jewish and Liberal.

- Religious populations: 50-60% Catholic, 1-1.5% Evangelical Protestant, 7-8% Liberal, 14% Non-religious, 7% Muslim and 0.3% Jew.
- Church attendance in Belgium: only 4 to 5% go to church each week.



The **Church** is the body of Christ, His bride: God loves her incredibly, even with all of her defaults. The term Church in Greek is the word "**ecclesia**".

Literally translated, this word means "sent out"! Before, in the world of old, it was often a "governing body". Ecclesia suggests that the church should have great influence in all areas of society. With an abundance of religions across the world, it is the Church's responsibility to reach out to the

lost with the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ and to extend the Kingdom of God nationally and internationally.

The division of churches is a major problem, also among the evangelicals. We urgently need a **Kingdom vision** so that we can positively appreciate the differences. Mutual differences are a blessing. It is even a strength, when viewed with love and respect in the light of God's greatest designs.

Pray for:

- Growing **Kingdom vision**: an awareness that all the different "colours" (of churches and Christian movements) have meaning and together contribute to God's work and to the development of His Kingdom.
- The **love** for our brothers and sisters, the Church (as God loves her Himself). This love is so fundamental. "*By this all will see that you are my disciples, if you have love between you*" (John 13:35). Pray for the 'bridge-builders', prophets and apostles. Pray for peacemakers, full of love, who will be able to bring leaders together for large-scale initiatives that unite the children of God.
- Pray for **revival** and **breakthrough**, spiritual hunger and openness: a shower of divine graces on this earth. Also pray that many Muslims and migrants will find God here and become missionaries among the Muslims themselves.
- Develop **consecration**. Is the Church of God our first priority and is it receiving all of our time / effort / resources? In our western society, other things are often prioritized without our knowledge.
- **Intimacy** with God, in the interior room, in prayer. May this intimacy be manifested regularly: the will and the heart of God, listening to the voice of God, unity, authority, love, wisdom, revelation, passion, hunger.. May the rush/call of the world not deprive us of this privacy.
- Importance of **discipleship** (training and equipment). Pray for deep healing from wounds among Christians, churches, and denominations.

• **Workers** in the harvest. *"Therefore pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest"* (Matthew 9:38). There is a huge need for more full time workers, especially for the younger generation. Pray that the five ministries (Ephesians 4: 11-15) will rise in unity (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers).

• **Boldness** to fulfil the Great Commission (*Matt.28: 19-20*): *go out to make disciples of all nations and to do the works of Christ*. Pray for creative methods of evangelism so that Christians will boldly take their place in society. Pray that they will be salt and light in the seven mountains (religion, family, education, politics, media, art and entertainment, economy). Pray that the public voice of the Church will be restored: a new and clear voice in media and politics (eg on respect for all life).

• **Personal experience** of the goodness of God. *"Taste and see that the Lord is good"* (Ps 34: 9 HSV). May the Belgian bride come to the perfect knowledge of Christ and live it in a personal experience, without abandoning the biblical foundations. This experience of the goodness of God leads to the realization that we Belgians are one and complete in Christ. Pray that in the midst of the spiritual void, the Belgians will have a personal encounter with the King of Kings, the Alpha and the Omega, the Lion and the Lamb, the Root and the Son of David, the radiant morning star .