

Western Europe – Marginalization of Christians through Secularization?

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Introductory Observations

Freedom of belief is an increasingly significant issue for Christians in contemporary Europe, alongside the closely related concerns of freedom of conscience and freedom of expression. This was highlighted in a significant recent report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council (PACE) on *Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians*. The rapporteur was Valeriu Ghiletschi, who is both a Moldovian politician and president of the European Baptist Federation. In his report, Ghiletschi draws attention to

the absence of any Europe-wide surveys on intolerance and discrimination against Christians. However, an illustrative cross-section of incidents that have taken place over the past three years are referred to in this report, based on national reports provided by governments, NGOs and civil society organisations. With this report, I intend to shed light on a phenomenon which is largely overlooked.¹

One of the central sources referred to in Ghiletschi's report is the European Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians:²

(35.) In its report published in April 2014, the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians provided information about 158 incidents, which took place in 2013 in member States of

the European Union as well as in San Marino and Switzerland. During a hearing organised by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination on 5 March 2014 in Vienna, Dr Gudrun Kugler (Director of the Observatory) underlined that vandalism of religious sites was widespread in Europe and that numerous cases concerned Christian sites. Dr Kugler indicated that, *while there was no persecution of Christians in Europe, forms of intolerance were emerging and that negative stereotyping of Christians was an issue.*³

As illustrated by these quotes, Ghiletschi's widely respected report⁴ provides us with a helpful framework for exploring the current relationship between freedom of belief and Christian mission in Europe at large. However, due to the limited space available, the wide variety of current European contexts,⁵ and my own perspective as situated in Western/Northern Europe, it is impossible in this article to do full justice to the European context at large. I have therefore chosen to focus on Western Europe, whenever appropriate, also in view of its unique post-Christendom context and its unique global role as promoter of secular worldviews.⁶

This article presupposes an understanding of Christian mission as being 'from everywhere to everywhere',⁷ thus including Western Europe as one of the geographical contexts of mutual missional reflection and action. Such a missional

approach to Europe and the West was pioneered in the late 20th century by Lesslie Newbigin. 'The Western church finds itself in a missionary situation because the radical secularization of Western society has changed 'old Christendom' into a mission field.'⁸

I will explore the relationship between freedom of religion and Christian mission in Western Europe at four closely interrelated levels, i.e. the legal, the attitudinal, the plausibility, and the credibility levels. This exploration leads to some concluding reflections on missional implications.

The Legal Level: Formal Protections and Ambivalent Practices

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion are protected at the pan-European level by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights:

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.
2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion have traditionally been considered as foundational for a democratic and pluralist society, and should be upheld as such in legal practice.

Four high profile cases from January

2013 in the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)¹⁰ provide an illustration of current legal practices in Europe related to these freedoms. All the four cases came from the United Kingdom, with a focus on 'the place of religion, and a religiously formed conscience, in modern European society. Two were about symbols, and were probably themselves symbolic of wider disputes about the place of religion in public life. The other two concerned the reluctance of some Christians to be involved in apparent affirmation of homosexual practices.'¹¹

When reviewing these four cases, ambivalent legal practices appear.¹² In terms of the first two symbols cases, the two judgments pull in opposite directions:

There is a fundamental right to manifest one's faith, but on the other hand, circumstances may mean that it is inappropriate for that right to be exercised. Much is left to the discretion of the employer, and there is room for continued controversy (and no doubt lawsuits) about such matters. The Court's decisions may have been cleverly nuanced, but they cannot be said to give clear guidance.¹³

When it comes to the homosexual issues cases, the two judgements both affirm 'gay rights' over against the claims from the Christian applicants. In the case of the counsellor, ECHR 'sided with the English courts in backing the employer's right to secure the implementation of a service without discrimination'.¹⁴ Concerning the case of the civil registrar, the Court stated that 'in its case-law . . . it has held that differences in treatment based on sexual orientation require particularly serious reasons by way of justification'.¹⁵ Thus, in these two latter cases the Court dismissed the applicants' claim for reasonable accommodation.

It should be noted, however, that the January 2015 PACE resolution on "Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians" calls on all member states of the European Council to 'promote reasonable accommodation within the principle of indirect discrimination'.¹⁶ Such a consistent legal practice at the national level in Europe would clearly enhance religious freedom, also for Christians in public arenas and in the workplace. This would counter the present tendency that the idea of state 'neutrality' to religion, denuding the public sphere of all religious influence, is 'being paraded as a European core value'.¹⁷

The Attitudinal Level: Ambivalent Trends of Tolerance and Intolerance

When moving from the legal to the attitudinal level, we should note that the growing limitations in Europe on religions in public life come from at least two different sources:

On the one hand, more secularist countries such as France and Belgium are stressing their centuries-old concept of *laïcité* [*secularity*] to prevent further incursions of religion into public life. On the other hand, both varieties of Orthodox countries, Russian and Greek, are citing their even older fight against the incursions of Islam into Europe in order to justify their constraints on recent Muslim immigrants and other dangerous 'sects', 'cults', and minority religions.¹⁸

When focusing on Western Europe, we find an ambivalent post-modern context in relation to freedom of religion and Christian mission:

On the one hand, honest questions arise in a post-modern context as a result of a widespread cultural

openness to personal stories and arguments related to the epistemic permission of the Christian faith. On the other hand, the Christian ... encounters a widespread cultural **aversion** towards claims and arguments related to the epistemic obligation of the Christian faith.¹⁹

The European public universities²⁰ are usually considered to be among the most secular institutions on the continent, often operating with some restrictions for Christian witness and mission. However, the recent pan-European missional initiative FEUER (Fellowship of Evangelists in the Universities of Europe) provides an illustration of considerable cultural openness towards exploring essential Christian truth claims in many university contexts across Europe, both among faculty and students.²¹ It is worth noting, however, that such university missions, and the work of Christian Unions at universities at large, recently were at the centre of a major debate in United Kingdom in relation to a proposed Parliament Bill against terrorism.²² Because of this public debate, 'a free speech safeguard was introduced in the new anti-terror Bill, following widespread concerns that Christian Unions and other university societies could face censorship'.²³

The cultural aversion towards the Christian faith (as noted above), corresponds to Gudrun Kugler's deep concern (as referred to at the outset of this article), that forms of intolerance against Christians are emerging and that negative stereotyping of Christians is an issue. This is in line with the following significant observations by Os Guinness:

We are seeing a series of mounting violations of religious freedom in the West – health care mandates that violate conscience, de-recognition of Christian groups that refuse to

allow ‘all-comers’ in their leadership, and the threat to cut the funding for religious groups that cannot agree with the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) agenda when dealing with relief and development around the world. Many of these are unwitting violations of religious freedom by liberals in the name of equality and other noble intentions.²⁴

A number of these attempts to marginalize Christians are in fact intentional. Various lobbying groups – claiming to represent such groups as new atheists, LGBT communities, and fundamentalist Muslim communities – clearly want to restrict Christian witness and mission to the private sphere.²⁵ Such attempts should be seen as attitudinal and cultural signs of intolerance, thus threatening and (in some contexts) reducing freedom of belief for confessional Christians in (Western) Europe.

If such intolerant attitudes are established more permanently sociologically and culturally, they will function as plausibility structures. This means that such convictions become more plausible if they are supported by sociological structures and by influential cultural and friendly voices around us. This is often the case with a secular mind-set in (Western) Europe, as will become evident in the following.

The Plausibility Level: Less Meaningful Ideas and More Marginal Institutions

Sociologists claimed earlier that the process of secularization would lead to a completely secular world, where religion would disappear altogether. Even if this strong secularization thesis now is abandoned, due to the widespread global resurgence of religion, central areas of modern society are secularized and secular

outlooks on life are highly influential. The two foremost examples are Western Europe and the global intellectual and cultural intelligentsia.²⁶

In line with this revised and nuanced secularization thesis, Os Guinness offers the following definition:

*By secularization I mean the process through which, starting from the center and moving outwards, successive sectors of society and culture have been freed from the decisive influence of religious ideas and institutions. In other words, secularization is the process by which we have neutralized the social and cultural significance of religion in the central areas of modern society, such as the worlds of science, economics, technology, bureaucracy, and so on, making religious ideas less meaningful and religious institutions more marginal.*²⁷

This secular context has immense implications for how Christian mission and witness are being practised in the Western European context, both related to Christian ideas becoming less meaningful and Christian institutions becoming more marginal.

First, since *Christian ideas are seen as less meaningful* by many Western Europeans today, authentic and relevant Christian mission in this context has become a highly challenging task, especially in terms of the public and interpersonal communication of the Christian faith. This includes the following common challenges in today’s Europe:

- (a) Christian ideas and images are often viewed through the cultural lenses of post-Christendom, i.e. through stories of mythical and factual abuses of power by churches and Christians throughout history.

- (b) Biblical realities, concepts and images – such as God, Father, holiness, sin, love, salvation, cross, freedom, and Jesus Christ – are not defined through the lenses of classical Christianity, also due to the loss of any given, traditional authority.
- (c) The wider cultural milieu is a context where the Gospel usually is not seen or heard as a viable and relevant option, neither in terms of reason (arguments) nor in terms of imagination (stories).

This challenging situation may lead to Christian self-censorship and retreat into the private sphere, thus creating an impression that the Christian faith is personally unengaging and socially irrelevant. This is clearly self-destructive for authentic Christian mission, and needs to be countered with a holistic missional approach safeguarding both the integrity of the message and the messenger.²⁸ On the other hand, the widespread ignorance about the Bible and the Christian faith may increasingly open up for a new and honest curiosity, generating public and private discussions, conversations, and explorations.²⁹

Secondly, the fact that *Christian institutions are more marginal* in contemporary Western European societies, has created an ambivalent context for Christian mission. This is especially true in terms of the church and its public engagement and witness, which include the following common challenges in today's Western Europe:³⁰

- a) Established churches with a traditionally strong and close relationship to the state (such as in UK, the Netherlands, Germany, and Scandinavia) are seen as a 'public utility' and as 'vicarious religion'.

- b) Churches are often considered to be ancient and archaic, and thus being culturally and socially irrelevant. This is reinforced by the historic and more recent takeover of a number of church-owned institutions by Government agencies, especially in the fields of education and diakonia.³¹
- c) The fact that Christian institutions are more marginal results in less public respect for their institutional convictions and integrity. Increasingly, Christian organizations and institutions are challenged (whether by secular peers, mainstream media or government agencies), in areas such as institutional beliefs and values, employment policies, and sexual tolerance.
- d) The fact that Christian institutions are more marginal also reinforces the increasing individual tendency of 'believing without belonging', since Christian churches (and other institutions) often are seen as irrelevant and unengaging.

Again, such challenges may lead to Christian self-censorship and to an even further retreat into the private sphere, thus reinforcing the social and cultural irrelevance of many churches in Western Europe. In view of the global nature of the Christian church as well as the increasingly global nature of secular modernity, this leads at the missional level to the following question: 'Can Christians from both the West and the Global South so recover the integrity and effectiveness of faith that together we prevail against the challenges of modernity?'³²

At the public level, all this raises the issue of how to live together in a secular and pluralistic society across deep differences, with a mutual respect for freedom of belief. Historically, Europe was charac-

terized by ‘a sacred public sphere’, where Christian churches were given preferred, established or monopolistic positions in public life at the expense of everything else. Increasingly, the contemporary situation in Western Europe is characterized by the opposite, i.e. ‘a naked public sphere’, where religions and religious expressions are being excluded from public life. For the upholding of freedom of belief and for the promotion of authentic Christian mission, neither model is preferable.

Therefore, the alternative model of ‘a civil public square’ was recently proposed as a third way in *The Global Charter of Conscience*. It was launched by an international group of academics and activists in Brussels in June 2012.³³ In line with the concept of ‘reasonable accommodation’, the charter defines the notion of ‘a civil public square’ in article 16:

The public place of freedom of conscience in a world of deep diversity is best fulfilled through the vision of a cosmopolitan and civil public square – a public square in which people of all faiths, religious and naturalistic, are free to enter and engage public life on the basis of their faith, but always within a double framework: first, under the rule of law that respects all human rights, freedom of conscience in particular, and makes no distinction between peoples based on their beliefs; and second, according to a freely agreed covenant specifying what each person understands to be just and free for everyone else too, and therefore of the duties involved in living with the deep differences of others.³⁴

This is arguably the most developed and attractive notion of the public square for a deeply secular and pluralistic context such as Western Europe, with an approp-

riate framework both for safeguarding freedom of belief, thought and conscience and for entering and engaging public life on the basis of fundamental faith commitments. If this charter were to be implemented in Europe at large, the freedom of authentic Christian witness and mission would be strengthened at the public level. This would also lead to the challenging – and even changing – of fundamental plausibility structures.

The Credibility Level: The Challenges to Freedom of Belief from Secular Worldviews

As indicated at the outset of this article, Western Europe has some unique missional features.

This includes the historical observation that most – if not all – secular worldviews originated within Western Europe and the current observation that Europe is the leading educator of the rest of the world.³⁵ Thus, a secular Western European mind-set is becoming highly influential globally.

However, in relation to the issue of freedom of belief, secular worldviews only become a challenge for Christian mission if they are totalitarian in their claims, as noted in *The Cape Town Commitment* (CTC):

Most [religions/worldviews] will seek to respect competing truth claims of other faiths and live alongside them. However postmodern, relativist pluralism is different. Its ideology allows for no absolute or universal truth. While tolerating truth claims, it views them as no more than cultural constructs... Such pluralism asserts ‘tolerance’ as an ultimate value, but it can take oppressive forms in countries where secularism or aggressive atheism govern the public arena.³⁶

This latter observation points to a challenging tendency in a number of Western European countries, especially evident in arenas such as the universities, the mainstream media, the law courts, and the workplace in general.³⁷

Current secular worldviews with totalitarian claims in Europe include both modern versions (such as new atheism³⁸) and postmodern versions (such as postmodern relativist pluralism). An appropriate missional engagement with such totalitarian worldviews has to integrate robust apologetics, whether for those ‘who can engage at the highest intellectual and public level’ or for all believers when relating ‘the truth with prophetic relevance to everyday public conversation’.

Concluding Reflections on Implications for Christian Mission

The discussion above has shown that, in terms of freedom of belief, Christian witness and mission in (Western) Europe take place in an ambivalent and challenging secular and pluralistic context.

In view of the above, I conclude with the following reflections on missional implications:

- (a) It seems that every Christian church in (Western) Europe is being challenged by secular mind-sets and worldviews. However, the actual responses from churches may vary across a spectrum from cultural assimilation through cultural engagement to cultural escape.⁴⁰
- (b) At all four levels described above, it is primarily the public exercise, propagation and defence of Christian beliefs that is being challenged in Europe through secularization.
- (c) Such public pressures in Europe may lead to a compromise both of the integrity of Christian beliefs, the integrity of Christian institutions and organizations, and the integrity of Christian believers, thus threatening the essential practice of holistic mission.
- (d) Christians of various theological persuasions and missional traditions in Europe need to engage together constructively in the common social and cultural shaping of a global civil public square.⁴¹ This includes making an essential contribution to a richer pluralism in the wider European society, hopefully through an authentic Christian witness.⁴²
- (e) Finally, authentic Christian mission in this challenging secular context needs to recover – or discover – ‘mission in 3D’. This is the urgent calling ‘to bear witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas’.⁴³

Appendix

PACE Resolution 2136 (2015)⁴⁴ Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians

1. Intolerance and discrimination on grounds of religion or belief affect minority religious groups in Europe, but also people belonging to majority religious groups. Numerous acts of hostility, violence and vandalism have been recorded in recent years against Christians and their places of worship, but these acts are often overlooked by the national authorities. Expression of faith is sometimes unduly limited by national legislation and policies which do not allow the accommodation of religious beliefs and practices.

2. The reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs and practices constitutes a pragmatic means of ensuring the effective and full enjoyment of freedom of religion. When it is applied in a spirit of tolerance, reasonable accommodation allows all religious groups to live in harmony in the respect and acceptance of their diversity.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly has recalled on several occasions the need to promote the peaceful coexistence of religious communities in the member States, notably in *Resolution 1846 (2011)* on combating all forms of discrimination based on religion, *Recommendation 1962 (2011)* on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue and *Resolution 1928 (2013)* on safeguarding human rights in relation to religion and belief, and protecting religious communities from violence.

4. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion is protected by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and considered as one of the foundations of a democratic and pluralist society. Limitations to the exercise of freedom of religion must be restricted to those prescribed by law and necessary in a democratic society.

5. The Assembly is convinced that measures should be taken to ensure the effective enjoyment of the protection of freedom of religion or belief afforded to every individual in Europe.

6. The Assembly therefore calls on the Council of Europe member States to:

6.1. promote a culture of tolerance and "living together" based on the acceptance of religious pluralism and on the contribution of religions to a democratic and pluralist society, but also on the right of individuals not to adhere to any religion;

6.2. promote reasonable accommodation within the principle of indirect discrimination so as to:

6.2.1. ensure that the right of all individuals under their jurisdiction to freedom of religion and belief is respected, without impairing for anyone the other rights also guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights;

6.2.2. uphold freedom of conscience in the workplace while ensuring that access to services provided by law is maintained and the right of others to be free from discrimination is protected;

6.2.3. respect the right of parents to provide their children with an education in conformity with their religious or philosophical convictions, while guaranteeing the fundamental right of children to education in a critical and pluralistic manner in accordance with the European Convention on Human Rights, its protocols and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;

6.2.4. enable Christians to fully participate in public life;

6.3. protect the peaceful exercise of freedom of assembly, in particular through measures to ensure that counter-demonstrations do not affect the right to demonstrate, in line with the guidelines on freedom of assembly, of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR);

6.4. uphold the fundamental right to freedom of expression by ensuring national legislation does not unduly limit religiously motivated speech;

6.5. publicly condemn the use of and incitement to violence, as well as all forms of discrimination and intolerance on religious grounds;

6.6. combat and prevent cases of violence, discrimination and intolerance, in particular by carrying out effective investigations in order to avoid any sense of impunity among the perpetrators;

6.7. encourage the media to avoid negative stereotyping and communicating prejudices against Christians, in the same way as for any other group;

6.8. ensure the protection of Christian minority communities and allow such communities to be registered as a religious organisation, and to establish and maintain meeting places and places of worship, regardless of the number of believers and without any undue administrative burden;

6.9. guarantee the enjoyment by Christian minority communities of the right to publish and use religious literature.

Notes

1. Valeriu Ghiletschi, *Document 13660: Report to The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians*. Strasbourg: Parliamentary Assembly - Council of Europe (PACE), 7th January 2015, 4-5.

2. See <http://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/>.

3. Ghiletschi, *Report to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination*, 9. (Italics are mine.) For further reference, see Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians, *Data Collection and Submission to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) 2013 Annual Report on Hate Crimes*, 9 April 2014, 170p.

4. On the 29th of January 2015, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) accepted Ghiletschi's resolution on "Tackling intolerance and discrimination in Europe with a special focus on Christians" with a large majority (67 against 2). This historic resolution is included as an appendix to this article.

5. 'Looking around, we should also note the different kinds of Europeans among whom we live: Post-Christian, post-communist, postmodern, post-migrant and post-secular Europeans each require tailored approaches. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy.' (Jeff Fountain, 'Europe: A Most Strategic Mission Field', *Lausanne Global Analysis*, 3.6 (November 2014); <http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2014-11/europe-2.>)

6. See later references to Jeff Fountain and Greg Pritchard.

7. See 'Edinburgh 2010 Common Call', paragraph 7, published at <http://www.edinburgh2010.org/>.

8. Donald Le Roy Stults, *Grasping Truth and Reality: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Mission to the Western World*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 23.

9. Article 9, The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (formally the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*), see <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/005.htm>. For an overview of the protection of freedom of thought, conscience and religion in other legal instruments in the European context, see Ghiletschi, *Report to the Committee*, 4.

10. Whereas the first case concerned a British Airways (BA) employee who wanted to wear a cross as a sign of her Christian faith, in violation of BA's uniform code, the second case concerned a nurse on a geriatric ward who was not allowed to wear her cross on duty, due to health and safety reasons. The third case concerned a counsellor working for a private, national, relationship counselling service. As a practicing Christian, he became unwilling to work on sexual issues with homosexual couples, and lost his job. The fourth case concerned a civil registrar who, as a practicing Christian, was unwilling to register civil partnerships for same-sex couples after they had been introduced. See *Eweida and Others v United Kingdom* (UCHR archives).

11. Roger Trigg, 'New Threats to Religious Freedom in Europe and Their Implications', *Lausanne Global Analysis*, (March, 2013) 2.2. (<http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2013-03/new-threats-to-religious-freedom-in-europe-and-their-implications>)

12. See also Ian Leigh and Andrew Hambler, 'Religious Symbols, Conscience, and the Rights of Others', *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* (February, 2014) 3.1, 2-24. (<http://ojlr.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/1/2.full>)

13. Trigg, 'New Threats to Religious Freedom'.

14. Trigg, 'New Threats to Religious Freedom'.

15. Quote in Trigg, 'New Threats to Religious Freedom'.

16. On 'the concept of reasonable accommodation for religious reasons', see Ghiletschi, *Report to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination*, 12-13.

17. Trigg, 'New Threats to Religious Freedom'.
18. Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 108.
19. Lars Dahle, 'Encountering and Engaging a Post-modern Context: Applying the Apologetic Model in Acts 17', *Whitefield Briefing* (December, 2002) 7.6, 2. (<http://klice.co.uk/uploads/whitfield/Vol%207.6%20Dahle.pdf>)
20. On 'the closing of the university mind', see Guinness, *The Global Public Square*, 99-105.
21. For some impressions from one such missional initiative, see <http://ifesworld.org/en/blog/2014/03/feuer-fire-europe-responds-gospel>.
22. The evangelical student movement UCCF voiced deep concerns in relation to the proposed anti-terror Bill. See <https://www.uccf.org.uk/news/potential-threat-to-freedom-of-speech-in-university-cus.htm>.
23. <http://www.christian.org.uk/news/govt-climbdown-after-cu-free-speech-concerns/>. It should be noticed that the public debate in UK also included an open letter from 500 university professors, see <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/feb/02/counter-terrorism-security-bill-threat-freedom-of-speech-universities>.
24. David Taylor, 'The Global Charter of Conscience' [interview with Os Guinness], *Lausanne Global Analysis*, 2.1 (January, 2013). (<http://www.lausanne.org/content/lga/2013-01/the-global-charter-of-conscience>)
25. '[We] are seeing an unwitting convergence between some very different Western trends that together form a perfect storm. One trend is the general disdain for religion that leads to a discounting of religious freedom, sharpened by a newly aggressive atheism and a heavy-handed separationism that both call for the exclusion of religion from public life. Another is the overzealous attempt of certain activists of the sexual revolution to treat freedom of religion and belief as an obstruction to their own rights that must be dismantled forever. Yet another is the sometimes blatant, sometimes subtle initiatives of certain advocates of Islam to press their own claims in ways that contradict freedom of religion and belief, and freedom of speech as it has been classically understood.' (Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square*, 17.)
26. For an accessible summary of the extensive secularization debate, see Albert Mohler's interview with Peter Berger, published at <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/10/11/rethinking-secularization-a-conversation-with-peter-berger-2/>.
27. Os Guinness, *The Last Christian on Earth: Uncover the Enemy's Plot to Undermine the Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 57.
28. See Lars Dahle, 'Mission in 3D: A Key Lausanne III Theme', in Margunn S. Dahle, Lars Dahle, and Knud Jørgensen (eds), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2014), 265-279.
29. See Lars Dahle, 'Truth, Christian Mission and Apologetics: A Response and A Proposal', *Norwegian Journal of Missiology* (2013) 67.1, 21-38.
30. See Jeff Fountain, 'Europe: A Most Strategic Mission Field'; Rick Wade, 'Guest Editorial: Part 1: Secularization and the Church in Europe', *Christian Education Journal* (Supplemental Issue, Fall, 2013), 80-84; and Os Guinness, *Renaissance. The Power of the Gospel However Dark the Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).
31. The opposite tendency (i.e. starting new Christian schools) is also evident in some contexts (e.g. in Norway). This may be viewed *either* as openness to faith-initiatives in a given context (with wider cultural potential) *or* as a marginalized faith-initiative within the faith community.
32. Os Guinness, *Renaissance*, 48.
33. See Ghiletschi, *Report to the Committee*, 11-12; David Taylor, 'The Global Charter of Conscience'; Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square*, 213-227; and <http://charterofconscience.org/>. It should be noted that Os Guinness was the major author of the charter.
34. The charter is published at <http://charterofconscience.org/> and in Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square*, 215-227.
35. See Jeff Fountain, 'Europe: A Most Strategic Mission Field' and Greg Pritchard, 'A Global Vision of the Gospel: Why Europe is Strategically Important II', *Evangelical Focus* 28th Jan 2015, at <http://evangelicalfocus.com>.
36. CTC, II.A.1, published at <http://www.lausanne.org/>.
37. As expressed in The Cape Town Commitment: 'The interlocking arenas of Government, Business and Academia have a strong influence on the values of each nation and, in human terms, define the freedom of the Church.' (CTC, II.A.7 'Truth and the public arenas'). Unfortunately, CTC II.A.7 leaves out the mainstream media; see Dahle, 'Media Messages Matter: Towards a New Missiological Approach to the Media', *Norwegian Journal of Missiology* (June, 2014), 105-121.
38. New atheism claims that religion in general, and Christian faith specifically, is not only intellectually wrong but is also morally wrong and dangerous. See e.g. Alister E. McGrath, *Why God won't go away: Engaging the New Atheism* (London: SPCK, 2011).
39. CTC II.A.2; see also Lars Dahle, 'Truth, Christian Mission and Apologetics'.

40. It seems plausible to assume that historical and established churches have a tendency to move towards cultural assimilation, whereas non-established, non-traditional and migrant churches usually would move towards cultural escape.

41. In order to advance a civil public square, we should (a) affirm and expect *transparency* (regarding fundamental faith / worldview commitments), (b) expect and respect transposition (with appropriate arguments for the different arenas), and (c) expect and facilitate *translation* (due to the lack of knowledge of faith traditions and terminologies).

42. This is in accord with the recommendations in the January 2015 PACE resolution (see appendix).

43. See Lars Dahle, 'Mission in 3D'.

44. Resolution adopted by The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 29th 2015 (8th Sitting), see Doc. 13660. Published at <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=21549&lang=en>.

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