

The Discipline of Journalism

Reflections from a Christian Perspective

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Introduction

Values are always debated within journalism theory. The South African professor of media studies Herman Wasserman says in an article in *Equid Novi*, that “The danger for journalism does not lie in a conceptual engagement – it lies in not acknowledging the conceptual frameworks that already underpin the practical day-to-day journalistic habits and rituals, and thereby allowing them to persist unquestioned.”¹

The late Kenneth Minogue, professor emeritus at London School of Economics, takes this a step further in an article in *The New Criterion*. In the article entitled “Journalism: Power without responsibility”, he argues that “A meta-moralistic addiction to tolerance, secularism, ecumenism, and anti-discrimination becomes evident as what one might initially call ‘the journalistic ideology.’”²

Nora French, Head of School of Media at Dublin Institute of Technology, also looks at values in journalism and journalism education. Based on research on competing discourses in journalism education, she concludes that

[with] regard to journalism, there was agreement on the skills needed and the widespread recognition of its public role. From the latter, one can argue that journalism needs to be distinguished from the media in general and from other media prac-

tices. It does not need professional status to protect its role. Linking journalism to democracy and human rights in public policy and legislation is a better option.³

In an article in *Journalism Research* in 2009, three Norwegian journalism researchers Gunn Bjørnsen, Jan Fredrik Hovden and Rune Ottosen present an overview over the Norwegian institutions offering accredited journalism education. It says this about Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication (since 2013 merged with NLA University College, thus ‘NLA Gimlekollen’): “Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication was approved as a credit point-given private university college in 1996. This J-school is extraordinary in the way that it is run within a Christian framework.”⁴

NLA Gimlekollen’s status may be extraordinary in as much as the school is the only Norwegian – and Nordic – Journalism School run within a Christian framework. This framework is sometimes regarded with suspicion, in other cases tolerated, by secular journalists, journalist educators, and other academics.

This article presents a twofold argument: (1) A Christian perspective on the discipline of journalism presupposes a fundamental commitment to democracy and principled pluralism. (2) A Christian perspective, as illustrated at NLA Gimle-

kollen as a case study, offers a unique contribution to the discipline of journalism at four levels, i.e. in terms of a) guiding principles, b) a guiding methodology, c) a data set, and d) a guiding narrative.

A Fundamental Commitment to Democracy and Principled Pluralism

Traditionally, Christians have argued for a biblical view of humanity as an essential foundation and reference point for their social engagement. This includes the key belief that God created human beings in his own image and that this is what gives us inherent value. Furthermore, Christians claim that a consequence of being created in the image of God, is that we can choose between good and evil, and that we make our moral choices, not by preprogrammed animal instincts, but as responsible human beings with a free will. The classical Christian view of humanity also implies that we are all created as equals before God. For this reason, a Christian must regard fellow human beings as equals and thus regard oneself as a member of a pluralistic society where a plurality of viewpoints is recognized as legitimate.

Principled Pluralism as a Democratic Feature

Democracy may be defined as an organization or situation in which everyone is treated equally and has equal rights.⁵ The Christian perspective, as mentioned above, offers a logical reason for this equality. All people's opinions carry equal weight. Birth, wealth, and social standing does not matter. Men and women have a God-given right to participate in a pluralistic society.

Accordingly, the American theologian and human rights lawyer John Warwick Montgomery argues that

Divine revelation informs us that human rights exist – paradoxically – by grace alone. Man's dignity does not rest on itself but on the grace alone of the God of redemption. Man has no claim to it whatever; he receives pardon not by virtue of his merits but as the gracious gift of God. Ultimately, it could be said one has no 'right' to human rights! But this realization is the *sine qua non* for a truly adequate philosophy of human dignity. If people's rights were of their own making, they could as easily unmake them. Since rights come as divine gift from above, their inalienability is sure.⁶

The term "unalienable rights" is a key phrase in *The United States Declaration of Independence*: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."⁷

Again, according to a Christian perspective, we see that fundamental human rights are essentially tied to God as Creator of humanity.

Principled Pluralism as a Consequence of Human Rights

Throughout human history, these rights have not always been clearly spelled out. However, on 10th January 1948 during the General Assembly of the United Nations in Paris, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was adopted. Articles 18, 19 and 20 in the charter outline how pluralism is possible through the practice of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (article 18), freedom of speech

(article 19), and freedom of assembly (article 20).⁸

In his book *The Global Public Square*, the British author and sociologist Os Guinness points out the relationships between and progression of these three fundamental articles:

The right to freedom of assembly or association assumes and requires the right to freedom of speech. In that sense, freedom of speech logically comes before freedom of assembly. Free people want to join together with other people not merely to talk about the weather or some inconsequential subject – though that too would be covered by the protection of the right – but because they want to say things to each other that matter to them supremely.

In the same way, freedom of speech assumes and requires freedom of conscience, and in that sense freedom of conscience logically comes before freedom of speech. Free people want to speak freely of things that matter to them supremely – matters of truth, justice, freedom, human dignity, beauty, social policy and the like – because they are convinced of them and are therefore bound by the dictates of their conscience.⁹

Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are important elements in a democratic, pluralistic society, but they need a base. It is not enough to say that freedom of speech is good and important in and of itself. From the perspective of a Christian worldview, I argue that freedom of speech is a consequence of freedom of conscience, which again is based on the Christian view of humankind.

Montgomery states this in even stronger terms when looking behind the formal expressions of human rights in covenants

and ethical systems, and focusing specifically on the question of human motivation:

Not a single major philosophy of human rights is able to supply the motivation needed to carry out even its own best ideals. Utilitarianism, were it to identify and prove what is truly useful for human beings (which it does not), would still not be able to motivate them to choose the useful. Neo-Kantian rights theories tells us, *inter alia*, that we ought to act in accord with the generic rights of the recipient as well of ourselves; but we are given no inner stimulus to ethical universalization. Policy orientation is incapable of motivating the individual or the society to carry out what it claims (and incidentally, has not proven) to be desirable policies. Marxism is caught in the vicious conceptual circle of believing that external economic factors are the ultimate source of all violations of human dignity; its refusal to face the dark side of human nature leaves it powerless to find any means of changing human beings from within so that they will no longer exploit each other.¹⁰

As it is not possible to pull oneself up by one's own bootstraps, I will argue that the motivation for one's ethics needs to come from something or someone outside of oneself.

Accordingly, Christians can point to God as an ultimate reference point. Secular humanists do not have a similar reference point, and thus Christians traditionally have claimed that the foundation for their arguments for human rights and human dignity seems arbitrary.

Principled Pluralism, the Public Sphere, and the Academy

Liberal democracy may be defined as “a

democracy based on the recognition of individual rights and freedoms, in which decisions from direct or representative processes prevail in many policy areas.”¹¹

These rights and freedoms have been violated through history, not least in the hands of the Christian Church, when it saw itself as the divinely appointed custodians of the truth and thus monopolized the public discourse. In his book *The Global Public Square*, Os Guinness calls this situation “The Sacred Public Square.” As a reaction to this, we have seen political forces, not least in France, where religious arguments are banned from public discourse. This is known as the principle of *laïcité* based on the French law of separation of Church and State of 1905. Guinness calls this “The Naked Public Square.”¹²

The alternative to these two systems is what Guinness calls “The Civil Public Square.”¹³ This is a system of public discourse open to all, be they Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, agnostics, or atheists. The term *Civil Public Square* is used in *The Global Charter of Conscience*. This is a declaration reaffirming and supporting Article 18 of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. It sets out a vision of “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” for people of all faiths and none, and calls for the cultivation of civility and the construction of a civil public square that maximizes freedom for everyone.

This charter was launched by an international group of academics and activists in Brussels in June 2012. It 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 bases 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 difference of others.¹⁴

A similar vision is described in an Official Norwegian Report submitted by a committee appointed by the Norwegian Government. This report is entitled *The Worldview Open Society* (NOU 2013:1). It states that the use of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as a basis for public policy can be argued from a variety of perspectives and worldviews. One can e.g. argue from a Christian, Secular Humanistic or a Muslim point of view. If one can secure agreement from all these and other viewpoints in the democratic development of society, the result will be a strong society, the report states.¹⁵

This report also points out that such a worldview open society requires that a proposal based on one religion or worldview must be agreeable for other religions and worldviews, based on their values. As an example, the report states that a secular person may think that religion is dangerous and should therefore not be part of the curriculum in public schools. However, it is to be expected that religious people would not agree with that claim. Thus, to reach agreement, both secular and religious groups must find arguments for their viewpoints and pro-

posals that represent common ground. The report quotes the American philosopher John Rawls and his work *Public Reason* to support the argument.

In an article in the *University of Chicago Law Review*, Rawls writes:

Citizens are reasonable when, viewing one another as free and equal in a system of social cooperation over generations, they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of cooperation according to what they consider the most reasonable conception of political justice; and when they agree to act on those terms, even at the cost of their own interests in particular situations, provided that other citizens also accept those terms. The criterion of reciprocity requires that when those terms are proposed as the most reasonable terms of fair cooperation, those proposing them must also think it at least reasonable for others to accept them, as free and equal citizens, and not as dominated or manipulated, or under the pressure of an inferior political or social position. Citizens will of course differ as to which conceptions of political justice they think the most reasonable, but they will agree that all are reasonable, even if barely so.¹⁶

So far, I have argued that, from a Christian point of view, all human beings have equal value and thus have a right to be heard in the public discourse and a right to voice their political views in democratic elections. This is based on the Christian belief that all human beings are created in the image of God. A consequence of this view is that Christians often have been at the forefront in the endeavor to build democratic societies.

Historical Precedence for Christian Democracy Building

Associate professor at National University of Singapore, Robert D. Woodberry, argues in a significant article in *The American Political Science Review* that protestant missionaries, historically and statistically, heavily influenced the rise and spread of stable democracies around the world. He argues that these missionaries were crucial catalysts initiating the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, newspapers, voluntary organizations, and colonial reforms, thereby creating the conditions that made stable democracy more likely. In the Western world, leading universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge in the UK and Harvard and Yale in the US, are examples of places of higher learning, established in close relations with Christian churches. Thus, the Christian contributions to Western culture, thinking and democracy can hardly be overestimated.¹⁷

Woodberry concludes his article referring to a classic work in sociology:

A century ago Max Weber argued that Protestantism helped spur the rise of capitalism. Some of his causal mechanisms may be wrong, but his main intuition seems right: Religious beliefs and institutions matter. What we consider modernity was not the inevitable result of economic development, urbanization, industrialization, secularization, or the Enlightenment, but a far more contingent process profoundly shaped by activist religion.¹⁸

It is in this context that NLA Gimlekollen's efforts in journalism education as a means of democracy building and good

governance must be seen.

Furthermore, in Norway one finds strong historical evidence of what Woodberry is talking about, in the highly significant ministry of the Norwegian lay preacher and entrepreneurial businessman Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824). He was not only concerned for the soul of his fellow man, but also worked tirelessly in establishing businesses and printing presses, and advised his contemporaries on how to run their farms more productively. He published his writings and in them, he did not shy away from criticizing the rich and powerful. In a booklet entitled *Utøvelse af Patriotiske Betænkninger* (i.e. *Practicing Patriotic Ideas*) he criticized landowners who “have been concerned with nothing other than how they could amass riches and admiration in gluttonous lifestyle, while destroying the forests and depleting the earth in a few years, or thinking, it is enough in my lifetime, and not consider future generations”.¹⁹

Hauge started book publishing with a countrywide distribution network, he started paper mills, he founded a newspaper, in addition to buying estates, a mining company, mills for grinding grain, as well as teaching ordinary people how to make salt from seawater.²⁰ He believed ordinary people should participate in trade and business, not only the rich and established. He therefore encouraged his friends and followers to start businesses and other useful activities:

The worldly, wise and false and evil have gained worldly goods, and engaged in useful activities such as businesses and stores, and large factories. But the simple minded and they whom our Lord have convinced that worldly honor and the love thereof, leads to misery, they

have despised and left useful things, either because they do not want them, they are lazy, or they fear by partaking of worldly goods, they lose the heavenly. Because of this the worldly-minded have become rich and gained power in this world, and by their evil wisdom they have made good people their slaves and lived in plenty, and splendor themselves.²¹

Unlike Hauge’s contemporary members of the Norwegian establishment, he was not after “worldly riches”. Hauge saw his “worldly endeavors” as contributing to the wellbeing of his fellow men. To him, this work was of equal value to his preaching and teaching ministry concerning the spiritual wellbeing of his followers. In one of his many letters he wrote: “I now ponder my walk among you, and profoundly wish, that I have given you examples and knowledge, such as is pleasing to God.”²²

The Norwegian Lutheran Mission, founded in 1891, were among those who carried on the visions and concepts from Hans Nielsen Hauge both at home and overseas, as it e.g. established schools and hospitals in Africa and Asia. One of the institutions that the organization established in Norway (at a later stage) was Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, with clear links to the significant heritage from Hauge.

It is in this context that NLA Gimlekollen understands its role, both inspired by Hans Nielsen Hauge’s efforts in terms of social reform, and the wider Protestant understanding of the importance of democracy. Both traditions are deeply rooted in the biblical view of humanity as having value because each human is created in the image of God.

As we have seen, Woodberry gives Christian missional enterprises historical

credit for establishing universities, which to this day are among the leading universities in the world, in both the UK and the US. These institutions have promoted democracy and freedom of speech as well as academic freedom in Western civilization. Norwegian institutions of higher learning are part of this tradition.

Principled Pluralism and the Legal Protection of Academic Freedom

Norwegian public and private institutions of higher education share the same legal framework. *The Norwegian Law of Universities and Colleges of 2005*, in § 1-5, states that

1. Universities and Colleges can not be forced or instructed regarding
 - a. content in teaching and research or in the artistic and academic development of the institution
 - b. individual hiring and appointments
2. Institutions covered by this law have the right to develop its own academic and value base within the framework covered in law or pursuant to law.²³

Norwegian Professor of Law Jan Fridthjof Bernt states in his substantive commentary to the law that this ruling is particularly important for private institutions, which are established as academic-pedagogical alternatives or are established for specific worldview or religious reasons. The ruling is designed to emphasize that the right to have such an alternative value framework for such institutions is part of the overarching academic liberty.²⁴

Thus, from a legal point of view, NLA Gimlekollen clearly operates within the

law regarding its Christian framework. Moreover, the School contributes pluralism to the academic field of journalism in Norway and beyond, in as much as all other Norwegian and Nordic journalism schools operate within a secular framework.²⁵

I have now argued that a Christian perspective on the discipline of journalism presupposes a fundamental commitment to democracy and principled pluralism. In the following section, I will show how this perspective also makes a unique contribution to the field of journalism.

NLA Gimlekollen's contribution to the discipline of journalism

Based on an interdisciplinary interaction with key contributions in various academic fields, Christian philosopher Paul M. Gould suggests that any academic discipline is comprised of four components. He starts with guiding principles, which influence the guiding methodology. This influence the approach to the data set. The outcome of this process is the individual and collective narrative of the discipline.

Using Gould's categories, I will argue in this essay that NLA Gimlekollen contributes to the discipline of journalism in significant ways. But before I spell that out, let me use Gimlekollen's various activities within journalism education, research and communication with the wider world as a case study.

Contributions in the Area of Education

NLA Gimlekollen's Christian value base is reflected in our curriculum. Much of the content and the approaches in the journalism craft courses and the general media courses are similar to the ones taught in the state-run journalism schools in Norway. The Christian value base is

primarily and explicitly reflected in the specific courses on ethics, worldviews, and intercultural communication.

As part of our journalism ethics course, we go deep into the ethical and moral reasoning behind the various positions taken. We also offer a course on journalism and worldviews, based on the assumption that all people have a worldview of one kind or another which influences their motives and actions. Students are encouraged to define their own worldview and they are helped to understand the modern pluralistic society and the intellectual and spiritual forces that shapes it. The course also takes a critical look at how Norwegian media covers religion and worldview questions.

Immigrants are contributing significantly to the modern pluralistic society in Norway. Some of these come from other European countries, and are therefore not so different from ethnic Norwegians, but many also come from the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and bring cultures and religions quite different from the ones that dominated Norway in the past.

NLA Gimlekollen is of the opinion that journalists need to understand these newly arrived people, their culture and worldviews and what motivates them to talk and behave in the way they do. The influx of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers is currently a hugely important story in Norway, and for the news coverage to be fair and just, the journalists must understand and appreciate both the value framework of the arriving people and of the value framework they meet when they get here.

In addition to these courses, NLA Gimlekollen offers annual study tours to East Africa, with intercultural communication as a key perspective. Since 2000 the Gimlekollen students have met

Kenyan and Ethiopian journalists and journalism students, as well as politicians and aid workers. They learn about politics in these countries, and see for themselves the problems many people are facing in a third world economy. NLA Gimlekollen aspires to educate its students in the value of understanding our interconnected and globalized world.

In 2015, NLA Gimlekollen launched an MA program in Global Journalism with students from around the world. Its design is partly based on the experience we gained from our involvement in international journalism education programs.

When one looks at the curricula for the journalism study for the public Norwegian Schools of journalism at Volda, Bergen, Oslo, Bodø and Stavanger, one sees a lot of similarities with the curriculum offered at NLA Gimlekollen. In the area of ethics, there are obvious similarities, inasmuch as the Norwegian Press Council's code of conduct is taught. However, at NLA Gimlekollen the foundations and presuppositions for ethical values and worldviews are studied in much more detail.

Contributions in the Area of Research and Development

When it comes to journalism research, NLA Gimlekollen Faculty has made key contributions in how to better understand the values, worldviews, and beliefs of others. This is exemplified in the following.

Kenneth Andresen completed his PhD thesis on a study of journalism in post-conflict Kosovo entitled *Journalism under pressure: The case of Kosovo* (2015). He is also a member of the international research project called "Worlds of journalism" where he is responsible for research on journalism in Kosovo. The study's pri-

mary objective is to help journalism researchers, practitioners, media managers and policy makers to achieve a better understanding of the worldviews and significant changes that are taking place in the professional orientations of journalists, the conditions and limitations under which journalists operate, as well as the social functions of journalism in a changing world.²⁶ Terje Skjerdal is also involved in this project, being responsible for research in Ethiopia. His PhD thesis was entitled *Competing Loyalties: Journalism Culture in the Ethiopian State Media*.

To provide a better understanding of immigrants to Norway, and their value encounter with Norwegian society, NLA Gimlekollen Faculty has published an interdisciplinary anthology entitled *Innvandrerungdom og mediebruk* (i.e. *Immigrant Youth and Media Usage*) with Øyvind Økland as editor.

Another NLA Gimlekollen Faculty, Hilde Kristin Dahlstrøm, published an academic text book in 2015 entitled *Kors på halsen. Innføring i livssynsjournalistikk* [i.e. *An introduction to worldview journalism*]. In this first text book on this key theme in the Nordic countries, her colleague Margunn Serigstad Dahle contributes two foundational chapters, providing a conceptual framework for understanding worldviews and describing the transformation of the Norwegian society from a homogenous to a secular and pluralistic society.

Contributions in the Area of Communication with the Wider World

Communicating with the wider world, including serving key communities, is the third task in the university sector alongside education and research. This third task has been a key area of major project involvement for Gimlekollen.

Inspired by our Christian faith, Gimlekollen has been involved in several international development projects promoting democracy, human rights and freedom of speech in countries where these rights and freedoms are not well developed. It is our experience that these rights and freedoms need constant defense against forces that seek to deprive the common people of them. Journalism is one of the primary tools for defending and implementing democratic rights.

In 2004, we launched an MA program in journalism in cooperation with Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia, financed by NORAD. Since AAU wanted the teaching to start as soon as the money was available, we organized a network of teachers from leading universities such as University of Nebraska (US) and University of KwaZulu Natal (South Africa) to participate alongside teachers from NLA Gimlekollen. Seasoned journalists with background from BBC, CBC, Time Magazine, The Daily Nation, Nairobi, NRK, Fædrelandsvennen and other news organizations taught practical reporting courses. Whereas NLA Gimlekollen's Christian faith provides the foundation and motivation for our own involvement, we did not demand that our cooperating partners should share our worldview or our beliefs. As long as these institutions and individuals had the same educational goal as NLA Gimlekollen, i.e. to contribute to democracy building, human rights and freedom of speech, we accepted that their inspiration came from a different source than ours. Thus, we worked alongside such individuals and groups as Muslims, Communists, and Secular Humanists.

In 2009, the project in Ethiopia was taken over by AAU itself. In the five previous years, the journalism program pro-

duced 102 graduates. These graduates can now be found in media businesses, NGOs, research institutions and universities all over Ethiopia. A survey conducted among the first 41 graduates in May 2007 showed that 15 worked as journalists/editors in the media, 16 worked as lecturers or university faculty, and 9 worked as information/communication officers in NGOs (graduates sometimes had several jobs).²⁷

An interesting long-term effect of our program is that journalism programs have been established at five regional universities in Ethiopia, largely employing graduates from the AAU journalism program as teachers. The AAU journalism program is now officially called Faculty of Journalism and Communication. It should be added that NLA Gimlekollen is currently in communication with AAU regarding joint research programs on African journalism.

In 2005, we established a similar educational programme in Pristina, Kosovo. It was modelled after the AAU program and thus the intention was to establish it at the University of Pristina (UP). However, we were advised by the Minister of Education to establish an independent institute, for later inclusion into the Kosovo public educational system. Thus, Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication (KIJAC) started classes in October 2005, sponsored by the West Balkan Section of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The cooperating partners were somewhat the same as in Ethiopia, but new institutions were added, such as University of Mississippi and Cardiff University.

Negotiations are now ongoing with the aim of incorporating KIJAC into a local university or university college. Three Kosovars with PhDs from Cardiff University and Nebraska University,

sponsored by KIJAC, are ready to teach. Sixty-two graduates with MA degrees from KIJAC are also ready to contribute. Many of these people are now holding senior positions in the Kosovar press.

In 2013, Uganda Christian University (UCU) started a Master's programme in Journalism and Media Studies in cooperation with NLA Gimlekollen and University of KwaZulu Natal (South Africa). This is financed by NORHED, a NORAD program. NORHED focuses on building institutional cooperation, so one of its requirements is that the teachers must primarily come from the cooperating institutions. Thus, the international network built in connection with the AAU and KIJAC projects, is not used with the exception of KwaZulu Natal University.

NLA Gimlekollen is also involved in the recent launch of a master programme in Journalism for Development at Universidad San Francisco Xavier (Sucre, Bolivia). Whereas the previously mentioned MA programs have been conducted through the medium of the English language, the Bolivia program is in Spanish. In addition to Spanish-speaking personnel from NLA Gimlekollen, this project draws on teachers from the University of Mississippi, and journalists from media such as the Miami Herald. The Strømme Foundation (Norway) sponsors this program.

In authoritarian countries, the press is punished for criticizing the authorities, and have great difficulty in obtaining documentation to base its criticism on. Such situations usually change very slowly, because those with power to change see little reason to do so, since they, in many cases, benefit greatly from the way things are. It may therefore seem naïve to establish schools of journalism that teach global media philosophy and practice in

such countries. But, NLA Gimlekollen takes the long view, and strives to educate the next generation of media leaders, who are thus helped to change the news and information systems in their own countries from within.

A theoretical framework for assessing NLA Gimlekollen's contribution

In order to measure NLA Gimlekollen's contribution to the academic discipline of journalism, I need an appropriate theoretical framework. As already mentioned, I will use Gould's four components.

A guiding principle: Gould defines a guiding principle as a belief held by a scholar that operates as a constraint on theory acceptance and a signpost for theory discovery.²⁸

NLA Gimlekollen's contribution to the guiding principle is connected to Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Christians believe that this verse charges humankind to understand and build the earth. As the creator and creation are separate entities, we believe in a mind-independent world and thus in objectivity and unity of truth. God is the source of both, and thus science, faith and reason do not inherently compete.

The Norwegian journalist and media scholar Audgunn Oltedal defines the guiding principles of journalism in a significant book by these four values: truth, essentiality, independence and human rights.²⁹

Thus, when a journalist seeks truth, because the subject matter under investigation is of the utmost importance, he or

she does this as an outside independent observer, inspired by a concern for the individuals involved in the story, because of their human rights. All these key journalistic values are grounded in a classical Christian worldview as the foundational guiding principle.

A guiding methodology: In terms of a guiding methodology, Gould argues for perspectival factualism (or critical realism) as the most suitable. Such a methodology welcomes a distinct Christian perspective into the discipline because it is fundamentally social and perspectival.³⁰ This argument also brings us back to the key notion of *The Civil Public Square*, which I earlier have pointed to as our guiding methodology in search of principled pluralism.

A Data Set: Next Gould points to the data set, which encompasses the specific domain of knowledge that is studied.³¹ In our case journalism.

There is no authoritative definition of journalism, but a useful example of such a definition can be the one formulated by The American Press Institute: "Journalism is the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information. It is also the product of these activities."³²

Thus, journalists are the chronicler of events large and small, primarily reporting on events of the day or in recent past. They seek to put what happens into a wider perspective, tell the audience what it means, and how it matters in people's daily lives.

It is important that the reporters get the fact of a story right, both in the details of what happened and in understanding the wider forces and the deeper issues which may have shaped what happened.

Journalists who claim that the public square must remain purely secular, is at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding world events in the 21st century.

International terrorism often dominates the news. Sunni and Shia Muslims are fighting each other in the Middle East and terrorist groups with ties to both Muslim denominations are attacking Western targets. Very few journalists can explain why Sunni and Shia Muslims are fighting each other, let alone being able to explain what caused this divide in the Muslim religion.

In the Christian realm, there are also significant divisions. The Catholic Church is divided between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, where there are several sub divisions, the protestant church has numerous divisions, and so on.

In an interview with William R. Burleigh, President of the Scripps Howard newspaper group, conducted by journalist Terry Mattingly for the book *Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion*, Burleigh said that "the prevailing ethos among most of our editors is that the public square is the province of the secular and not a place for religious life and for religious messages to be heard. As a result, lots of editors automatically think religion is out of place in a public newspaper."³³

Blind Spot mentions many examples of wrong conclusions drawn by journalists because of their lack of knowledge and understand of religion. One example is that most media concluded that the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards as a revenge for the Indian Army attack on the Gold Temple in Amritsar. Few were able to see the growing conflict between Indira Gandhi's efforts to create a secular India

and the Sikh's fear of losing their identity.³⁴

The journalism students at NLA Gimlekollen are given the skills of the trade during rigorous practical training. In addition, the students are given insight into the worldviews, religions and ideologies dominating our world today.

A Guiding Narrative: Gould's fourth term describing an academic discipline is a guiding narrative. He writes that each academic discipline has a history, a narrative full of intrigue, sub-plot, climax, paradigm shift, honest toil, and ill-gotten gain. NLA Gimlekollen is striving to contribute to Norwegian, Nordic and global journalism by educating future reporters and editors. Inspired by our Christian faith we also work to promote democracy and freedom of speech in post conflict and authoritarian countries, as we have already seen.

In our teaching, we stress the importance of truth. Journalists endeavor to uncover the truth about what happened. Our conviction has been and still is that objective truth is a reality, a conviction rejected by social constructivism or post-modernism.

The Oxford Dictionary defines post-modernism as "a late 20th-century style and concept in the arts, architecture, and criticism, which represents a departure from modernism and is characterized by the self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, a mixing of different artistic styles and media, and a general distrust of theories."³⁵ The idea of objective truth is foreign to postmodernism as a philosophical perspective. Truth is usually seen as contextual and constructed because it is a mere product of social and political discourse and interpretation. If nothing is true, then objectivity is not possible.

Wilson Lowrey and Peter J. Grade discuss postmodernism's influence on journalism in their book *Changing the News: The Forces Shaping Journalism in Uncertain Times*. They claim that contemporary journalism is strongly influenced by postmodernism. Classic journalism's emphasis on objectivity meant to apply the logic of science to it. In practice, it meant detachment, control of one's biases to make its facts speak for themselves, to be non-partisan, to rely on the empirical data, to seek multiple views and be fair and balanced in representation. They conclude that

Postmodernism's rejection of meta-narratives calls into question the very notion of demonstrable broad-based truths. This has undeniably implications for journalism and its embrace of objectivity as a normative value. In a postmodern society, in which large segments do not believe that objectivity is an attainable goal – and even if it is, its hold no greater authority than other forms of discourse – the journalistic rationale for objectivity as a core norm appears dubious.³⁶

They go on to suggest that the best journalism can do is perhaps to tell many stories from diverse perspectives, and thereby creating a better public understanding of the multiple perspectives on issues. They also point out that this approach diminishes the distinction between journalists and other media voices.³⁷

Lowrey and Gade conclude that journalism is moving to integrate postmodern ideals into its norms, and using online media as a way to do so. Journalism organizations are restructuring to adopt new practices that reflect changing social values and business environments, but nearly all these innovations create additional uncertainties, which add to the complex-

ities of understanding the shifting environment in which journalism resides.³⁸

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines human rights in absolute terms. Postmodernism's rejection of absolutes and inherent rights does not only "add to the complexities of understanding the shifting environment in which journalism resides," as Lowrey and Gade put it, but could, from a Christian point of view, possibly weaken freedom of speech and therefore journalism and its current role in democracy itself.

Concluding Reflections

In this essay, I have argued that journalism and journalism education always contain basic value frameworks and perspectives. A Christian value base is therefore not qualitatively different from other value bases. I have argued that the Christian value base leads to principled pluralism because of the biblical view of humankind.

Following Os Guinness, I have argued that rather than having "The Sacred Public Square", where the Church (or another religious authority) dominates public debate, or "The Naked Public Square", where organized religion is banned from public debate, as ideals, we should promote "The Civil Public Square" where representatives of all beliefs and world-views are encouraged to participate in the public discourse, presupposing that everyone respects mutual democratic rights and obligations.

This could of course lead to a situation where representatives of the various viewpoints stonewall the arguments from opponents. The key to unlock such a situation may be to utilize John Rawls principle of "Public Reason": For an argument from, say, a Christian point of view to be acceptable from a secular, liberal point of

view, the argument must provide common ground, acceptable to both world-views.

Journalism education, research, and communication with the wider world from a Christian value base, argue that a biblical view of humanity inspires efforts to promote and defend freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom

of assembly, which are the building blocks for democracy itself. As NLA Gimlekollen has shown in the international projects, we are willing to cooperate with anyone who shares our journalistic goals, even though inspired by other values and worldview systems. This is “Public Reason” in practice.

Notes

1. Herman Wasserman, “Journalism education as transformative praxis,” *Equid Novi* (2005 26 (2)) p. 166
2. Kenneth Minogue, “Journalism: Power without responsibility,” *The New Criterion* February 2005 p. 13
3. Nora French, “Competing Discourses in Journalism Education,” Professional Education Section, *International Association of Media and Communications Research*, Cairo, 2006. p. 5
4. Gunn Bjørnsen, Jan Fredrik Hovden, Rune Ottosen, “The Norwegian journalism education landscape,” *Journalism Research*, No.2, 2009. p. 125.
5. ‘Democracy’, in *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary*. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/democracy>
6. John Warwick Montgomery, *Human Rights & Human Dignity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986) p. 217.
7. <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/U.S>, Declaration of Independence
8. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>
9. Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2013) pp. 87-88.
10. Montgomery, p 214.
11. www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/liberal-democracy
12. Guinness, p 130.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 180.
14. The charter is published at <http://charterofconscience.org/> and in Os Guinness, *The Global Public Square*, 215-227.
15. NOU 2013:1 *Det livssynsåpne samfunn. En helhetlig tros- og livssynspolitik*. p 123.
16. John Rawls, “The idea of public reason revisited”, *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol.64 no. 3 p. 770
17. Robert D. Woodberry, “The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 106, NO 2 (May 2012): p 244.
18. *Ibid.*, p.270.
19. Sigbjørn Ravnåsen, *Ånd og hånd, Hans Nielsen Hauges etikk for ledelse og næringsliv* (Oslo: Luther Forlag, 2002), p.107.
20. *Ibid.*, p.73
21. *Ibid.*, p.79.
22. *Ibid.*, p.83.
23. Jan Fridthjof Bernt, *Universitets- og Høgskoleloven av 2005 – med kommentarer* (Bergen: Fagforlaget, 2006) pp.28-29.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Lars Dahle, former Principal at Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, explores in an article entitled “Western Europe – Marginalization of Christians through Secularization” the relationship between freedom of religion and Christian involvement in society at four closely interrelated levels, i.e. the legal, the attitudinal, the plausibility, and the credibility levels. (See Hans Aaage Gravaas et al (eds.) *Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2015) p. 382-394.
26. www.worldsofjournalism.org/
27. Anders Wirak, *Final Report ETH-2414 Education programme for journalists* (Addis Ababa and Oslo, 10. November, 2008, pp 45-46.
28. Gould, p. 107.
29. Audgunn Oltedal, *Den myndige journalisten. Korleis forstår journalisten sitt samfunnsansvar?* (Kristiansand: IJ-forlaget, 2001,) pp.30-39.

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30. Gould, p. 109. It should be added that social anthropologist Asle Jøssang at Gimlekollen has shown the legitimacy and relevance of critical realism as a key methodological approach in his academic contributions. See e.g. his article “Reassessing Christian mission as an anthropological study object”, in *Theofilos* 2014, vol. 6(3), pp. 436-444.
 31. Ibid., p. 110.
 32. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/>
 33. Paul Marshall, Lena Gilbert, Roberta Green Ahmanson (eds.), *Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 149-150
 34. Ibid., pp. 159-162
 35. <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/postmodernism>
 36. Wilson Lowrey, Peter J. Gade, ed., *Changing the News. The forces shaping journalism in uncertain times* (New York: Routledge, 2011) pp. 75-76.
 37. Ibid.
 38. Ibid., p.78.