

Cognitive Dissonance as a Missiological Challenge and Opportunity: An Evangelical Perspective on Western Europe

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The issue between the atheist and the believer is not whether it makes sense to question ultimate fact, it is rather the question: what fact is ultimate? The atheist's ultimate fact is the universe; the theist's ultimate fact is God.

(John Lennox)²

In the late 1990's Lesslie Newbigin claimed that developing a missiology of Western culture is "the most urgent task facing the universal church at this time"³. Michael W. Goheen has recently expressed this as a threefold task: a theological task of faithfully articulating the Gospel in the Western context, an ecclesiological task of exploring the missional identity of the church in the West, and a cultural task of probing the stories and fundamental assumptions of Western culture.⁴

This missiological agenda is highly relevant for Christian witness in secularized Western European contexts. The narratives and experiences that many confessing Christians are sharing from such settings are clear indicators of alienation and marginalisation. One such story from North-Western Europe made a huge impact at the Tokyo 2010 global mission conference:

Stefan Gustavsson of Sweden gave a Macedonian call ("Come over and help us," an allusion to Acts 16:9) about how to evangelize secular Europeans, the "prodigal sons" of Christianity today... He pointed

out that the Christian church in Europe is rapidly diminishing...; the gospel is not viewed as good news — many think it's been tried and found false... Furthermore, he claimed, Europe is a mix of the modern and the postmodern... He concluded: "The advent of postmodern thinking has not diminished the need for apologetics; it has doubled it. Now the Christian church has two major challenges to deal with: The concept of truth (that there is such a thing as attainable truth) and the content of truth (that it is the Christian message, not naturalism, which is the truth)."⁵

In a subsequent, recent publication, Stefan Gustavsson expands on the shared experiences of many Christians in such deeply secular contexts. He *proposes cognitive dissonance* as a helpful explanatory model, i.e. psychological experiences of conflict resulting from incongruous beliefs and attitudes held simultaneously. We may summarize his cultural analysis as follows:

God is taken for granted within our Christian churches, and sermons may

describe his love and goodness. But the existence of God is hardly ever justified, it is only presupposed. The Bible is quoted and applied, but no reasons are given for the selection and credibility of the biblical books. Jesus is being worshipped, but no explanation is presented for his uniqueness and his salvation. Prayer, liturgy, and mission are only seen as Christian traditions, and thus never argued for in relation to the wider secular context.

Our culture at large, and especially the educational system, however, views God as absent. Prayer is only a psychological exercise. The Bible is an irrelevant ancient text which contains some literary gems. Science has replaced faith in God. Christianity is not unique, but only one alternative among many worldviews. Jesus is an inspiring humanist. The Christian faith can no longer be seen as objectively true; it may function as a source of personal inspiration or as a kind of spirituality which may lead to increased well-being.⁶

Thus, many confessing Christians in Western Europe (and beyond) are faced with a demanding cognitive dissonance between Christian stories, beliefs, and truth-claims within the church and dominant secular narratives and arguments in the wider culture.

Following on from Gustavsson's perceptive analysis, *this article explores how dealing with cognitive dissonance is a key missiological task in many Western European contexts*. This exploration is carried out in three parts after an introductory presentation of the classical theory of cognitive dissonance; *first* by describing some of the key cultural factors behind this challenging experience for many confessing Christians, *secondly* by discussing and outlining an appropriate Christian response to this challenge, and *thirdly* by

considering cognitive dissonance as a potential missiological opportunity.

Revisiting the theory of cognitive dissonance

The American social psychologist Leon Festinger published *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* in 1957. He claimed in this seminal publication that the relationship between any pair of cognitions may be consonant (in harmony), dissonant (in disharmony), or irrelevant. Festinger noted that there is a human preference to hold consonant cognitions. Since it is psychologically uncomfortable to hold contradictory cognitions, the unpleasant experience of dissonance motivates a person to change his or her cognition, attitude, or behaviour.

Festinger summarized his theory as follows: "The presence of dissonance gives rise to pressures to reduce or eliminate the dissonance. The strength of the pressures to reduce the dissonance is a function of the magnitude of the dissonance."⁷ Furthermore, he outlined three methods that people use to reduce cognitive dissonance: "(1) They can change one or more of the cognitions or behaviours. (2) They can add new cognitions that alter the magnitude of the dissonance. (3) They can reduce the importance of the cognitions causing dissonance."⁸ It has recently been observed that Festinger's pioneering theory "still provides much explanatory, integrative, and generative power."⁹

When applying these insights to the cognitive dissonance experienced when faced with conflicting fundamental Christian and secular truth-claims, we also need an appropriate understanding of the nature and function of worldviews. In view of our present missiological concerns, the following definition offered by James Sire may be helpful:

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.¹⁰

This leads to three key observations central to the purpose of this article. *First*, Christian and secular truth-claims both relate to the level of fundamental personal commitment. At this level, an ultimate change of beliefs and convictions is demanding. *Secondly*, Christian and secular truth-claims may be expressed both as competing stories and as conflicting sets of presuppositions. *Thirdly*, Christian and secular truth-claims offer contradictory perspectives on faith, reality, humanity, and values. It is quite understandable in view of these observations, that simultaneous deep exposure to Christian and secular truth-claims may lead to challenging experiences of cognitive dissonance for many confessing Christians.

Experiencing cognitive dissonance as Christians: Key cultural factors

There are at least four central cultural factors involved in generating deep experiences of cognitive dissonance for confessing Christians in many Western European contexts.

First, the significant cultural factor of the educational system and the academy should be mentioned. What is being communicated about religion in general and Christian faith specifically in many of these settings? How does that challenge young Christian believers? A recent doctoral dissertation in Gothenburg may

provide us with some key answers. After having observed the discourse on religion and worldviews in upper secondary school Religious Education classes in Sweden, Karin Kittelmann Flenser summarized her major findings as follows:

The findings indicate that a secularist discourse was hegemonic in the classroom practice and implied norm of talking about religion, religions, and [religious] worldviews as something outdated and belonging to history. A non-religious, atheistic position was articulated as neutral and unbiased in relation to the subject matter and was associated with being a rational, critically thinking person.¹¹

It seems plausible to presume that such a reductionist secular discourse is predominant in the educational system in many countries in Western Europe. This secular discourse is reinforced by highly influential secular paradigms in the academy, as noted by Gustavsson:

In the natural sciences, naturalistic interpretations are offered for the Big Bang theory and the evolution theory. In the discipline of literature, postmodern hermeneutics excludes absolute Christian truth-claims. In the study of history, the Christian church is presented as an oppressive institution which has supported slavery, the suppression of women, and homophobia. Within psychology, God is explained away as being projected in our image. In the social sciences, all religion is seen as products of the social contexts. In gender studies, real distinctions between men and women made in the image of God are excluded. Within post-colonial studies, 'the Christian West' is portrayed as the exploiter. In religious studies, the search for God within and the similarities between various religions are emphasized.¹²

Because of these dominant secular paradigms in textbooks and teaching in many European schools and universities, young confessing Christians are being deeply challenged in such educational and academic settings at the foundational worldview level. This leads to a widespread experience of cognitive dissonance, evident from many observations in youth and student ministry contexts. Such experiences may be compared to trying to have one foot in each rowboat, when two adjacent boats are drifting apart.¹³ It should also be added that Western Europe affects the rest of the world with its predominant secular thinking, through its many influential secular perspectives and its often leading role as an educator.¹⁴

A *second* key cultural factor is the media, whether news, documentary, entertainment, creative or social media. Tim Keller points out that various media, especially in Western Europe and in the USA, are key carriers of basic secular assumptions. These are influential background beliefs that our culture presses on us about the Christian faith and which make it seem so implausible:

These assumptions are not presented to us explicitly by argument. Rather, they are absorbed through the stories and themes of entertainment and social media. They are assumed to be simply ‘the way things are’. They are so strong that even many Christian believers, perhaps secretly at first, find their faith becoming less and less real in their minds and hearts. Much or most of what we believe at this level is, therefore, invisible to us as belief. Some of the beliefs ... are: “You don’t need to believe in God to have a full life of meaning, hope, and satisfaction.”; “You should be free to live as you see fit, as long as you don’t harm others.”; “You

become yourself when you are true to your deepest desires and dreams.”; “You don’t need to believe in God to have a basis for moral values and human rights.”; “There’s little or no evidence for the existence of God or the truth of Christianity”.¹⁵

Thus, secular paradigms in most Western European schools and universities are reinforced by this widespread communication of explicit and implicit secular convictions in the Western media. This includes popular fictional stories where secular worldview perspectives are portrayed positively, Christians are being stereotyped, and Christian faith and practices are excluded.¹⁶ “Put another way, there is now dissonance or a discrepancy between imagination (formed by the arts via TV and movies) and the truth from Scripture (proclaimed from the pulpit).”¹⁷

A *third* key cultural factor is the increasing presence of worldview pluralism in Western Europe, because of reduced Christian influence and increasing media exposure and immigration. Harold Netland raises the empirical question, “whether, when faced with intelligent, sincere, and morally good people who embrace different religious commitments, Christians do in fact experience ‘cognitive dissonance’, a reduction in confidence in their own beliefs, and sense the need to justify their beliefs”¹⁸. Netland himself answers affirmatively. It should be added that the fact of religious pluralism may be interpreted in different ways, whether the underlying perspective is secular relativism, religious syncretism, or the acknowledgment of alternative absolute truth-claims.

A *fourth* key cultural factor is the marginalization of Christian faith and practice in Western Europe. This process is related

to the previous three factors but needs also to be understood on its own terms. In the context of this article, it is natural to focus on the plausibility challenge in Western Europe.¹⁹ This challenge consists of two parallel phenomena, i.e. Christian ideas are seen as less meaningful and Christian institutions are becoming more marginal. The first phenomenon is especially relevant for cognitive dissonance. It includes the following significant challenges in many of today's Western European societies:

- (1.) 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.
- (2.) 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.
- (3.) The wider cultural milieu is a context where the Gospel is not usually seen or heard as a viable and relevant option, either in terms of reason (arguments) or in terms of imagination (stories).²⁰

All the four major cultural factors outlined above contribute significantly to the experience of cognitive dissonance among many confessing Christians in Western Europe (and beyond²¹). As Netland points out, one should not “minimize the degree to which individuals, including [confessing] Christians, undergoing normal educational and socialization processes in the West, struggle with basic Christian beliefs, intuitively sensing the need for justification”²².

Responding to the challenge(s) of cognitive dissonance: Key strategies

As mentioned earlier, Leon Festinger argued that there are three basic ways to deal with cognitive dissonance. He described these as changing one of the cognitions, adding new significant cognitions, or reducing the importance of the cognitions. Festinger did not consider these approaches as mutually exclusive.

These three supplementary strategies illustrate a spectrum of responses from many confessing Christians when faced with the demanding experiences of cognitive dissonance, because of contradictory Christian and secular truth claims.

First, Christians may try to change one or more of the beliefs, opinions, or behaviours involved in the dissonance. Due to the plausibility of secular convictions and political correctness in the wider Western European setting, Christians may be persuaded to give up – or downplay – key Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, God as Creator, Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and personal faith, witness, and discipleship, thus accepting a secularist worldview. Alternatively, Christians may be encouraged to uphold key Christian beliefs with confidence, and thus challenge fundamental secular convictions as insufficient, inconsistent, and undesirable.

Secondly, Christian may try to acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced. If Christians continue to be deeply attracted to naturalism, individualism, or relativism, they may gradually adopt such fundamental secular perspectives as plausible overall explanations. This may lead to an ultimate acceptance of secular worldview perspectives. On the other hand, Christians may be encouraged to

expand their knowledge of the relevant premises, issues, and facts, and pursue that new knowledge in accordance with classical Christian convictions. If so, the personal confidence in biblical truth claims will grow and the total dissonance will be reduced.

Thirdly, Christians may try to forget or reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship. If Christians are suppressing or diminishing the significance of fundamental Christian doctrines, this may lead to a gradual adoption of secular beliefs and attitudes. Christians may also be downplaying the challenges from secular thought, which in turn may result in a Christian ghetto mentality with insufficient teaching and a problematic inward-looking ministry. On the other hand, if Christians become increasingly convinced of the authenticity, credibility and relevance of key Christian truth claims, the personal significance of secular convictions will be gradually reduced. This latter strategy presupposes broad and credible justification of central Christian truth claims.

Such alternative and conflicting strategies may be seen all over Western Europe in churches, youth and student work, and children ministries. However, there is currently an increasing emphasis in many contexts on constructive apologetic strategies both internally and externally. As mentioned above, this includes encouraging confessing Christians *first* to uphold key biblical beliefs, *secondly* to expand the knowledge of Christian faith and relevant alternative worldviews, and *thirdly* to offer broad and credible justifications of central Christian truth claims.

We can observe this new apologetic renaissance in various settings in Western Europe. In the university world, there is an increasing number of evangelical uni-

versity missions with a clear apologetic edge, organized by student organisations such as IFES alongside the specialist university ministry FEUER.²³ The emphasis is on biblical material, persuasive public communication, and a variety of creative approaches. This European-wide phenomenon includes the increasingly popular ‘sceptics weeks’ in Norway. There is also an increasing interest in Christian apologetics among a growing number of younger Christians, focusing on books, podcasts, and social media by well-known and highly popular evangelical apologists such as John Lennox, William Lane Craig, and Ravi Zacharias. The growing influence of The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA), The European Leadership Forum (ELF), and the annual Norwegian Veritas Conference are all clear indicators of this development.²⁴

The need for a holistic apologetic approach in a Western European context was emphasized in a recent research project at NLA University College (Norway) called “Why Jesus?”²⁵ carried out in the period 2012-2016.²⁶ The project was based on in-depth interviews with Christian youth workers and faith educators and on subsequent critical reflections on the interview findings in the light of recent relevant research on youth ministry, worldview formation, and apologetics. This led to the development of a holistic apologetic strategy for youth ministries which consists of three parts. The *first* component is a hermeneutical approach, which helps young Christians to identify traces of secular and religious worldviews in influential educational, academic and media texts around them. The *second* element is a didactic approach, which helps young Christians to see the consistency, the credibility, and the relevance of a comprehensive Christian worldview

based on central biblical truth claims. The *third* part is a formative approach, which allows young Christians to gradually mature and grow into a more confident Christian commitment within an affirmative Christian community.²⁷

Cognitive dissonance as a missiological opportunity: Turning the tables

So far, in this article, I have primarily focused on cognitive dissonance as a challenge for confessing Christians when faced with the demanding tension between Christian and secular truth claims. However, we also need to explore how cognitive dissonance may serve Christian mission and apologetics positively, both *inwardly* in terms of discipleship and Christian growth in children and youth ministries and *outwardly* in terms of pre-evangelism and evangelism.

The internal apologetic strategy emerges out of Jesus' prayer for his disciples in John 17, where he describes the disciples' status as "being in the world, but not of the world, and sent to the world". Following on from this, Luciano Cid suggests that we need to create a formal and informal educational environment within church contexts in which children and youth "are presented with alternative perspectives specifically intended to cause what psychologists refer to as *cognitive dissonance*. That is, as adults who profess to be Christians, we should continually provide our children [and youth] with premises that can counterbalance the inaccurate viewpoints being offered by the world."²⁸

If Stefan Gustavsson's assessment is correct, that many churches in Western Europe have largely neglected to recognize and address significant secular challenges, then we need to take Luciano Cid's advice seriously. This includes iden-

tifying and challenging such key contemporary secular worldview perspectives as naturalism, secular humanism, and pantheism, by introducing alternative premises, perspectives and arguments related to the Christian faith. We may call this Christian discipleship of the mind.

I have found this approach highly constructive in my own teaching, preaching, and writing, especially related to The Communication and Worldviews Programme at NLA University College (Gimlekollen Campus, Kristiansand, Norway) since 2001. This includes exploring the following foundational statements about the Christian faith in open dialogue with students (and other young Christians outside the classroom): (1) Every worldview, including the secular ones, is based on faith commitments. Therefore, we need to challenge the popular view which claims that secular worldviews are based on science and facts, whereas the Christian worldview is supposed to be based on faith and feelings. (2) Many secular worldviews (such as naturalism and secular humanism) misinterpret science, overestimate human reason, and underestimate morality, truth, and religiosity. (3) Our human search for ultimate meaning, purpose and dignity can only be fulfilled partially through non-Christian worldviews, whereas it is only the Christian faith that provides a comprehensive fulfilment. (4) There are many good arguments for the credibility of the Christian faith, both for the belief in God as the Creator and in Jesus Christ as the unique Saviour and the risen Lord. (5) The central Christian truth claims about Jesus Christ invite us to respond to Him with personal trust, thus challenging our fundamental belief and behaviour.

The external apologetic strategy emerges out of Paul's insightful and provocative

comment in Rom. 1:18, where he describes the heart of all unbelief as a way of “suppressing the truth”. Os Guinness explains:

As such, unbelief cannot be other than partly true and partly false, though each unbeliever will have responded to the tension by taking it in either of two directions. Some, usually the few, will have been more consistent in rejecting God, and therefore ended further from God and his full reality. Others, usually the majority, will have been less consistent in rejecting God, and therefore ended closer to God’s reality.²⁹

This biblical insight led Christian authors such as G. K. Chesterton³⁰ and Francis A. Schaeffer³⁰ to develop the broadly negative apologetic strategy of ‘table-turning’:

This strategy turns on the fact that all arguments cut both ways. It therefore proceeds by taking people seriously in terms of what they say they believe and disbelieve, and then pushing them toward the consequences of their unbelief. The strategy assumes that if the Christian faith is true, their unbelief is not finally true, and they cannot fully be true to it. At some point the falseness shows through, and at that moment they will experience extreme cognitive dissonance, so that it is no longer in their best interest to continue to persist in believing what they believed until then. When they reach this point, they are facing up to their dilemma, and they will be open to rethinking their position in a profound way.³²

This apologetic strategy illustrates that cognitive dissonance may represent a significant missiological opportunity in pre-evangelism and evangelism, in the context of meaningful relationships with non-Christian family, friends, colleagues

and neighbours. Peter S. Williams expounds on this in the setting of Western Europe:

I agree that apologists should try to use common ground to lead the non-Christian into a discovery of cognitive dissonance inherent within their non-Christian worldview, revealing a felt need to which the Christian worldview can be addressed as a to-be-desired intellectual and existential resolution. However, to follow this advice one must be able to compare and contrast the Christian worldview with relevant non-Christian worldviews (so that one can build upon commonalities whilst critiquing differences).³³

Thus, the Christian community needs to provide alternative Christian viewpoints on all areas of life and particularly on those that a given culture considers crucial. “This is not only needed to provide plausibility for the Christian worldview for non-Christians but also for Christians, who otherwise live in a continual tension of what the sociologists call ‘cognitive dissonance’.”³⁴

In other words, as we have seen above, there is dual need among confessing Christians for an external and an internal apologetic strategy.

Concluding reflections

This article has explored cognitive dissonance as a missiological challenge and opportunity in predominantly secular settings, from an evangelical perspective and with a specific focus on Western Europe.

I have presented a threefold argument: (a) The challenging experience of cognitive dissonance is due to key cultural factors such as secular paradigms in the academy and the media, the increasing presence of worldview pluralism, and the marginalization of Christian faith and practice;

(b) An appropriate Christian response to this challenge includes upholding key biblical beliefs, expanding the knowledge of Christian faith and alternative world-views, and offering broad and credible justifications of fundamental Christian truth claims; (c) Confessing Christians may use cognitive dissonance internally and externally as a constructive and creative way of challenging alternative world-views.

The emphasis has been on the role of apologetics in Christian mission in such secularized contexts. This is not because apologetics (*apologia*) is more important

than other key missional tasks, such as kerygma (*preaching*), martyria (*witness*), didache (*teaching*), and diakonia (*service*). The reason, however, is that apologetics seems to have been a largely neglected task within many Western European churches.

Thus, there is a need to reclaim biblical foundations and models of apologetics, to learn from historic and contemporary apologetic mentors, and to build a constructive apologetic culture inside Christian churches, fellowships, and ministries, in order to equip for holistic disciple making and mission.³⁵

Notes

1. This article was previously published in Knud Jørgensen et al (eds.) *Mission in Secularised Contexts of Europe: Contemporary Narratives and Experiences*. Oxford: Regnum Books, 2018 [Regnum Studies in Mission]. pp. 137-149. Reprinted with permission, and in honour of Knud Jørgensen (1942-2018). This article is part of a wider project, where I am exploring Christian mission as the three-dimensional global task of “bearing witness to Jesus Christ and all his teaching – in every nation, in every sphere of society, and in the realm of ideas” (*The Cape Town Commitment*, ‘Foreword’, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment#foreword>). The emphasis here is on the third dimension (i.e. “in the realm of ideas”) in the Western European context. See further L. Dahle, ‘Mission in 3D: A Key Lausanne III Theme’, in M. S. Dahle, L. Dahle and K. Jørgensen (eds.), *The Lausanne Movement: A Range of Perspectives* (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), pp. 265-279.

2. John Lennox, *God and Stephen Hawking: Whose Design Is It Anyway?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2011), p. 68.

3. Lesslie Newbigin, ‘Culture of Modernity’, in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, ed. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), p. 98.

4. Michael W. Goheen, *Introducing Christian Mission Today: Scripture, History, and Issues* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 297-329.

5. Allen Yeh, *Polycentric Missiology: 21st-Century Mission from Everyone to Everywhere* (p. 84). (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition), pp. 83-84. “After [Gustavsson’s] presentation, the entire consultation (most of which represented the fruit of European missionary sending in past centuries) began to intercede for this once Christian continent that is now itself in need of pioneer missionary effort – a phenomenon being referred to as ‘reverse mission’. At the same time, many non-Western mission leaders remarked that the very trends which contributed to the decline of the church in Europe are beginning to affect their countries as well.” (David Taylor & Young Cho, ‘Tokyo 2010: Analysis and Reflection on the Global Missions Consultation’, in Kirsteen Kim & Andrew Anderson (eds.) *Edinburgh 2010. Mission Today and Tomorrow* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), 307.)

6. Stefan Gustavsson, *Trenger troen forsvares? En programerklæring for kristen apologetikk* (Oslo: Lunde Forlag, 2016); my translated summary of Gustavsson’s argument on pp. 26-27.

7. Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Vol. 2. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1962), 18.

8. Morvan, Camille. *An Analysis of Leon Festinger’s A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (London: Routledge / The Macat Library), 36-37 [Kindle Edition]

9. Morvan, *An Analysis*, 61.

10. Sire, James W. *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015; 2nd ed.), 141. [Kindle Edition]

11. Karin Kittelmann Flenser, *Religious Education in Contemporary Pluralistic Sweden*. PhD thesis. University of Gothenburg, 2015, 6.

https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/40808/1/gupea_2077_40808_1.pdf [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]

12. Gustavsson, *Trenger troen forsvares?*, 24-25. [My translated summary.] It should be added that such secular paradigms often contain elements of truth, which may be (re)discovered when the reductionist claims are relativized. This is what Peter Berger famously called «the relativizing of the relativizers»; see his *A Rumor of Angels* (New York: Doubleday / Integrated Media, 1970), p. 42ff.

13. "Enlightenment thinking pushed Christian believers toward the untenable position of one foot in the rowboat of their Christian worldview, and the other foot in a rowboat of their education which was shaped by Enlightenment ideas – with the two being slowly pulled apart. In this situation, believers felt a cognitive dissonance between the Enlightenment and Christian worldviews." (Greg Pritchard, 'A Global Vision of the Gospel (III)', www.EvangelicalFocus.com 4th Feb. 2015) [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
14. See further Greg Pritchard, 'A Global Vision of the Gospel (II)', www.EvangelicalFocus.com 28th Jan. 2015. [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
15. Keller, Timothy. *Making Sense of God: An Invitation to the Skeptical* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2016), 5. [Kindle Edition]
16. Key popular examples from the fascinating world of television series include *Big Bang Theory* (with its dominant scientism), *Modern Family* (with its plurality of family norms and lifestyles), and *Downton Abbey* (with its clear absence of Christian faith and practices).
17. Darrow Miller, «Why Do Movies Influence Youth More Than the Bible?», Aug. 23rd 2012 .
<http://darrowsmillerandfriends.com/2012/08/23/christian-worldview-and-the-arts/> [Accessed 23rd Feb 2018.]
18. Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2001), 273.
19. A more comprehensive treatment of the marginalization of Christian faith and practice in Western Europe includes both the legal, the attitudinal, the plausibility and the credibility levels. See further Lars Dahle, 'Western Europe: Marginalization of Christians through Secularization', in Hans Aage Gravaas et al. *Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2015), 382-394.
20. Dahle, 'Western Europe', 388.
21. The global influence of Western secular worldviews through the academy and the media as key missional challenges will be explored in depth in future contributions.
22. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 273.
23. See further <https://feuerreports.wordpress.com/about/>. [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
24. See further www.johnlennox.org, www.reasonablefaith.org, www.rzim.org, www.theocca.org, www.euroleadership.org, and www.veritaskonferansen.no. [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
For an illuminating case study, see Katelyn Beaty, 'Oxford's Unapologetic Female Apologist', *Christianity Today*, April 2015.
25. In Norwegian: "Hvorfor akkurat Jesus?». This research project was funded by the national Christian faith education reform in Norway.
26. See further <https://www.damaris.no/hvorfor-akkurat-jesus/>. [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
27. Bjørn Hinderaker, 'En helhetlig religionspedagogisk tilnærming til sannhetsspørsmålet. Sluttrapport fra tro-sopp læringsprosjektet *Hvorfor akkurat Jesus?*', *Theofilos* 8.2 (December, 2016), 277-288.
28. Luciano Cid, "In the world, but not of the world. Cognitive dissonance and altering student perspectives." *The Inspired Home Educator. A Biola Youth Academics Blog*. Feb 6th 2017.
<http://youth.biola.edu/blog/in-the-world-but-not-of-the-world-cognitive-dissonance-and-altering-student-perspectives/>. [Accessed 23rd Feb 2018.]
29. Os Guinness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (p. 112) (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 112. [Kindle Edition]
30. G. K. Chesterton, *Manalive* (Los Angeles: Indo-European, 2009), 73-78.
31. Schaeffer expressed this in the following way: "The more logical a non-Christian is to his own presuppositions, the further he is from the real world; and the nearer he is to the real world, the more illogical he is to his presuppositions." (*The God Who Is There* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1970), 122.)
32. Guinness, *Fool's Talk*, 109. It should be mentioned that Guinness underlines that the negative strategy of 'turning the tables' need to be complemented by the positive strategy of 'triggering the signals'. This latter phrase refers to what Peter Berger called 'signals of transcendence', i.e. "phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our 'natural' reality but that appear to point beyond that reality" (*A Rumor of Angels*, 53). Such experiences beep like a signal, impelling us to transcend our present awareness and think more deeply, widely, and seriously.
33. Peter S. Williams, "Apologetics in 3D" *Bethinking.org*
<https://www.bethinking.org/apologetics/apologetics-in-3d> [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]
34. Benno van den Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue* (London: T&T Clark / Continuum UK, 2011), 187. [Kindle Edition]
35. See further Lars Dahle, 'Truth, Christian Mission, and Apologetics: A Response and A Proposal', *Norwegian Journal of Missiology* 67.1 (March, 2013), 21-38.
http://www.egede.no/sites/default/files/dokumenter/pdf/NTM_2013_1_Dahle.pdf [Accessed 23rd Feb. 2018.]