



# Lawyers' Christian Fellowship Newsletter

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JULY 2004

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## Globalisation and its Competing Gospels



*Dr Os Guinness, best known as the author of the Dust of Death (1975), The Call (1998) and Time for Truth (2000), is an Englishman based in the United States where he is a fellow of the Trinity Forum. Recently he addressed a special morning prayer breakfast of the UK LCF. The following is a summary of that address prepared by John Dimos and originally published in the UK LCF Newsletter.*

The London Committee of the LCF was delighted to host Dr. Os Guinness at a special morning prayer breakfast on 28 March. Dr. Guinness, a noted apologist presently living in the United States, gave a talk on "Globalisation and its Competing Gospels." He gave us five propositions to consider after briefly discussing the difference between the US and Europe in church attendance, and how the Christian faith is growing in many parts of the world, but losing influence in Europe.

The first proposition Dr. Guinness offered for discussion is that there are three dimensions to globalisation. The first dimension, so prominent that many people consider it to be globalisation itself, is market capitalism. With tariffs lowered and boundaries erased, you can see free market capitalism sweeping everywhere. The second dimension is democracy, also expanding around the world. And the third dimension is cultural or free market choices. Even in a country like Iran, where they say the West is the "Great Satan," the most watched television program is "Baywatch," a typical example of a sort of cultural imperialism. These dimensions do not go uniformly around the world, but go to different cultures in different ways

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Justice David Lloyd QC—Recent developments in the Land & Environment Court;  
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Justice Ken Handley QC —Recent developments in res judicata;  
Dean Philip Jensen—9/11 and recent pressures on Church/State relations (inc lunch)  
Justice Peter Young QC—Recent developments in equity;  
Hon M Rolfe QC— Recent developments in Commercial Arbitration;  
Justice Bryson—Recurring issues in the Court of Appeal.

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because of a country's cultural values. But increasingly, according to Dr. Guinness, we are moving into a world that is rapidly globalising in every part in many ways that our grandparents would hardly recognize.

The second proposition put forward is that there are three competing gospels of globalisation openly competing with the Christian faith, which they see as behind the West. Dr. Guinness suggested that while there are 1,001 or more faiths in the world, there are three main families of faiths. The first is the Eastern, including Hinduism, Buddhism and a vast number of varieties of the new age movement, all of which go back to an impersonal growth of being and all their understanding of humanness and life flowing out of that. The second family of faiths is the secularist, including atheists, agnostics, humanists and naturalists. Enormous variety in this family, but they all go back to the same vision of human life coming from chance. The third great family of faiths is the Biblical. Obviously, in Western history that has been principally Judaism and Christianity, but we are all aware today of the significance in the world of the third great religion of the Book, Islam. Each of these Abrahamic faiths, with their tremendous differences, has an understanding that behind the world is a personal, infinite God, and all have conceptions of life that flow out of that understanding of who God is. If you look at globalisation today, each of the three families above has one faith that is competing with the Christian faith.

Buddhism, not Hinduism, is the faith from the Eastern family of faiths that is competing with Christianity today. Hinduism is older and extremely sophisticated, but territorially tied to India and has an extraordinary amount of baggage, such as the caste system or old practices like the burning of widows. Buddhism does not usually appeal to working class people, but much more to upper middle class people and certainly to the elites. What is challenging to Buddhism is that our modern world is essentially world affirming; whereas, Buddhism classically is world denying, withdrawing, renouncing and detaching oneself. Therefore, there is an attempt to reformulate Buddhism today; so reincarnation, for example, instead of being a matter of fatalism and almost weary resignation, becomes a kind of spirituality for those who want a second chance.

The second faith competing with Christianity today, but coming from the second family, is secularism itself, which is immensely important, because secularism has always only appealed to the few, the

academic and cultural elites. For all its bravery and bleakness, secularism has to be taken significantly because it is the faith of most of the educated and the elite all around the world. The Christian faith lost the intellectuals at the end of the 19th century in Europe, and today there is no significant impact and influence of the Christian faith among the intellectual elites of the Western world.

The candidate from the Biblical family of faiths that is the open rival to the Christian faith is Islam, which has been recently the ideology of reaction to the modern world, as we know only too well in the extremist form. But the challenge, according to Dr. Guinness, is to see if they can have an Islamic reformation, so that some of their leading moderate thinkers take the lead in a direction very different from the Islamists like Osama bin Laden.



Dr. Guinness then looked at three blind spots or flaws of the secularist vision as his third proposition for discussion, since the secularists are the leading champions at the moment to lead globalisation. The first blind spot is that very few secularists understand the dislocations of globalisation. Here we are at the beginning of the 21st century in Europe, where forces like capitalism and democracy bring us nothing but freedom and prosperity. But we only need to think how it hit the UK from the novels of Charles Dickens. The first stages of

industrial revolution have the effect of a savage dislocation of traditional ways of living; huge sprawling slums and massive oppression and injustice.

The second great blind spot of secularism is toward the contradictions within globalisation itself. In the West, capitalism and democracy go hand in hand, but often what happens outside the West, is that capitalism comes in and cultures whose values favour capitalism flourish and make unimaginable fortunes very fast. For example, Dr. Guinness mentioned the Chinese throughout Asia, where there is a huge native majority, whose cultures don't favour capitalism, staying where they are. But you also see tiny majorities, say the Chinese in the Philippines, with vast fortunes and the native peoples with nothing. And not surprisingly, the result is not increased justice and increased equal opportunity; it is resentment, suspicion, violence and terrorism.

The third blind spot is simply the blind spot to religion itself. Human beings have a deep need for meaning and belonging, and secularists, in the arrogance of their position, often totally misunderstand the deeply important place religion in individual and cultural life has, as well as the importance

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of faith in civilisation.

The fourth proposition concerns three broad ways of relating all diversity of faiths in the public square. Dr. Guinness argued that the old ways of arguing faith in public life have to be re-examined under the challenge of extreme diversity and pluralism. The traditional approach has been what is called the notion of the "sacred public square." Wherein, whatever the region of the world, its local faith is given an established or preferred position. Now, increasingly, the political and intellectual and legal pressures of our modern world would say that situation that worked well in the past, is unjust and unworkable. The second broad option is what is called the "naked public square," which is the one that most Western countries are swinging towards. This view argues there should be a secular public square cleansed of all religion. This view is equally unjust and unworkable, however, because most human beings are religious and want to relate their faith to whatever they do in public life. This is unwittingly secularism smuggled in through the back door. In Europe, leaders talk of neutrality, but what it means in practice is that secularists have the dominant hand. and people of all the religious faiths are reduced to second-class citizens in terms of relating their faith to public life.

The third broad conception of the public square in a globalised world is what Dr. Guinness calls a "civil public square;" a public square, in which people of any and all faiths, including secularism, are free to enter and engage public life on the basis of their faith. According to Dr. Guinness, across the world Christians are pretty much divided over which of those is right. In many countries in Europe many Christians are still passionately defending the sacred public square. Others have actually contributed unwittingly towards the heavy drift and movement towards the naked public square. He argues for the third one, which isn't yet anywhere, saying "But I believe unless we open such a hole in the ice, we will find public life soon frozen over."

Finally, the fifth proposition is acknowledging three great contributions of the Christian faith to the West. Many people ignore the incredible contributions of the Christian faith to the West, only remembering the Crusades or the Inquisition. It is not too much to say the Jewish and Christian ideas are the single strongest set of ideas that have made the West the West. The first contribution is the one often overlooked, but worth putting on the map: the fact that most people over the last 200 years have understood themselves and their lives from the point of view of faith in Christ. The second is that the Christian faith is behind all of the greatest appealing features of the West. Our Western culture is very distinctive for its long tradition of giving and caring and reforming.

Even atheist historians acknowledge the rise of hospitals, orphanages and reform movements, from the banning of gladiatorial games and infanticide, to the abolition of slavery. One cannot find any of that culture in Buddhism or Hinduism nor any of the other civilizations or cultures in the world. The Christian faith is linked to the most vital institutions in the West, such as universities, capitalism, democracy and the rise of science and human rights. In every single case, they were directly or indirectly linked with the Christian faith, many of them to the Reformation. Christian movements accomplishing these were the conversion of the Roman Empire, a staggering achievement, and the conversion of the Barbarian Empire, or what has been called the "gentling of the European people."

Dr. Guinness argues the third contribution has been the sending of missionaries around the world, but now what is needed is a mission today to the West, as the Christian church has lost three fourths of the West. If you look at the US and Europe, and then at leaders and ordinary people, you see the church has lost the whole of Europe. There are only two countries in Europe where Christians are more than a practicing minority, and one of those, Ireland, is rapidly disappearing. There is no Protestant country, only Poland. And in the US, the church has lost the leadership of the US. So there is only one quadrant of the West in which the church is strong, ordinary people in the US.

In concluding his talk, Dr. Guinness stated that the three deepest questions he hears raised in geopolitical discussions today, all have a strategic dimension, but also a spiritual dimension. The first decisive question for the world in the 21st century is whether Islam will modernize peacefully. Not inconceivable, but an extraordinary challenge for them and for us. The second great question for the 21st century is which faith will prevail in China. It is only a matter of when Marxism disappears forever. But will China move toward National Socialism, be taken over by reformulated Buddhism or will China in twenty or thirty years time be a majority Christian country? The third question is whether the West will recover its relations to its roots? The real problem today is not the West vs. the rest, but the West vs. itself, as the West has severed its relationship with its roots. If you ask historians can a great civilisation survive once it has severed its roots, the answer clearly is no. The challenge given by Dr. Guinness to Christian lawyers is to make our faith something that is vital and influential, changing the direction in which the UK and Europe are heading.

Originally published in *The Christian Lawyer* Winter 2003 written by John Dimos

## MAKING HEADLINES

It is good to see lawyers making the headlines for the right reasons. Peter Kell's chairman of partners at Kell's Lawyers has agreed to become the first lay CEO of Anglicare Sydney Diocese's social welfare arm. Anglicare assists more than 400,000 people each year and employs approximately 1200 staff and co-ordinates more than 2500 volunteers.

The Illawarra Mercury said "Mr Kell's announcement yesterday surprised staff and colleagues, but many conceded his strong faith and commitment to the church meant he could not have said no to the higher calling".

Peter Kells stated "The opportunity to use some of the skills I have learned in my current role, as well as my understanding of the Diocese and its mission in fulltime service in an organisation like Anglicare really excites me. Anglicare is an excellent provider of welfare services, and plays such an important part in our community. My hope is to see even closer links forged between Anglicare and the parishes of the diocese, as it clearly promotes the gospel in word and deed".



## FOR YOUR LISTENING PLEASURE LCF UK Talks



If you missed Dr Michael Schluter last year when he visited Sydney, or you enjoyed his talk so much you want to hear more, then you can listen online to the talks he gave at last year's UK LCF Conference. The talk are available at <http://www.lawcf.org/audio.php> and you can even download them to an MP3 player or if you have the technology download, convert and burn them to an audio CD.

The topics and speakers from last year's conference that are available online are:

Paul Conrathe— Prayer of Deborah (Judges 5)

Andrea Williams—UK Law challenges and opportunities

John Scriven—Vision for the LCF

Mark Mullins—What manner of people? (2 Peter 3)

Michael Schluter:  
Christian Social Reform;  
Social Vision and the Christian Lawyers.

"See what love the Father has given us,



that we should be called children of God."

1 John 3:1

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### Membership Renewal for 2004

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