

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Negotiating Religious Voices in Public Places

1. Case Study #1: (Not) Coming to a Cinema near you

Why did Digital Media Cinema withdraw the Church of England's #JustPray ad in November 2015?

A discomfort around people 'doing God' in public?

A deficit of religious literacy?

Would it even be possible to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' religion?

2. A world troubled by religion

Case Study #2: Charlie, qui est-il?

Less innocuous instances of religion in the public square – Charlie Hebdo one year on

3. The Perfect Storm: decline, mutation, resurgence, resistance

The unprecedented co-existence of:

- *Resurgent religion*
- *Decline of traditional patterns of believing and belonging (e.g. 'SBNR')*
- *Enduring resistance to forms of religious activity in public*

Case Study #3: Godless Congregations

4. Learning to 'Speak Christian' in a world troubled by religion

A culture that is both more sceptical and more pluralist, and yet in some ways more receptive to the language of values, will require a more explicit level of self-justification on the part of people of faith.

Modern apologetics has a tendency to focus on propositional argument as prelude to personal conversion. Historically, however, apologetics is more about dialogue, more about 'persuasion' than 'proof'.

5. An 'Apologetics of Presence'

'all of us are ambassadors for Christ, making his appeal through us. We are petitioning the world on Christ's behalf: know you have been reconciled to God'. (2 Cor 5:20)

- *Participation in mission Dei*
- *Bearing witness to 'God-in-the-world, to the world'.*
- *Creating spaces of dialogue and exchange – but as a gesture of solidarity rather than proselytization*

6. Some further reading

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#JustPray [<http://www.justpray.uk/>] – an initiative of the Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England; see also YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlUXh4mx4g>
Sunday Assembly [www.sundayassembly.com] The Guardian podcast, ‘The godless church and the atheists taking the US by storm’ [online] 30 September 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1t-WEk0D0k>