FoRB as a call to mission

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Abstract

This paper argues for a confluence between the principles of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), which are enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the missional impulse which contributed to its formation. Drawing from a study of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, I offer three arguments for Christian engagement in FoRB. First, FoRB is consistent with ideas found in early Christian reflection and mission. Second, as a call to mission FoRB is reflected in two theological ideas: the *imago dei* and Christian universalism. Third, engagement in FoRB creates the potential for dialogical partnerships with people of all faiths and none.

Keywords FoRB, UDHR, image of God, mission of God, kingdom of God, CSW.

1. What is FoRB?

Many Christians, in particular evangelicals, have appeared inclined to approach the 'secular' instruments of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), including its provisions for the protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), with foreboding. FoRB (United Nations 1948) is here presented as the right to hold a belief or to change one's religion without coercion. It is to be understood as religious freedom for people of all faiths and none. This principle was further enunciated in subsequent human rights instruments between 1966 and 1981.[2]

Sceptical Christians view the UDHR's articulation of FoRB as incongruous because supporting it entails defending a non-Christian's religious freedom, which seems antithetical to evangelism or to fulfilling God's mission. Where some Chris-

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[2] For example, in July 1964 the CCIA presented a statement to the Thirty-Seventh Session of ECOSOC urging that Article 18 be retained in the 1966 Covenant and that freedom of religion or belief should include atheists. The fact that the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) retained Article 18 and that Article 4.2 of the ICCPR stipulates 'non-derogation' from Article 18 was a recognition that FoRB was regarded as a cornerstone of all human freedoms and a testament to the Christian engagement which went beyond 1948 to include the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief in 1981.

tians ostensibly adopt the language of FoRB, it is not necessarily reflected in a clear commitment to people of all faiths or none.[3] Moreover, as Jonathan Chaplin (2008:17) suggests, where human rights claims confront religious freedom, there seems to be an assumption within secular human rights circles that the latter is expected to capitulate.[4] Consequently, where Christian praxis has ventured into this precarious terrain, it has been with considerable caution rather than with theological certainty. One such example was Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), a UK based human rights ministry specialising in FoRB (Edwards 2019).

2. CSW as a case study

CSW offers a helpful model for exploring Christian engagement in FoRB. My ethnography study, which took place between 2015 and 2017, provided a portrait of the organisation's understanding of its existential journey and highlighted its own tensions between its evangelical convictions and its praxis.

As an international agency "working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice" (CSW n.d.a.), CSW was anxious to make its evangelical identity cohere with its intuitive commitment to FoRB. A case study of CSW's unique work as an evangelical human rights agency provides insight into the wider issues surrounding Christian support of FoRB.

2.1 Missional ambiguity

The perception of FoRB as a missional enterprise, was a key feature in the organisation's self-perception. Unambiguously, CSW's mission strictly excluded proselytising. The interview process included seventeen CSW staff, five church leaders and seven individuals who had experienced some element of persecution. All interviewees agreed that Christian engagement in FoRB was consistent with their understanding of the mission of God. However, when measured against a qualifying question, "Does the church understand this?" it was evident that in their mind, the church did not share this belief. As one respondent suggested, the church was "afraid of FoRB."

Engagement in FoRB unveiled layers of organisational ambiguities. These ranged from the meaning of 'mission' to concerns about the loss of the charity's Christian

[3] For example, in an APPGFORB report, '2017 World Watch List Launched in Parliament: Persecution Increasing' (11 January 2017). Available at: http://bit.ly/2Ln286m. Open Doors integrated its advocacy with bodies such as All Parliamentary Party Group on FoRB (APPG) and the FCO whilst promoting an almost exclusive focus on persecuted Christians.

[4] The case against Asher, a Christian Bakers in Northern Ireland is one such example. BBC News, '"Gay Cake" Row in Northern Ireland: Q&A' (10 October 2018). Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-32065233.

identity and a vocabulary which used 'religious freedom', 'human rights' and FoRB interchangeably. Critically, there was a recognition that whilst the board historically avoided the language of FoRB, the staff embraced it as the basis for its praxis.

2.2 Reactions to persecution

Given that FoRB is concerned with marginalisation and suffering on the basis of belief, the study briefly considered responses to the relationship between persecution and church growth. CSW's professional staff and church leaders struggled with the idea that persecution could lead to church growth. Both groups suggested that whilst persecution was unacceptable, it may in some instances actually contribute to church growth. Conversely, respondents with personal experience of persecution were far less ambiguous about the symbiotic relationship between the two.

Moreover, critical questions were raised in relation to Christian advocacy on behalf of those whose worldview was diametrically opposed to or hostile to the Christian faith. One respondent identified this tension: "When we talk about the religious persecution of Christians, we often whip out Bible verses and talk about it like a spiritual attack on the church. But then we work for a Muslim and we don't." This raises an important question: how far can Christians authentically defend a faith beyond their lived reality and religious vocabulary?

Such questions emerging from the study were illustrative of the tensions involved in FoRB. They also revealed the theological vacuum in which CSW operated.

3. Theological inhibitions related to FoRB

CSW's equivocations, despite its experience as an espoused practitioner in FoRB, had to do with an inadequate theological narrative which the charity previously identified. The chasm between its emerging praxis and its profession of faith was largely the result of an unformed theological basis for its intuitive response to the human rights agenda.

Although there is a wealth of theological material on religious freedom issues generally (Johnson 2016), arguments specific to FoRB as a missional paradigm have not been extensive. Christian institutions such as the Religious Freedom Institute with considerable global expertise in religious freedom have given only scant attention to a theology of FoRB. Andrew Walker's unpublished evangelical perspective on religious freedom (2018) made no reference to human rights. More recently, the Stefanus Alliance (Brown, Storaker and Winther 2017) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), a founding influence in the UDHR, have provided brief biblical studies supporting FoRB (World Council of Churches n.d.).

Christian engagement in human rights has not received universal approbation. Ethna Regan (2010:63-76) identifies Stanley Hauerwas, Oliver O'Donovan and

John Millbank as scholars who approach human rights language with "theological disdain". Even where Christians have developed considerable expertise in advocacy, practitioners such as Ronald Boyd-MacMillan (2006:100) doubt the efficacy of human rights instruments.

4. An embryology of FoRB ideas

What follows cannot be described as a systematic theology on FoRB. However, it points to elements of earlier Christian thinking that could be described as 'forb-like'. These themes emerged in the earliest Christian apologists and also found important resonances in the drafting process of the UDHR.

First, the right to worship free from coercion was a cornerstone of early Christian apologist-missionaries such as Tertullian and Lactantius. Free worship, Tertullian claimed, was a human right (*humani iuris*) and a privilege of nature (*naturalis potestatis*). It was therefore "no part of religion to compel religion to which free-will and not force should lead us" (Tertullian 1885:105-106). Lactantius, who evidently wielded influence in the imperial household and brought critical analysis to ideas about justice (O'Donovan and O'Donovan 1999:46-47), was equally vociferous on this issue.

What is noteworthy about this early Christian thinking is that Christian freedoms were being defended along with all religious freedoms. For example, Kahlos (2009:9) suggests that Lactantius' approach "resembles modern ideas of tolerance in which it is usually understood that, despite the disapproval of the religious, moral or political views of other people, one does not take action against them."

Second, the concept of natural law, to which Tertullian alluded, would later become pivotal in shaping an enduring Christian anthropology. The catholicity of natural law extended from the work of Thomas Aquinas, through the missionary work of thinkers like Bartolomé de las Casas, to John Locke and Jacques Maritain who described natural law as "an order or a disposition which human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act in order to attune itself to the necessary ends of the human being" (1944:35).

In Thomas' thinking, the image of God makes us "fit for God", for natural law is "nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light … and the rational creature's participation of the eternal law" (ST 1-II.91.2). Because God's wisdom rules over creation (ST 1-II.91.1 and ST 1-II.93), everyone has a "natural inclination to know the truth about God, and … avoid offending those among whom one has to live" (ST 1-II.94.2).

These ideas governed the development of Christian thinking and were formative in las Casas' radical mission among the Peruvian Indians, which championed their right to worship free from the juridical power of Spain and contrary to Catholic

teaching. As Roger Ruston (2004:85) suggests, las Casas' missiology was premised on the image of God in which the Indians and conquistadores shared alike.

As a Christian philosopher, Locke, whose ideas played a pivotal role in the American revolution and the development of rationalism, was equally indebted to the idea of the *imago dei*. Religious and civil toleration, he claimed, was therefore owed to "the Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Arminians, Quakers and including pagans, Mahomedtan, and Jew" who were all included in "the commonwealth" (Locke 2005:150).

There is insufficient space here to expand on the development of Christian reflection which flowed into advocacy for human rights and religious freedom for all. These earlier protagonists for religious freedom did not create perfect political crucibles in which FoRB was forged. Indeed, their designs created a complex alloy of freedom of conscience in tension with public consensus and stability.

5. Jacques Maritain, 'personalism' and human dignity

As a Thomist who lived and taught in America during the post-war years, Maritain contributed to the development of ideas which arguably had a direct impact in including the concept of dignity in the wording of the UDHR. Based on natural law, two principal ideas were critical in shaping the work of drafters such as Charles Malik: personalism, as differentiated from individualism, and a correlated belief in human dignity. Maritain's personalism reacted to individualism as much as it did to the totalitarian power of the state. This is because each person has a direct relationship with the Trinity so that "it is in society with God" that we possess the common good (Maritain 1946:22). Each "concrete person" was entitled, therefore, to full independence "by the economic guarantees of work and property, political rights, civil virtues, and the cultivation of the mind" (Maritain 1944:27). Personalism and dignity were coterminous ideas in which "the transcendent dignity of our human person was made manifest" (Maritain 1944:41).

Ruston states that Maritain's approach to human rights began "not from the sovereign individual, but with the social person made in God's image, endowed with reason and freedom of choice" (2004:11). In Song's view, Maritain's religious freedom set a precedent for other liberties (1997:131).

Allied to this profound concept of personalism, the Christian understanding of dignity had a discernible influence on the contested process of the UDHR. Richard Moyn (2015:2) states that ideas of dignity which gained prominence during the French revolution later accelerated in 1937 with Pope Pius XI's *Divini Redemptoris* and the introduction of the Irish Constitution, culminating with Maritain and the 1942 Christmas Message of Pope Pius XII.

The association between ideas of personalism and dignity should not be understated. First, it was clear that Christian UDHR drafters such as René Cassin and Charles Malik

championed the ideas of human dignity which were missing from earlier drafts of the document but which eventually became included in the preamble and Article 1 of the UDHR.[5] Indeed, the relationship between Christian reflection and human dignity has been widely acknowledged (Moltmann 1984; Moltmann 1999; Glendon 2013; Hollenbach 1979; Spencer 2016). Second, these ideas put individual autonomy above the overbearing power of the state so that, at least in the spirit of the UDHR, the responsibility to define and protect human rights was not determined by the political foibles of statism.

6. Missional impulse

Arguably, the apologetic response to religious freedom led by thinkers such as Tertullian and Lactantius may be understood as a part of a missional argument for freedom of conscience. This missional imperative became even more pronounced in the later work of Catholic missionaries such as Francisco de Vitoria[6] and las Casas.

The list of Christian thinkers who stressed religious freedom for all also includes Roger Williams. Exiled from England, Williams, who founded the American colony of Rhode Island, championed the religious freedom of the Indian community in Massachusetts. In opposition to British imperialism Williams contended for the freedom of "Jewish, Turkish or anti-Christian conscience" because, freedom was due "to all men in all nations and countries" (2001[1644]:3).

No single or unbroken influence can be traced from these earlier missionaries and thinkers to the specific statements of the UDHR. However, through these ideas of human dignity and personalism, an anthropology premised on the image of God asserted that the individual superseded the state. This idea which created the foundation for religious and civic freedom remains the basis on which religious freedom for all is monitored today. In addition, Christian reflection and activism clearly demonstrated that Christian missionaries saw human rights as a critical instrument for all religious freedoms and actively campaigned for it.

In 1942, for example, the International Missionary Council of North America and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ commissioned a study of human rights under the Joint Commission on Religious Freedom which resulted in *Religious Freedom*, an influential study of freedom of choice (Bates 1945). Across Europe and the US, missionary movements regarded human rights as integral to their

[5] On 12 April 1944 the US Joint Committee on Religious Liberty issued a statement on Religious Liberty in which human dignity was located in the image of God, (WCC and CCIA Archives, Box: 428.3.01 1948-1964). In the first draft Charles Malik argued that there was insufficient reference to dignity in the preamble Commission on Human Rights 1947a:4). Subsequently, the chair, Mrs Roosevelt and Mr Chang the China representative both agreed that dignity should be included in the Art 1. (Commission on Human Rights 1947b:2).

[6] Vitoria (AD 1483-1546) also applied Thomist reflection to his missionary work during the volatile period of Spanish expansionism in Peru.

work (Nurser 2005:20). As a key drafter and someone who believed in Christian conversion (Moyn 2015:149), Malik was fully convinced that the Church had a duty to set the pace on human rights (2000:137).

When the Commission on Human Rights held consultations on the wording of international human rights instruments, the government of the Netherlands argued powerfully that freedom of religion should include:

> the freedom of religious denominations or similar communities (including missionary societies) to organise themselves, to appoint, train and support their ministers to enjoy civil and civic rights, to perform educational, medical and other social work. (Commission on Human Rights 1948:21)

So pervasive was the missionary zeal that human rights became a part of the church's "missionary need" (Lindkvist 2017:66). Christian investment was so significant that Christian values could be construed as the ideological hegemony in the process (Moyn 2010:75). Indeed, this influence almost certainly contributed to the resistance of non-Christian delegates during the drafting process. Whilst Christians may disparage the pushback from non-Christian communities who "feared the machination of certain missions" (UN General Assembly 1948), it is well to recall that even some Western delegates feared the potential for proselytising (Lindkvist 2017:100-102).

It would be naïve to assume that these Christian activities were devoid of self-interest. What the records suggest, however, is that the development of human rights ideals was entirely consistent with a post-war Christian narrative in which peace, social harmony and economic security were highlighted. The combination of missional zeal and political activism provided an important feature of Christian engagement during a period in which totalitarianism was a potential threat to human freedoms as well as the proclamation of the Christian message. As in 1948, this tension remains at the heart of Christian engagement in FoRB today.

7. Theological Proposition

7.1 CSW's search for theology

CSW's ambiguity arose in part from an absence of a clear theological framework for their praxis. The interviews highlighted a cluster of theological themes which informed their intuitive praxis. Inevitably for a Christian organisation, Jesus or Christ emerged as a dominant focus. This was followed by other themes such as justice, the kingdom of God, suffering, the image of God and the 'good' Samaritan.[7] These important ideas were managed under two areas of study which I offer

[7] Luke 10:25-37. I have opted for 'good' Samaritan as this adjective was not included in Jesus' teaching

as an initial theological framework for praxis: a Christian anthropology shaped by the idea of the *imago dei* and a Christian universalism which complies with an evangelical ethos.

7.2 FoRB and the *imago dei*

A Christian anthropology is inconceivable without reference to Genesis 1:26, 27 as "the *locus classicus* of the doctrine of the *imago dei*" (Middleton 2005:15). Discussion of the 'image' and 'likeness' of God is saturated in hermeneutical complexities. For our purposes, it is sufficient to acknowledge a broad agreement that these texts provide the most foundational idea that all people share something of the nature of God.

On this basis, the Bible points further to a relationship with God in which human beings carry responsibilities of stewardship for the planet (Genesis 2:15-17). Brueggemann suggests that these three verses contain "a remarkable statement of anthropology" in which everyone stands before God in "vocation, permission and responsibility" (1982:46). The image-obligation commissions all humanity as God's emissaries who steward the world. As Christopher Wright advocates, the 'image' involves God "passing on to human hands a delegated form of God's own kingly authority over the whole of his creation" (2006:426).

Similarly, as Cain discovered, this status also makes us morally liable in human relationships (Genesis 4:1-16). To kill another human being is therefore to kill someone made in God's image, and every murder or persecution becomes "a direct attack on God's right and dominion" (Westermann 1984:468).

Far from being an afterthought, the *imago dei* is therefore the premise on which human dignity is built, for it proposes a radical anthropology which demands the well-being of other human beings.

7.3 Christian universalism and FoRB

By 'universalism' here, I do not refer to universal salvation, or the idea that all people will be saved. Rather, I mean the recognition that in the image of God, everyone belongs to a human commonwealth. This commonality exposes everyone to the ubiquitous nature of God's grace and protection held together in the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9:1-17) and the generosity of the kingdom of God.[8] Understood in this way, universalism acknowledges Christ's complete and unique death for human sin whilst recognizing that its scope extends beyond salvation from sin.

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and can distract us from the purpose of the story: the meaning of neighbour.

[8] David VanDrunen argues plausibly that a biblical defence of religious freedom is supported by the covenant with Noah rather than Romans 1:18-32 (VanDrunen 2012:135-146).

I can provide only a short overview here of the biblical foundation for this understanding of universalism. I will include a reference to Isaiah's Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), the idea of a fellowship of suffering, a fleeting reference to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-7:29) and some comments on the kingdom of justice.

Isaiah's Servant raises difficult hermeneutical challenges associated with the identity and nature of the Servant's suffering. Nevertheless, across the spectrum of opinions there is an agreement that this suffering should not be limited to a substitutionary death. As Motyer suggests, the Servant dealt with the problem of sin and shalom as a "rounded wholeness comprising personal fulfilment, harmonious society and a secure relationship with God" (1993:429).

The repercussion of an all-encompassing suffering raises the potential of a universal 'fellowship of suffering' in which all human oppression has been experienced in the complete suffering of the Servant. As the one who bore sin and carried sorrow, Christ understood as the Servant[9] creates a soteriological bond between atonement for human sin and redemption from oppression.

In his own poignant reflection on a fellowship of suffering, written during World War II, Wheeler Robinson suggests that God suffers "in us, with us and for us" (1940:6) and that such suffering should not be limited exclusively to Christians (1940:210). The suggestion is that the Servant offers a Christological narrative in which personal salvation and the non-atoning work of Christ coexist.

A universal ethic which legitimises FoRB as a call to mission is also implied by Jesus' expansive teaching including the 'good' Samaritan and the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46). Moreover, the Sermon on the Mount offers further evidence of a universal ethic of the kingdom of God.

There are good grounds for assuming that the Sermon on the Mount was addressed exclusively to Jesus' inner circle of disciples.[10] Indeed, the happiness of obedience may aptly be ascribed to Christians who suffer persecution for Christ, or the meek who will inherit the kingdom of heaven. However, the text also offers a broader application which suggests a universal ethic to which all human conduct should aspire. In this sermon, Jesus illustrates "God's dispositions toward human beings, both redeemed and unredeemed" (Mouw 2002:33). This is because the

[9] In relation to the Servant's identity, I argue that there is sufficient New Testament evidence to equate Isaiah's Servant with Jesus' sacrificial death. For example, Matthew 1:21; 20:28; 26:28; Mark 10:45; Acts 4:8-12; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38,39; 22:16; Romans 3:23-25; 4:25; 5:6-8; 10. 9; I Corinthians. 15:3, 14-17.

[10] For example, μακάριοι is overwhelmingly descriptive of those who have been identified as followers of Christ. (Matthew 11:6; 13:16; 21:9; 23:39; Mark 10:16; Luke 2:34; 6:20-22; 7:23; Romans 4:6; 4:8. I Peter 3:14).

passage presents us with two realities: demanding teachings exclusive to Jesus' followers, as well as universal ethical imperatives including murder, adultery and revenge which should be exemplified in the disciples, but which may also be applicable to all human relationships.

Clearly, the blessings of 'mercy' is most frequently associated with God's action toward people.[11] However, 'mercy' between individuals occurs sparingly in this text and again in Matthew 18:33 where Jesus' parable castigates a servant who failed to show mercy. Matthew is clear that ἔλεος includes secret gifts to the needy (Matt 6:2). Significantly, Jesus challenged pedantic worship that omits the greater matters of "justice, mercy and faithfulness" (Matt 23:23). It is precisely this hypocrisy that is highlighted in the story of the 'good' Samaritan who, as the outsider, demonstrated a quality of 'mercy' toward the stranger who had been robbed (Luke 10:37).

Although the Sermon on the Mount was addressed principally to the followers of Jesus, it also introduces a universal ethic open to all humanity. This is entirely consistent with our understanding of Old Testament ethics and its universal applicability to all humanity beyond the prescribed relationship with Israel.[12]

Such a reading of the Sermon on the Mount is consistent with the kingdom which Jesus taught and which was so central to CSW's intuitive framework. Again, there is insufficient scope here to explore this theme, but there is something of an expansive generosity in Jesus' kingdom of righteousness which exceeds the more prescriptive ecclesial reading of the Sermon.

In the kingdom, God rules justly[13] and delegates this order of justice to leaders.[14] According to Timothy Keller, this involves "more than just the punishment of wrongdoing. It also means to give people their rights" (2010:3), and "righteousness is inevitably 'social' because it is about relationships" (2010:10). As Christian ethicist Stephen Mott says, "the justice that characterises God's defence of the poor is the justice that is demanded of humanity" (1993:79). Beyond mere *mitigation*, "Justice is deliverance" (1993:80). In this kingdom Christians assert that there is no gap between soteriology and ethics (Padilla 2010:47).

Whilst an ecclesial reading may suggest a narrow hermeneutic of the Sermon, the kingdom of justice offers the perspective of a wider understanding of righteousness consistent with God's care for people of all faiths and none. Christian universalism exposes us, therefore, to joint activism with everyone.

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[11] See for example, Matthew 15:22; 17:15; 20:30; Luke 1:58; Romans 9:15-18.

[12] Amongst many examples one might cite the Ten Commandments, the Wisdom literature and numerous ethical injunctions to Belteshazzar (Daniel 4:24-27) and the Minor prophets, including celebrated passages such as Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24.

[13] Among the many references, Psalm 89:14; 97:2 may be noted.

[14] Genesis 49:16; Deuteronomy 16:2; Micah 3:1; Proverbs 13:34.

8. FoRB as dialogical partnership

8.1 Ethics and the language of human rights

With over 80 percent of the world's population living in countries with some degree of religious restrictions (Pew Research Center 2017), engagement in FoRB includes people of all beliefs and none. Beyond the narrow task of evangelism, the biblical ethic provides an entrée for a wider missional discourse about shalom. From this perspective, ignoring religious freedom or any element of human rights could be regarded as an abdication of our mission. With no global consensus on religious ethics, FoRB offers an agreed basis for discourse about persecution and the moral basis for disapproval where freedom of conscience has been violated.

Despite its deficiencies, human rights provide what Regan calls a "dialectical boundary discourse" about human flourishing (2010:2) and, in Hollenbach's helpful observation, provides "intellectual solidarity" with non-Christians committed to human flourishing (2002:154-155).

8.2 Partnership and the mission of God

A Christian anthropology premised on the *imago dei* inevitably includes everyone in the ministry of stewardship mentioned earlier. In addition, the fact that God demands just behaviour from everyone suggests that everyone is fully implicated in the mission of God. This also follows from an awareness that in the *missio dei* God is already at work in the world and the church has the privilege of participating (Bosch 1991:390).

God's mission liberates Christian praxis to work collaboratively with people of all faiths and none in ways which conform to the teachings of Jesus. In such settings, engagement in FoRB is entirely consistent with the call to mission.

My research made it clear that this was CSW's experience. Far from compromise, the quest for theological affirmation led the charity to reassert its identity. In its final rebrand which flowed from the research, CSW declared, "As Christians, we stand with everyone facing injustice because of their religion or belief. Everyone. Free to believe." (CSW n.d.b.)

Such a position is not without its considerable challenges. However, the research suggests that a firm Christian commitment to an evangelical position is reconcilable with a non-proselytising engagement in FoRB and that this praxis may be regarded as consistent with the mission of God.

9. Conclusion

Given the ambiguities associated with the politicisation and secularisation of human rights and human dignity, Christian engagement in FoRB will increasingly become

a challenging enterprise as human rights violations continue to increase.[15] In a climate where human rights and equality claims are increasingly at variance with faith claims, much caution and ambiguity remain.

The overall indication of this study is that human rights and FoRB owe an intellectual debt to Christian reflection. As has been shown, Christian engagement in this arena presents a number of important hurdles. I have argued, however, that Christian engagement in FoRB is not only in keeping with the mission of God but is also demanded by it.

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[15] The UN Sec Gen Antonio Guterres conceded this point in an interview with the BBC, Radio 4 Today on 3 May 2018.

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