

DRAFT

Transatlantic Christian Council – Events Report – September 10 – 12, 2014, Washington D.C.

This is a Report on three events in Washington D.C. from September 10 – 12, 2014, organized by the Transatlantic Christian Council (TCC) and co-sponsored by the Acton Institute, Alliance Defending Freedom, Cardus, CitizenLink, the Colson Center and Renaissance Partnership for Faith and Culture:

A. Series of Meetings (September 10 / morning September 11)

B. Conference: “Do Religious Freedom and Human Rights Clash in Today’s Democracies?” (afternoon September 11)

C. Round Table “Engaging as Christians in the Global Public Square: Development of an International Network of Christians in Think Tanks.” (all day September 12)

A YouTube film per speaker on the three events and the three different programs are on the website of TCC (www.tccouncil.org). Attached are also the three different event folders with hard copies of the programs and participant lists.

By organizing these events, in cooperation with strategic partners TCC gave shape to its mission statement. These days the focus was especially directed on one of TCC’s objectives which was religious freedom and the current challenges and threats around the theme. We were successful in bringing together Christians and conservatives involved in policy think tanks, law, business, journalism, politics, training and education, foundations and other institutions in the public square. Hereby the Transatlantic Christian Council functions as a transatlantic actor and hub for analyzing public policies and social trends, as well as promoting and facilitating reflection and action among a wide variety of like-minded people involved in public life.

A. Series of Meetings

For our participants from overseas to the September 11 afternoon conference, the TCC organized a series of meetings prior to the conference, on the afternoon of September 10 and the morning of September 11. We met with European ambassadors to the U.S., Members of Congress and their staff, the European Affairs Bureau of the State Department and leaders of Washington think tanks. We also attended a commemoration ceremony of the 9/11/2001 attack on the Pentagon.

40 people from in total 15 different nationalities had registered for the series of meetings. At 11a.m. on September 10 TCC had the pleasure to receive its guests at the Center for Christian Statesmanship (CCS), which Office and meeting room is just in front of the Congressional Building. After a light lunch and due to a last minute program change we had the pleasure to receive at 11:30 Congressman Bill Huizenga from Michigan, who exchanged views with the participants. Next to him we had the pleasure to hear Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler from Missouri.



At 12:30 we left for a short walk to Cannon House Office Building, in order to be well in time to go through security and to reach the office of Congressman Frank Wolf at 1:00p.m. Here he gave a very impressive talk on his work and motivation, especially on the topic of religious freedom, where he is known for.



After this meeting we went to the United States Senate for a meeting with the Chaplain of the Senate Rear Admiral Barry C. Black, USN (Ret.) at 2:00p.m. He informed the audience on his work and position in the Senate.



When we returned at the building of the Center for Christian Statesmanship (CCS) at 2:45pm, the Director of this Center, George Roller, gave a presentation on the work of the CCS.



At 3:00p.m. we had the honor to receive the Mr. Brian Bachman, Deputy Director Office International Religious Freedom of the U.S. Department of State, together with the acting director Ms. Maria Olson of the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, also from Department of State. Mr. Bachman gave a presentation on the work of the International Religious Freedom Bureau and answered many questions. The final 15 minute contribution at the CCS was from Stephanie Hammond, Foreign Affairs Advisor to Congressman Trent Franks and Director of the Congressional Caucus on International Religious Freedom. She explained the work of the Congressional Caucus on International Religious Freedom.



At 16:30 the group of participants traveled to the office of the American Enterprise institute. Here they attended a networking reception and dinner conversation at the occasion of the 2014 Inaugural Evangelical Leadership Summit. This two-day Summit with 189 registered

participants was organized by the renowned American Enterprise Institute. It was a special honor for us and our group of participants to be invited for their closing event.



Till late in the evening a Dutch-American team worked hard in the basement of the office building of the CCS on New Jersey Avenue to prepare everything for the upcoming events.



Early in the morning of September 11 the group went to the Netherlands Embassy in North West Washington. At 9 'o' clock we were received by Deputy Chief of Mission Peter Mollema and Mr. Job Van den Berg, Deputy Head of the Economic Department. Topics of discussion included Transatlantic Relations, security, NATO, the state of affairs of the negotiations between the US and EU on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

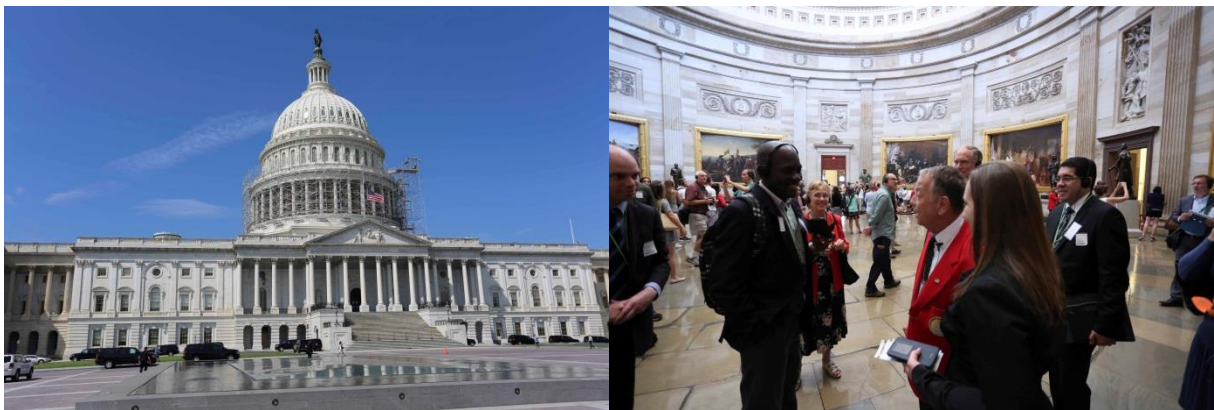


At 10:00a.m. we traveled to the one hour further located office of the CCS. From 11:00 till 11:30a.m. we attended here a commemoration ceremony of the 9/11 attacks on the Pentagon.

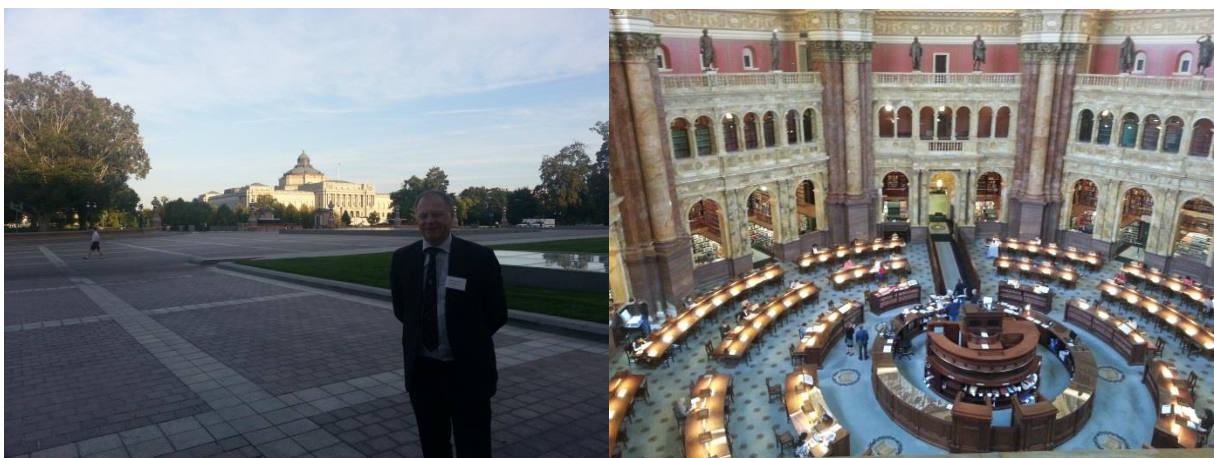
The ceremony was held by Colonel Allen Staley, Chaplain of the Pentagon. Also Colonel Larry Racster was present and gave a testimony as survivor of the attacks.



At 11:30 the group went to Capitol Hill Visitor Center. Because the Members of Congress had held their own 9/11 commemoration ceremony there, the official tour leaders of the Visitor Center were not able to provide a public tour of the Capitol. We found three assistants of Congress Members who could lead a group through the Capitol with a maximum of 15 people each.



Next to the tour the participants had lunch at the restaurant of the Capitol and walked through the underground tunnels to the Members Room of the opposite located building of the Library of Congress. There the conference of the TCC and co-sponsors started at 1:30p.m.



B. Conference: “Do Religious Freedom and Human Rights Clash in Today’s Democracies?”

As a follow up of the inaugural conference of the Transatlantic Christian Council (TCC) in Brussels on December 4, 2013, TCC hosted its second conference in Washington D.C. in the afternoon of September 11. The conference was co-sponsored by the Acton Institute, Alliance Defending Freedom, Cardus, CitizenLink, the Colson Center and Renaissance Partnership for Faith and Culture. The 130 chairs in the attractive venue of the Members Room of the Library of Congress were filled with exactly the maximum number of 130 people who registered for the conference. The capacities in which the participants attended the conference complied with the group of people we targeted on in the open invitation and included politicians, high officials, diplomats, ngo-representatives, business people, academics, journalists and students. Participants came from more than 20 different countries. About two third came from North America and one third from Europe. But there were also participants from all the other continents: China, Australia, Latin America and Africa. After registration and coffee the conference started at 1:30p.m. and lasted till 5:00p.m.

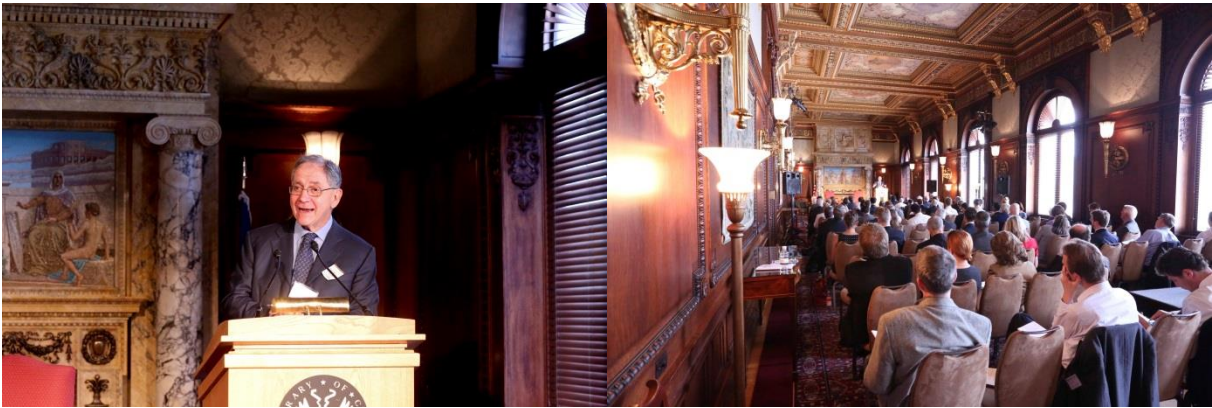


The theme of the conference was: “Do Religious Freedom and Human Rights Clash in Today’s Democracies?” TCC Director Van Schothorst opened the conference by introducing the TCC and its *raison d’être*. He stated that the theme of the conference derives directly from TCC’s Mission Statement and from the many current threats to Religious Freedom. That is the case in the Transatlantic Community but also in the entire world, for example the Middle East. By mutually and transatlantically strengthening our forces we can do more to preserve this foundational freedom.



Two excellent keynote speeches followed. The first was from Rocco Buttiglione, philosopher, former Member of the European Parliament and Minister and Nominee for European

Commissioner and current Member of the Italian Parliament. He elaborated on the theme from a European perspective.



The second speaker was Frank Wolf, serving already for 34 years as Member of Congress on behalf of a North Virginian District. He discussed the theme from an American perspective and he included the very difficult situation of Christians in the Middle East in his contribution.



The interesting and interactive discussion with the conference participants, following these contributions, was moderated by Rein Willems, former President of Shell Netherlands and Dutch Senator. Focus was the growing clash between religious freedom and the secularized view on human rights in our societies today, and how to turn the tide.



Todd Huizinga, Director TCC United States Office and Director of International Outreach at the Acton Institute, closed the meeting, but not before having the pleasure and honor to announce the final speaker: Chris Smith, long time serving Member of Congress from New

Jersey, who had reserved the Congressional conference venues for us on his name. In a fascinating and impressive speech he stressed the importance of fostering Religious Freedom in our countries, but also in the world at large.



An hour for a fruitful and great networking reception followed. Participants had the time to get to know each other and exchange views and experiences. This networking element was very worthwhile for all the participants.



C. Round Table “Engaging as Christians in the Global Public Square: Development of an International Network of Christians in Think Tanks.”

On November 12 a full day Round Table was held in Washington D.C. in the Capitol Hill Visitor Center in the North Congressional Meeting Room. The Round Table was organized the Acton Institute and the Transatlantic Christian Council (TCC) and co-sponsored by the Alliance Defending Freedom, Cardus, CitizenLink, the Colson Center and Renaissance Partnership for Faith and Culture. Out of a total of around 200 targeted personal invitations 60 people from at least 15 different countries had registered for this event. This invitation-only event for Christians from Europe and the Americas was for those who work in think tanks and similar civil society institutions.



Featuring Os Guinness and Rocco Buttiglione as keynote speakers, the purpose of the conference was to get together and discuss how we can better collaborate and serve our societies as Christians engaging in the ever more global public square.





We initiated a collaborative pilot project at this event examining, as an international network of Christians in think tanks, a crucial theme in our societies today:

Engaging as Christians in the Global Public Square: Revitalizing Civil Society and Liberty

We discussed ideas and input on this project of the participants, which we will shape, develop and realize together.

The summary of our thinking so far is the following:

One of the most accomplished public intellectuals of the last fifty years, Michael Novak, once made the case for a threefold foundation for a flourishing society, a unified vision of political, economic, and “moral-cultural” systems. These foundations served as equally important “legs” of a stool, without which society would suffer and ultimately topple. In Europe and the Americas today, political and economic powers have increasingly displaced the institutions of civil society, the structures of the moral-cultural system Novak identified as so critical to human flourishing. Increasingly, we find ourselves faced with a false choice between the selfishness of the marketplace and the benevolence of the state. To move beyond this chimerical dilemma we must recover a vigorous vision of social life, including the positive but limited roles of government and market as well as the “third leg” of civil society.

The threat posed to the institutions of civil society by governmental overreach and market commodification should first of all be viewed as dangerous to human dignity. The human person is created in the image and likeness of God for relationship with Him and with others. This fundamental fact about the human person means that each of us are called to develop in community with others, a sociability that necessarily takes diverse and plural forms. Christians have long recognized the foundational role of the family as a basic and indispensable unit of social order, for instance. The human conscience, too, must be respected, which is why religious liberty is a critical component of a free and virtuous society.

As we must be free to worship God as our consciences dictate, so too must we be free to act upon our convictions and argue for them in the public square.

Without the revitalization and reformation of civil society, our social order will become increasingly uncivil and disordered. We must be free to form and to develop religious, cultural, moral, and charitable institutions that reinforce and restrain political and economic forces. The key task in Europe and the Americas today is recovering the third leg of the moral-cultural system at the heart of the free society. It is this task that we attend to in our focus on the challenges and opportunities for civil society in the twenty-first century.

Who contributed on what?

After registration and coffee the Round Table was opened by United States co-host Reverend Robert A. Sirico, President of the Acton Institute.



The welcoming address from co-host from the Netherlands and Europe were done by Henk Jan van Schothorst, Executive Director of the Transatlantic Christian Council, Office Europe.



The opening session, introducing the theme ‘Engaging as Christians in the Global Public Square’ was done by Ray Pennings, Executive Vice President of Cardus from Canada. He also moderated the discussion on the very interesting contributions of the keynote speakers Os Guinness and Rocco Buttiglione.





After lunch the afternoon session started. It was about the Development of an International Network of Christians in Think Tanks, introduced by Brian Grim, President of the Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.



A panel discussion followed, highlighting national contexts of religion in the public square and the role of religion in society. Panelists were Thomas F. Farr, director of the religious freedom project at the Berkely Center for Religion and world affairs at the Georgetown University, New York, from the United States, Paul Coleman from the United Kingdom, legal counsel of the Vienna office of the Alliance Defending Freedom and Daniel von Wachter from Germany, director of the Internationale Akademie für Philosophie in Liechtenstein.



As a welcome surprise Congressman Chris Smith came to the Round Table as well. He delivered a powerful speech, in which he highlighted the attacks on religious freedom, especially in the Middle East. His speech was followed by a statement of His Grace Bishop Angaelos, General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church in the United Kingdom.



The closing remarks were done by Todd Huizinga (Acton/TCC) and Bill Redmond of the Traditional Values Committee of New Mexico and former Member of the U.S. House of Representatives and also representative of co-sponsor CitizenLink. After a wonderful reception he led us through the Capitol Building, including to many places which are normally closed for ordinary visitors as the meeting room and floor of the Congressman. The successful Round Table was concluded with an optional dinner gathering at Bullfeathers

restaurant, opposite to the Congress buildings.



Introduction of the Pilot Project

Todd Huizinga, Director of International Outreach of the Acton Institute and Executive Director of the Transatlantic Christian Council, United States Office, formulated the

conclusions of the Round Table and the way forward. He did that based on a proposal of a **Pilot Project** to Launch an International Network of Christians in Think Tanks:

Engaging as Christians in the Global Public Square:

Pilot Project to Launch an International Network of Christians in Think Tanks

The Pilot Project:

INITIAL PHASE, 2014-2015/16

We propose the formation of **six transatlantic working groups**, each with concrete, measurable objectives:

- (1) **The Calling of Christians in Think Tanks:** Working group to plan a week-long retreat next year for Christians in think tanks, on “Developing a Christian world view among think tankers.” On the way toward developing this Christian world view, the retreat would examine questions such as, “What is/are the calling(s) of a Christian in the think tank world?”
- (2) **Constructive Christian engagement:** Working group to develop a long-term strategy for engaging in the public square that will not merely oppose the secularist paradigm with a Christian paradigm, but engage in a way that is as constructive as possible
- (3) **Strengthening the Sinews of Civil Society:** Working group to develop a long-term strategy for revitalizing civil society from a Christian perspective.
- (4) **Recovering the Sacred Canopy:** Working group to develop a long-term strategy to recover the “sacred canopy,” with a practical rather than creedal character; this should allow for unity in practice and diversity in belief, while recognizing that the free society is dependent upon people who embody certain virtues and who recognize certain principles that are derived from and sustained by the Christian faith.
- (5) **Establishing a Transatlantic Think Tank for Christians in Public Life:** Working group to develop a business plan for a European-American research-oriented think tank to serve Christians who are engaged in the global public square.

- (6) **Developing a Donor Base:** Working group to write funding proposals and build a network of donors for all of the above.

MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

- (1) All of this will be preparatory work for a **plenary conference** in a year or two, in which each core group will report on its findings and the plenary will strategize on next steps.
- (2) All of this will also provide the **foundation for the establishment of a transatlantic think tank for Christians in public life** that will focus on researching, reflecting on and promoting the virtues and principles derived from and sustained by the Christian faith that are necessary to the sustainment of liberty, prosperity, democracy and the rule of law.

Bodegraven, The Netherlands

October 31, 2014,

Henk Jan van Schothorst