



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Public theology - combining secular and religious discourses

Prof. Kjetil Fretheim, PhD

Faith in the Public Square, November 2013

28.11.13



NORWEGIAN
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Faith in the public square

- Public debate
 - Politics
 - Religion
- Religion
 - A conversation-stopper (Rorty)
 - Private sphere
- Theological perspective
 - Should we contribute in the public debate?
 - How?
 - Radical orthodoxy, social ethicists, public theologians etc.

28.11.13

Suggestion: strategy for participation

- Public Christian faith
 - Church, academia, society (David Tracy)
- The post-secular
 - Habermas
- Two examples
 - Faith and migration in Norway
 - Church asylum (sanctuary)
 - Faith and land in the Middle East
 - Political and religious interpretations
- Combining secular and religious discourses

28.11.13

Theology in the public square

- John Rawls
 - Liberal, democratic state
 - Participation of everyone
 - Contributions accessible to all
 - Not relying on a comprehensive doctrine/religion
 - Common ground and overlapping consensus
- Jürgen Habermas
 - A post-secular position
 - Religion as a source of meaning and identity
 - Potential for complementary learning
 - The institutional translation proviso
 - Freedom to use religious language

28.11.13

Public theology

- Public theology takes

... the public square and what goes on there seriously, but it tries to articulate in the public square its convictions about truth and goodness. [...] Public theology attends to the Bible and the tradition of faith at the same time as it attempts to discern the sign of the times and understand what is going on in the light of the gospel.

Duncan Forrester 2000

28.11.13

Faith and migration in Norway

- International migration
 - Refugees, asylum, social issues
 - Europe and Norway
- Church of Norway
 - Lutheran *Folk*-church
 - «Jesus and his family were refugees in Egypt»
 - Compassion, justice, hospitality
 - Two regiments (secular and spiritual)
 - Prophetic voice
 - Human dignity

28.11.13

Church asylum (sanctuary)

- Application declined
 - Leave the country
 - Illegal alien, undocumented immigrants
 - Church asylum
- Norwegian government
 - Acknowledged/respects the church as a secluded space
- Church of Norway
 - Diaconal imperative
 - Temporary character
 - Ordinary activities

28.11.13

Church of Norway and church asylum

- The church an actor in the public square
 - Addressing the issue
 - Church vs. state
 - Theological assessments of government policies
- Theological justification
 - «Holy space»
 - «Peace of the church»
 - «Diaconal compassion»
- Religions and secular discourses combined

28.11.13

Faith and land in the Middle East

- Christianity
 - Particular places and universal outlook
 - Multiple and conflicting interpretations of places
- *Kairos Palestine* (2009)
 - Christian theology
 - Israeli-Palestinian conflict
 - Occupation of the Holy Land (religious)
 - Palestinian land (political)
- Universal perspective
 - Christians and Muslims
 - All the inhabitants of this land

28.11.13

God's land

- Universal, religious perspective
 - Inclusive, non-ethnic interpretation
 - A new vision for the land
- Universal mission
 - Love and mutual respect
 - All of humanity
 - Hope for all
- Controversial interpretation
 - *Kairos Palestine* vs. «certain theologians in the West»
 - Political and moral implications; human rights

28.11.13

Biblical texts and political analysis

- Socio-theological perspective
 - Scriptural references
 - Religious interpretation of social issues
- Integrated approach
 - Religious identity and theological outlook
 - Applied social analysis
- Relative success
 - Many responses
 - Multiple recipients and multiple dimensions
 - Powerful document

28.11.13

Conclusion

- Faith in the public square
 - Should I stay, or should I go?
 - Contributions of different kinds
- Combination of secular and religious discourses
 - Constructive and critical approach
 - Public scriptural reasoning
 - Religious voice in the public discourse
 - Integrating social analysis and theological reflection
 - Political and prophetic perspectives
- Relevant, critical and comprehensible public voice

28.11.13