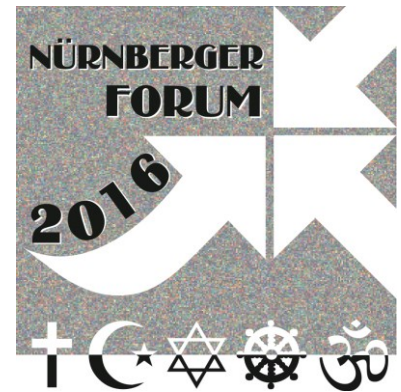


L. Philip Barnes

Public Theologies or Religious Studies? Deliberations on the Basis of Multifaith RE



ABSTRACT

This paper begins by providing a genealogical account of the origins and rise to dominance of multi-faith religious education in the United Kingdom, with attention given to the tensions and weaknesses that have emerged over its history. Current tensions are then related to wider debates within education and religious studies and a critical perspective brought to bear on the relationship between both fields of study. The position that emerges from this review are then brought into dialogue with public theology. The aims of public theology include both providing a Christian witness to society and contributing to the common good. There can be tensions between these two aims while acknowledging that both are essential to the practice of public theology as a ministry of the church. The conclusion is reached that faithful witness to the truth and practice of Christianity is contextual and is required to take different forms in different contexts. The implications of the preceding analysis are then explored in relation to the nature and practice of religious education in a pluralist society.

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