

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR PUBLIC THEOLOGY
THE WORD AND THE WORLD: PUBLIC THEOLOGY IN AN AGE
OF GLOBAL MEDIA

Short Paper Parallel Sessions: Abstracts



Details of themes, times and venues for each session are in a separate booklet

Andrew Bradstock (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

Doing public theology in a straitened public square

The absence in New Zealand of a national daily press and public service television means that space for serious and informed conversation about public issues is small relative to many other developed countries. Apart from one publicly-funded national radio station which regularly carries discussion about 'issues of the day', opportunity for New Zealanders to appreciate in-depth discussion of matters of public concern is extremely limited.

In such an environment a 'public theology' centre can have an important role. In addition to seeking to contribute to discussion in the public square, it can itself *become* the public square, or at least a significant quarter of it. By creating space for balanced and educated discussion, and setting the terms of the debate such that language based on belief and convictions is encouraged, a centre for public theology can contribute much towards the development of a 'better-informed democracy'.

Universities in New Zealand have a statutory obligation to 'accept a role as critic and conscience of society', a further incentive to a university-based public theology centre to promote 'public conversation'. This paper explores the role that the Centre for Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago has played in facilitating public conversation, and what its experience might offer to similar centres.

Matt Brain, Andrew Robinson and Geoff Broughton (Session 2, Tuesday p.m.)

Public *and* Personal: Negotiating friendship in the Facebook age

Thinking about connectivity is a way to think about what we mean to each other (Turkle, 2011).

Social networks have introduced new kinds of connection which are simultaneously public and personal. This paper will describe the kind of *friendship* that emerges when 'public and personal' are combined and suggest that *embodied* relationships are more merciful.

Connections using digital media create new patterns of friendship that must be negotiated. Personal conversations have become public, including mundane images (e.g. 'selfies' and food pics) alongside more intimate conversations previously deemed private (e.g. 'no longer in a relationship'). The shadow of these conversations is the destructive potential of online conflict (such as personal vitriol [flaming], trolling, bullying and cyber-stalking). The paper will argue that *embodied* connections are more humane.

We conclude that the embodied life has always been public *and* personal because the physicality of what happens in me and to me is constantly evolving and always evident. Christian theology affirms that people are 'at home' in the body through the doctrine of the incarnation and announces that they ought to be hopeful about the body through the doctrine of the resurrection. These more controversial tenets of Christian faith are therefore interpreted as *merciful* convictions in the Facebook age where connections are transient but images, conversation and conflict have become permanent features of life online.

Robert P. Borrong (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

The Role Of Television in Increasing Consumerist Behaviour in Children: the Indonesian Case

The presence of media in Indonesia is a necessary consequence of globalization. The church in Indonesia has had a paradoxical response to this situation. On the one hand, churches fully support, and try to use, media technology as an efficient way to proclaim the Good News both to the members of the church and to the public. Some churches have radio and TV stations to promote Christianity in the public arena. Within the church itself, digital media are used to increase the enthusiasm of church members to attend worship and support the church's programs.

On the other hand, digital media are suspected and distrusted as having dangerous consequences for Christianity, especially in relation to the bad influence of media on children and youth. This writer is among those who warn against the dangers of digital media for the younger generation in Indonesia, as seen by this paper.

Jaco S Dreyer (Session 2, Tuesday p.m.)

Religion in the public sphere: what can public theology learn from Habermas's latest work?

The complex and problematic role of religion in the public sphere in modern, democratic societies raise many questions for a public theology. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the ongoing debate about the task and methods of public theology by asking what we can learn from the ideas of Jürgen Habermas. Habermas was a leading participant in the thinking process on the secularisation thesis in Western societies. His view was that religion would eventually disappear from the public scene due to the rationalisation of society. In recent years he seems to have changed this view in the light of new developments in the world. He now maintains that religion has something important to offer in the public sphere. Religion could participate in this public discussion, provided that it satisfies strict conditions. In this paper I will firstly explore and critically discuss Habermas's recent ideas regarding religion in the public sphere. This will be followed by a reflection on the possible contribution of Habermas's thoughts to the

method and task of public theology.

John Forrest (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

Reflections on the role of entertainment in theological communication

This presentation will argue that entertainment as projected by popular and electronic media has traditionally been ignored, disdained or misconstrued by significant players in theological communication. This has had an effect on the cultural acceptance and understanding of theological issues in the public domain. One of the results is an unhelpful use of entertainment media by some of those involved in the 'confessional' communication of religious ideas.

Possibilities for the understanding of belief are discussed with reference to contemporary movies. The effect of public entertainment on the perception of religion and on discourse within religious groups is explored through samples of television comedy. Reference will be made to a naiveté of religious communicators in relation to issues of ownership and control of entertainment media and the subsequent effect on its content and form within worship practice.

The possibility of a concept of 'pure entertainment' is discussed alongside some current entertainment theory. Reference is made to an approaching 'singularity' and its resonance for the development of theological understanding within the field of entertainment.

Stephen Garner (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

Old Texts and New Media: Doing Public Theology in a Biblically Illiterate, Popular Cultural World

Public theology is sometimes described as the offering of something distinctive, and that is gospel, to the world for the welfare of human society (Forrester, 2004). As an activity, it is rooted in the distinctive theological discourse of faith communities, which are then communicated appropriately to a particular public sphere. Popular storytelling is a pervasive feature of contemporary media society, and one which provides the raw materials through which people communicate their values and enthusiasms and maintain relationships (Green, 2002). Given this, it is incumbent upon faith communities to look seriously at these forms of media as a location for doing public theology.

How successfully faith communities, such as Christian churches, do this though is often dependent upon how they negotiated new kinds of media and texts in the past (Campbell, 2010). This is further complicated by the situation that in an increasingly post-Christian society

the original biblical texts, both inside and outside of churches, have been ‘terminated’ and replaced by alternative cultural memories or biblical ‘afterlives’ of those texts. This paper will draw upon examples from popular culture to highlight how public theology might address both the public with religious communities and those outside of them in this context.

Robert Gascoigne (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

The Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* as an Act of Global Public Theology

Fifty years ago, on Holy Thursday 1963, Pope John XXIII promulgated the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), the first encyclical addressed not only to all members of the Catholic Church but also to ‘all people of good will’. A short time before this, Pope John had played a significant role in helping to prevent the Cuban missile crisis escalating into nuclear war. The encyclical makes a fundamental connection between peace and a just order founded in respect for human dignity and human rights. Its methodology lies in classical natural law theory, yet at the same time the Pope self-consciously addresses himself to all humanity as the Vicar of Christ, the Prince of Peace. This paper will consider *Pacem in Terris* as an act of global public theology, an attempt to address all humanity through the language of natural law, justified by a particular conception of the Papal role and of Christ’s gift of peace. Drawing on this historic example of global public theology, the paper will consider the ways in which public theology can both conceive and address a global audience today from the perspective of a universal humanity.

Andrew Graystone (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

Towards a new broadcasting covenant

In the earliest days of broadcasting the relationship between producers and consumers had a covenantal quality. Then, as broadcasting grew in its scale and social impact, that covenant was abrogated in favour of regulatory intermediaries. In the digital era the regulatory paradigm is challenged to the point of breakdown. Technological developments and convergence undermine the ability of regulators to offer coherent standards. In the digital environment the relationship between content-makers (all of us) and content-consumers (also all of us) is substantially disintermediated, and libertarianism is the default ethic. A public enfranchised by individualised access to and control over the transmission of information will not tolerate a Constantinian approach to media regulation.

I argue that we need to re-label the axes upon which we evaluate and regulate broadcast content, setting aside the language of “standards” and “values” in favour of the language of

virtue expressed in a covenantal relationship between the creator and consumer of broadcast text. Using the Fair Trade movement as a pattern I explore whether the recovery of a covenantal model of relationship, based on virtue ethics and motivated by human well-being, could offer a discourse of integrity and hope.

James Holt (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

“I’m a Mormon”: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its utilization of an integrated media campaign. What is its purpose?

In response to “The Book of Mormon” musical, a satirical and, some would say offensive look at aspects of Mormon beliefs, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints launched an integrated media campaign. This campaign, first of all in New York, extended to Los Angeles and in 2013 to London utilizes a variety of media to deliver the message of Mormonism. But what message is being conveyed?

This paper will explore the various efforts through the later 20th century and early part of the 21st century to posit the various messages and purposes that these media campaigns have been designed to promote. What has changed? Why has it changed? Is a result of what Mauss has called a movement towards assimilation into the mainstream? He suggests that movements like Mormonism swing pendulumlike between retrenchment and assimilation. Is this just another phase in sect development, or is it finding success as a proselyting tool and confirming Mormons in a place of retrenchment?

In addition to the academic nature of this paper, it will also draw on the experiences of the presenter who has been a part of the development of public relations outreach on a national level for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during 2011-2013.

Benyamin Intan (tbc.)

Religious violence and 'public religion' in the Pancasila-based state of Indonesia

If religious conflict in Indonesia is not solved well, it will threaten the nation's integration, and may cause the collapse of Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). I will argue that religious violence is caused more by factors that are external to religion, in particular strives for political power that often take form in the subordination of religion under the state for the sake of the state's politics, or the subordination of the state under religion for the sake of the religion's agenda.

This study will show that within Pancasila, Indonesia's national ideology, not only could religions live together in peace and harmony but an opportunity would also open up for them to play an active role in the public sphere. This concept will allow all religions and beliefs to function in public life. Yet it must start from the reality of religious diversity, which drives the practice of many religions within the confinement of civil society. 'Public religion' at the civil society level has a mission on how religions could have the power to transform the social-political life of society in a democratic way. Thus, far from becoming an element of conflict, this study will show that religions could become a transformed and liberated power to establish a democratic socio-political life.

Eneida Jacobsen

Religion in the Public Sphere: On the Theological Reception of Jürgen Habermas' Political Theory and Its Relevance for a Global Public Theology

By offering an overview of the reception of Jürgen Habermas' political thinking in the field of Christian theology in the last decade, the paper shall discuss the theological response to the challenge of combining faith and reason when religion enters the public sphere. Authors of significance here are, among others, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, Edmund Arens, and Nicholas Adams.

What would the role of faith-based arguments in the public sphere be? How can religious discourses contribute to a democratic political process? What are the theological foundations that can be identified for a political thought that integrates religion and individual freedom in democratic societies?

By addressing these questions, it will be possible to unfold the main contributions of the most recent dialogue between Habermas and theology to the project of a global public theology.

Pauline Kollontai (Plenary, Weds a.m.)

Islamic Revivalism and the Media in Bosnia-Herzegovina

The media in Bosnia-Herzegovina, both during and in the post-communist era, has showed interest in Islam for a variety of reasons. During the period of President Tito's promotion of a pan-Yugoslav identity, intended to overcome the division created by ethnic and religious identity, the pre-dominant interest of the Bosnian media was in those aspects of Muslim religious life which was perceived as promoting Muslim nationhood and the potential ideological challenge this could present to Communism.

In the latter part of the Communist era and since the ending of the war in 1996 there has been a range of media approaches to the presentation of Islam. These range from the apologetic approach, through to coverage on the exposure of the criminal activities and abuses of civic responsibility on the part of Muslim leaders, to media representation that clearly expresses elements of Islamophobia. It is the apologetic approach which will be the focus of this paper. The newspapers in this category are *Dnevni Avaz*, *Mualim*, *Saff* and *Preporod*. These will be looked at to identify why and how they have played a role in the process of Islamic *tajdid* (revival) and *islah* (reform) and also to identify the nature and content of their reporting as regards the expression of inner-pluralism in the Muslim community of Bosnia-Herzegovina in relation to *tajdid* and *islah*.

Nico Koopman (Session 2, Tuesday a.m.)

Prophetic Public Theology and the media in South Africa. Duel or duet?

This paper investigates the roles of prophetic public theology and the media in the transformation and renewal of public life in the context of the young South African democracy. It makes a plea for avoiding clashes and duels between between theology and the media in all its forms in building a society where dignity, justice and freedom for all reign supreme. Constructive collaboration and the singing of a duet is possible where religion offers a prophetic **vision** of a new society of dignity, justice and freedom; prophetic and courageous self-criticism and public **criticism** where this vision is betrayed, prophetic **stories** of exclusion from the new as well as stories of hope and the actualisation of the new; prophetic **technical analysis** that serves the new; and prophetic **policymaking** practices that advance the dawning of a new society. Where a prophetic public theology serves this agenda, and where the media also serves

this vision of dignity, justice and freedom, the door is opened for constructive collaboration, for the singing of a duet.

Bex Lewis (Session 2, Tuesday a.m.)

Engaging in Discipleship in a Digital Age

The 'digital age' brings the opportunity for a wider range of voices to contribute to conversations: many online will engage with "church" through their friends rather than formal Christian organisations. In 2010 "The BIGBible Project" emerged to encourage those at all levels of the Christian sector to engage with digital culture, and to consider what this means for Christian communication practices, in a culture in which messages are both ephemerally 'in the now', and perpetually available.

BIGBible emphasises that "disciples" live at all times for God, and therefore all Christians need to take seriously their presence both online and offline. The core definition of a disciple is given in John 13:35 "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (NRSV). How might this affect Christian behaviour online? This paper will draw from over 2,000 contributions made to the BIGBible site.

The paper will also consider how churches are moving from the broadcast, pew-focused and geographically localised ministry that has held sway for the last few centuries, and embracing a more social ministry, where to 'love your neighbour' may include those from another county (or even country), but also connects locally though hyper-local practice.

Sylvia Losansky (Session 4, Friday a.m.)

The contribution of Christian churches to societal cohesion in Europe

The process of European integration, especially the European Union, is a central part of the globalized world. Living together in this globalized world is dependent on new forms and ideas of societal cohesion and cannot longer be based on the traditional concept of nation states. In my doctoral thesis („Öffentliche Kirche für Europa“, Leipzig 2010) I searched for possible ways to develop such new forms of societal cohesion and the contribution of the Christian churches in this context. For that I compared the concepts of societal cohesion and the role of the churches by Jürgen Habermas, Pope John Paul II and Wolfgang Huber.

On this basis I developed the concept of a public church for Europe, and studied public statements of the Christian churches on various social and political topics: here I focused especially on the European social policy, the European Charter of Human Rights, the discussion about a

Esther McIntosh (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

Belonging without Believing? Social Networking Media and the Concept of Church

My publications to date have focused on the concept of community in face-to-face relations; however, this notion is deeply challenged by social networking media. Hence, I have begun research into the use of social networking media by Christian groups and seek to analyse the theological and philosophical concepts of community at work therein. With the advent of e-churches, the traditional notion of 'church' as a physical location where face-to-face interaction occurs is contested. This burgeoning field of enquiry has been assessed within communication studies and sociology of religion, but there is much work to be done here from a philosophical and theological perspective.

Contrary to Grace Davie's well-known claim that Britain has entered an era of 'believing without belonging', this paper will explore whether social networking media provides examples of 'belonging without believing'. In particular, while the notion of friendship has been trivialised by the collecting of 'friends' on Facebook, this new media has also made it possible to maintain deep friendships across divides of geography and time: this paper will ask whether the notion of 'church' is similarly trivialised by the use of new media or whether it is strengthened?

Victoria Nesfield (tbc.)

The Sanctification of the Holocaust and its Impact on Israel and Judaism in the Media

I propose to discuss the idea of the Holocaust as sacred, and ask if the sanctification of the Holocaust in public discourse has created an obstacle to reasoned and open public debate, both theological and political, on issues of Judaism and the state of Israel in particular.

Two specific instances in the mainstream media inform this proposal. The first is the well-publicised case and verdict of Cologne's district court in September 2012, to ban circumcision for religious purposes. Although this ruling affected both Jewish and Muslim communities, it was the impact on German Jewry, given the pained history of Nazism in Germany, which provoked media interest in the role of the secular state in religious affairs. The second example is the more recent Gerald Scarfe satirical cartoon which was published in the Times newspaper in January 2013. The cartoon, a commentary on Benjamin Netanyahu's aggressive policies towards Palestinians, was a response to the Israeli general elections taking place at the time, but was published on Holocaust Memorial Day.

In both instances, references to the Holocaust and to anti-Semitic persecution were raised, and the original news story became subsumed within a discourse heavily informed, and arguable, impeded by Holocaust memory.

Clive Pearson (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

Twittering Good News? The Rise of the Fifth Estate and a Public Theology

The purpose of this presentation is to explore the role of the social media for a public theology.

The term the fifth estate is itself malleable in meaning. Here it refers to its use in Greg Jericho's original research into social media and blogging in Australian politics. How have Facebook, Twitter, and the blogosphere responded to question time, leadership spills, and controversial policy? In what ways have journalists and politicians made use of blogs and tweets to break news and sometimes manipulate its reception? How has the work of tweeters and bloggers been received by the established mainstream media? In what ways did text messages and other forms of social media fan public disturbances like the Cronulla race riots of 2005 – and, in this particular instance, create what has been described as a 'counterpublic' for the disaffected?

From the perspective of a public theology how does the social media and digital news alter the public forum. How is a public theology's call to bilingualism altered? What might be the role of faith's civic virtues of wisdom, grace, and seeking to do 'good to all'?

Josué Reichow (Plenary Session, Weds a.m.)

The evangelical movement, mainstream media and public sphere in Brazil: a new configuration

Brazil is living a moment of deep transformations. A country that has always been called by its population as 'the country of the future' seems to have entered in a cycle of relevant changings. Within the growing of economy another group is worthy of attention whose growth has been challenging the religious scenario in Brazil: the *evangélicos* (evangelical movement). They grew 61% in 10 years (from 2000 to 2010), reaching 42.3 million people in 2010 (22% of the population).

Their ascension was mainly through the media: the mainstream TV channels. The biggest church – IURD – bought a few years ago the second biggest TV channel in Brazil – Rede Record. In the begging most part of the members of these news churches belonged to the lower social classes. Were there any changes in the religious discourse in the last years of economic growth in Brazil?

My interest is to present this new configuration of the religious scenario in Brazil, which could be understood as a media phenomenon. In a moment when delicate issues are being discussed, such as abortion and gay marriage, I intend to reflect on the possibilities of an emerging public sphere, which is divided in religious terms.

Adam T. Shreve (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

Jesus on a Mobile Phone in Zimbabwe: Jesus Films in Select, Zimbabwean Contexts

This paper presents the author's research of a comparative reception study of Jesus films among the Shona peoples located in the Gora and Chikara villages, which are located in the Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The two central questions of the author's research are: (1) In what ways might pre-existing Shona images of Jesus shape Shona responses to, and interpretations of, Jesus as he is portrayed in *The Jesus Film* (1979) and in indigenous, short, Jesus films in Zimbabwe today? (2) How might the viewing of these films affect these images of Jesus? This paper addresses how indigenous, short Jesus films in Zimbabwe have manifested different images of Jesus from the pervasive European image of Jesus that is perpetuated by *The Jesus Film*.

This research is particularly relevant to current trends in media and technology, as the indigenous, short Jesus films are being distributed via mobile phones in Zimbabwe. This paper illustrates how the author is helping to fill the wide gap in scholarship associated with the reception of Jesus films in Africa through his original research connected to the reception of both the *Jesus Film* and indigenous, short, Jesus films in Zimbabwe today.

Ezequiel de Souza (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

Theology as a Political Commitment from the Liberation Theology in Latin America: an approach to the contribution of Leonardo Boff

Liberation Theology has followed the political theologies and has privileged social sciences in developing its method. Through the socio-analytical mediation, theologians sought to contextualize the theological thought in order to redeem its relevance to the action in the reality. However, due to the fact that theology is historically linked to the biblical tradition, theology could not claim an interpretation of reality without passing through the sieve of the heritage of faith. With that, there was an epistemological hierarchy, in which social theory composed a pre-theological moment, or rather, the raw material for theological elaboration. In this paper, we analyze the thought of Leonardo Boff, an exponent of Liberation Theology, from the perspective of the relationship between theology and social theory.

Anlené Taljaard (Session 4, Friday a.m.)

Reconciliation as rooted in the word and the Word?

The paper describes the multidimensional meaning of reconciliation as it functions within the South African public vocabulary. This accounts for the political, social and theological meaning of reconciliation evident in news reports, articles, cartoons, official documents and the social media. Findings of a national survey conducted by the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation on the progress and regress of the South African reconciliation process are used to illuminate the complexities that arise when these different meanings meet in the public sphere.

The paper further explores whether this multi layered meaning of reconciliation can be viewed as an example of a functioning middle axiom in public discourse. The analysis is based on the work of De Gruchy and Clements that proposes the use of middle axioms in public theology. Both scholars argue for a middle axiom that is informed by theological and societal knowledge that is able to enrich public dialogue in various ways.

The paper concludes that the South African context is a public sphere where different meanings of reconciliation have taken root and constantly inform and shape one another in public dialogue. Hence, can the reconciliation process in South Africa be viewed as a case study for the embodiment of a middle axiom?

Andrew Todd (Session 4, Friday a.m.)

Repatriations as Re-membering Who We Are: Military/media rituals and the power of the sacred

This paper is rooted in an ethnography of the multiple, growing rituals associated with the repatriation of UK military personnel killed in Afghanistan. It will highlight ritual images, narratives and actions; the careful management of boundaries between overlapping social domains (military, family, public); and the role of multi-media/military interaction.

The paper will explore the durkheimian question: can repatriation rituals be understood as social re-ordering, or re-membering, in the face of the social disruption of the death of a soldier? It will argue, not for the construction of a singular 'social order', but for multiple re-orderings; involving juxtaposed and overlapping performances of the sacred, by which different groups re-member who they are, as military unit; parents/family; or the public, in relation to the pivotal figure of the dead soldier.

As one re-ordering, the paper will investigate how far ritual allows all involved to be re-membered as the 'we' who hold military service to be sacred. This will focus on the honouring of those killed; but also, drawing on Bourdieu, on the boundary and power work being done.

Conclusions will be drawn about these particular military/media repatriation rituals as performed public theologies of military service; and their wider political significance.

David Tombs (Session 4, Friday a.m.)

Regarding the Shame of Others

The paper examines recent media coverage of case studies relating to punitive sexualised violence as a weapon of shame, and explores the ethical and theological issues which relate to this. The case studies include: the Death of Gaddafi; the unnamed woman protester in Tahrir Square, Cairo; the execution of a prisoner in Afghanistan; and the exhumation of Richard III in Leicester. These case studies suggest that media coverage will often obscure, downplay or sanitise sexualised violence, and treat it as in some ways 'unspeakable'. Against this, it is argued that more attention should be given to how best to discuss 'unspeakable violence' and the ethical principles which might guide this.

Whilst there are unlikely to be easy answers, a more frank and constructive conversation is needed on the use of sexualised violence as a weapon of shame. The paper argues that any ethical response should be guided by an affirmation of the dignity of the victims. The final part of the paper links this discussion to a more honest approach in Public Theology to an apparently unspeakable element in Christian theology – the Roman use of crucifixion as a punitive instrument of shame, and the sexualised violence this involved.

Vuyani S Vellem (Session 1, Tuesday a.m.)

A Black Reflection on Culture and the Media in Post 1994 South Africa with Reference to the Spear

Black Theology of liberation has argued that the defeat of racism without the radical change in the economic order of the world would be difficult to achieve. One of the most powerful tools in the hands of the wealthy is the use of the media in the Fourth Estate. The imaginary of the role of the media in public life, conceived mainly and mostly through the lenses of differentiation of spheres in a capitalist "Public" continues to be in conflict cultures of the oppressed in South Africa post 1994 as shown in the debacle of the Spear, a painting by Brett Murray which triggered untold commotion in public life.

An analysis of the debates on this matter portrays the latent difficulty our post 1994 public discourse is faced with, particularly, the irreconcilability of epistemological and cultural imaginaries in a nation that struggled for reconciliation for centuries. Ultimately, the obstinate

imposition of media expression conceived within the capitalist, modernist logic becomes helpful while at the same time taking the gains of our political liberation two steps backward. It is only when the contours of the Fourth Estate dismantles in order to go beyond its totalistic walls that perpetually reduce others to constant learners including their cultures, the paper argues.

D. Etienne de Villiers (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

In Search of an Appropriate Contemporary Ethical Approach in Public Theology: Max Weber's Ethic of Responsibility as Resource

Public Theology today deals with many of the ethical issues of a public nature previously only dealt with by Christian Social Ethics. It therefore also has to deal with the question: 'What are the features of an appropriate ethical approach to public issues in the contemporary context of late-modernity?' Instead of trying to answer this question by comparing and evaluating existing Christian social ethical theories, I would instead like to take a step back and address the question: 'To what extent can Max Weber's ethic of responsibility be a helpful resource in Public Theology's search for an appropriate contemporary ethical approach?'

Not only did Weber provide an incisive and still influential sociological analysis of the origins and features of Western modernity, but did he also present his ethic of responsibility as an ethical approach better attuned to modernity than the prevalent one of the ethic of conviction. In this paper an interpretation of Weber's view of the ethic of responsibility will be provided. A case will be made out that in spite of the fact that some aspects of Weber's view are unacceptable to public theology the core of his ethic of responsibility is commendable.

Jenny Wright (Session 3, Thursday a.m.)

With whose voice and what language? What it means to speak 'Christian' in public

In a world with a plurality of religious voices available from a variety of different media, sources are not always reliable, good or accurate. Portrayal in the media is often negative and critical. So how do we ensure that what we have to say in the public sphere is neither misinterpreted nor exclusionary?

I would like to suggest three areas: that any websites affiliated with the church or theological centres provide accurate information and are, in part and where appropriate, in language which is understood by the general public. This could also mean that we need to take responsibility to ensure that pages such as Wikipedia are well-referenced and responsibly written. Secondly, whenever we make theological statements in public we use language which is unambiguous and yet as inclusive as possible. While it is important to retain our identity as a distinctive community, we should not seek to isolate ourselves.

Lastly, we need to ensure that we have a public voice which is prophetic and precautionary, proactive and reactive. We need to speak against the status quo where necessary, cautioning against potential ethical and moral pitfalls as well as dealing with such situations where they arise in a timely fashion.