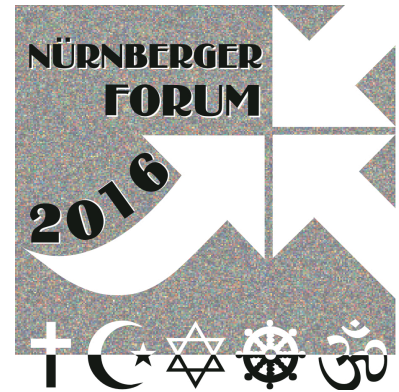


Florian Höhne

**"You Shall not Make to You any Graven Image."
The Culture of Images in the Media and Public Religions -
from a Public Theology Perspective**



ABSTRACT

Media-publics are full of images. This holds true for the publics created by modern newspapers and television. It has not changed in the new forms of communication made possible by the internet. If people want to say something publically, they often do it with images – and not primarily with words.

Insofar as a religion is public in this context, its publicness will include visibility in images. These images of religions, religious orientations and world-views are created by media-producers and viewers of different religious convictions as well as by the (official) representatives of religions themselves.

On the one hand, public theology focusses on and principally affirms religion being public in a non-authoritarian ways. On the other hand, public theology claims to draw on religious traditions, in which the prohibition of images plays a more or less important role and has left its traces. In such a critique of images their potential to limit freedom is memorized.

What can public theology learn from the ban of images? In how far can it value which kind of images? And how can religion be responsibly public in culture dominated by images?

The paper addresses these questions by drawing on theological interpretations of the ban of images as well as on recent theories and theologies of images. The paper will give some, exemplary insights into the ambivalence of images and offer orientations for how to deal with public pictures of religions.