



## ABSTRACTS

KATJA STUERZENHOFECKER

Campaigning has two audiences, an internal one which comprises the members of the campaigning group (e.g. donors and activists) and a larger group that they are part of (e.g. the Christian community as a whole), and an external one which is society as a whole with its key players and policy makers. The significant distinction between the internal and external audiences concerns exclusive as well as shared discourses. My hypothesis is that 1) the internal audience requires a process of self-censoring from Christian campaigners that moves campaign issues, which are considered to be in conflict with Christian teachings or marginal, to non-Christian platforms (e.g. members of *Christian Aid* address environmental issues under the umbrella of the 'secular' *World Development Movement*); and 2) the external audience requires a process of self-censoring from Christian campaigners that removes explicitly religious/Christian references from campaign material. My questions for discussion that follow from my hypothesis: 1) if political theology's task is a radical critique and healing of a church complicit in oppression and exploitation (Moltmann), can an analysis of the 'silences' in Christian campaigning help to reform Christian theology; and, 2) if Christian campaigns in the UK speak to their external audience in a secularised manner, does this constitute 'the domestication of religion by secular society for social progress' (Metz)?

THEODROS ASSEFA TEKLU

*Towards a Theology of Ethnic Justice: THE Case of Ethiopia.* The principal aim of this research is to construct and to propose a theology of ethnic justice that can make a questioning/critiquing, and also a constructive contribution to the discourse of multiculturalism. The other subsidiary aims are (1) to describe, analyze and critically evaluate the different theories of ethnicity (with special reference to conceptions of the *human* in relation to culture) and (2) to make a comparative and analytical study of the theories of justice as conceptualised in nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The research project is led by the following central research questions: (1) How do conceptualisations of justice relate to an understanding of the *human*? (2) To what extent are the contemporary theories of justice in nationalism and cosmopolitanism relevant to ethnicity? (3) How does a theological anthropology serve as a basis to reflect and critique on the anthropologies behind nationalism and cosmopolitanism? (4) How does ethnic justice look like when seen from a perspective of Trinitarian ethics? The study will have an interdisciplinary nature drawing perspectives from cultural/social anthropology, theological ethics and political philosophy using mainly the dialectical method.

## RUTH HADLEY

During his presidential campaign, Barack Obama was asked what he thought the US could do in order to end global religious persecution. His response was to declare that positive action could not be achieved. In his words, 'without ignoring the very real prosecutions...that are taking place, and so having an administration that is speaking out, joining in international forums, where we can point out human rights abuses, and the absence of religious freedom... Over time, what we are doing is setting up new norms and creating a universal principle that people's faith and people's beliefs have to be protected. And as you said, it's not just Christians, and we've got to make sure, you know, one thing I think is very important for us to do on all of these issues is to lead by example. That's why I think it's so important for us to have religious tolerance here in the United States'. His response raises two immediate questions: 1) Can tolerance extend beyond 'Christianity'? (Specifically Protestant Christianity and its conceptualization of religion as something inherently private and neatly compatible with the liberal public-private mindset). Is the creation of a 'universal principle' thus truly universal? 2) Is there a difference between religious tolerance and religious freedom given Obama's seeming equation of the two?

## RICHARD BENDA

What was the relationship between religion and politics in Rwanda before the introduction of Christianity and Islam? Both Christianity and Islam entered in contact with Rwandan society and culture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They found in the then small Kingdom of Rwanda a relatively homogeneous community of Tutsi, Hutu and Twa; the three ethnic groups of Rwanda living somewhat in peaceful coexistence under a much centralised monarchy. Was the authority of the *Umwami* (king) the sole guarantor of this relative harmony between these three groups? A generalised fear of *Imana y'I Rwanda* (God of Rwanda) and the Communion with the Ancestors were pervasive in Rwandan Traditional society. What was the relationship between the *Umwami* and *Abiru/Abapfumu* (spiritual leaders) and how did this impact peaceful coexistence among the people? Did the content of Rwandan traditional spirituality provide mechanisms of conflict prevention and resolution? Finally, did Christianity and Islam sow the seed for future conflicts, of which the genocide of 1994 was the epitome? These are the questions that will guide my discussion.

I would like to introduce for discussion my doctoral work, which explores the significance of the Hegelian philosophy of Gillian Rose (1947-1995) for contemporary orthodox political theology, particularly her interaction with John Milbank. Hegel's theological critics have often concluded that his system makes God a part of the whole and therefore makes God finite, collapsing the theological into the secular. It is a serious criticism, since if religion and the state are essentially the same, then there is no real mediation, and, as John Milbank in particular would argue, Hegel's system is atheist. In contrast, Gillian Rose argues that Hegel's absolute, far from being a fixed or rigid structure or conflation of religion and the state, is actually 'broken' in form, a 'broken middle', by which she means a structure of mediating syllogisms, in which religion and the state interact. My thesis is that it is Hegel, rather than Milbank or the counter-Enlightenment thinkers, who is able truly to secure an analogical relation between the state and religion that allows for relative political autonomy and some form of faith.

In his role as an evaluator of modernity, Przywara employs the hermeneutic of analogy to show how Catholicism entirely circumvents the immanence-transcendence controversy that overshadows Protestant thought, and which is typified in skewed inquiry as: 'Is religion in essential form, an Act of God, or act of man' (Przywara, *Polarity*, p.137)? Przywara develops his understanding of the *analogia entis* from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and argues that it is unequivocally part of revelation itself: 'between the Creator and the creature so great a likeness cannot be noted without the necessity of noting an even greater dissimilarity between them' (Denziger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, p.171, n.432). Przywara judges that all Protestant streams of thought premised upon Luther's Augustinian understanding of nature and grace (the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, liberal Protestantism, and dialectical theology) are theopanic (a term drawn from Rudolph Otto) in their religious attitude. The intense realism and humility of Aquinas' *causae secundae*, which in the *analogia entis* will be properly partnered with Augustine's theory of participation, was displaced in the Reformation by the attribution of the all activity in the realm of faith to God. The private nature of faith and the hiddenness of God deepen the Protestant principle that God is the only effective and important agent in salvation history. After setting out Przywara's reading of modern thought, I will ask the group to respond to his portrayal. It may be helpful to consider the following quotations: 1) 'In this basic formula the ancient 'protest' of the Reformation is living, the protest of subjective interiority against objective "ecclesiality"' (Przywara, *Ringens der Gegenwart: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1922 - 1927*, p.27) 'I should not view myself so forcefully as nothing *vis-à-vis* God that I then make God the 'all alone' of my knowing, and thereby through a devotion to extreme distance create, in fact, an identity between us. The ultimate, albeit unconscious, impetus of extreme distance is precisely a desire for identification. The human person makes itself before God so intense a nothingness in order to suck God into himself and so be "like God"' (Przywara, *Zwischen Religion und Kultur*, p.95).

## ANDY CROME

This presentation discusses seventeenth century divine Thomas Brightman, and his re-reading of accepted Protestant eschatology. Brightman's contemporaries had, in general, adopted a historicist reading of the Apocalypse which concluded with Christ's return and the resurrection of the dead. Brightman, however, believed the book of Revelation did not describe either of these events. Instead he argued that Revelation's primary aim was to depict a restored Jewish nation in Palestine. Within his scheme he also found an exalted role for England, and a unique reading of Revelation 20 as referring to two distinct chiliads. Brightman's re-reading was the result of a distinctive hermeneutic, which blurred the boundaries of the 'literal', 'allegorical' and 'typological' senses of scripture through a controversial reading of both New and Old Testament prophecy. In the interregnum his theology became one of the key points of discussion in the political controversies surrounding the readmission of the Jews to England. This brief presentation aims to lead into discussions of the ways in which the 'literal' sense can be applied in prophecy, and in particular the ways these conclusions can be applied for political ends. This may be in a historical context, or through more current readings, such as those advanced in dispensational Christian Zionism.

## KYLE GINGERICH HIEBERT

Contemporary debates in political theology are often set against the background of discussions surrounding identity and difference. Indeed, at a time when the Christian *altera civitas* appears to have tragically failed and become a hellish anti-church it is one of the most pressing tasks for Christian theology to re-narrate itself such that its true difference consists in the interruption of the ubiquitous cycle of violence indicative of late capitalist liberal democracies. However, this re-narration of the Christian story, which is a story of differential charity and ontological peace, is often accompanied by a rhetoric of singularity that seeks to relegate Christianity's others to the wastebasket of nihilism. The question, then, is what becomes of differential charity and ontological peace in the midst of a narrative that reduces all others to nothingness? Moreover, what would a political theology that seeks to proclaim the peace of Jesus Christ as Lord look like if it were to reconcile that proclamation with its performance?