

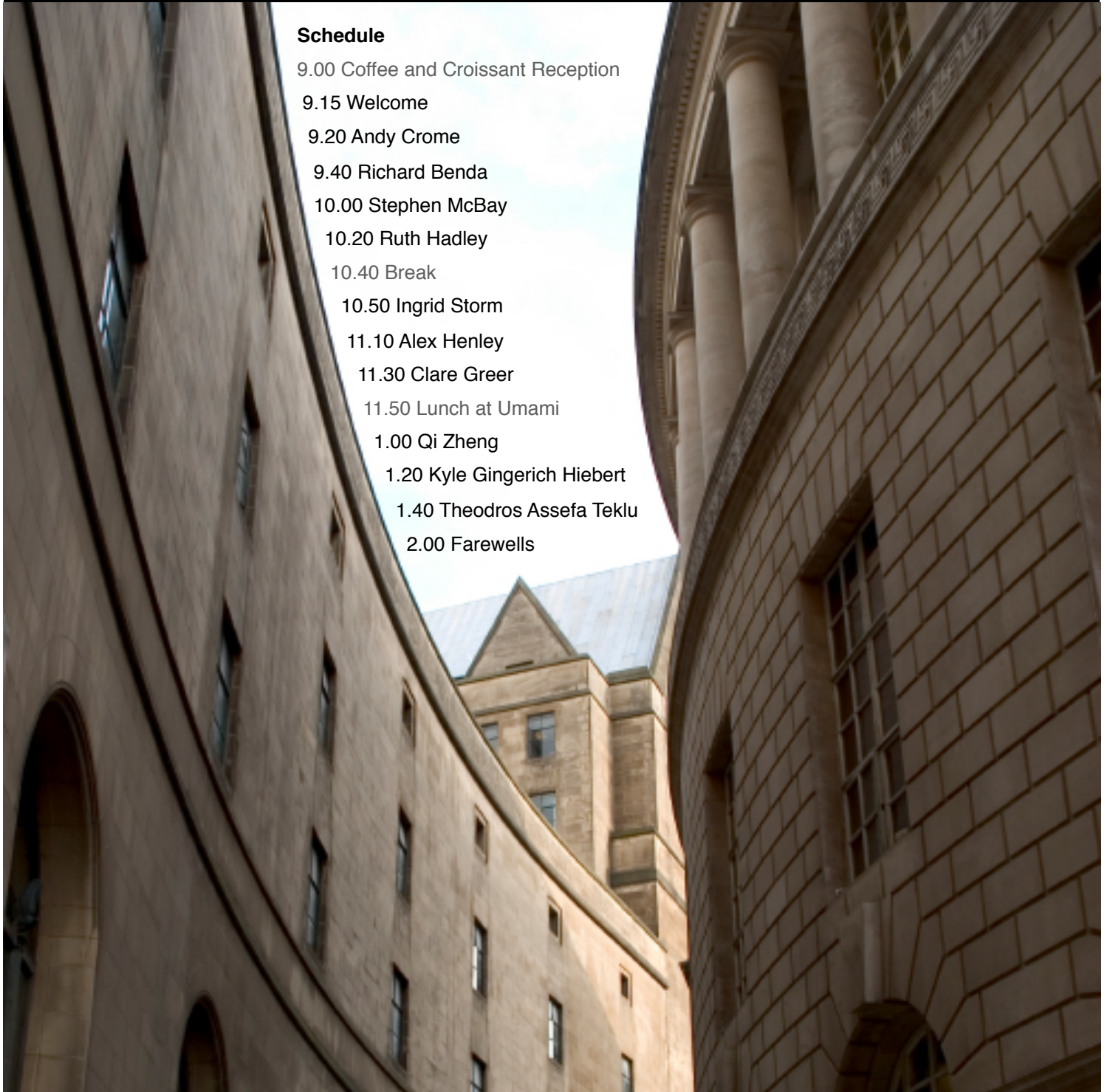
MANCHESTER
1824

5 November 2009
Samuel Alexander A202
9am-2pm

Centre for Religion and Political Culture doctoral seminar

Schedule

- 9.00 Coffee and Croissant Reception
- 9.15 Welcome
- 9.20 Andy Crome
- 9.40 Richard Benda
- 10.00 Stephen McBay
- 10.20 Ruth Hadley
- 10.40 Break
- 10.50 Ingrid Storm
- 11.10 Alex Henley
- 11.30 Clare Greer
- 11.50 Lunch at Umami
- 1.00 Qi Zheng
- 1.20 Kyle Gingerich Hiebert
- 1.40 Theodoros Assefa Teklu
- 2.00 Farewells



ANDY CROME

Laodicean Rhetoric and Church Reform

In this paper I will briefly examine the use of the Church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22) as a motivator to reform in a selection of sermons and biblical commentaries from the early to mid seventeenth century. The Laodicean church, which Christ threatens to “spew from [his] mouth” is held on the brink of uncertainty, and provides the ideal rhetorical tool through which to critique and encourage the church to reform. Here I will argue that the image is primarily used in a positive manner, focusing on projected promises of glory based on internal reformation, rather than as a warning of judgement. In conclusion, I will offer some thoughts on the way in which the Laodicean trope emerges in contemporary Evangelical eschatological discourse and its potential for future critiques of the church.

RICHARD BENDA

A Reflection on the Book “The Wounded Researcher”

These last few months, I realized that my research was heading towards the past and studying the doctrine of God in Rwandan traditional religion. The more I tried to wriggle out of this chapter, the more I was drawn into it and the whole thing was making me anxious. Why could I not get over it and move to the more exciting parts of my research? This anxiety persisted until I read the *Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind* by Robert D. Romanyshyn. In this book, Romanyshyn talks about the research having its own soul and being an agent that acts on the researcher. I aim at sharing a few insights from this book. My presentation therefore will be more about methodology and approach to my research than about the content.

STEPHEN MCBAY

Re-investigating Paul’s “Powers”

Starting from a reading *Christ and the Powers* (1953) by Hendrik Berkhof, *Principalities and Powers* (1956) by G.B. Caird, and *The Politics of Jesus* (1972) by J. H. Yoder a study of New Testament powers and principalities is relevant for the social sciences and humanities because “the problem of power” still conscribes, if not defines, the human condition; each of the three believed strongly that these statements were immanently political. How scholars in various fields have dealt with these passages, especially for the past few centuries, reveals more about their powers and principalities than Paul’s. In addition, seeking these answers in Biblical Studies, Theology, or Ethics should not begin with personal glosses about holiness or practical ways of doing the least harm toward the greatest good. These approaches spring from contemporary fears and hopes, wrought with the most culturally bound manners of knowing. So they are far more speculative than any interpretation of the apostolic texts reviewed in situ. A historical-cultural approach is best if one first wants to know how Paul and his primary audiences may have interpreted the statements, and then, infer how to live today if the Pauline account of power is realistic and illuminating.

RUTH HADLEY

The Intolerance of Tolerance

Public-political discourse currently lauds tolerance as a fundamental personal and political moral virtue. Is there, however, a darker, compensatory aspect to this institutionalised promotion and understanding of tolerance? Can we parallel material supporting the Third Reich - a regime of intolerance - for example, with material pertaining to the 1995, United Nations “Year for Tolerance” (a year designed to generate awareness among both policy-makers and the public of the dangers associated with contemporary forms of intolerance, with the aim of inculcating tolerance)? Are similar problems hereby being identified, countered (beyond a superficial reading of the materials) by similar solutions? Secondly, where is equality in relation to tolerance in the “Year of Tolerance?” Is tolerance the inevitable outcome of the tension between freedom and equality within liberal democracy? In light of the intolerance of tolerance, is a broader equality - beyond the liberal “equality of opportunity” - the answer?

INGRID STORM

“Ethnic Religion”: Hervieu-Leger and the Study of Religious and National Identities

The work of the French sociologist Daniele Hervieu-Legér has been particularly useful for my doctoral research, both in conceptualising the research questions, and analysing the results. In this presentation, I will give a brief overview of my research to date and discuss how Hervieu-Legér’s (2000) book *Religion as a Chain of Memory* has been conceptually informative for research on religious and national identity. In sample surveys less than half the British population identify themselves as belonging to a Christian religion, and only a minority of these are practicing their faith. Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of the population think it is important to be Christian to be truly British. My doctoral research mixes methods to explore the complex relationships between religious and national identities in Western Europe. The results indicate that Christianity has cultural significance for national identity primarily as a proxy for ethnic identity. Generally, Hervieu-Legér is helpful in pointing out the general importance of collective identity and its symbols, creating a general frame of interpretation for specific associations between religious and national identity. More specifically, her concept of “Ethnic Religion” is useful for describing situations where religious identities become symbols of national and ethnic heritage rather than faith.

ALEX HENLEY

The Politics of Religious Institutions in Lebanon

My PhD proposal is built around a comparative history of two key Lebanese religious institutions, the Maronite Catholic Patriarchate and the Sunni Muslim office of Mufti of the Republic. While both are relevant to Middle Eastern political analysis, the former in the context of a growing literature on Christian minorities in the region and the latter in the context of the even more contentious debates over Islamic religious authority, I am particularly interested in these two offices as Lebanese institutions. The relationship between religion and politics in Lebanon’s peculiar confessional power-sharing “democracy” has been the subject of a good deal of scholarship, but largely from the perspectives of sectarianism among the electorate and political elites. The less easily quantifiable roles of religious leaders have tended to be overlooked, but are of interest for their political influence within their respective communities, their historic relationships with the nation and the state, and their wide transnational networks. These case studies may contribute to broader debates on secularisation theory and its alternatives, and I would be interested to hear suggestions of other religion-politics issues in which they could be framed.

CLARE GREER

Representation in Hegel

My discussion will be about the concept of *Vorstellung* (“representation”), used in Hegel in the ambiguous sense of “picture-language,” a stage between intuition and conceptual thought. I am interested in the work of Gillian Rose who refers, after Hegel, to religion as the *Vorstellung* of philosophy. The question is whether in Rose, religion (the *Vorstellung*) is overcome when philosophy sublates (*Aufhebung*) it. I compare the theological strengths and weaknesses of two readings of Rose, as Christian and as atheist. I argue that the “death of God” approach is (unintentionally) the more accurate reading of Rose’s work. I want to open a discussion about how far religious themes can be part of a Hegelian dialectic without being subsumed and distorted.

QI ZHENG

A Review Carl Schmitt's, *The Concept of the Political*

In this book, Schmitt criticizes individualistic liberalism. The reasons for his critique can be summarized as follows: First of all, individualistic liberalism has the wrong perception of the individual. To Schmitt, individuals cease to be private individuals in the public domain. Second, individualistic liberalism breaks the principle of obedience and protection which is fundamental for any serious political theory. And finally, individualistic liberalism is based on the wrong presumption of human nature. Then through the concept of "friend," Schmitt proposes his understanding of a correct relationship between the individual and state.

KYLE GINGERICH HIEBERT

Reconciling Schmitt and Metz

The explosion of interest in political theology is due, in part, to a reappropriation of the work of Carl Schmitt, a German Catholic jurist whose legacy is inextricably intertwined with his participation in the Nazi Party. However, the suggestion that the work of Johann Baptist Metz must be read alongside Schmitt for a full understanding of the emergence and enduring significance of contemporary political theology is given scant attention in the new debates. That the interrelationship between the founder (Schmitt) and re-founder (Metz) of the term "political theology" in late modernity has not been found to be significant is curious, not least because Schmitt cites Metz approvingly in *Political Theology II* and uses Metz's theological critique of society as a point of departure to reinstate his own political theology against the "Parthian attack" inflicted upon him by his one time friend Erik Peterson. By paying special attention to the apocalyptic tone that infuses and haunts their work I will attempt to call into question interpretations of Schmitt that characterize his political theology as little more than a fascist ideology that buttressed the policies of the Third Reich as well as interpretations of Metz that see his new political theology as little more than an overcoming of the Schmittian program. In the end, I will argue that Schmitt and Metz are far closer to each other than currently realized and Metz's new political theology can be read as a religious supplement to Schmitt's formalist-structural political theology.

THEODROS ASSEFA TEKLU

Cacophony in Rights Discourse: Contrasting Agamben and Benhabib

This paper contrasts two differing conceptions of Human Rights by two prominent thinkers: Giorgio Agamben and Seyla Benhabib. Agamben's inquiry in *HOMO SACER: Sovereign Power and Bare Life (1996)* focuses on the concealed point of intersection between the juridico-institutional and the biopolitical models of power. Agamben rejects human rights as a 'hypocritical dogma' and a technology of sovereign domination. For Agamben, seeking emancipation within the juridical framework is to remain imprisoned in the sphere of the sovereign. Agamben's postulation poses a problematic for those, such as Benhabib, who would like to offer constructive theories of human rights. Founded on a Kantian philosophical legacy of cosmopolitan norms, Benhabib conceives human rights as a universal ideal that transcends nation-states. She develops a concept of "democratic iterations" ("political repetitions-in-transformation") - a normative framework, which underpins human rights. Contra Agamben, Benhabib holds that liberal democracies empower and transform "docile subjects" to "public selves." Moreover, in contrast to Agamben she opts to work within the juridical framework. In brief, my paper presents some key issues of dissimilarity between the two scholars regarding rights in relation to citizenship; nationhood and statehood; humanitarianism; and the future.