

I found the day highly stimulating, and enjoyed Pete's mix of philosophical reasoning and great story-telling. His argument for a quasi-theology that stops people speaking of God in conclusive ways was compelling, as was his views on heresy and God as apocalyptic.

However, I did have some major doubts about his handling and discussion of historicity. There seemed to be an outright rejection of the possibility of historical reconstruction of any kind - which would certainly be the post-modern critique of a modern view of history, and in relation to the biblical text, it is also a common assumption of post-modern hermeneutical methodology. Yet for me belief in the historical Jesus is central to my faith, and in my view, a non-negotiable component of orthodox Christianity - without it we lose not only our ability to talk in any real terms of incarnational theology, but also the 'risen' Christ and his return? Despite Pete's fairly clear cut rejection of foundationalism, I think it is hard to escape from true claims with regard to history within the Christian tradition. To stray away from this not only loses our place in the passing on, and re-imagining of the Christian tradition, but we also lose sight of the biblical witness, where both Paul and gospels make fairly explicit claims for an historical Jesus (Luke 1 and Colossians).

Pete also seemed to suggest that the Jewish theology[s] of the OT was more concerned with telling the big story than exploring the historicity of it - I think this is a rather reductionist reading of early Jewish concepts of history. I think it is both and not either or. It seems clear that the OT text has been embellished and developed over the centuries it was passed down, but to deny that the basis of the major points in Israel's history are not necessarily based on a historical event again seems to deny the cut and thrust of Jewish belief. Exodus, inheriting the land and exile are all events that are appealed to as axiomatic in Jewish thought within both the historical writings, the Psalms and the prophets in the OT.

I also think Pete over-emphasised the idea that authentic multiple readings are possible of any given biblical text. Whilst this is certainly true of some genres of text, such as the Psalms, it is certainly not true of other types of text, such as Pauline texts, although different interpretations are possible it is hard to deny that Paul was actually trying to communicate something specific, albeit something specific for a 1st century audience. Nevertheless, this does not negate our role in trying to uncover what those specifics were. Yes we remember the glasses of our own tradition colour the text and influence our reading of it, but through dialogue with those of other Christian traditions, as well as biblical scholars, philosophy, historians and hermeneutics we strive to grasp what was said and to re-imagine that for today. This is a highly complex task, and one that will never be finished. Yet to deny it would close down the biblical text as a witness and merely highlight our own voices and traditions.

I think the above points also come into play with Pete's concept of a 'hermeneutic of love' and 'truth being a soteriological event' both being the overriding ethic for life - what is this concept of love or truth based on? Where is its 'ground of being' so to speak? I do not think it should be drawn solely from the biblical witness or from this and Christian tradition, yet these two offer us the best clues as to what that ethic may look like. I think our concept of love and truth, resulting in an experience of salvation, must conform in some way to that which is revealed and handed down to us in the biblical witness, and the Christian tradition, but it must also be informed, as Pete argued, by our own experience of Christ in the here and now, both in ourselves, our communities and the world.

Thanks Pete for a great day - and for facilitating such good discussion. I hope that moot can visit you guys sometime soon and continue the debate.