

Friday Night Theology, 9th October 2009.

Doing God

When both the politicians and the pop stars are 'doing God', you've got to feel sorry for the atheists. But so it seems to be this week as both [David Cameron](#) and [Robbie Williams](#) turn to Christianity to get their message across.

On Thursday, David Cameron's speech made a number of Biblical allusions. He told the Conservative party conference, "If you're frightened, we'll protect you. If you risk your safety to stop a crime, we'll stand by you. If you risk your life for your country, we will honour you." All of this would seem to reflect the pattern of the Beatitudes in which Jesus told us, ""Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:3-5)

And in criticising "the insatiable consumption and materialism of the past decade", Cameron also seemed to be echoing Jesus' words that "life is more important than food, the body more important than clothes." (Matthew 6:25)

Paul Woolley, Director of [Theos](#), commented on all of this: "It's perhaps surprising that party leaders should use biblical allusions when biblical literacy amongst the general public is so low, but the Bible still resonates with people, even at a subconscious level. The use of religious allusions might reflect Mr Cameron's interest in religious groups in our society, but it's also an effective way of communicating to people at a deeper level. Tony Blair understood that well."

Robbie Williams also seems to be on the same trajectory. His new single, [Bodies](#), which is due out on October 12th, has the repeated refrain:

If Jesus really died for me, Then Jesus really tried for me

Now, as with many Robbie ballads, it's not always clear exactly what he is getting at in his lyrics. For instance, towards the end of the song, he throws in this line:

*Jesus didn't die for you, what do you want?, (I want perfection),
Jesus didn't die for you, what are you on?*

It seems likely that in suggesting Jesus didn't die for us, Robbie is being ironic here (and the video would certainly suggest that). In other words, he's asking, 'If Jesus didn't die for you, then what do you want?' And the comment about perfection, which in reality is a comment about the narcissistic "*look good naked*" culture in which we live seems to suggest that the point being made is that the stark choice before us is the empty validation that comes from our image obsessed, consumer driven culture, or the real validation that comes from the crucified saviour.

Whether or not that is precisely what Robbie meant, what is clear from both his and Cameron's mining of the Christian tradition is that both our politicians and our pop-culture know that we're in a mess, and that if anyone has the answers it won't be the secularism that got us here, but might just be the Christ who narrates an alternative paradigm. Surely, something worth talking about this weekend.

Justin Thacker, Head of Theology