PAUL'S 'NEW MOMENT':
THE RECEPTION OF PAUL IN BADIOU, EAGLETON, AND ŽIŽEK

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (THEOLOGY)

Word Count: 91378

Acknowledgements

I am unable to acknowledge all those who are deserving of acknowledgement here, and I will inevitably have neglected somebody very important in the writing of this thesis and the formation of the person who is writing these acknowledgements to-day. I must first thank my supervisors for their invaluable support and guidance throughout the process of writing this thesis. It simply would not have been possible for me to have completed the project without the constant inspiration of the Rev'd Prof. Chris Rowland, nor to have completed this thesis without the confidence instilled in me by the Rev'd Prof. Graham Ward, when he joined Chris and myself towards the end of my research. Thanks must also be given to those who commented on various stages of the project: the Rev'd Prof. Christopher Tuckett, the Rev'd Prof. Mark Chapman, Prof. Werner Jeanrond, and Prof. Markus Bockmuehl. I must also acknowledge the kindness of my examiners, the Rev'd Dr. Philip Kennedy OP, and the Rev'd Prof. Timothy Gorringe, who guided me in the process of correction and revision. I must also thank those who proof-read some, or all, of this thesis. Any mistakes which remain are my own. I will forever be in the debt of Jackie Ashmenall and Dr. Mary Marshall.

This thesis was completed as I started my time as Assistant Curate of the Parish of Christ the Saviour, Ealing Broadway. I thank the entire parish, clergy house and school community for their patience, prayers, and support in the final stages of writing and examination. Fr David Birt must especially be thanked for his insistence on a new biretta. I could not have asked for a more generous allocation of time to devote to this thesis than that offered to me by the Rev'd Preb. Andrew Davis. This seems as good a place as any to acknowledge my profound gratitude for his guidance and formation as I continue in the early days of Holy Orders.

Throughout my time in Oxford I was supported by so many that I simply cannot them all. I must thank all those with whom I had the joy to share time at Keble College, and especially the community centred around Keble Chapel, which is entirely responsible for the direction my life continues to take. I would also like to acknowledge my debt to the people and parish of S. Mary Magdalen, Oxford for nurturing in me a love of the catholic potential of the Church of England, and providing a rich seedbed of catholic intellectual thought.

If one day you should ever read this and think that I should have acknowledged you, then I almost certainly should have done so, and would like to thank you (and apologise for a sin of omission). To run the risk of expressing debts of gratitude by name, and in no particular order: Anthony Apodaca, Fr Philip Corbett SSC, Fr Nicholas Edmonds-Smith Cong. Orat., Rachel Elliot, Dr. Stefan Fisher-Hoyrem, Fr Mark Fox, Fr Rob Gilbert, Fr Peter Groves, Dr Beatrice Groves, Michael Groves, Edward Groves, Dr. Joel Harrison, James Holden, Alex Hodgkinson, Br. Kentigern John SSF, Fr Jonathan Jong, Trevor Kimball, Megan Kearney, Ben Lay, Read Marlatte, the Rev'd Prof. Diarmaid MacCulloch, Gerard McHugh, Mthr Melanie Marshall, Arabella Milbank, Dr. Susan Miller, Mthr Carol Morgan, Asia Osborne, Fr Angus Ritchie, Mthr Di Rowlandson, Kyle Sawhney, Simon Schoenbuchner, Jessica Sheppard, Bishop Allen Shin, Mthr Jenn Strawbridge, Fr John Spiers, Mthr Emma Stonham, Gregory Tucker, Liliana Worth, Fr Hugh Wybrew, and so many others.

My family, whose support was invaluable in providing me the stamina for the completion of the project, must also be thanked. My mother, father, grandfather, grandmother (may she rest in peace), and my two brothers – I love you all more than I shall ever properly be able to say, and owe you for what each of you has given and sacrificed to help me at some stage. I hope that I have, and will continue to, repay those debts of love whenever need arises.

Finally, for the protection of all those whose prayers I am aware of in my daily life, especially those of S. Paul, and our Lady. I hope that this thesis provides at least a small contribution towards the Church's search for that mind which was in Christ Jesus (Phil 2.5).

To whom it may concern

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Short Abstract

This thesis traces the 'New Moment' in Pauline reception in the writings of Alain Badiou, Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Žižek. It explores how the Pauline epistles are read and feature in their thought. An answer to the question, 'why Paul?' prompts reflection on what it is to read and understand the Apostle.

An introduction sets out the writers of this 'New Moment' [Jacob Taubes, Giorgio Agamben, Stanislas Breton, as well as Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek] before isolating the figures of this study. The reception of this 'moment' by mainstream New Testament studies is considered, and with it the charge of 'appropriation'. The concept of 'appropriation' is explored, and a definition arrived at, for the purpose of evaluating the readings we will go on to discover.

As part of this notion of 'appropriation', the turn to Gadamer in recent New Testament study is surveyed. We suggest another potential hermeneutical approach that derives from Gadamer is possible. Thus, the object of this study is both an instance of, and means by which to critique the understanding of, New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte.*

Each of our thinkers is then considered in turn. The outline for each chapter is the same. A brief introduction to the figure with bibliographical background salient to his Pauline reading precedes some textual examples indicative of that reading. We then move to analyse the manner of that reading and certain conceptual problems which are revealed in the course of the engagement with Paul.

The conclusion analyses the approaches, and reasons for turning, to Paul on the part of these thinkers. Salient differences between each thinker's reading are noted and the charge of appropriation is evaluated afresh. The implications of such readings for conventional biblical criticism are considered, and the success of an approach which explores a Gadamerean-inspired interest in reception in the manner adopted by this thesis is judged.

Long Abstract

In this thesis, I seek to trace the 'New Moment' in Pauline reception in the writings of Alain Badiou, Terry Eagleton and Slavoj Žižek. This moment ('named' through an interaction involving Žižek with John Milbank, Creston Davis and Catherine Pickstock) sees the production of several readings of Paul and Pauline themes produced by those from whom such a reading appears at first unlikely.[1] This thesis seeks to explore the manner in which Paul is read and features in the thought of these figures as a means to answering the question 'why Paul?'. An answer to this question prompts reflection on what it is to read and understand the Apostle.

An introduction sets out the writers that make up this 'New Moment' [Jacob Taubes, Giorgio Agamben, in addition to Stanislas Breton, as well as Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek], before arguing for the consistency of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek as a distinct sub-group to be read together in their own right.[2] The selection of this group as an object of study is rare but not unique, and the reasons for their joint consideration are not often given in those studies which do so.[3]

We seek to demonstrate that it is through Zizek's bringing the Pauline reading of Badiou to the attention of an Anglophone audience, and Eagleton's response to that reading, which is the ground for their identification as a 'sub-group'. This genealogy also makes for a fruitful means of comparison between the readings offered – a comparison which serves to highlight shared features between these thinkers and also the distinctive elements of the readings of each.

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1 Milbank, J., Žižek, S., Davis, C., *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Michigan: Brazos Press 2010).

2 Taubes, J., *The Political Theology of Paul* (trans. Hollander, D.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2004) [orig. *Die Politische Theologie des Paulus* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1993)]; Agamben, G., *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (trans. Dailey, P.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005) [orig. *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani* (Bollati Boringhieri 2000]; Breton, S., *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* (trans. Ballan, J. N.)(Chichester: Columbia University Press 2011) [orig. *Saint Paul* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1988)].

3 cf. Packman, C.,'The Perverse Core of Christianity' in *The Philosopher's Magazine 48* (1st March 2010) 87 – 91; cf. Ward, G., *The Politics of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press 2009) 156, 177; Griffiths, P. J., 'Christ and Critical Theory' in *First Things* (August/September 2004) 45 – 54.

We then turn to consider the manner in which this 'moment' has been received by mainstream New Testament studies in a number of essays and publications.[4] We find there a charge of 'appropriation' of the Pauline text on the part of the writers of the 'New Moment'. The concept of 'appropriation' is considered, and a definition arrived at, for the purposes of evaluating the readings we will go on to explore.

As part of this notion of 'appropriation' we consider the turn to Gadamer in recent New Testament study, and suggest that the manner in which the Gadamerean concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* is being understood in this field is at odds with another potential hermeneutical approach deriving from Gadamer.[5] The study of these readings is therefore both an instance of, and means by which to critique the understanding of, New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte.* This aspect of Gadamerean theory thus functions as a critical apparatus for the thesis as a whole.

This theory, and its focus on the tradition in which an interpreter stands, enables us to consider what we learn of the manner in which that tradition affects the reading of each reader of Paul. It also provides the lens through which we are able to analyse the reception of the 'New Moment' on the part of conventional New Testament studies and become aware of the tradition and foci of that discipline.

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4 e.g. Gignac, A., 'Taubes, Badiou, Agamben: Reception of Paul by Non-Christian Philosophers Today', in Odell-Scott, D. (ed.), *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* (New York: T&T Clark: 2007); Caputo, J. D., Alcoff, L. (eds.), *St Paul Among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2009); Harink, D., *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek and others* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade 2010).

5 Gadamer, H. G., *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum 2004); orig. *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1960); *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (London: University of California Press 2008); cf. Räisänen, H., 'The Effective "History" of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship' in *Scottish Journal of Theology 45* (1992) 303 – 324; Bockmuehl, M., 'A Commentator's Approach to the "Effective History" of Philippians' in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament 18* (1996) 57 – 88; 'New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Early Christian Appeal to Living Memory' in Stuckenbruck, L., Barton, S.,Wold, B., *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007) 341 – 361; cf. Childs, B., 'Alternative Proposals for the Problem of Interpretation' in *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2008); Nicholls, R., 'Is *Wirkungsgeschichte* (or Reception History) a kind of intellectual *Parkour* (or Free Running?)' [available at http://bbibcomm.net/news/nicholls.pdf (accessed 21st September 2010)]; Nicholls, R., *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt 14.22-33 in Light of Its* Wirkungsgeschichte (Brill: Leiden 2007); Luz, U., *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1994); *Matthew* (Vols. 1-4) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007) especially 'On the Intention of This Commentary and on the Hermeneutical Significance of the History of the Text's Influence' in *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007) 60 – 66; 'The Significance of the Church Fathers for Biblical Interpretation in Western Protestant Perspective' in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 290 – 312; 'Canonical Exegesis and Hermeneutics of "Effective History"' in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 333-348; 'Hermeneutics of "Effective History" and the Church' in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans 2005) 349 – 369. The general trend to be observed in the interpretation of *Wirkungsgeschichte* is towards the direction of the hermeneneutics of Jauss cf. Parris, D. *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Eugene: Pickwick 2009).

The foci of conventional New Testament studies are revealed to be on the 'historical' and a restriction of the frame of context for interpretation. This restriction refuses, *contra* Gadamer, to allow the interpreter's own context to enter the frame of reference of interpretation.

It will be shown that the reception of the 'New Moment' itself suggests that the frame of reference of the interpreter (including the practitioner of conventional New Testament studies) is allowed to influence the task of reading the New Testament more than those practitioners themselves recognise – particularly in the case of the refutation of the possibility of 'atheistic' readings of Paul which are the main focus of this thesis.

We then move to consider each of our thinkers in turn. The outline for each chapter is broadly the same. We offer a brief introduction to the figure in question with salient intellectual biography for the purposes of understanding his reading of Paul. We then move to some textual examples which are indicative of the manner in which he reads Paul, before moving to analyse that manner, and in turn certain conceptual problems which are revealed by the reading.

In the chapter on Badiou, we first introduce the context of Badiouan thought against which Badiou's reading is made and trace the interest which Badiou has demonstrated in the Apostle earlier in his career.[6] We then introduce the manner in which Badiou reads Paul through a number of textual examples in order to analyse the charge of appropriation and the manner of Badiou's interpretation of Paul. This enables us to consider the charge of Marcionism which has been made against his interpretation (and against features of Badiouan thought more generally), and also the nature and influence of Badiou's atheism on that interpretation. Finally, we consider the place of the Resurrection in Badiou's Pauline reading, and the manner in which his focus on novelty impacts on the possibility of historical criticism. This enables us to consider the hermeneutical implications of Badiou's reading and reception of Paul.

[6] Badiou, A., *The Incident at Antioch: A Tragedy in Three Acts/L'Incident d'Antioche: Tragédie en trois actes* (trans. Spitzer, S.) (Chichester: Columbia University Press 2013) [originally written 1982].

In the chapter on Eagleton, we demonstrate his ‘historic’ engagement with Paul in his early theological career through *Slant* – a leftist Catholic journal originating in Cambridge. We survey the Paul that appears on the pages of that journal – the context in which Eagleton's early theological engagement was formed – before moving to consider passages of Paul which occur frequently in Eagleton’s reading. From this we discover four associated concepts which provide the foci of Eagleton's reading of Paul – ‘law’; ‘dying-every-moment’; the scapegoat; and the flesh/spirit distinction – each of which is analysed. This analysis reveals an Eagletonian theory of the atonement which serves to demonstrate an unresolved tension in Eagleton’s work for which Paul provides the answer. This tension also helps us to explain the reasons for Eagleton's turn to Paul and provides a further means by which to consider the charge of appropriation.

Finally, in the chapter on Žižek, we outline the backdrop against which Žižek's reading of Paul emerges, namely the concept of Christianity with which Žižek operates and its construction in opposition to his concept of Judaism. This concept of Christianity is analysed, and the passages of Paul which make up Žižek's Pauline reading are surveyed. Žižek’s reading of Paul is analysed through the conceptual lenses which emerge as the foci of that reading and the concepts of 'law'; 'love' and the nature of universalism are surveyed. We move to consider why Žižek turns to Paul at all and attempt to challenge a dominant theory which sets his turn to Paul alongside a perceived turn to Lenin.

A conclusion follows which draws together the results of these readings by first analysing common approaches to and reasons for the turn to Paul which will have been observed in the previous pages. We move to note the salient differences between the readings of this sub-group and in doing so find a surprising echo of the Sacred Triduum in the foci of each of their readings of Paul. These foci are the centrality of the crucifixion (Good Friday) in the reading of Žižek; the descent to the depths of hell (Holy Saturday) in the reading of Eagleton; and the Resurrection (Easter Sunday) in the reading of Badiou. We find that these foci themselves are evidence of the distinctiveness of each of their readings and enables us further to understand the relation the thought of each has to the others.

Finally, we attempt to evaluate the charge of appropriation afresh in the light of these readings by surveying the reasons for and the manner of each of their Pauline readings. We move to consider the implications of such readings for conventional biblical criticism through what the reading of each of our readers reveals about the interrelationship between reader and act of reading. We are then able to judge the success of an approach which explores a Gadamerean-inspired interest in reception in the manner adopted by this thesis.

PAUL'S 'NEW MOMENT':

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1. Introduction

We stand in what has been described as Paul's 'New Moment'.[1] This 'Moment' is the discovery (or re-discovery) of the writings of Paul by a group of left-wing philosophical writers for whom 'the writings of St. Paul have become... a touchstone for radical thought'.[2]

The figures of this 'New Moment' stand outside the tradition/s of interpretation which have culminated in the exegetical methods and hermeneutical assumptions that govern modern New Testament scholarship. The writers of the 'New Moment' show limited and varying awareness of such scholarship.

As a result, the reception of the 'New Moment' (as an intervention from beyond the guild of New Testament Studies) has met with a mixed, and sometimes hostile, reception from that guild. In this climate, this thesis seeks to critically analyse the reception of Paul which makes up Paul's 'New Moment'.

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1 Žižek, S., Milbank, J., Davis, C. (eds.), *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press 2010).

2 Delpech-Ramey, J., 'An Interview with Slavoj Žižek "On Divine Self-Limitation and Revolutionary Love"' in the *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* (1.2) (Spring 2004) 32 – 38, 32.

We begin with a description of the 'New Moment' and survey the writers who are commonly associated with this recent interest in Paul (§1.1). We note that the description of this 'Moment' as 'New' is a potentially misleading description. We then isolate the three figures who comprise the object of study of this thesis: Alain Badiou, Terry Eagleton, and Slavoj Žižek (§1.2).

We then move to explore the manner in which the 'New Moment' has been received by mainstream New Testament studies (§1.3) and consider an illuminating parallel concerning the institutional politics of reading in a late work of Kant. We uncover a sustained charge of 'appropriation' made against these readers of Paul. Since the term 'appropriation' is used by critics with little or no development of what is meant by the term, a central theme of this thesis will be a consideration of the concept of 'appropriation' itself. This will provide means by which to judge whether a charge of 'appropriation' against the readers of the 'New Moment' can be upheld. A fuller evaluation of the charge will come after our analyses of the readings themselves (§5.2). A working understanding of the term will suffice for our initial analysis of these readings and will be given in our introduction (§1.4).

Both the charge of 'appropriation' levelled against them, and also the nature of the readings of the 'New Moment' themselves, make the concept of the 'reception' of a text another central theme of this thesis. We shall consider one important stream of 'reception' studies which has gained recent prominence within the mainstream of New Testament study, namely the Gadamerean hermeneutical concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (§1.4). As with the concept of 'appropriation', a fuller discussion of this theme will be reserved for after our discussion of the readings of the 'New Moment' themselves (§5.1, 5.5).

The reception of Gadamerean theory within New Testament studies will also reveal a parallel to the reception of the 'New Moment' within that field, and therefore offers us an important means of understanding the reception of the 'New Moment' itself. We shall observe that the dominant understanding of terms of Gadamerean hermeneutics, as they are being used and applied within the field of New Testament studies, appears at odds with the sense in which they appear within Gadamer's hermeneutical theory. The manner in which this is so is revealing for the task of understanding the reception of the 'New Moment' within the field of New Testament studies.

Moreover, Gadamer's theory itself provides us with a means of evaluating the readings of the 'New Moment'. We suggest that another hermeneutically informed mode of reception-study is available, which finds its basis in Gadamer, than that which currently holds sway in New Testament studies. This hermeneutic perspective will provide a framework for understanding both the reception of Paul as it is found in the thought of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek and also the wider implications of their readings for New Testament study. This forms the basis of our evaluation of these readings and forms the main contribution of this thesis.

Each of our main chapters is devoted to a single thinker of the sub-branch of the genealogy of the 'New Moment' which we have outlined as our object of study. Chapter 2 considers the reading of Alain Badiou; chapter 3, that of Terry (Terence) Eagleton; and chapter 4, that of Slavoj Žižek. The outline for each chapter is broadly the same. We begin by offering a brief introduction to the figure with salient intellectual biography for the purposes of understanding their reading of Paul. We then move to some textual examples which are indicative of the manner in which they read Paul, before analysing that manner, and, where appropriate, considering certain conceptual problems for reading the New Testament, which are revealed by the reception of Paul in the work of the reader in question.[3]

[3] Žižek calls on historically-motivated exegetes to go further and historicise the very conceptual apparatus with

A conclusion brings together the results of our research. We return to the Gadamerean concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, especially as a means for evaluating the readings of Pauline texts in our study (§5.4, 5.5). We evaluate the reasons for Paul's 'New Moment' as evidenced in each of our writers (§5.1), in order to establish whether there are sufficient conditions for the charge of 'appropriation' to hold. We then attempt an answer to the question 'Why Paul?', before bringing together the results of our investigation as to the manner in which Paul is received in these readings(§5.2). We especially note the individual emphases of our three writers as a means to highlight the distinctions between each of their readings (§5.3).[4] The implications of these emphases are considered as a guard against overlooking the distinct focus in the Pauline readings of each of our figures.

Finally, we consider what our study has revealed about the 'meaning' of Paul for each of our writers (§5.5) and what this shows us about the concept of 'meaning' more generally. It is at this point that Gadamer's hermeneutical insight is most strongly felt. A final section considers the possible implications that this combination of reflection on the Pauline 'New Moment' and a Gadamerean-type hermeneutic might have (§5.6). We consider the possibility of readings receptive to the voices of those from the margins of, and from outside, conventional New Testament study, which might impact on the business of reading the Apostle who remains all things to all people in order to save some (cf. 1 Cor 9.22).

which they operate. [Žižek, S., 'Concluding Roundtable' in Caputo, J. D., Alcoff, J. M. (eds.) *St. Paul Among the Philosophers* (Indiana: Indiana University Press 2009) 160 – 183, 173.] Our consideration of these conceptual problems is a step toward this task.

[4] In the individual emphases of these writers we find a resemblance to the three days of the Sacred Triduum (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday). This resemblance further serves to distinguish between the readings of each of our writers, but also highlights the particular theological nuance of each [§5.3].

The combination of our enquiry into the modern interpretation of ancient texts and our application of Gadamerean theory, as a critical means of analysing that interpretation, situates this thesis within the field of philosophical hermeneutics.[5] We are interested in the process of interpretation that can be observed as these interpreters read the Pauline text.

Our survey of the reception of Paul in Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek (and the reception of that reception within conventional New Testament scholarship) provides us with an opportunity to observe the means by which understanding is sought and achieved across different interpretative traditions. We will therefore seek to set out the interpretative tradition/s in which each of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek stand, in order to evaluate the influence of those traditions on their interpretation of Paul. The reception of their readings within conventional New Testament study, a distinct tradition of interpretation, will offer us an additional means of evaluating the extent to which the present standing of the interpreter impacts upon the reading produced. We will come to conclude that the present standing of the interpreter is as important, if not more important, than the historical context in which the text was produced (and in which the author wrote) in the task of interpreting a text. Our thesis is, therefore, that the readings of the 'New Moment' demonstrate that understanding is achieved as much by the application of the text to the present, as by the reconstruction of the historical conditions in which the text was produced. The consequences of this for the historical-critical method will be a recurring theme of this thesis.

[5] The term 'philosophical hermeneutics' is the term for hermeneutical enquiry favoured by Gadamer. It indicates the descriptive nature of Gadamerean hermeneutical theory. Gadamer, H. G., *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Linge, D. trans.) (London: University of California Press 2008). See §1.5 below.

1.1 Paul's 'New Moment'

We now outline the standard account of the 'New Moment' and trace those figures with whom the term has been associated before introducing their readings of Paul. We then isolate the readings of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek as our objects of study.

The figures which have become associated with this 'New Moment' are, in broadly chronological order: Jacob Taubes in his *The Political Theology of Paul*; Stanislas Breton in his *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*; Alain Badiou in *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*; Slavoj Žižek in an increasing number of works but notably in *The Ticklish Subject*; Giorgio Agamben in *The Time That Remains*; and Terry (Terence) Eagleton in a number of his recent works including *On Evil* and *The Trouble with Strangers*.[6]

This proliferation of philosophical interest in Paul must be explained. It comes as a surprise to many that a collection of writers, cultural theorists, and philosophers within the so-called 'continental' tradition have demonstrated *any* interest in the writings of Paul.[7]

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[6] Taubes, J., *The Political Theology of Paul* (trans. Hollander, D.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2004) [orig. *Die Politische Theologie des Paulus* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1993)]; Breton, S., *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* (trans. Ballan, J. N.) (Chichester: Columbia University Press 2011) [orig. *Saint Paul* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1988)]; Badiou, A., *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003) [orig. *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France 1997)]; Žižek, S., 'The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso 1999) 145 – 197. This marks the beginning of Žižek's inclusion within the 'New Moment' but his engagement is found across a number of works (see §4.1ff.); cf. Sigurdson, O., 'Reading Žižek Reading Paul: Pauline Interventions in Radical Philosophy' in Odell-Scott, D. (ed.), *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* (London: T&T Clark 2007) 213 – 245, 228: '[Žižek has] not written a full-length book on Paul'; Agamben, G., *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (trans. Dailey, P.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005) [orig. *Il tempo che resta. Un commento alla Lettera ai Romani* (Bollati Boringhieri 2000)]. Eagleton's engagement occurs across a number of works, see below §3.1ff. This list of authors includes those readers of Paul ordinarily interested in philosophy and philosophical themes. It is not exhaustive but includes all those who have been so grouped. The readings of Breton and Eagleton are less often recognised as part of this phenomenon, and thus appear less frequently in discussion.

[7] Sigurdson, 'Reading', 213: 'philosophical interest in Paul is not self-evident'; cf. Odell-Scott, D., 'Introduction: Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians' in Odell-Scott (ed.) *Reading Romans*, 1 – 19, 2 – 3: 'Who would have thought thirty years ago that self-identified "secular" philosophers in Europe would write studies of the epistles of Paul?'

To explain this, we must consider the broader turn to religion which can be observed among those writing in the field of cultural theory and so-called 'continental' philosophy.[8] This turn has become so widely acknowledged that to introduce it as a theme is to speak of 'the dominant cliché of contemporary theory'.[9]

However, whilst Paul's 'New Moment' can be seen within, and constitutive of, this 'turn to religion', this turn to religion is not itself a sufficient condition for the turn to Paul with which we are concerned. A turn to religion, and, further, to Christianity, need not imply a turn to Paul. It is not difficult to think of reasons why the Apostle might *not* be attractive for a modern philosophical project (based on his putative homophobia, misogyny and so on). Therefore, further reasons for this resurgence in Pauline interest must be found. These reasons can be uncovered only through consideration of the writings of the 'New Moment' themselves.

The term 'New Moment' derives from the title of a collection of essays published as *Paul's New Moment* in 2010 and edited by John Milbank, Creston Davis and Slavoj Žižek.[10] However, this work is not really indicative of a "new moment" in Pauline interpretation at all. Firstly, the remit of the volume is wider than, and not limited to, Paul. The contribution of Catherine Pickstock in this volume, an essay on the subject of the senses' involvement in liturgy, indicates this wider remit.[11]

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8 Lyotard, J-F., Gruber, E., *The Hyphen Between Judaism and Christianity* (trans. Brault, B-A.; Naas, M.) (New York: Humanity Books 1999) [orig. *Un trait d'union* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble 1993)]; Derrida, J., Vattimo, G. (eds.), *Religion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998); de Vries, H., *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press 1999); Janicaud, H. (ed.), *Phenomenology and the "Theological Turn": the French Debate* (New York: Fordham 2000) (orig. *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* (Paris: Éditions de l'Éclat 1991); Hoezl, M., Ward, G. (eds.), *The New Visibility of Religion* (London: Continuum 2008); cf. Sigurdson, 'Reading', 213. For the example and role of the 'messianic' in such a turn see: Bradley, A., Fletcher, P. (eds.), *The Politics to Come: Power, Modernity and the Messianic* (London: Continuum 2010).

9 Critchley, S., 'Mystical anarchism' in *Critical Horizons* (10:2) (2009) 272 – 306, 272: 'the dominant cliché of contemporary theory'; cf. Watkin, C., *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillasoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2011) 8.

10 Milbank, Žižek, Davis (eds.), *New Moment.*

11 Pickstock, C., 'Liturgy and the Senses' in *Milbank, Žižek, Davis* (eds.), *New Moment*, 125 – 145.

Secondly, beyond this wider remit, *Paul's New Moment* is also not really a "new" work in Pauline interpretation. The most substantial contribution in this volume to the 'New Moment' proper, the essay by Žižek entitled 'Paul and the Truth Event', is in fact not 'new' at all.[12] Rather, this essay is reprinted with little alteration from a work of Žižek's over a decade earlier: 'The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul'.[13] Therefore, the origins of Paul's 'New Moment' are not to be found in this volume.

The beginning of the 'New Moment' of Pauline reception is widely taken to be the reading of Paul found in the edited transcript of lectures given at the University of Heidelberg by Jacob Taubes between February 23 and 27 1987 and published as *The Political Theology of Paul*.[14] In these lectures, Taubes pursued an excited and urgent commentary on Paul's epistle to the Romans, an intellectual testament before his death shortly thereafter.[15]

However, whilst this will prove to have been Taubes' last engagement with the Apostle, it was, importantly, by no means his first. Therefore, the prevailing narrative which see Taubes' "discovery" of the Apostle in these lectures, and with them the start of the 'New Moment' and the reactivation of Paul as a philosophical resource, fails to account for the phenomenon at hand.

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12 Žižek, S., 'Paul and the Truth Event' in Milbank, Žižek, Davis (eds.), *New Moment*, 74 – 99.

13 Žižek, *Ticklish Subject,* 145 – 197; see §4.2 below.

14 Bullimore, M., 'The Political Resurrection of Saint Paul' in *Telos 136* (Spring 2006) 173 – 182, 173: 'Some recent philosophers, however, have noticed him... Jacob Taubes was one of the first to do so'; Crossley, J., *Reading the New Testament: Contemporary Approaches* (Abingdon: Routledge 2010) 99: 'the most immediate influence has been... the late Jacob Taubes'; Blanton, W., *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007) begins with an analysis of Taubes setting him in this role as originator viz. the state of disciplinary boundaries.

15 Taubes, *Theology,* 1.

Moreover, as we shall demonstrate by way of an example below, Taubes' engagement is manifestly not the first philosophical interaction with the Apostle. There are important forerunners which are currently underemphasised in the surrounding scholarly narratives and give us cause to question both the appropriateness of the language of 'turn' in this reception of Paul and the newness of this 'New Moment'. There are thus problems with both prongs of the narrative that sees the 'New Moment' beginning with Taubes *Political Theology* and it must be modified if it is to explain the origins of the 'New Moment'.

Firstly, the prevailing narrative does not take account of Taubes' earlier and sustained Pauline engagement.[16] We find such engagement from the outset of, and throughout, his career.[17] The *Political Theology* therefore does not represent a sudden turn to Paul on the part of even Taubes himself.[18]

Secondly, to view Taubes as inaugurating the 'New Moment' requires a narrative of a hiatus in philosophical engagement with Paul. In this narrative, Taubes is seen not only as this founding figure, but the *Political Theology* is also read as a return to philosophical engagement with Paul which had been silent since Nietzsche.[19] It is not difficult to question this narrative of hiatus.

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[16] Nor indeed Taubes' own earlier lecture courses on the Apostle and 1 Corinthians. See Assman, 'Preface', 143.

[17] Taubes, J., *Occidental Eschatology* (trans. Ratmoko, D.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009) [orig. *Abendländische Eschatologie* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 1947)] 58 – 65 ('Paul and the Unraveling of the Ancient World') and *passim.*; 'The Issue Between Judaism and Christianity: Facing Up to the Unresolvable Difference (1953)' in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2010) 45 – 60; 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 57; 'Religion and the Future of Psychoanalysis (1957)' in Taubes, *Cult*, 334 – 343; 'Martin Buber and the Philosophy of History (1963)' in Taubes, *Cult*, 10 – 27, 11, 12, 18, 20, 21; 'The Justification of Ugliness in Early Christian Tradition (1968) in Taubes, *Cult*, 76 – 97; 'Letter to Carl Schmitt, September 18, 1979' in 'Appendix B' in *Political Theology*, 110 – 113, 112; 'The Price of Messianism (1983)' in Taubes, *Cult*, 3 – 9, 4 – 6; 'On the Current State of Polytheism' (1983) in Taubes, *Cult,* 302 – 314, 312; 'The Iron Cage and Exodus from It, or the Dispute over Marcion, Then and Now' (1984) 137 – 146, 140, 142.

[18] The sustained nature of Taubes' interest in Paul is also demonstrated in a letter dated February 14, 1952 to Armin Mohler , both by the date of reference and also Taube's claim at the end of the letter where he describes how he is lead 'again and again – against my "will" to Paul'. [Taubes, J., 'Appendix B' in Taubes, *Political Theology,* 107 – 110; also Taubes, J. to Mohler, A., 14 February 1952 in Taubes, J., *Ad Carl Schmitt: Gegenstrebige Fügung* (Berlin: Merve, 1987) 31 – 35].

[19] Bullimore, 'Political', 173; Sigurdson, 'Reading', 215 – 6; referring to Nietzsche, F., *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* (trans. Hollingdale, R.)(Clark, M., Leiter, B. (eds.)) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997) esp. 40 – 44 [orig. *Morgenröthe: Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile* (Leipzig: B. G.

The often overlooked reading of Pauline texts (Galatians and 2 Thessalonians) found in the early output of Martin Heidegger serve as just one example with which to question the narrative of hiatus. These readings are found printed in the *Phenomenology of the Religious Life* and take the form of a (reconstructed) lecture series given across the Winter Semester 1920 – 1921. These lectures manifest nascent themes developing in the early Heidegger.[20] The general lack of awareness of these lectures is caused in part by the fragmentary nature of their remains in lecture notes and handouts, and Heidegger's apparent desire for them to be omitted from the start of his collected works. They remain an under-considered resource both for Pauline reception and the study of Heidegger more broadly.[21]

Jennings notes that Heidegger's reading of Paul serves as an example of a philosophical engagement which predates Taubes, and therefore interrupts the narrative of silence on the part of philosophers concerning Paul in the period between Taubes and Nietzsche. However, he claims Heidegger 'inaugurates the philosophical reappraisal'.[22] This language of 'inaugurates' and 'reappraisal' is also suggestive of a qualitative break between Nietzsche and Heidegger's engagement with the Apostle. Whilst Jennings' use of the terms reflects Heidegger's own distancing of himself from the Nietzschean Paul, emphasis on the fact that Heidegger is reacting *to* Nietzsche is sufficient to place them in a stream of reception of the Apostle.[23]

Teubner 1881)]. Nietzsche sees Paul as 'the *first Christian*, the inventor of Christianness! Before him there were only a few Jewish sectarians' (42).

[20] Heidegger, M., *The Phenomenology of the Religious Life* (trans. Fritsch, M.; Gosetti-Ferencei, J. A.)(Indiana: Indiana University Press) esp. 47 – 114. Themes first raised here will go on to be explored in further depth in his *Being and Time* (trans. Stambaugh, J.) (Albany: SUNY Press 1996) [orig. (Tübingen: Max Verlag 1953)].

[21] See Kisiel, T., *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time (London: University of California Press 1995); Kisiel, T. 'Heidegger (1920-21) on Becoming a Christian: A Conceptual Picture Show' in *Reading Heidegger from the Start* (New York: State University of New York University Press 1994) 172 – 194; Brejdak, J., '*Philosophia Crucis*: The Influence of Paul on Heidegger's Phenomenology' in *A Companion to Heidegger's* Phenomenology of Religious Life (eds. McGrath, S.J. and Wiercinski, A) (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V. 2010) 209-218; Bruun, L., 'Back to the future: Reading Heidegger reading Paul' in *The Bible and Critical Theory* 5.1 (2009) 2.1–2.14; Klassen, 'Heidegger's Paul', 64 – 89; Blanton, *Displacing*, 105 – 128.

[22] Jennings, T., 'Paul and Sons: (Post-modern Thinkers Reading Paul)' in Odell-Scott (ed.) *Reading Romans,* 85 – 114, 91. He also points ['Sons', 91] to Spinoza's earlier (1670) reading of Paul in Spinoza, B., *Theological Political Treatise* (trans. Shirley, S.) (Indianopolis: Hackett 2001) as a forerunner to these philosophical engagements.

[23] Heidegger, *Religious,* 86; Jennings, 'Sons', 91.

However, an analysis of Heidegger's Pauline interpretation is beyond the scope of this thesis. For our purposes, consideration of Heidegger's *Phenomenology* is sufficient for us to note that the philosophical interpretation of Paul "re-emerges" before Taubes' *Political Theology* and even before Taubes' own earlier engagements with the Apostle.

Thirdly, and finally, the identification of the 'New Moment' as beginning with Taubes fails to make sense of the 'New Moment' from within those readings themselves. The early Pauline readings of Badiou and Žižek do not make reference to Taubes or his *Political Theology*.[24] The earliest reference to Taubes we have been able to find in Badiou or Žižek is in Žižek's (2001) collection of writings of Lenin.[25]

Rather, as we shall see, Žižek's Pauline engagement begins not in relation to Taubes but in response to Badiou.[26] Badiou's own Pauline engagement is itself an independent and equally life-long one.[27] Thus, Badiou and Žižek do not, at the start of their Pauline engagement, stand in direct succession to the reading of Paul by Taubes. We must therefore explain how it is they all come to be associated under the same banner of the Pauline 'New Moment'.

Before attempting this description, we must first seek to explain the reasons behind Taubes' acclamation as the inaugurator of the 'New Moment'. Two reasons suggest themselves and combine to explain why Taubes' *Political Theology* is singled out for this acclaim, and also why a narrative of philosophical silence on Paul between Nietszsche and that reading may seem credible.

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[24] Reference to Taubes is also absent from Breton, *Radical.* Meanwhile, in contrast, Heidegger is mentioned early on: Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.

[25] Žižek, S., 'Lenin's Choice' in Lenin, V. *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917* (London: Verso 2004) 165 – 336, 316n38. Even this engagement, which calls Taubes' work 'outstanding', confines mention of it to a single footnote.

[26] Žižek, 'Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul'.

[27] See below §2.1.

Concerning the former, Ratmoko notes in the preface to the English translation of Taubes' *Occidental Eschatology* that at the time of publication (2009) the *Political Theology* was Taubes' 'only book available in English to date'.[28] It would take another 5 years before the translation into English of other works by Taubes would bring wider exposure to predominantly Anglophone scholarship.[29] As a result, *Political Theology* was for many the first (and may remain their only) exposure to Taubes' work. This fact alone may be enough to account for Taubes' acclamation as the founder of this 'Moment'.

However, above mere availability in translation and print, Taubes' own description of his task in the *Political Theology* lends itself to an interpretation of these lectures as an inaugural venture in the engagement of philosophers and other 'non-theologians' with Paul. Taubes repeatedly claims that he is encroaching on the space of New Testament scholars and theologians and maintains his status as a non-theologian.[30] His language at times can appear to indicate an interest in the Apostle which is newly expressed in this lecture series:

> 'where little Jacob Taubes comes along and enters into the business of gathering the heretic (Paul) back into the fold'.[31]

Taubes' battle call is also indicative of a new beginning as he calls on his audience to:

> 'Begin anew to interpret Paul!'[32]

However, as we have seen, this language is not an accurate indicator of Taubes' own Pauline engagement if taken merely at face value.

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[28] Ratmoko, D. ,'Preface' in Taubes, J., *Occidental Eschatology* (trans. Ratmoko, D.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2009) [orig. *Abendländische Eschatologie* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz 1947)] xi – xxiii, xii.

[29] Parallels can be made here between Badiou's description of the fate of his play published as Badiou, *Incident* and the reasons for its 'discovery', see *Incident*, viii – ix.

[30] Taubes, *Theology,* 1 – 2: 'I must say right from the outset that all that I plan to say here as nothing to do with the Paul who is practised in the theology departments' (2).

[31] Taubes, *Theology*, 11.

[32] Taubes, *Theology,* 95.

We have already described in broad terms the readings of Paul which have been numbered amongst the 'New Moment'. Of these, Agamben's *Time That Remains* cements Taubes' image as the founder of this 'Moment', since it is to Taubes that Agamben dedicates the work.[33] Moreover, Taubes' reading is a sustained object of Agamben's focus.[34] It is as much through the reading of Agamben that Taubes' reading is grafted into this stream of philosophically-orientated interpretation of Paul, as it is due to the content of the *Political Theology* itself.

By questioning Taubes' foundational status for the 'New Moment', we have laid the ground work for the identification of a sub-group of Paul's 'New Moment' which isolates Badiou's reading of the Apostle as a central focus within this stream of philosophical interpretation of Scripture. We now seek to isolate that sub-group as our object of study.

[33] Agamben, *Time*, 3.
[34] Agamben, *Time,* 2 – 4, 33 – 37, 55, 104, 140 – 1.

1.2 Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek – Why These Three?

This section serves to explain our isolation of these three figures. We have already questioned the 'newness' of the 'New Moment' above by pointing to previous examples of philosophical engagement with Paul. The breadth of such engagement itself demands a narrowing of scope. It is also the case that, within these 'New Moment' readings, a distinct genealogy can be identified stemming from the Pauline reading of Badiou. This genealogy, as we have seen, parallels and becomes united with that stemming through Taubes and Agamben as Paul's 'New Moment'.[35]

The grounds for this isolation is threefold. Firstly, we have already noted that Žižek and Badiou produce readings of Paul *before* any evidence of Žižek or Badiou's awareness of Taubes is found in their output. Rather, Badiou's reading of Paul (the genesis of which will be explained in §2.1 below) is responsible for Žižek's reading. We remember that Žižek's reading of Paul is first found in 'The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul' (see below §4.1 – 2). Žižek and Badiou are then responsible for Eagleton's (re-)engagement with the Apostle (see below §3.8).

Secondly, and relatedly, there is the relation between the readings of Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton which is reflected by cross-reference and mutual engagement with the respective ideas of each. Badiou features more prominently here as one to whom each figure relates, in a manner similar to the debt Agamben demonstrates to Taubes as a central point of reference.

[35] Agamben, *Time*, 51 – 52 refers to Badiou's *Universalism* but there is no sign of sustained engagement with Badiou's text.

Thirdly, Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton can be isolated from Taubes and Agamben in terms of their relation to the philosopher and jurist Carl Schmitt.[36] Agamben's distance from Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton, and even Taubes, comes from his rejection of a universalising reading of Paul.[37] Taubes had identified a concern for the universal as the thrust of Pauline thought:

'About this *pas, pan* in Paul one ought to think a great deal; this is a key word'.[38]

The readings of Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton each tend toward the universal. We recall the title of Badiou's work which hails Paul as the *Foundation of Universalism.*

Agamben's work, meanwhile, both in *The Time That Remains* and elsewhere, takes up and develops Schmitt's famous definition of sovereignty based on the state of exception.[39] Agamben's reading of Paul focuses on such exception through Agamben's rejection (or amendment) of a universalising interpretation of Paul. Agamben prefers to read Paul as operating with the notion of an Appelle's cut – a new division and grafting of a chosen people – to that of the possibility of a universal access to salvation.[40]

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[36] It is not that our subgroup are unaware or do not mention Schmitt's work, but that his influence is less strongly felt in terms of shared ideas. The objects of study of this thesis prefer thought that tends, in varying degrees, toward the universal over the exception; cf. Žižek, S., '*Homo Sacer* in Afghanistan' in *Lacanian Ink 20* (2002).

[37] Indeed, he expressly sets his reading against that of Badiou: "At this point one can measure the distance that separates the Pauline operation from modern universalism – when something like the humanity of man, for example, is taken as the principle that abolishes all difference or as the ultimate difference, beyond which further division is is impossible. This is how... Badiou is able to think about Paul's universalism... [However] For Paul, it is not a matter of "tolerating" or getting past differences in order to pinpoint a sameness or a universal lurking beyond. The universal is not a transcendent principle through which differences may be perceived – such a principle of transcendence is not available to Paul." [Agamben, *Remains*, 52].

[38] Taubes, *Political Theology*, 25, 51; cf. Agamben, *Remains*, 55.

[39] Agamben, *Remains*, 105 – 112; Agamben, G., *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1998) [orig. *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Giulio Einaudi 1995)]. Schmitt's exceptional definition of sovereignty famously opens his *Political Theology*: 'Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception' [Schmitt, C., *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2005) 5].

[40] Agamben, *Remains*, 50 – 57.

Whilst Taubes' reading differs from Agamben's in terms of the emphasis he places on this universal, he shares with Agamben an indebtedness to Schmitt.[41] Taubes' thesis that 'the Epistle to the Romans is a political theology' echoes the title of Schmitt's *Political Theology.*[42] Moreover, Taubes explicitly reflects on his own relation to the famous jurist.[43] At the outset, Taubes details a personal conversation with Schmitt which followed as a result of a letter from Taubes to Schmitt in 1979.[44] This conversation had as a central topic a discussion of Romans 9 – 11, and ended with Schmitt charging Taubes: 'Taubes, before you die, you must tell some people about this'.[45] Thus, Schmitt's influence is felt not only conceptually but personally in the selection of the subject matter of the *Political Theology* and for Taubes' own interest in the letter to the Romans at this stage of his life.[46] Schmitt's charge further explains Taubes' late switch of subject matter from Corinthians to Romans.[47]

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to further explore the distinctiveness of Agamben's and Taubes' readings of Paul. For our purposes, it is sufficient to note the influence of Schmitt on the Pauline reading of Agamben and Taubes that serves to further distance the readings of Agamben and Taubes from that of Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton.

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41 Taubes, *Political Theology,* 2 - 3, 7, 31, 40, 51, 64 – 70, 75, 85, 92; 'The Jacob Taubes-Carl Schmitt Story' in *Political Theology,* 98 – 105.

42 Taubes, *Political Theology,* 16. For Taubes' use of the term political theology see: Hartwich, W-D., Assman, A., Assman, J., 'Afterword' in *Political Theology*, 115 – 142, 138 – 142.

43 'If you ask me what I really learned [from Schmitt] which is not a little' [Taubes, *Political Theology*, 31]; cf. Taubes, J., *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections* (trans. Tribe, K.) (New York: Columbia University Press 2013) [orig. *Ad Carl Schmitt: Gegenstrebige Fügung* (Berlin: Merve, 1987)]; Taubes, J., 'Carl Schmitt: Apocalyptic Prophet of the Counter-Revolution' in *To Carl Schmitt,* 1 – 18 [orig. Carl Schmitt – ein Apokalyptiker der Gegenrevolution' in *Tageszeitung,* July 25, 1985]. Hartwich, Assman and Assman give details of a substantial research project on Schmitt organised by Taubes entitled 'Theology of Religion and Political Theology' culminating in three conferences and volumes edited by Taubes: Taubes, J. (ed.), *Der Fürst dieser Welt: Carl Schmitt und die Folgen* (Munich: Fink 1983); Taubes, J. (ed.), *Gnosis und Politik* (Munich: Fink 1984); Taubes, J. (ed.), *Theokratie* (Munich: Fink 1987).

44 'Taubes, J. to Schmitt, C. 18 September 1979' in 'Appendix B' in *Political Theology,* 110 – 113; cf. *Political Theology*, 2, 3, 51.

45 *Political Theology,* 3.

46 *Political Theology,* 3.

47 *Political Theology,* 1 – 2; cf. Assman, A. 'Preface' in *Political Theology*, xiii.

For these reasons we are able to isolate the readings of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek from those of Taubes and Agamben. The readings of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek are therefore a proper object of study in their own right. Such study will benefit the study of the 'New Moment' more generally. We shall go on to discover that these three also bear consideration through the potential conceptual challenge to reading the New Testament posed by each. At the end of our study, we find further advantage in considering these figures simultaneously as their readings offer a surprising complementarity.[48]

[48] See §5.3.

1.3 The Reception of the 'New Moment' in Biblical Studies

We now consider the main trends in reception of the 'New Moment' within biblical studies. This will enable us to uncover the charges which have been levelled against the readers of the 'New Moment'. We reveal a perceived clash between two manners of approaching the Pauline text, which will be illuminated by consideration of a similar clash documented in a late work of Kant.

The reception of the 'New Moment' reveals a scholarly divide. This divide has been characterised as one between 'historians' or the historical-critically minded on the one hand, and 'systematisers' or 'philosophers' on the other. Thus, for example, Dale Martin notes of Badiou's reading: 'it was not historically sensitive enough, not historically accurate'.[49] This distinction between historically-focussed interpreters and others is found most clearly in an essay of Paula Fredricksen.[50] Fredricksen seeks to defend an isolation of the historical as the only legitimate 'frame of reference' for interpretation. Her foundational principle is that 'the frame of reference for historical interpretation is not and cannot be the present'.[51] The historicising focus of this position reveals an assumed theory of meaning with which such scholarship operates.

[49] Martin, D. B. in 'Concluding Roundtable' in *Paul Among,* 163.

[50] Fredricksen, P., 'Historical Integrity, Interpretative Freedom: The Philosopher's Paul and the Problem of Anachronism' in Caputo; Alcoff (eds.) *Paul Among,* 61 – 73.

[51] Fredricksen, 'Integrity', 61. This is despite the fact that all interpretation, even historical interpretation, can only occur *in* the present.

Fredricksen assumes a distinction between what Paul mean*s* and what Paul mean*t*.[52] However, in doing so, Fredricksen reveals an isolation of meaning which is overtly historical and historicising. In fact, ironically, it consists in, yet does not argue for, a conflation of these two possibilities: what Paul mean*s* is what Paul mean*t*.[53] This is revealed above all in her concern for 'anachronism'; a charge which also betrays an isolation of meaning to what the historical 'ancient subject thought'.[54]

Whilst recognising with Odell-Scott, that 'the philosophers' approach to the text is not the same as that of the historian', we must not too quickly accept the prevailing division and analysis of the 'historian' and the philosopher or 'systematiser' as set out by those such as Fredricksen.[55] It will become essential to consider exactly how we are to judge Fredricksen's claim that the present cannot serve as a 'frame of reference' for the interpreter.

As Jennings notes, the distinction between historians and others (non-historians) in respect of the former being distinguished as legitimate readers of text serves to enable the historian or the historically-minded exegete to critique the readings of others from a position of assumed dominance: 'historical approaches to texts... are set up as a sort of magisterium that limits access to those who are duly certified'.[56]

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52 Fredricksen, 'Integrity', 62.

53 Note Fredricksen's 'epistemological claim... namely, that only a historical interpretation of such texts can give us at least an approximation of what the ancient subject thought' (72) and her insistence that to 'say "this is what Paul means" and then go on to say something that is also a cheat, though a different form of cheating' [Fredricksen, 'Concluding Roundtable', 178].

54 Fredricksen, 'Integrity', 72; cf. 61, 70.

55 Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 1

56 Jennings, 'Sons', 89. Note the "magisterial" language of Alcoff, L. M., 'Concluding Roundtable' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among*, 160: 'the historians, who have raised questions about the interpretations, and the theory of interpretation, which have grounded the various philosopher's use of Paul'.

There are, however, examples of cracks in this historical edifice, evidenced elsewhere in the reception of the 'New Moment', which enable us to see the role that the present has as a 'frame of reference' for interpretation, even within such historical interpretation. The present is revealed as a frame of reference on and within which all interpretation inevitably occurs.

These cracks are evident in two themes found in the reception of the 'New Moment', which are out of joint with a purely "historical" approach, and seem to betray concerns that suggest a 'frame of reference' expanding to the present. Firstly, we note the concern over the generally atheistic position adopted by those who make up the 'New Moment' and their lack of belief in God, as well as concern over the presence or otherwise of a concept of God in their readings of Paul.[57] Whilst we shall see below that the question of their belief status (in respect of theistic belief) is a complex one for each of our thinkers, such a concern should not and cannot be raised on purely-historical critical grounds.[58] The belief-system of the interpreter ought not to be a feature of comment in a strictly historical engagement.

[57] Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 1 cites Grenholm, C., Patte, D., 'Overture: Receptions, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism' in Grenholm, C., Patte, D. (eds.), *Reading Israel in Romans* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International 2000) 1 – 54, 3 who note the series in which *Reading Romans* is published (Romans Through History and Cultures) 'is deliberately focussed upon individual and communal interpretations of biblical texts by *believers*... neglected for too long by biblical studies'. Parallels might be made to readings arising from the community of faith and those of our philosophers. It remains to be seen why Christian belief should be so privileged. cf. Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 2, 15; Jennings, 'Sons', 92 – 3; cf. Žižek, S. and Caputo, J. D. 'Concluding Roundtable' in Alcoff, Caputo (eds.) *Paul Among* 164 – 5, 164: 'Žižek: I thought the debate was going to be, Do you really believe in God? Instead of that type of naïve question, we have totally different ones. Caputo: That was going to be my next question!'; Barclay, 'Event', 180: 'It is ironic that it takes a French atheist to remind Pauline scholars about Paul's theology of grace'.

[58] See §2.5 for a defence of Badiou's thoroughgoing atheism; §3.1 for Eagleton's former and now uncertain Catholicism; and §4.3 for the complex relation to belief and Christianity evidenced by Žižek.

Secondly, there is the repeated concern regarding the reception of these readings on behalf of the Jewish community relating to the charge of supersessionism.[59] This charge will not be raised here but considered where appropriate in our engagement with Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton below.[60]

It is sufficient, at this stage, to note that if Paul is found to be articulating such a position then that reading must be allowed under the historical-critical method. It is therefore not obvious why historical-critical exegetes should express concern at a supersessionistic reading of Paul. That this is so seems to further betray the present as a 'frame of reference' on which reading occurs. It is thus significant that a concern for the contemporary readership (in respect of the attitude towards present-day Judaism) is to be found. This reminds us – despite the protestations of those such as Fredricksen – that the historical method is itself able to incorporate and serve any number of competing interests.[61]

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[59] Crossley, *Reading*, 106 – 109; Caputo, J. D., *Postcards from Paul: Subtraction Versus Grafting* in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among* 1 – 26, 10; Boyarin, D., 'Paul Among the Antiphilosophers; or, Saul among the Sophists' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among*, 109 – 141, 100, 107; Caputo, Alcoff et al 'Concluding Roundtable' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among,* 160 – 184, 161; Bockmuehl, M., *The Remembered Peter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 36.

[60] See §§ 3.4; 4.4-5. In the case of Badiou, the charge of a 'break' is considered primarily against the charge of the more extreme Marcionite allegation; see §2.4.

[61] This has echoes to a thesis of Gadamer's we shall consider below concerning the trivial ends to which any such method can be put, see below §1.5. cf. Gadamer, H. G., L'herméneutique philosophique' in *Studies in Religion 5.1* (1975 – 6) 3 – 13, 12: 'Je m'objecte seulement contre une application sans intelligence et sans intérêt motivé des méthodes, car je sais trop que les méthodes aussi peuvent être excellemment mises au service de trivialités.'

Therefore this perceived clash between 'historians' and 'systematisers' is at best illusory and the division must be questioned. To assume that historical and historicising readings, or those who embark upon them, are ideologically free is naïve. Jeanrond reminds us, 'historicism is an ideology'.[62] An important observation for our study has thus been made: the historian is not distinct from the systematiser because she is not a systematiser, but because the system the historian follows is not whichever system is propounded by the systematiser in question.[63] Historical reading and historical-criticism are as systematic as any other system one chooses to adopt, being distinguished by (ironically) their own history, traditions of interpretation, and, most notably, their focus on *method*.[64] However, we must reserve judgement on the differences between historical, philosophical and other schools of interpretation. We are not yet in a position to outline fully the systematisers' manner of reading Paul and the role Paul plays in their system/s. This must be put off until we complete our analysis of the Pauline engagement of our three thinkers.

It must be noted, however, that such a conflict of interpretative strategies within the politics of the academy is nothing new.[65] It is not an original observation that readings which claim no overriding system is governing their canons of interpretation are inevitably operating with a different (and possibly conflicting) system from those they critique. Furthermore, the divide between those who represent a perceived 'philosophical' system and those who understand their task as a supposed 'mere' adherence to the task of interpreting the biblical text is, likewise, not new.

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62 Jeanrond, W., *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM Press 1994) 126.

63 We agree here with Žižek *pace* Boyarin. Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable', 175: 'It's too simple to say that historians discover inconsistent views. To say that something is inconsistent is already systematizing'; Boyarin, D. 'Concluding Roundtable', 167: 'The opposition is between the historian's reading, which is not systematic, and all systematic readings'.

64 cf. Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 16: 'Any attempt to now separate philosophy from … the enterprises of interpretation and assessment of scripture and belief... in the search for the historic particular is not only too late, but the very framing of the enterprise... is already philosophical'.

65 It is most widely discussed in relation to the New Testament under the theme of 'biblical theology'.

These observations can be illustrated by way of comparison with a clash from the theological past, as recorded in Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties*.[66] Kant's *Conflict* has been called 'required reading' for those considering the conflict of interpretations that has occurred between conventional scholarly and recent philosophical readings of Paul.[67] The differences between this conflict and those of the 'New Moment' and its reception are as illuminating as the similarities between them.

Kant's *Conflict* is primarily an account of the relationship between the higher faculties (theology, as well as law and medicine) and lower faculties (philosophy) of the German university system. It bears similarities to the debate between Pauline scholars operating within the conventions of the New Testament criticism and those of the 'New Moment', insofar as it deals with the manner of reading the biblical text. In particular, it deals with the issue of Kant's perceived biblical interpretation and the restriction of the state censor. Thus, it is above all else a political document.[68]

[66] Kant, I., *The Conflict of the Faculties*/*Der Streit der Fakultäten* (trans. Gregor, M.) (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1992) cf. Bahti, T., *Allegories of History: Literary Historiography After Hegel* (London: John Hopkins University Press 1993) 20 – 25; Blanton, *Displacing,* 35 – 38 considers Kant's *Conflict* for purposes similar to our own but with the end of recovering New Testament's studies forgotten (or repressed) philosophical heritage. cf. Blanton, *Displacing*, 1 – 23.

[67] Jennings, 'Sons', 88.

[68] Kant, *Conflict,* 9, 25, 125 cf. 35, 121 on the statutory nature of the religion assumed here.

This political context may at first seem to render the Kantian conflict dissimilar to that between Pauline scholars and the 'New Moment'.[69] However, since this political disagreement takes a precise form (concerning the rules of interpretation of the Biblical text, and what might be counted as both a legitimate approach and interpretation) it provides a point of comparison with the reception of the 'New Moment'.[70] This is so because the reception of the 'New Moment' reminds us of the intellectual hegemony governing rules of interpretation laid down by a common scholarly consensus, a consensus which is often assumed without being argued. The reception of the 'New Moment' – and the criticism it has engendered – reminds us of the inherently political nature of reading, and of who decides a reading is 'legitimate'. Such a situation of interpretative hegemony with regards the biblical text, and enjoyed by the biblical theologians of Kant's day, serves as the background against which Kant outlines his principles of exegesis. There are thus parallels here between the state censor and the position of institutional hegemony enjoyed by mainstream New Testament scholarship.

A key dissimilarity, however, is the concept of philosophy with which Kant operates.[71] Kant's concept is wider than that of the modern, broadly 'continental', stream of philosophy with which the 'New Moment' figures are associated.[72] This is partly because of the institutional focus of Kant's work:

> 'the philosophical faculty consists of two departments: a department of historical knowledge (including history, geography, philology and the humanities, … natural sciences), and a department of pure rational knowledge'.[73]

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69 cf. Blanton, *Displacing*, 35.

70 Blanton, *Displacing*, 36 goes so far as to see Kant as adopting the role of Paul 'at the very moment he relegates "biblical" interpretation' against his imagined biblical interlocutors, based on a parallel between Kant's higher/lower faculty distinction and a Pauline flesh/spirit division. This is perhaps too hyperbolic an identification. cf. Bahti, *Allegories*, 20 on this distinction as received by Kant.

71 Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 9 (mis)reads Kant as operating with a narrow (modern) notion of philosophy.

72 This is so even though 'philosophers' referred to in the title of Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among* [i.e. Badiou and Žižek] are of the sort that would not be considered as 'philosophers' in many Anglo-American university contexts because of the sort of ('continental') philosophy they practice cf. Benson, B. E., 'A Continental Perspective' in Meister, C. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011) 421 – 432; Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 11. For the problems of Eagleton viz. philosophy see §3.1.

73 Kant, *Conflict,* 45.

Kant's view of the Bible in this context is, however, revealing for our purposes. He sees the Bible as a kind of a statutory code with parallels to the legal statutes of the lawyer or the code of practice of the physician.[74] These parallels mean that when Kant goes on to expand further the relationship between the philosophical and theological faculties it is from a politico-institutional perspective. The relationship between the philosophical and theological faculties is not itself unique but one that serves as an 'example to clarify the conflict of the faculties'.[75]

The main focus of the divergence between the biblical theologian (a member of a higher faculty) and the philosopher (as a member of the lower) is the source of teaching: 'the biblical theologian... draws his teachings not from reason but from the Bible'.[76] In response to the Biblical theologian's complaints concerning the philosopher's use of Scripture, Kant turns the charge on its head:

> 'as soon as one of these [higher] faculties presumes to mix with its teachings something it treats as derived from reason, it offends against the government that issues orders through it … so that the dignity of their statutes … (is) damaged by the free play of reason'.[77]

The role of 'reason' and the extent of liberality in allowing its 'free play' thus become the central point at issue. Kant notes that it is always the case that:

> 'any principle – even those exegetical principles to do with historical or grammatical criterion – must always be dictated by reason'.[78]

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[74] cf. Bahti, *Allegories,* 20 – 21.

[75] Kant, *Conflict,* 61.

[76] Kant, *Conflict,* 15 begins defending his own and other moral philosopher's use of Biblical citation as 'neither to put anything Biblical into philosophy, nor to draw anything philosophical out of the Bible, but only to clarify and confirm … rational propositions by their real or supposed agreement with the judgements of others' . He identifies a biblical theologian contrastingly: Kant, *Conflict,* 35, cf. 61: 'A biblical theologian is, properly speaking, one versed in the Scriptures with regard to ecclesiastical faith, which is based on statutes – that is, on laws proceeding from another person's act of choice'. Such a theologian is contrasted to the rational theologian: 'versed in reason with regard to religious faith, which is based on inner laws that can be developed from every man's own reason'. It is at this point that Rasmussen's contention is at its most convincing that the *Conflict* is not dealing with a conflict between philosophy and theology but between two modes of theology. Rasmussen, J., 'The *Conflict of the Faculties,* and the "Contamination" of Discourses", paper presented on 26th November 2012 at the Modern Theology Seminar, University of Oxford.

[77] Kant, *Conflict*, 35.

[78] Kant, *Conflict,* 65; Bahti, *Allegories*, 20 – 25 sees this as Kant's bid to promote the role of 'philosophy' within the University context.

This critique of pure exegesis continues as Kant notes that when:

> 'no other meaning can be ascribed... than one which contradicts reason … (we do) not interpret the text literally'.[79]

In this process, it is shown that 'reason is the highest interpreter of Scriptures'.[80] This is further shown by way of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument:

> 'if biblical theologians will stop using reason for their purposes, philosophical theologians will stop using the Bible to confirm their propositions'.[81]

Kant thus argues for permission to read the Biblical text as a non-biblical theologian through a common application of reason which all must accept.

The ecclesiastical, institutional and political setting of the *Conflict* mean that this clash does not map exactly onto that between Pauline historical-scholars and the 'New Moment.[82] However, in dealing with the response of the biblical theologians of Kant's day to the rational interpretation of Scripture, we find strong echoes to the vocal reception of the 'New Moment', since Kant notes:

> 'biblical theologians cry out in unison against the very idea of a philosophical interpretation of Scripture and against these rules of exegesis... that they are all judgements of the philosophy faculty which, by giving them, presumes to interfere with the biblical theologian's business'.[83]

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79 Kant, *Conflict*, 70.

80 Kant, *Conflict*, 70.

81 Kant, *Conflict*, 77.

82 For example Fredricksen, 'Integrity', defends 'inconsistency' and so sides against Kant's search for an interpretation that is 'consistent with (reason's) own principles' [Kant, *Conflict*, 69 – 70]. We are reminded that in *Conflict* we are dealing with a debate between two kinds of consistency: rational and ecclesial. 'Consistency' must not be confused with 'system' here, since the (particular) historical system Fredricksen defends is merely one comfortable with inconsistency. On the Bible's place of honour in this debate: Kant, *Conflict*, 125: 'The Bible will continue to hold a place of honour for a long time, since the government's interest in the harmony and peace of people in civil society is closely bound up with it'; cf. Jowett, B., 'On the Interpretation of Scripture' in *Essays and Reviews* (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts 1861) 330 – 433. This essay represents something of an attempt in 'plain reading' that is similar in kind to that with which Kant is concerned. We note it here because of the position at which Jowett ends, that the conviction that reading the Bible 'like any other book' will only serve to prove that its contents mark it out from all other books. For the dissimilarities between Jowett's project and emergent historical criticism see Barr, J., 'Jowett and the Reading of the Bible 'Like Any Other Book'' in *Horizons in Biblical Theology* (1982) 1 – 44.

83 Kant, *Conflict*, 77, 79.

This notion of 'interference' in a realm which is not proper for the philosopher to enter is one with strong resemblance to the contemporary debate, as we have already begun to see.[84] Kant concludes that the shared use of reason is sufficient to defend the reading of the biblical text by the non-“specialist”. This relates to our earlier observation of the systematic nature of all interpretation, as all interpretation relates to the wider application of reason on behalf of the interpreter.

The use of this text by Kant has illuminated the politics of the debate which has arisen around the texts of the 'New Moment' and their readings of Paul. In particular it serves further to undermine the distinction between the “historian” and the “systematiser” as we are alerted to Kant's appeal to the notion of the common application of reason. This common application of reason is also the grounds on which Kant makes his case for an equal right to read and cite the Biblical text. Kant's *Conflict* has also alerted us to the institutional setting of our conflict of interpretations, and alerted us to the politics that are at work within such academic debate.

This discussion of the institutional politics of reading and the notion of 'interference' in an object of study governed by another's field of scholarship, marks an appropriate point at which to introduce the most consistent charge made against the reception of Paul in the 'New Moment'. This is the charge that, like the rational philosophers of Kant's day, through interfering in the exegete's business without adhering to the rules of biblical exegesis, our philosophers merely 'appropriate' the Pauline text.

[84] Although note that Jennings, 'Sons', 88 suggests that Kant's claim for the philosophical faculty to arbitrate all readings via the category of 'reason' finds parallels in that of the historian's attempts to evaluate all interpretations via the category of 'history'.

1.4 The Charge of 'Appropriation'

In this section we introduce the charge of 'appropriation' that has been levelled against the readings of the 'New Moment', and arrive at an understanding of this term with which to evaluate that charge. This will guide our analysis of the readings of the 'New Moment' and provide a means to evaluate whether the charge of 'appropriation' can be maintained. A more considered evaluation of the charge of 'appropriation' will be postponed until after our consideration of each of the Pauline readings that make up this study (§5.2).

At this point, we can note that the thinkers of the 'New Moment' are repeatedly charged with appropriating the Pauline corpus, or sections of it, for their own ends.[85] The charge is found in its most extreme form in the claim that it is not merely the process by which these authors engage with the Pauline text which is appropriative but that the readings they produce are not themselves readings but 'appropriations'.[86] Thus, we can observe an assumed distinction between 'reading' and 'appropriation' – a distinction we must explore.

[85] Fowl, S. A., 'A Very Particular Universalism: Badiou and Paul' in Harink, D. (ed.), *Paul, Philosophy and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek and Others* (Eugene: Cascade 2010) 119 – 134, 120; Elliot, N., 'Ideological Closure in the Christ-Event: A Marxist Response to Alain Badiou's Paul' in Harink, *Theopolitical*, 135 – 154, 144, 147; Holsclaw, G., 'Subjects Between Death and Resurrection: Badiou, Žižek and St. Paul' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 155 – 178, 155; Hansen, R. L., 'Messianic or Apocalyptic? Engaging Agamben on Paul and Politics' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 198 – 226, 205; Zimmermann, J., 'Hermeneutics of Unbelief: Philosophical Readings of Paul' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 227 – 253, 228 – 9; Zerbe, G., 'On the Exigency of a Messianic Ecclesia: An Engagement with Philosophical Readers of Paul' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 254 – 281, 268 – 272; Martin, D. B., 'The Promise of Teleology, the Constraints of Epistemology, and Universal Vision in Paul' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among,* 91 – 108, 91; cf. Martin, D. B. in 'Concluding Roundtable', 163; Jennings, 'Sons', 86 – 7; Greydanus, R., 'Religion and Revolution: Terry Eagleton's Literary Appropriation of the Doctrine of Creation' in *Arc 38* (2010) 95 – 103.

[86] Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 14: 'poaching'; Bockmuehl, *Remembered,* 36. He cites with approval (36 n15) a comment from Emile Perreau-Saussine at a seminar in Oxford in June 2009 that the Paul of the philosophers is 'manipulated' and 'mutilated'.

Whilst 'appropriation' seems always to imply 'not-' or 'mis-reading' the term is rarely, if ever, defined. Given the frequency with which the term appears in the reception of the Pauline 'New Moment' clarity must be sought as to what constitutes 'appropriation'. A definition must be arrived at that is precise enough both to do justice to the concept of 'appropriation' itself, and for our conclusions to be accepted by those who have made the charge against the readings of the 'New Moment'. This will enable us to evaluate *both* whether the readings of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek may be considered 'appropriations', and, further, whether this classification means that they may not be considered readings of the Apostle.

Some of the problems of 'appropriation' are set out by Wolterstorff in relation to divine and human speech.[87] He reminds us that 'appropriation' consists in not one but two discourses – the appropriating and the appropriated.[88] These discourses are related:

> 'what the second person said is determined in good measure, by what the first person said'.[89]

However, he notes that appropriating and appropriated speech may not be identical and that what is taken over in the act of appropriation may be selective in its rendering of the appropriated discourse:

> '(The appropriator) wants to embrace the main points but not all the incidentals. Thus to get from the propositional content of the appropriated discourse requires subtlety and sensitivity of interpretation. In appropriating we re-fashion, not always, but often'.[90]

[87] Wolterstorff, N., *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995) 51 – 54.
[88] Wolterstorff, *Discourse*, 52.
[89] Wolterstorff, *Discourse,* 52.
[90] Wolterstorff, *Discourse*, 52 – 53.

Wolterstorff's understanding of the mechanism of 'appropriation' thus alerts us to an important relation between the content of appropriating and appropriated discourse. However, it also alerts us to the need for care in discerning that which is taken over in appropriation and that which is not. A key term here is 'inscription', as Wolterstorff views the appropriating discourse as inscribing the appropriated discourse in a new register. This means that there is a sense of appropriation in *all* interpretation, as one text or discourse is inscribed by another thereby inevitably rendering one text or discourse in another.

The inevitability of this process encourages generosity of interpretation in attempting to discern the relation between a text and one which is either suspected of, or even known to be, appropriating that text. This forms Wolterstorff's 'most fundamental principle':

> 'the interpreter takes the stance and content of my appropriating discourse to be that of your appropriated discourse, unless there is good reason to do otherwise'.[91]

In adopting this principle, we are liberated to consider the readings of Paul we are exploring as genuine readings of the content of the Pauline text unless there is a good reason to do otherwise. Part of the task of analysing the 'New Moment' is the discovery of such reasons where present (§5.1). Wolterstorff also notes that the appropriated discourse serves to 'anchor' the appropriating discourse, which means that the nature and manner of the appropriative anchor is also deserving of study – to see whether, where and in what manner this anchor is cast off.[92]

[91] Wolterstorff, *Discourse,* 204.
[92] Wolterstorff, *Discourse*, 237.

The concept of 'appropriation' also has resonance as an hermeneutical category. In describing the relation between 'appropriated' and 'appropriating' discourse, we are able to note echoes with the Gadamerean concept of *Horizontverschmelzung*, the fusion of horizons between 'past' text and 'present' reader, that stands at the heart of his hermeneutics.[93] This fusion of horizons is related to Gadamer's discussion of meaning as 'application'.[94] Gadamer's hermeneutic will provide a suitable hermeneutical lens for this thesis, since it highlights the place that the present has as a 'frame of reference' (to use Fredricksen's term) or 'horizon' with which, and in which, the interpreter approaches the text.

The concept of 'appropriation' itself has an hermeneutical legacy in the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur which brings into full light the appropriative nature of *all* interpretation.[95] Ricoeur's understanding of 'appropriation' also takes seriously the 'present' standing of the interpreter and underlines 'the “present” character of interpretation'.[96] To interpret is thus understood as a form of appropriation: 'to interpret is to appropriate *here and now* the intention of the text'.[97] The role of the interpreter is highlighted in the process of interpretation:

> 'the interpretation of text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself.[98]

[93] Gadamer, H. G., *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum 2004) [orig. *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1960)] 305 – 6: 'Understanding is always the fusion of these horizons (past and present) supposedly existing by themselves' (305). It is Gadamer's recognition of the impossibility of isolating or distinguishing discrete discourses that separates him most significantly from Wolterstorff.

[94] Gadamer, *Truth*, 306: 'the problem of application, which is to be found in all understanding'. See further §1.5 below.

[95] Ricoeur, P., 'What Is a Text? Explanation and Understanding' in Ricoeur, P. *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II* (trans. Blamey, K., Thompson, J. B)(Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press 2001) 105 – 124, 120: 'Interpretation, understood as appropriation'; de Vries, P., *Appropriating Apocalyptic: Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and the Discourse of Mark 13* (Doctoral Dissertation University of Pittsburg 2010) (available online at http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/10297/ accessed 21st April 2013) 36 – 44.

[96] Ricoeur, 'Text?', 119.

[97] Ricoeur, 'Text?', 120.

[98] Ricoeur, 'Text?', 118.

Interpretation is not then just mastery of some foreign or distant object (the text) but an exposure to the text which shapes and alters our own 'present':

> 'to understand is *to understand oneself in front of the text*... exposing ourselves to the text and receiving from it an enlarged self'.[99]

Appropriation in this sense is linked to Gadamer's concept of 'application', but an application of the text to the self or, in Ricoeur's parlance, an acceptance of the text's invitation to transformation of the self.[100]

A focus on the present of the interpreter leads some to the fear of subjectivism and relativism in interpretation which we shall encounter as a criticism of a Gadamerean hermeneutic in §1.5 below. However, Ricoeur's statement on this bears consideration:

> 'Appropriation loses its arbitrariness insofar as it is recovery of that which is at work, in labor, within the text. What the interpreter says is a resaying that reactivates what is said by the text'.[101]

This reactivation is precisely what is meant by Wolterstorff's 'anchor', as 'appropriation' constitutes a reactivation in the present of some aspect latent within the text.[102] Thus, it is:

> 'quite the contrary of projecting oneself and one's own beliefs and prejudices; it is to let the work and its world enlarge the horizon of understanding'.[103]

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[99] Ricoeur, P., *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (trans. Thompson, J. B.)(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981) 143.

[100] Ricoeur, *Sciences,* 143.

[101] Ricoeur, 'Text?', 124.

[102] Ricoeur, *Sciences*, 113 notes that it is precisely this concept of 'appropriation' mediated via the understanding of the present self which is a genuine *response* to the text and which serves to avoid the danger of subjectivism: 'I exchange the *me*, *master* of itself , for the *self, disciple* of the text'.

[103] Ricoeur, *Sciences,* 178.

With this understanding of 'appropriation', indebted both to Wolterstorff and Ricoeur, we are able to arrive at a definition of 'appropriation' which withstands the criticism of those who have concerns about the legitimacy of reading and its possible relativism. 'Appropriation' consists in the inscription of the discourse of one text (in our case the Pauline epistles) into the present discourse of the 'appropriator' through which the 'appropriator's' own self-understanding is enlarged: 'the very act of understanding oneself before the text'.[104] Thus, appropriation is not opposed to reading a text, but *is* the very act of reading, insofar as the 'appropriated' text offers something to the 'appropriating' author which is genuinely expansive of the interpreter's own frame of reference.

Thus, quite apart from the imposition of a foreign frame of reference on to a text, 'appropriation' sees the frame of reference of the text voluntarily imposed on the appropriator's own. In this view, rather than being the forced imposition of a "pre-arrived at" meaning onto a text, 'appropriation' is the final stage of understanding: 'the last act of understanding is the *appropriation* of the meaning of the text'.[105]

However, in order for such a definition to be maintained we need an analysis of the interpreter which enables us to analyse *both* the interpreter *and* the interpretative process in question. This analysis we shall find in the hermeneutical theory of Gadamer.

[104] Ricoeur, P., 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation' in *Harvard Theological Review 70.1* (1977) 1 – 37, 30.
[105] Ricoeur, P., 'The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation' in *Philosophy Today 17.2* (1973) 129 – 141, 141.

1.5 The Reception of Gadamer in Biblical Studies

This section introduces the hermeneutics of Gadamer and surveys the understanding and impact of Gadamer's hermeneutics which currently holds sway in New Testament study. We move to consider the possibility of an interpretative strategy based on Gadamer's hermeneutical theory, which sheds light on the situation and role of the interpreter. This theory will form the hermeneutical basis of this thesis in order to illuminate the readings of Paul we find by those authors of the 'New Moment' which are the object of this study.

The sudden rise of interest in the hermeneutical theory of Gadamer within contemporary (mainstream) New Testament scholarship further enhances Gadamer's role as an important figure of dialogue within this thesis. However, this rise in interest has seen Gadamerean theory received and interpreted by the mainstream of New Testament scholarship in a manner which is at odds with – and at times *explicitly* at odds with – a considered evaluation of Gadamer's hermeneutical theory. Moreover, terms taken over from that theory are used within New Testament scholarship with little or no reference to their Gadamerean forebear. Therefore, we also seek to consider afresh Gadamerean theory for the purposes of arriving at an understanding of Gadamerean hermeneutical theory with which to arrive at an evaluation of the readings of Paul by our authors of the 'New Moment'.

It must be observed that there is something of an irony here. The very body of scholarship which has cried 'appropriation' against those who it sees as simply using the thought of Paul for their own ends, can be observed to have done something similar with the theory of Gadamer. The fate of Gadamer thus becomes a parallel for the figure of Paul. The manner in which Gadamer has been received by New Testament scholarship is revealing for our understanding of how that same scholarship has received the 'New Moment' of Paul, as both instances of reception reveal much about that body of New Testament scholarship.

Given the widespread, and increasing, appeal to Gadamerean hermeneutics which can be observed in contemporary biblical study, it seems remarkable that as recently as 2001 (during Gadamer's lifetime!) Pearson is able to write: 'Gadamer has not been utilized in any extensive way by New Testament scholarship'.[106] At first glance it seems that Pearson's statement no longer holds true. Moreover, a survey of the reception of Gadamer by New Testament scholarship causes us to question its validity even in 2001. However, the more we consider the *manner* in which Gadamer has been received, the more we find a situation which we might well describe in terms similar to Pearson. The utilisation of Gadamer seems at odds with the hermeneutical project of Gadamer, and, therefore, his insight remains under-utilised.

[106] Pearson, B., *Corresponding Sense: Paul, Dialectic and Gadamer* (Leiden: Brill 2001).

That the situation Pearson once described no longer obtains can be seen in the flurry of interest in the reception- or effective-history (or *Wirkungsgeschichte*) of the Biblical text that can be observed in contemporary biblical studies, especially within the study of the New Testament. A host of articles, monographs, and substantial commentary series have been published in the recent past, which put special emphasis on the reception of the text by other interpreters as central to the task of interpretation.[107]

David Parris has offered an important account of this rise of reception-critical study.[108] He traces a history from early 20th-century German Biblical scholarship and finds the launch of the current interest in the work of Gerhard Ebeling.[109] However, in doing so he plays down the important role that Ulrich Luz has had in popularising the current focus on reception in Biblical studies, and, in particular his role in bringing the theory of Gadamer to a wider scholarly audience.[110] Parris' oversight is reflective of the state of contemporary New Testament studies' understanding of Gadamer in general, which fails to recognise the distance between Gadamer's theory and Luz's application of the same. This has important implications for the manner in which *Wirkungsgeschichte* is understood within New Testament studies.

[107] Räisänen, H., 'The Effective "History" of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship' in *Scottish Journal of Theology 45* (1992) 303 – 324; Bockmuehl, M., 'A Commentator's Approach to the "Effective History" of Philippians' in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament 18* (1996) 57 – 88; 'New Testament *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Early Christian Appeal to Living Memory' in Stuckenbruck, L.; Barton, S.; Wold, B., *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007) 341 – 361; cf. Childs, B. 'Alternative Proposals for the Problem of Interpretation' in *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2008) 29 – 63; Nicholls, R., 'Is *Wirkungsgeschichte* (or Reception History) a kind of intellectual *Parkour* (or Free Running?)' available at http://bbibcomm.net/news/nicholls.pdf (accessed 21st September 2010); Nicholls, R., *Walking on the Water: Reading Mt 14.22-33 in Light of Its* Wirkungsgeschichte (Brill: Leiden 2007). Series which emphasise the reception of the text include: InterVarsity Press' *The Ancient Christian Commentary*; Blackwell's *Blackwell Bible Commentaries*; and the *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament.*

[108] Parris, D. P., *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications 2009).

[109] Parris, *Reception*, ix – x ; cf. von Dobschütz, E., "Bible in the Church" in Hastings, J., *Encyclopaedia of Religion 2* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1909) 579 – 615; Ebeling, G. *Wort Gottes und Tradition* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1964).

[110] Luz, U., *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1994); *Matthew* (Vols. 1-4) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007) especially 'On the Intention of This Commentary and on the Hermeneutical Significance of the History of the Text's Influence' in *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007) 60 – 66; 'The Significance of the Church Fathers for Biblical Interpretation in Western Protestant Perspective' in *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 290 – 312; 'Canonical Exegesis and Hermeneutics of "Effective History"' in Studies in Matthew, 333-348 and 'Hermeneutics of "Effective History" and the Church' in Studies in Matthew 349 – 369; cf. Parris, *Reception*, xiv – xv.

Wirkungsgeschichte as the history of a text's effects is understood by Parris as effectively synonymous with terms such as 'reception history' or 'interpretation history'. Such a terminological haze is a feature not only of Parris' study but scholarship in this area more generally. Parris contributes to this terminological haze by considering both the theory of Gadamer and Hans Robert Jauss under the category of 'reception theory'. Whilst that term is appropriately used of a hermeneutics indebted to Jauss, it is not appropriately used of a Gadamerean one. Moreover, Parris furthers the tendency to understand the possible contribution of Gadamerean hermeneutics to Biblical studies as one reduced to a study of how an artefact ('the text') has been received by various groups and generations of interpreters. By doing so the focus is put not on the present interpreter herself, but on those who have interpreted the text in the historical past and on the interpretations they have produced.

It is therefore wrong to think that the term '*Wirkungsgeschichte*' or 'effective-history' as it is employed by Gadamer is synonymous with the term as understood by Luz. In fact, Luz is clear that this is not the case:

> 'Effective history enables me to connect with Gadamer, though my perspective is different from his'.[111]

Luz shares with Gadamer a concern for 'the effective power of the texts themselves'.[112] However, Luz expresses this concern through a focus on the readings those texts have engendered, rather than a focus on the interpreter who seeks to understand the Biblical text herself.[113]

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[111] Luz, '"Effective History" and the Church', 351.

[112] Luz, 'Intention', 61.

[113] Luz's reasons for a turn to reception study in terms of a desire to bring the text to life for his students find parallels in Kant's understanding of the purpose of biblical scholarship. Kant, *Conflict,* 121: 'Literal interpretation may well be important enough for biblical scholars... but this kind of interpretation can not only fail to promote but even hinder the real end of religious teaching – the development of morally better men'; cf. Luz, 'Intention'.

Gadamer's perspective, meanwhile, is one firmly rooted in the phenomenological tradition stemming through Heidegger. This perspective is reflected by Gadamer's perception of 'the necessity to prolong the critique of hermeneutics which Heidegger had begun'.[114] Stover notes, therefore, that the term '*Wirkungsgeschichte*' might be translated as 'radical historicality'.[115]

Such an understanding is at odds with that of Luz and those who understand the contribution of *Wirkungeschichte* as an interpretative aid. *Wirkungsgeschichte* is not a means through which the present interpreter is made aware of interpretations between hers and the original text and which may have prejudiced her understanding of the text, and whose influence she must overcome. Rather, as Stover notes:

> 'radical historicality means that meanings are forever bound to a tradition-in-process, and the grasp for an absolute understanding is futile, meaningless'.[116]

Gadamer's sole focus meanwhile is the interpreter, and, more specifically, what happens as the interpreter interprets in the event of understanding, specifically in relation to tradition. It is therefore an utterly descriptive process. This descriptivism has been the persistent site of critique based on a perceived inevitable relativity in interpretation and Gadamer's failure to advocate a responsible method which would serve to guard against subjectivist readings of a text.[117]

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[114] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12: 'la nécessité d'un prolongement de la critique de l'herméneutique que Heidegger avait commencée'. This paper was originally delivered to the University of Montreal as an address on the 11th March 1974. Stover, D., 'Linguisticality and Theology: Applying the Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer' in *Studies in Religion 5.1* (1975 – 6) 34 – 44, 37 notes the Heideggerean influence on *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

[115] Stover, 'Linguisticality', 36, 37, 43 n3. He notes: 'effectual historicality would be more literal, but obscure in English. 'Radical' is used here in the sense of root principle, fundamental ground, or pervasive condition. 'Radical historicality,' then means something like 'unconditionally historical' (43 n3).

[116] Stover, 'Linguisticality', 36 – 7.

[117] Hirsch, E. D., 'Truth and Method in Interpretation' in *The Review of Metaphysics* 18.3 (1965) 488 – 507; Hirsch, *Validity,* 46 and esp. 'Appendix'; Hirsch, E.D., *The Aims of Interpretation* (London: University of Chicago Press 1976) 17, 39. Hirsch, *Aims*, 17 (cf. 17 n1) even suggests this puts Gadamer outside of the hermeneutical tradition started with Schleiermacher: 'The relativism of Heidegger and Gadamer runs counter to... objectivist views (that) can be considered a throwback to the "genuine" or "authentic" tradition of Schleiermacher'. Elsewhere [*Validity,* 153] he notes that his criticism of Gadamer is based on a more basic denial of Gadamer's assumptions and interests concerning 'how the historicity of understanding affects the conduct of interpretation'. Hirsch, 'Truth', 492: 'If the language of a text is not speech but rather language speaking its own meaning, then whatever that language says to us is its meaning. It means what ever we take it

Responding to such early criticism of Emilio Betti that Gadamer's opus failed to live up to its title by providing a 'method' of interpretation, Gadamer responded:

> 'Fundamentally I am *not proposing a method*; I am describing *what is the case.* That it is as I described it cannot, I think, be seriously questioned... I am trying to go beyond the concept of method held by modern science (which retains its limited justification) and to envisage in a fundamentally universal way what *always* happens."[118]

Moreover, Gadamer is insistent in *Truth and Method* that hermeneutics must not be obsessed by method:

> 'Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutical theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, of a method'.[119]

Gadamer is not against method as such, but he recognises that the buck does not stop with, and 'objectivity' is not secured by, the application of method.[120] He notes in support the trivial ends to which method can be utilised.[121] There are therefore limits to the usefulness of method: 'Method is not everything'.[122] Method is useful only in so far as it serves as an instrument to understanding.[123]

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to mean. Reduced to its intelligible significance the doctrine of the autonomy of a written text is the doctrine of the indeterminacy of textual meaning.'; Thiselton, A., 'Reader-Response Hermeneutics, Action Models and the Parables of Jesus' in Lundin, R.; Thiselton, A.,Walhout, C., *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Exeter: Paternoster 1985) 79 – 114, 110: 'The distinction between meaning and application disappears... (leaving) no room for hermeneutical norms which would help us decide what might constitute *responsible* interpretation in any given case'.

[118] Gadamer, H. G., 'Hermeneutics and Historicism (1965)' in *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum 2004) 507 – 537, 512 – 513. For the critique see: Betti, E. 'L'Ermeneutica storica e la storicita dell intendere' in *Annali della Faculta di Giurisprudenza* (Bari) 16 (1961); cf. Betti, E., 'Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the *Geisteswissenschaften*' in Bleicher, J., *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy and Critique* (London: Routledge 1980).

[119] Gadamer, *Truth,* 291.

[120] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12: 'Il est totalement absurde de dire que j'ai des objections contre les méthodes'; cf. Stover, 'Linguisticality, 36.

[121] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12: 'Je m'objecte seulement contre une application sans intelligence et sans intérêt motivé des méthodes, car je sais trop que les méthodes aussi peuvent être excellemment mises au service de trivialités.'; cf. Milbank's comment on the clash between historical and 'New Moment' readings of Paul: '(Pauline scholars) like J. D. G. ("Jimmy") Dunn, who appear to have spent their lifetimes reducing the great apostle to banality'. [Milbank, J., 'Paul Against Biopolitics' in Milbank, Davis, Žižek, *New Moment*, 21 – 73, 57 n72].

[122] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12: 'Cela veut dire que *la méthode n'est pas tout*'.

[123] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12.

This suspicion of method is linked to Gadamer's rehabilitation of the concepts of 'prejudice' and 'tradition' against, as Gadamer notes, the Enlightenment prejudice against them.[124] Lundin notes that many who focus on the security of method do so at the expense of the exercise of tradition:

> 'many modern theories of interpretation … (and) denigrate the role of tradition in interpretation and seek indubitable methods'.[125]

Stanley Rosen has noted that this fear of relativism leads to a state of desperation on the part of the historian, who seeks security in methodology as a result:

> '[The historian] is correct in his assertion that a lack of sound methodology leads to the obliteration of the distinction between subtlety and madness... since there are no canons for the exercise of subtlety, … [the historian] is in practice all too often driven to the desperate expedient of equating subtlety with the exercise of sound methodology'.[126]

He goes on to note that:

> 'the usual result is to define subtlety in terms of historical consensus, that is to say, in terms of the doctrines that characterise the school to which the philologist belongs'.[127]

Thus, in order to ensure that an interpretation is not infected by an overriding dogmatism, legitimate interpretation is restricted to consensually determined canons of the school to which the interpreter belongs. In the case of the interpreters who have been criticising the readings of the 'New Moment', we have seen above that the consensus is the historical-critical *method* and the restriction of 'legitimate' meaning to the primary and ancient context.

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[124] Gadamer, *Truth*, 272 – 3: 'There is one prejudice of the Enlightenment that defines its essence: the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power'.

[125] Lundin, R., 'Our Hermeneutical Inheritance' in Lundin, R., Thiselton, A., Walhout, C., *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Exeter: Paternoster 1985) 1 – 30, cf. 24.

[126] Rosen, *Hermeneutics,* 165 – 166.

[127] Rosen, *Hermeneutics*, 166.

Parris exhibits exactly the behaviour described by Rosen. Whilst recognising Gadamer's reluctance to advocate method, Parris refuses to allow it to stand:

> 'More than this is needed if we are going to successfully apply Gadamer's hermeneutic to biblical interpretation. We really need some form of methodological framework to incorporate all the different approaches to the Bible that have developed'.[128]

By eschewing this descriptive focus, Parris falls foul of the desire to translate hermeneutical theory into a language understandable to biblical scholars: method. Sherwood and Moore note the obsession with method which defines biblical studies, and which the reception of Gadamer in this field highlights:

> 'Biblical studies is *obsessed with* method and is *possessed by* method. Biblical scholarship seems to turn everything it touches into method'.[129]

Similarly, we note Bockmuehl's rendering of Gadamerean *Wirkungsgeschichte* conventionalises the radical hermeneutical potential of the notion within the historically-focussed canons of New Testament criticism.[130] Bockmuehl conservatively restricts *Wirkungsgeschichte* to the historical 'memory' of the first-centuries AD.[131] This historicisation of Gadamer therefore offers an important parallel to the New Moment's reception within New Testament study, as the priority of the historical “original” is emphasised in both.

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[128] Parris, *Reception*, 114; cf. 113-115. This lack of methodology is the starting point of Ricoeur, 'Distanciation'; cf. Ricoeur, P., 'The Task of Hermeneutics' in *Philosophy Today 17.2* (1973) 112 – 129. Jeanrond, W., *Theological Hermeneutics* (London: SCM Press 1994) 9; Pearson, *Corresponding,* 9; Grondin, J., *Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biography* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press 2003) 281 - 2 notes that *Truth and Method* was originally to be entitled *Foundations of a Philosophical Hermeneutics*, then *Understanding and Event* before the final title. The irony of the mention of 'method' in the title has not been missed: Hirsch, E. D., 'Appendix II: Gadamer's Theory of Interpretation' in *Validity in Interpretation* (London: Yale University Press 1967) 245 – 264, 245: 'somewhat ironic title... the deliberate irony of Professor Gadamer's title'; Pearson, *Corresponding,* 9: 'Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics are not about facilitating the formulation of methods of interpretation. This is specifically why he has chosen the title 'philosophical' hermeneutics, in contradistinction to the 'science of hermeneutics'; cf. Gadamer, H.G. 'On the Scope and Function of Hermeneutic Reflection (1967)' in *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (trans. Linge, D.) (London: University of California Press 2008) 18 – 43; Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique'.

[129] Moore, S. D., Sherwood, Y., *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2011) 33.

[130] Bockmuehl, '*Wirkungsgeschichte*', 36: 'earlier'; and *passim.*

[131] Bockmuehl, '*Wirkungsgeschichte*', 36: 'My modest suggestion here is to harness the historical implications of a *Wirkungsgeschichte* on the *human* scale – the scale of personal living memory. That is to say, I propose to privilege the *earlier* over the more remote effects for a historical understanding of texts, persons and events'.

Any approach which seeks to base an interpretative method or approach on the legitimating authority of Gadamer therefore immediately parts company with its master.[132] Gadamer insists a focus on method shows only that one 'is profoundly involved in the subjectivism which we are endeavoring to overcome'.[133] At the end of his debate with Betti, Gadamer bemoans:

> 'Obviously I have not succeeded in convincing Betti that a philosophical theory of hermeneutics is not a methodology'.[134]

Gadamer maintains his position throughout:

> 'Hermeneutics surpasses methods, because it reminds us of our practical life experience and only through this awareness might the innate power of dogmatism be overcome'.[135.]

So, by giving us a Gadamer mediated via Jauss, Parris attempts to "go beyond" Gadamer to achieve a methodology with which to approach the text. However, whilst scholars of the New Testament might like Gadamer's aid in developing such a methodology in order to become aware of, and thereby throw off, the shackles of tradition so as to 'understand' what the text is trying to say to us, and to access afresh its meaning, they are unable to do so.[136] Gadamer does not give us, as interpreters, a way out of the shackles of tradition. Further, Gadamer says that the search for such a road map with which to approach the text is futile.

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[132] We again note here the ironic parallel to the charge of appropriation made by those historical critics against the readings of the 'New Moment' concerning the utilisation of Paul as a source of legitimating authority for their projects. The use of Gadamer by a conservative body of scholarship which draws support from his hermeneutical theory is a similar derivation of authority as that which the thinkers of the 'New Moment' have been accused.

[133] Gadamer, 'Historicism', 513.

[134] Gadamer, 'Historicism', 513.

[135] Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12 – 13: 'l'herméneutique rappelle aux sciences comme à notre expérience pratique de la vie, qu'il faut vaincre les aliénations de notre culture et de notre civilisation en surmontant la barrière des préoccupations dogmatisantes qui nous sont innées'. cf. the similarities here concerning the overcoming of dogmatism with Kant's vision for the philosophy faculty: 'The philosophy faculty can never lay aside its arms in the face of danger that threatens the truth entrust to its protection, because the higher faculties will never give up their desire to rule' [Kant, *Conflict*, 45]. cf. Guarino, T., 'Revelation and Foundationalism: Toward Hermeneutical and Ontological Appropriateness' in *Modern Theology 6.3* (April 1990) 221 – 235, 225: 'According to Gadamer, to speak of the stable determinacy of meaning of a text, or of the difference between a text's meaning and its significance, or of a distinction between a unity of content and a plurality of contexts indicates a hermeneutical naivete'.

[136] cf. Eagleton's summary of this Gadamerean hermeneutic: 'The point of the tradition, then, is to get us back to where we were, only more radically so' in Eagleton, T., *Walter Benjamin: or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso 1981) 54.

Instead, when it comes to understanding, we as interpreters are powerless to step fully outside of the tradition/s we inhabit, and which provides the context in which understanding may occur.[137] This realisation not only prompts us to seek refinements of our methods of reading, but also generates a humility with regards to other methods and leads us to afford greater space to interpreters, like those of the 'New Moment', who arrive at readings via other approaches.

Thus, if we give due consideration not to the impossible desire for a methodology but to the metaphysical commitments of a Gadamerean hermeneutic then we can note with Guarino that:

> 'reconstructive hermeneutics necessarily yields to an interpretive theory which allows for a plurality of new and differing interpretations of a text's meaning. Such plurality is demanded by the historicity of understanding'.[138]

This plurality of meanings is not a relativistic fudge, or the kind of arbitrariness which we saw above that Ricoeur was aware of, but a 'radical plurality'.[139] As such, *Wirkungsgeschichte* should be allowed the full weight of Stover's translation as 'radical historicality'. The historicality to which Gadamer alerts us does not, as the historians above have asserted, limit the canons of meaning, but rather expands them precisely in the manner that the historians resisted. The historicising of historicity itself leads not to a monism of interpretative possibility based on historical actuality, but to an awareness of the historical standing of the interpreter (Gadamer's *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*). This standing is therefore not incidental to and does not impede interpretation but is constitutive of interpretation itself.

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[137] This is precisely the issue on which Habermas sided against Gadamer in their debate. See Habermas, J., 'On Hermeneutics' Claim to Universality' in Mueller-Vollmer, H. (ed.), *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from The Enlightenment to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell 1986) 294 – 319 and How, A., *The Habermas-Gadamer Debate and the Nature of the Social* (London: Avebury 1995); cf. Eagleton, *Benjamin*, 54: 'It might seem natural... to ask Gadamer whose tradition exactly he has in mind, and whether we are allowed to opt out of it if we don't like it'.

[138] Guarino, 'Foundationalism', 227.

[139] Guarino, 'Foundationalism', 227.

We can go further, with Ricoeur, to note that the interpretation of a text is in fact an act of self-understanding, and therefore an understanding of the traditions in which that self is found. Thus, both an analysis of the self of the interpreter and of the traditions in which that interpreter's 'self' stands must feature in the evaluation of any reading of a text and its interpretation.

An authentically Gadamerean-inspired hermeneutic does not provide a means to arrive at a methodology with which to step outside of the interpreter's interpretative tradition, but a means of understanding and celebrating the tradition in which the interpreter approaches the text. We might note with irony that this has been shown even by the manner in which New Testament scholars have remained within the habitual stream of historical-criticism they inhabit in *both* their reception of Gadamer *and* of the readings of the 'New Moment'.

Gadamer's hermeneutical theory is therefore appropriate as a means to illuminate the interpretative standing of our thinkers of the 'New Moment'. Furthermore, Gadamer's hermeneutical theory is especially appropriate since their object of interest is the biblical text. An early criticism of Gadamer notes that his hermeneutic treats *every* text as if it were a text of the sort of Scripture.[140] This observation serves not only to highlight the appropriateness of Gadamerean theory as a means to analyse the readings of the 'New Moment' but also suggests that one reason for the interest in Paul's epistles is that they must count as “classics” in Gadamer's sense'[141].

[140] Hirsch, *Validity,* 123: 'For Gadamer, all texts are like the Constitution and the Bible'.
[141] Sigurdson, 'Reading', 237.

The utilisation of a Gadamerean hermeneutic allows us to analyse the readings of the 'New Moment' since it prompts us to seek an understanding of the traditions in which these interpreters stand, not as incidental to, but constitutive of, that interpretation. We are called upon to observe the manner in which such tradition/s give rise to the meaning they have found in the Pauline text. This, when combined with our positive understanding of 'appropriation' set out above, means that we must give full weight to the interpreter's present as a means of evaluating the reading/s they present us.

We shall now consider each Pauline reading in turn, as instances of Pauline *Wirkungsgeschichte,* with a particular focus on the traditions of interpretation in which each interpretation stands. Such a focus has already been made clear in our isolation of the 'tradition' of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek and with which this thesis is concerned. Moreover, it enables us to consider how the process of 'appropriation', and the 'standing-in-life' of the interpreter, impacts upon, and is impacted by, their engagement with Paul.

Such an approach is fully to appreciate the Gadamerean insight concerning the standing of the interpreter as one 'horizon' of interpretation. Moreover, these engagements with Paul, which, as we have seen, are at odds with those of the tradition of New Testament studies as conventionally conceived, throw into relief the 'prejudice' (in a Gadamerean sense) and convictions of that discipline. This in turn reveals the 'prejudice' of the authors of the 'New Moment' themselves.[142]

[142] Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 3: [The readings of the New Moment] 'reveal steadfast convictions, conceptions and practices which express presumptions about ownership (“our own”) of the intellectual property of Christianity which appear to be threatened by the vitality of contemporary philosophical interpretations of the Pauline texts beyond their assumed proper domiciles; the church or academic biblical literature societies'; cf. Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 5.

We proceed to survey Badiou's, Eagleton's and Žižek's engagement with Paul. We move to analyse certain conceptual problems raised by each, with the question of 'why Paul?' being considered throughout. This will enable us to give an account of their readings of Paul, and their reasons for engaging with the Pauline text at all. The search for an explanation for this 'turn' to Paul lies at the centre of our investigation throughout.

This process complete, we shall be in a position to review both those readings themselves and the charge of appropriation which has been levelled against the readings. Moreover, we shall be in a position to consider the success of such a Gadamerean-inspired notion of reading as 'application' more generally.

2. BADIOU'S PAUL

2.1 Introduction to Badiou

In this chapter, we turn to our first figure associated with the 'New Moment' of Pauline interpretation, as we consider the reading and reception of Paul by Badiou in his *Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism*.[1] Badiou's intellectual output is considerable and his influences are wide-ranging, resulting in a unique blend of mathematical, political (Maoist), and psychoanalytic Lacanian themes which make their way into his philosophical writings.[2]

A number of interests dominate his work, but two predominate. The first is a concern for the nature of philosophy itself – what philosophy is and how it is practised.[3] The second is an ongoing project to put forward a theory of being, in which 'truth' is 'evental', the nature of truth being bound up with events occurring in relation to various subjects.[4] The nature of the subject, and with it, subjectivity is thus also a dominant theme amongst many others.[5]

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1 Badiou, A., *Saint Paul: the Foundation of Universalism* (trans. Brassier, R.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003) [orig. *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1997)]. Hereafter *Universalism.*

2 For Badiou's mathematical interest see Badiou, A. *Theoretical Writings* (ed. and trans. Brassier, R.; Toscano, A.) (London: Continuum 2004). For his political interest see Badiou, A., *Polemics* (trans. Corcoran, S.) (London: Verso 2012); *Philosophy for Militants* (trans. Bosteels, B.) (London: Verso 2012) [orig. *La relation énigmatique entre philosophie et politique* (Paris: Germinal 2011); *The Century* (trans. Toscano, A.) (London: Polity 2007); *Metapolitics* (trans. Barker, J.) (London: Verso 2005); 'Philosophy and Politics' in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy* (ed. and trans. Clemens, J., Feltham, O.) (London: Continuum 2003) 69 – 78; 'The Political as a Procedure for Truth' (trans. Faulks, B. P.) in *Lacanian Ink 19* (2001) 71 – 81; 'Philosophy and Politics' (trans. Sowley, T.) in *Radical Philosophy* (1999) 29 – 32. For his interest in psychoanalysis see Badiou, A., 'Philosophy and Psychoanalysis' in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy* (ed. and trans. Clemens, J., Feltham, O.) (London: Continuum 2003) 79 – 90; 'Lacan and the pre-Socratics' in Žižek, S. (ed.) *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London: Verso 2006) 7 – 16; 'Anxiety' (trans. Faulks, B. P.) in *Lacanian Ink 26* (2005) 70 – 71; 'Psychoanalysis and Philosophy' (trans. Comprone, R.; Coelen, M.) in *UMBR(a) 1* (1996) 27- 35); 'Descartes/Lacan' (trans. Collins, D., Jöttkandt, S.) in *UMBR(a) 1* (1996) 13-7. For his interest in aesthetics see Badiou, A. *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (trans. Toscano, A.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005). For his interest in ethics see Badiou, A., *An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (trans. Hallward, P.) (London: Verso 2001).

3 Badiou, A. *Manifesto for Philosophy* (trans. Madarasz, N.) (Albany: SUNY Press 1999); *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy* (ed. and trans. Clemens, J., Feltham, O.) (London: Continuum 2003).

4 Badiou, A. *Being and Event* (trans. Feltham, O.) (London: Continuum 2005); *Briefings On Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology* (Madrasz, N.) (Albany: SUNY Press 2005); *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event, 2)* London: Continuum 2009) [orig. *Logiques des mondes: l'être et l'evénement 2* (Paris: Seuil 2006)]; cf. *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (trans. Burchill, L.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2000).

5 Badiou, A., *Theory of the Subject* (trans. Bosteels, B.) (London: Continuum 2009) [orig. *Théorie du subjet* (Paris: Seuil 1982)]; 'On a Finally Objectless Subject' (trans. Fink, B.) in *Topoi 7* (1988) 93 – 8; Hallward, P., *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2003).

Our interest, however, is with the manner in which Badiou reads Paul and the Pauline text. Given the interests and influences described briefly above, it may come as some surprise that Badiou – a Maoist and, as we shall see, an avowed 'atheist' – is interested and produces a reading of Paul at all. The reasons for this interest will be a key aspect of our enquiry.

In this chapter, we will observe some passages drawn upon by Badiou which are indicative of his reading of Paul (§2.2) in order to develop a critical analysis of Badiou's Pauline reading (§§2.3-4). We shall identify and evaluate other charges which have been made against Badiou's Paul and especially the charge that Badiou's reading is suspiciously Marcionite (§2.5). This will lead us to explore the related themes of atheism (§2.6) and resurrection (§2.7) in Badiou's thought. Finally, we will consider some consequences of this Badiouan reading for the task of reading Paul and the New Testament more generally (§2.7).

A persistent area of enquiry in this thesis will be the charge of 'appropriation' which has been levelled against the Pauline readings of the 'New Moment' *tout court,* as introduced above.[6] 'Appropriation' in the positive sense we outlined there consists in: the inscription of the discourse of one text (in our case the Pauline epistles) into the present discourse of the 'appropriator', through which the 'appropriator's' own self-understanding is enlarged. The charge of 'appropriation' will be evaluated in this sense in the conclusion of this thesis.[7]

[6] See §1.4.
[7] See §5.2.

A major theme of this chapter is the 'new' or the 'novel' and its implications for reading the New Testament.[8] Badiou's notion of the 'Event' raises a number of questions about the manner in which such novelty is described, and, in turn, how texts which seek to write about such novelty may be interpreted. Ultimately, they raise the question of whether the mere assumption of the value of historicity can continue to be defended.[9] The theme of 'novelty' thus runs as an ordering thread through this chapter. Of all of the readers of Paul with which we are concerned, Badiou is perhaps the one of whom the label 'New Moment' is most apposite, since in his reading the very concept of 'novelty' itself comes under scrutiny.

[8] Badiou, A., 'Concluding Roundtable' in Alcoff, Caputo (eds.), *Paul Among*, 162 notes that 'there is always something like newness, like creation, in universality'. Thus, the persistence of the theme of 'novelty' comes as no surprise given his focus on universalism in his reading of the Apostle; cf. *Universalism.*

[9] See §2.8.

2.2 Badiou's Pauline Interpretation – Textual Examples

The tale of Badiou's inclusion as a thinker of the 'New Moment' is not-often told. His reading of Paul comes to the attention of Anglophone thinkers through Žižek's treatment of Badiou's *Universalism* in *The Ticklish Subject*, before which, as Packman notes, Badiou was 'at the time relatively unheard of'.[10] This sudden and coterminous intrusion of both a Žižekian and Badiouan Paul upon English audiences has aided the impression of a sudden turn toward Paul on the part of these thinkers generally and of Badiou in particular.

However, several comments made by Badiou demonstrate his sustained engagement with the Apostle. Badiou speaks of his interest in Paul as having been present 'for a long time'.[11] Some time before *Universalism,* he wrote a play based on the life of the Apostle in which the Apostle is transposed into a female character – Paula.[12] Any account of a Badiouan 'turn' must therefore acknowledge the duration of his interest in the Apostle.

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[10] Žižek, *Ticklish Subject,* 147f.; Packman, C., 'The Perverse Core of Christianity' in *The Philosopher's Magazine 48* (2010) 87 – 91.

[11] Badiou, *Universalism*, x.

[12] Badiou*, Incident.* see Blanton, W., Spitzer, S., 'A Discussion of and around *Incident at Antioch*: An interview with Alain Badiou' in *Art&Research 3.2 (Summer 2010)* 1 – 10. This play was written in 1982 and so Badiou's interest can be traced to at least 1982 [*Incident,* vii] adding further doubt on the narrative of the New Moment's origination in Taubes *Political Theology* we questioned above in §1.1. Note that this approach of re-inscribing an ancient text into a dramatic genre with a female protagonist is not limited to Badiou's Pauline reception. He does the same to Plato's *Republic* via the introduction of the character of 'Amanda' see Badiou, A., *Plato's* Republic (London: Polity Press 2012) [orig. *La République de Platon* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard 2012)].

Badiou's interest in Paul stems from his inclusion of Paul as a member of a class of thinkers whom he regards as 'antiphilosophers'. 'Antiphilosophers' are a particular interest of Badiou's.[13] The term 'antiphilosopher' is one which finds its origin in Lacanian theory.[14] For Badiou, the term refers to a class of "philosophers" who sit uneasily to the predominant mode of philosophical discourse. Each member of this class relates to a group against which they are defined:

> 'each antiphilosopher chooses the philosophers whom he hopes to make into the canonical examples of the empty and vain shell of a word that for him is philosophy'.[15]

It is important to note that such figures do not do this merely theoretically, but with the whole of their lives:

> 'For the antiphilosopher, the pains and ecstasies of personal life bear witness to the fact that the concept haunts the temporal present all the way to include the throes of the body'.[16]

Badiou includes Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Lacan as well as Paul in his list of antiphilosophers, and Paul features as the last in a seminar series devoted to these figures of 'antiphilosophy':

> 'I devoted my seminar for some years to the great modern antiphilosophers. First Nietzsche, then Wittgenstein, and then Lacan. After which, carrying out the great leap backward, I concluded with Saint Paul, the inventor of the antiphilosophical position'.[17]

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[13] See Badiou, A.,*Wittgenstein's Antiphilosophy* (trans. Bosteel, B.) (London: Verso 2011) [orig. *L'antiphilosophie de Wittgenstein* (Caen: Editions Nous 2009).

[14] Johnston, A., 'This Philosophy Which is Not One: Jean-Claude Miller, Alain Badiou and Lacanian Antiphilosophy' in *S: Journal of the Jan van Eyck Circle for Lacanian Ideology Critique 3* (2010)137 – 158; Bosteel, B., 'Radical Antiphilosophy' in *Filozofski vestnik* XXIX (2) (2008) 155 – 187.

[15] Badiou, *Wittgenstein's*, 69.

[16] Badiou, *Wittgenstein's*, 69.

[17] Badiou, *Wittgenstein's*, 69.

We see here the importance of Paul for Badiou. Badiou not only numbers Paul amongst these antiphilosophers, but also regards Paul as a foundational figure of antiphilosophy.[18] The definition of an antiphilosopher, given above, highlights the importance of the whole of the antiphilosopher's life in Badiou's understanding of the term. It is perhaps this aspect more than any other which attracts Badiou to Paul, since the visibility with which sufferings are borne by Paul makes this aspect of Badiou's definition most evident (cf. 1 Cor 4.13).[19]

In his reading of Paul, Badiou seeks to 'reactivate' the Apostle by reading him as a figure in 'philosophical proximity' to Badiou himself.[20] This description of his reading process will be important when we come to consider the process of reading, which we can observe in his Pauline reception. Badiou summarises the Pauline project as the attempt to 'drag the Good News (the Gospels) out of the rigid enclosure within which its restriction to the Jewish community would confine it'.[21] This extension of the gospel to the non-Jewish community is found throughout the Pauline epistles, and is a central concern of Gal 3.28 – a passage to which we turn as an example of Badiou's reading practice in the course of this chapter.[22]

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[18] However,Badiou continues: 'unless this honor belongs to Diogenes, or even to Heraclitus' (*Wittgenstein's*, 69). A similar instance of Badiou ascribing a foundational role to Paul, only for this role to be then found in significant precursors, occurs in Badiou's discussion of the concept of universalism: 'We gave this book the subtitle *The Foundation of Universalism.* It is, of course, an excessive title. Real universalism is already present in … Archimedes, … Sophocles, … Sappho, … the Psalms or Ecclesiastes'. [Badiou, *Universalism,* 107].

[19] 1 Cor 4.9; 2 Cor 4.8-11; 6..4-10; 11.23-29; Phil 1.30; 1 Thess 1.6; 3.4; (2 Tim 1.11-12; 2.3, 9 – 10); cf. Rom 5.3; 1 Thess 2.9. 1 Cor 4.13 features most frequently in the reading of Eagleton (see below) and thus this aspect of struggle and its relation to the proclamation of truth becomes a shared feature of the readings with which we are concerned.

[20] Badiou*, Universalism*, 3, 5.

[21] Badiou, *Universalism*, 13. This reference may suggest Badiou considers it possible that Paul knew (at least one) Gospel. Whilst this is unlikely, it is not impossible cf. recent attempts to argue in favour for an earlier dating of Mark: Crossley, J. G. *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* (London: Continuum 2004).

[22] Rom 1.13; 9.30; 11.11, 13, 25 15.9, 16, 27; Gal 1.16; 2.2, 8 ; Gal 3.14 cf. Rom 1.5; 3.29.

Before surveying Pauline passages read by Badiou and the manner in which they are read, we must first point to two features of the Badiouan reading more generally and which set the context for this reading practice. These features are, firstly, the genre which Badiou understands the Pauline texts to be, and secondly, the stage on which Badiou reads Paul. Badiou claims to take seriously the epistolary nature of the Pauline corpus as made up of 'local interventions, and hence governed by localized tactical stakes'.[23] It might be surprising that an author intent on emphasising the potential universality of the Pauline corpus begins with an emphasis on its particularity. From these 'local interventions' he will go on to uncover a 'sinewy articulation' of the 'Pauline problematic'.[24]

Badiou's understanding that the particularity of the epistolary form is an inescapable feature of the Pauline corpus is one shared with New Testament scholarship as noted by Dunn:

> 'it is impossible to escape their character as letters, communications from a *known* author to *specific* people in *particular* circumstances'.[25]

[23] Badiou, *Universalism*, 14.

[24] Badiou, *Universalism*, 14. This move – a development of a 'core' of Pauline proclamation variously expressed in epistolary intervention – is one found in many New Testament scholarly reconstructions of Paul's meaning.

[25] Dunn. J. D. G., *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1998) 11; cf. Bornkamm, G., *Paul* (trans. Stalker, D.) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1995) xxi – xxv; Dahl, N. A., 'The Particularity of the Pauline Epistles as a Problem in the Ancient Church' in *Neotestamentica et Patristica* (Leiden: Brill, 1962) 261 – 271. See also M. M. Mitchell, 'The Continuing Problem of Particularity and Universality within the *corpus Paulinium*' in *Studia Theologica – Nordic Journal of Theology* (64.2) 121 – 137 for a development of the relation between the themes of particularity and universality in a previously untranslated homily of Chrysostom on Rom 16. Using Romans 16.3 as a starting point Mitchell finds that Chrysostom attempts to show 'that the particular is universal and that the universal meaning and import are to be found precisely in the particulars' (125). Mitchell argues that Chrysostom's homily 'demonstrates how much the selective reactivation of these time-constrained truths requires continual creative energy to translate the particular into the universal'(133).

Both Badiou's reading and that of mainstream Pauline scholarship properly discuss the implications of epistolary particularity in reading the Pauline corpus. However, Badiou and mainstream Pauline scholarship diverge in the consequences drawn from this consideration of the epistolary form. Badiou focuses on the epistles as 'local interventions' but this does not lead him to read them against ancient epistolary genres.[26] Conversely, Dunn claims the epistolary form means that:

> 'a theology of Paul is therefore tied to historical analysis and contextualisation to a degree neither possible nor necessary to achieve in the case of most other earliest Christian writings'.[27]

Such scholarship proceeds to a comparison of Paul's letters with other ancient epistles as models to aid in the discovery of the meaning of the Pauline text. The practice of reading the epistolary genre in its ancient context guards against the mistaken assumption of a constant form of the 'letter' as a mode of communication, a form which is instead itself open to change in form and status.[28] It is important, however, for our purposes, to note that Badiou does not historicise and read the genre solely against an ancient context.

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[26] e.g. Bahr, G. J., 'Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century' in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 28 (1966) 465 – 77 makes such a move in looking to comparisons with the letter-writing practice of ancient epistle writers, focussing on the potential problems associated with the practice of using a secretary or co-author. cf Rom 16.22; 1 Cor 16.21; Gal 6.11; Col 4. 18; 2 Thess 3.17; Phlm 19; (1 Cor 1.1; 2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1.1; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1; Phlm 1).

[27] Dunn, *Theology*, 11. This raises the stakes in the New Moment's persistent reduction of meaning to the historical.

[28] This point recognises the change in value and significance that a hand-written letter has acquired in the age of word-processing and email, and reveals that Benjamin's insight into the shifting nature of a work of art in an age of mechanical production is as much true of the concept of a 'letter', see Benjamin, W., 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Production (1936)' in Benjamin, W., Hannah Arendt (ed.), *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World,1968) 219-253 and Ziarek, K., 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Electronic Mutability' in Benjamin, A. (ed.) *Walter Benjamin and Art* (New York: Continuum 2005) 209 – 225.

Badiou's refusal to historicise is also a feature of his reading. He instead utilises an analysis of his own contemporary political situation as a frame of reference for the interpretation of the Pauline text.[29] The importance of this analysis for Badiou's reading is indicated by its presence at the beginning of *Universalism,* and it becomes the setting against which his reading of Paul is outlined. Badiou classifies the contemporary political situation of his native France as one beset with 'community particularisms' and he notes a 'communitarization of the public sphere' with regards to the status of immigrants.[30] Badiou takes this situation to provide a context in which the meaning of Paul can be understood in a special way through the parallelism of context: 'how clearly Paul's statement rings out under these conditions!'[31]

Jennings notes the contrast between an approach such as Badiou's and that of Pauline scholarship, which limits the context in which Paul can be discussed to his own 'first-century environment'.[32] This limitation of context does not rule out a political interest in Pauline interpretation, as Jennings also notes.[33] A recent wave of historical New Testament scholarship precisely emphasises the imperial political context of the Pauline proclamation.[34]

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29 Badiou, *Universalism*, 6.

30 Badiou, *Universalism*, 6, 9.

31 Badiou, *Universalism*, 9. Clodovis Boff spells out a similar hermeneutics in his 'correspondence of relationships model' between scripture/its context and ourselves/our context drawn from the observation of hermeneutical practice in base Christian communities. Boff, C., *Theology and Praxis: Epistemological Foundations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1987) §42 [orig. *Teologia e prática: Teologia do política e suas mediações* (Petropolis, Bra.: Editora Vozes Ltda 1982)]: 'What do we observe in the ongoing hermeneutic practice in our communities? We observe that Christian communities seek to "apply" the gospel to their particular situation, just as the primitive community [i.e. the early church] sought to do... meaning transpires, "comes to light," in historical currency, through and beyond the letter of the text of the past'. For our purposes we should note Boff's awareness of the fear that such reading is merely eisegesis or a misreading of the text: 'To be sure a hermeneutic practice of this type has been has been and continues to be subject to abuses.But this cannot constitute a motive for its abandonment... This hermeneutic practice must become the subject of greater theoretical interest, with the objective of furnishing it with the tools that will enable it to overcome these abuses'.

32 Jennings, T., 'Paul and Sons: (Post-modern Thinkers Reading Paul)' in Oddell-Scott, D. (ed.) *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* (London: T&T Clark: 2007) 85 – 111, 85.

33 Jennings, 'Sons', 86 – 7.

34 Elliott, N., *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle (*New York: Orbis 1994); 'The Apostle Paul and Empire' in Horsley, R. A. (ed.), *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (London: Westminster John Knox 2008) 97 – 116; [cf. Elliot, 'Closure']; Horsley, R. A. (ed.), *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Int. 1997); Horsley, R. A (ed.), *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International 2000); Horsley, R. A. (ed.), *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International 2004); Horsley, R, A., 'Rhetoric and Empire – and 1

However, we must note that Badiou is not *simply* reading Paul within his own context here and nor is he blind to Paul's first-century setting. This is shown shortly after he introduces the parallelism of context he finds between Paul's context and his own. Badiou goes on to refer to Gal 3.28 (see below) and the historical context of that passage: 'a genuinely stupefying statement when one knows the rules of the ancient world'.[35] Moreover, he repeats in a panel discussion: 'I have never said circumstances are nothing in the development of universality, of Pauline universality'.[36]

Badiou's manner of reading of Paul can be seen in his reading of 1 Cor 15.10 and Gal 3.28.[37] These two passages are indicative of the reading practice of *Universalism* generally. Badiou reads 1 Cor 15.10 as demonstrating the constitution of a new subject that occurred in Paul's "conversion". This focus on Pauline subjectivity and the constitution of the Pauline subject is a recurrent feature of Badiou's reading.[38] This interest is not confined to Badiou's reading of Paul and features more broadly amongst those with a philosophical interest in Paul.[39] Moreover, it is a recurrent interest in Badiouan thought more generally.[40]

Corinthians' in Horsley, *Politics,* 72 – 103; ; Wright, N. T., 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' in *Centre of Theological Inquiry Reflections 2* (Spring 1999) 42 – 65; Wright, N. T., 'Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire' in Horsley, *Politics*, 160 – 183; Wright, N. T., 'Paul and Caesar: A New Reading of Romans' in Bartholomew, C. (ed.), *A Royal Priesthood: The Use of the Bible Ethically and Politically* (Carlisle: Paternoster 2002) 173 – 193. The reception of this theme by other exegetes has been mixed. Some for example have warned of the dangers of overemphasising the significance of the Imperial cult, see Harland, P. A., *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2003) 241 – 243.

35 Badiou, *Universalism*, 9.

36 Badiou, 'Concluding Roundtable', 162.

37 1 Cor 15.10: 'But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.' χάριτι δὲ θεοῦ εἰμι ὅ εἰμι, καὶ ἡ χάρις αὐτοῦ ἡ εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ κενὴ ἐγενήθη, ἀλλὰ περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα, οὐκ ἐγὼ δὲ ἀλλὰ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ [ἡ] σὺν ἐμοί.

38 The constitution of the subject marks one of the most dramatic moments in Badiou's *L'Incident*, where Paul's conversion is seen (through Badiou's translation of it into the events in the life of his character Paula) as the point of emergence of the subject, the 'I'. See Badiou, *L'Incident,* 27 – 31.

39 This focus on Pauline subjectivity and the constitution of the Pauline subject is a recurrent feature of Badiou's reading. It also features more broadly amongst those with a philosophical interest in Paul. See, for example, Anderson, V. N., 'Becoming a Subject: The Case of Michel Foucault and Paul' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 11.1* (Winter 2010) 127 – 141.

40 Badiou, *Subject*; Bosteel, B., 'Alain Badiou's Theory of the Subject: The Re-Commencement of Dialectical Materialism' in *Pli 12* (2001) 200 – 229 and *Pli 13* (2002) 172 – 208; Smith, B. A., 'The Limits of the Subject in Badiou's *Being and* Event' in *Cosmos and History 2.1* (2006) 134 – 158; Brassier, R., 'Stellar Void or Cosmic Animal? Badiou and Deleuze on the Dice-Throw' in *Pli 10* (2001) 200 – 216, 209f; Power, N., 'The Collective Political Subject in Sartre and Badiou' in *Pli 20* (2009) and 'Towards an Anthropology of Infinitude: Badiou

Before turning to how Badiou reads this passage, we note his reticence toward applying the term “conversion” to Paul's Damascus Road experience, which provides the immediate context for Badiou's treatment of this passage.[41] Badiou employs the term “conversion” to describe Paul's experience albeit in quotation marks at first (which are subsequently dropped). However, he asks whether the term “conversion” is an appropriate description of that experience.[42] Badiou defines Paul's conversion experience 'as a thunderbolt, a caesura, and not a dialectical reversal'.[43] Modern New Testament scholarship shares this reticence towards the language of “conversion” as an accurate descriptor of Paul's experience. Krister Stendahl is most recognised for challenging the appropriateness of the term “conversion” here:

> 'Rather than being “converted,” Paul was called to the specific task – made clear to him by his experience of the risen Lord – of apostleship to the Gentiles'.[44]

Despite this challenge the term maintains currency – not least due to its cultural persistence as an archetypal conversion ('Damascus road experience'). There are also those who insist on the appropriateness of this classification for describing this moment in Paul's career.[45] Badiou's careful use of the term is therefore consistent with trends in New Testament scholarship.

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and the Political Subject' in *Cosmos and History 2.2* (2006) 186 – 209.

41 Paul's experience is described in Acts (Acts 9.1-22; 22.1-16; 26.9-2; cf. 1 Cor 9.1; 15.3-11; Gal 1.13 – 24).

42 Badiou, *Universalism,* 17.

43 Badiou, *Universalism*, 17.

44 Stendahl, K., *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (London: SCM Press 1977) 7 – 23, 7. On the relationship between the Damascus road experience and his apostleship to the Gentiles see Dunn, J.D.G. 'A Light to the Gentiles', or 'The End of the Law'? The Significance of the Damascus Road Christophany for Paul' in *Jesus, Paul and the Law* (London: SPCK 1990) 89 – 107.

45 Most notably, Segal, A., *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (London: Yale University Press 1990). Segal argues that the term 'conversion' makes sense as a conversion within positions available to a first-century Jew, which he understands Paul to be.

Badiou reads Paul's conversion experience through his interest in (Pauline) subjectivity: 'it was a conscription instituting a new subject'.[46] Here 1 Cor 15.10 is cited. Badiou reads 'I am' as the creation of a new subject, a new 'I am'.[47] We find no reference to Paul's status as apostle which seems to be the grounds for this assertion (1 Cor 15. 9, cf. 15.11).[48] Badiou continues to describe the nature of Paul's conversion: 'Paul has not been converted by representatives of "the Church"'. This description echoes the themes of 1 Cor 15.1-11 on the source of Paul's proclamation of the gospel.[49]

1 Cor 15.10 is therefore read as Paul's description of this new subjectivity in Christ. Subjectivity is an independent interest of Badiou's as we have seen. We must note also the importance of subjectivity in the Marxist tradition in which Badiou stands. Žižek reminds us that 'the great defining problem of Western Marxism was the lack of a revolutionary subject or agent', which he claims inspired the Marxist turn to psychoanalysis.[50]

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46 Badiou, *Universalism*, 17.

47 Note the parallels with Exod 3.14 here cf. Glombitza, O. 'Gnade – das entscheidende Wort. Erwägungen zu 1. Kor. xv. 1 – 11, eine exegetische Studie,' in *Novum Testamentum* 2 (1958) 281 – 290 (cited in Conzelmann, H. *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1975) 260. Both emphasise the role of grace in the construction of Paul's being, emphasising more or less Paul's dependency of Paul's on Grace. Badiou's notion of subjectivity constituted by the event plays a similar role; cf. *L'Incident,* 27 – 31.

48 Horsley, R. A., *1 Corinthians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1998) 199: 'another self-deprecatory defense of his own apostolate'.

49 Badiou, *Universalism*, 17.

50 Žižek, *Farce*, 89; cf. Wolfenstein, V. F., *Psychoanalytic-Marxism: Groundwork* (London: Free Association 1993).

This theme of subjectivity is not absent from Badiou's reading of Gal 3.28. Some commentators decry the appeal of Badiou and others to Gal 3.28. They regard those who emphasise this passage as doing so because it supports a kind of liberal politics currently in vogue.[51] Fowl, for example, finds the attraction of Gal 3.28 in the concerns Badiou wishes to address. Central among these concerns is the fragmentation of politics into a set of identity-based movements, particularly in his native France.[52] Fowl states 'given this set of concerns, it is clear why a text like Gal 3:28 would captivate Badiou'. We note that the identification of such concerns is often simply given as reason for the dismissal of Badiou and others as serious readers of Paul with little additional comment.

Badiou sees Gal 3.28 as pointing towards the overcoming of communitarian particularisms that he considers indicative of the state of contemporary political society. Badiou reads 'Jew' and 'Greek' not as references to particular (historical) communities or identities, but as reflective of differing community and ethnic identities *as such.* 'Jew' and 'Greek' become, in this reading, not specific groups or people, but examples of that which is overcome in the oneness of Christ.[53] Badiou makes nothing of the relation to baptism (Gal 3.27), faith (3.26) or the relationship to Abraham (3.29; cf. 3.16-18).

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[51] We will see below the text used in such a manner in the 1960s by the early *Slant* movement of which Eagleton was a part. (We also note that such a politics has therefore been in "vogue" for some time). Vass, G., 'Last April in Marienbad: 1. The christians [*sic*]' in *Slant 18* (December – January 1967 – 8) 3 – 10, 9; Unascribed, 'Slant on Heenan on race' in *Slant 21 (4.3)* (June-July 1968) 2. See § 3.2.

[52] Fowl, S. A., 'A Very Particular Universalism: Badiou and Paul' in *Paul, Philosophy and the Theopolitical Vision* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock 2010) 119 – 134 , 120, 121; cf. Badiou, *Universalism*, 9, 11.

[53] The nature of this oneness in Christ is not that found in traditional Christianity per se. This does something to undermine supersessionist arguments against Badiou's reading. Instead, Badiou's believes that 'contemporary political thought can provide a new reading and interpretation of the Apostle Paul *by leaving aside the twin oppositions of Christianity versus Judaism*' [*Incident*, xi]; cf. Lyotard, Gruber, *Hyphen.*

The appeal of Gal 3.28 to Badiou and others of the 'New Moment' does not obviously reflect the desirable contemporary liberal politics that critics have suggested lies behind their interest in this passage. The effect of the language of texts like Gal 3.28, when considered alongside Pauline statements which maintain cultural antipathy toward gentile behaviour, do not offer liberal inclusivists the kind of political programme they might prefer.[54] A notably different reading of Gal 3.28 to Badiou's is found in the work of Daniel Boyarin and serves to demonstrate that Gal 3.28 is not obviously in favour of such a liberal project. Boyarin reads the universalising position of Gal 3.28 not as the inclusion of opposites, but as an obliteration of cultural difference.[55] Moreover, Badiou's political sentiments as a confirmed Maoist and Marxist are not those of most liberal inclusivists!

Badiou does not read Gal 3.28 in isolation, but alongside Rom 2.10 – 11, which speaks of God's lack of partiality (viz. Jew and Greek) in the apportioning of gifts.[56] He connects the two via the lack of partiality expressed in both passages (cf. Gal 2.6; Eph 6.9) and highlights this as the central focus in his reading of Gal 3.28. However, he reads Rom 2.10-11 minus a conception of God:

> 'we who will unproblematically replace God by this or that truth, and Good by the service this truth requires'.[57]

This means that Badiou reads Rom 2.10 – 11 thus:

> 'Glory, honour and peace for everyone that does the service this truth requires, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For (this or that) truth shows no partiality'.

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54 1 Cor 10.20; Gal 2.15; 1 Th 4.5; cf. Rom 2.24; 1 Cor 5.1; 12.2.

55 Boyarin, D*., A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (London: University of California Press 1994) 181f, and *passim.* cf. Wright, N.T., 'Two Radical Jews: a review article of Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity'* in *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 1995/3 (August) 15 – 23. Wright, in an attempt to provide a more variegated politics than that suggested by Boyarin's criticism suggests Boyarin might employ Eph 3.9 in his reading. Klassen also notes the divergence between Badiou and Boyarin's reading of Gal 3.28 and what he understands the passage to mean: Klassen, J., 'Heidegger's Paul and Radical Orthodoxy on the Structure of Christian Hope' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 64 – 89, esp. 64 – 5.

56 These two passages are incorrectly cited as Rom 2.10 alone at Badiou, *Universalism*, 9. Col 3.10 is not referred to as, presumably, Badiou recognises that it is deutero-Pauline (cf. Badiou, *Universalism,* 2) and therefore spurious as an indication of Paul's thought.

57 Badiou, *Universalism*, 9. On the atheistic nature of Badiou's reading and his attempt to derive form from content see below §2.6.

Badiou's reading of this passage reflects a process of atheistic interpretation. The verse is translated into non-theistic terms and understood without reference to a concept of God. Badiou does not read either Gal 3.28 or Rom 2.10-11 as claims about divine activity which Paul might be making in respect to the Christ-event, but more general claims concerning the nature and structure of truth.

However, Badiou does not offer a similar translation of the terms 'Jew' and 'Greek' into a contemporary idiom. Instead, Badiou understands that 'Jew' and 'Greek' function within Gal 3.28 as signifiers for alternate discourses, from which Paul seeks to 'establish a resolute distance'.[58] An entire chapter of *Universalism* is dedicated to the theme of Paul's distancing himself from these opposing discourses.[59] Badiou identifies these discourses as a conservative legal one (Jewish) and a moral and philosophical one (Greek), distinguished with regard to the concept of law.[60] Badiou thus maintains a sharp divide between Jewish and Hellenistic forms of thinking. Such a divide has been questioned in New Testament study since Hengel.[61] In terms of the respective weight given to each of these discourses, Badiou does not comment on the distinctiveness of the formula in Rom 2.10 which affords a position of priority to the Greek.[62] Instead, he emphasises that Paul wishes to distance himself from both Jew and Greek.

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58 Badiou, *Universalism,* 14.
59 Badiou*, Universalism*, 41 – 53.
60 Badiou, *Universalism*, 14.
61 Hengel, M., *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM 1974) [orig. *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begungnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr* (Habilitationsschrift-Tübingen,1966)]; *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian period* (London: SCM 1980) [orig. *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren: Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit* (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag 1976)].
62 Rom 1.16; *contra*. Rom 10.12; Gal 3.28; Col 3.11.

The thrust of this reading of Gal 3.28, through Rom 2.10, is echoed in Badiou's reflections on Paul's putative Roman citizenship, which he discusses also in relation to Gal 3.28.[63] The author of Acts claims such citizenship for Paul in relation to his imprisonment and trial.[64] Badiou utilises the testimony of Acts to claim that Paul is 'proud' of this status.[65] Badiou does not give reasons for the absence of a reference to Roman citizenship in Paul's list of identity boasts in Phil 3, which we might expect to find if Paul is so proud.[66] However, for Badiou this pride serves as a contrastive foil for the claim that Paul conceives of a Christian subject devoid of any identification of legal categories.[67] Paul's citizenship is thus, like 'Jew' and 'Greek' in Gal 3.28, understood in relation to a concept of the law.

Finally, Badiou's appeal to the concept of law further alerts us to an historical awareness in his reading. He distinguishes between Paul's context and his own in respect of the kind of distinctions which must be overcome in the search for universality. Badiou understands what Paul refers to Christ's achievement in Gal 3.28 as:

> 'the case of mobilizing a universal singularity both against the prevailing abstractions (legal then, economic now), and against communitarian or particularist protest'.[68]

Badiou distinguishes between his own conceptual framework and context and that of the Apostle. However, Badiou's reading does not stop at the point of simply noting this dissimilarity. Instead, he proceeds to translate this passage into terms resonant with his own situation and frame of reference.

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63 Badiou, *Universalism*, 13.

64 Acts 21.39, cf. 22.25-9, 23.27. For the literature on the question of Paul's citizenship see Adams, S., 'Paul the Roman Citizen: Roman Citizenship in the Ancient World and its Importance for Understanding Acts 22:22-9' in Porter, S. (ed.), *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (Leiden: Brill 2008) 309 – 326.

65 Badiou, *Universalism*, 13.

66 A point made by Nebreda, S. R., *Christ Identity: a Social-Scientific Reading of Philippians 2.5-11* (Oakville: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2011) 205.

67 The problem of this reading, vis. 1 Cor 7.24 and the persistence of such distinctions, is not raised.

68 Badiou, *Universalism*, 14.

Badiou's reading practice is not therefore a simple identification between Badiou and his subject. This observation will be important when we come to consider the charge of 'appropriation'. Badiou does not simply read Paul's thought as his own. Badiou betrays a feature of reading common to much Pauline study. This is the process of reading one Pauline passage in the light of another, in order to illuminate that passage under investigation. Badiou likewise reads Gal 3.28 through and alongside Rom 2.10. However, he goes further and also reads the verse alongside both his own contemporary political situation, and a theoretical atheism, which he understands is demanded by his contemporary situation. In so doing, Badiou arrives at the meaning of the Pauline text not by an isolation of context to a perceived reconstruction of the Apostle's own, but by translation according to the interpreter's theoretical and interpretative context. To put this in Gadamerean terms, Badiou and Paul's horizons are thereby fused. Badiou is able to distance himself from his subject matter, as we have seen, but also able to understand Paul in the present.[69] He does so not by avoiding all trace of present concerns and interests from that reading, but through illuminating the Pauline text by bringing it into conversation with such interests.

[69] Badiou, *Universalism*, 5: 'Paul is a distant figure in a threefold sense: his historical site; his role as Church founder; his provocative centering of thought upon its fabulous element'.

2.3 Badiou as Appropriator

The process of reading demonstrated by Badiou, and others of the 'New Moment', has been labelled by some as 'appropriation'. One of the aims of this thesis has been to investigate this charge. It is therefore significant that the term 'appropriation' is itself used by Badiou to speak of his own procedure of reading. He thus shares this term with those critics. We must note the sense in which Badiou uses the term 'appropriation'. He writes:

> 'there is not one of these maxims which, setting aside the content of the event, cannot be appropriated for our situation and our philosophical tasks'.[70]

Badiou's use of the term has three aspects. Firstly, he admits the possibility of appropriation of Paul's 'maxims'. These maxims, once arrived at, might be 'appropriated'. Secondly, the end of this appropriation is the situation which is current to Badiou and that of philosophy.[71] Thirdly, the 'content of the event' is to be set aside. Badiou maintains his insistence on reading such maxims atheistically and therefore on the fabulous nature of the Resurrection. Those critics who see Badiou's Pauline reading as an instance of appropriation which is made at the expense of a genuine reading of Paul can find support in Badiou's statement. This is especially so since it stands near the beginning of *Universalism.*

The sentence immediately following Badiou's declaration of appropriation complicates the picture. He writes that, once these maxims have been appropriated, 'all that remains is to deploy their underlying conceptual organization'.[72] This begs the question as to how Badiou has access to this conceptual organization without *reading* the texts themselves. Further, it suggests that the term 'appropriation' is used by Badiou in a sense different from that of his detractors.

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[70] Badiou, *Universalism*, 15.

[71] Badiou has shown sustained interest in the nature and end of philosophy. Badiou, A., *Manifesto for Philosophy* and *Second Manifesto for Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity 2011).

[72] Badiou*, Universalism*, 15.

The charge of 'appropriation', in the sense understood by these critics, is intended to imply that there is no genuine *reading* of the Pauline text going on. Badiou, and other thinkers of the 'New Moment', simply illustrate their own thought with cherry picked citations from the texts of Paul. For such critics, the process of 'appropriation' is thereby distinct from the process of reading. 'Appropriation' is understood to mean "not-reading". However, we have already seen that there are others, such as Ricoeur, who hold an opposing view of 'appropriation.'[73] For them, 'appropriation' is, in fact, the very act of reading itself. All reading is 'appropriation'. We need therefore to understand how it is the term can be used as a criticism of Badiou, and whether such criticism can be maintained.

The criticism that Badiou 'appropriates', without reading, the text is bound up with an observation of the minimal level of Pauline scholarship with which Badiou acknowledges familiarity. Badiou is not, however, unaware of such scholarship[74]. He acknowledges a special debt to Günther Bornkamm in the prologue to *Universalism*.[75] That only one such scholar is mentioned is usually taken as a sign of Badiou's minimal engagement with New Testament scholarship. However, it is difficult to establish the extent of Badiou's awareness of such scholarship, since his reference to Bornkamm is deliberately symbolic. Badiou utilises Bornkamm's reading to invoke a catholic-protestant-atheist triad with Stanislas Breton and himself[76]. Even if Badiou's engagement with Pauline scholarship is limited, this is not a sufficient condition for ruling the reading of Badiou to be an 'appropriation' *tout court.* A lack of engagement with such secondary literature may instead reveal that Badiou is reading Paul through a different body of literature than that of contemporary New Testament scholarship.

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[73] See §1.4.

[74] We have also noted that Badiou shares some conclusions of modern New Testament scholarship. e.g. the significance of the epistolary genre and a hesistancy to apply the term 'conversion' to Paul's Damascus road experience. See above §2.2.

[75] Bornkamm, *Paul*; cited at Badiou*, Universalism*, 3.

[76] Badiou, *Universalism*, 3: 'A catholic, a Protestant. May they form a triangle with the atheist'; cf. Breton, S., *Saint Paul* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France 2000) [*A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* (trans. Ballan, J. N.)(Chichester: Columbia University Press 2011)].

Readings, such as Badiou's, which refuse to make explicit an engagement with the writings of contemporary New Testament scholarship have been regarded as illegitimate. Fowl reflects this sentiment when he writes: 'to presume to write on Paul without seriously engaging this literature seems a bit presumptuous'.[77] However, such judgements are important as they reveal a criterion of legitimacy with which these scholars operate. A legitimate interpretation of Paul is one that not only has reference to the Pauline text as an object, but also the surrounding body of mainstream Pauline scholarship. Such scholarship forms a frame of reference with which a reader must engage for a reading to be deemed legitimate.

Fowl introduces an important parallel here to Badiou that illuminates the place of an engagement with such scholarship has in order for a reading to be regarded as a legitimate interpretation. Fowl contrasts Badiou's reading of Paul in *Universalism* to that of Daniel Boyarin in his *A Radical Jew.*[78] Boyarin shares similarities to Badiou in that he initially approaches the Apostle from an intellectual tradition which is not that of mainstream New Testament scholarship. Boyarin is by training a rabbinic and philological scholar. Fowl contrasts Boyarin with Badiou precisely in terms of their respective engagement with the body of secondary literature on Paul:

> 'Boyarin would be counted as a full member of the guild of Pauline scholars... the works of scholars such as Alain Badiou... are not like Boyarin in this respect'.[79]

[77] Fowl, 'Particular', 119; cf. Jennings, 'Sons', 88. See also our discussion of appropriation in respect of legitimacy in §5.4 below.
[78] Boyarin, *Radical*.
[79] Fowl, 'Particular', 119 – 120.

Boyarin's *Radical Jew* reveals him to be fully engaged with and immersed in such literature. In fact, Boyarin's *A Radical Jew* sees him engaged so fully with this body of scholarship that he joins the mainstream of New Testament scholarship. The bibliography of *A Radical Jew* is similar in scope and reference to any work of Pauline scholarship. His dialogue partners are also in that field. Moreover, he participates in the *Society of Biblical Literature* Pauline Epistles panel.[80] The *Society of Biblical Literature* is the academic association whose membership includes the majority of mainstream Pauline and New Testament scholars. We need only contrast the respective contributions of Badiou and Boyarin to the proceedings of a conference in which both participated, published as *St. Paul Among the Philosophers,* to observe the manner in which Badiou persists in showing no such assimilation to the methods and authorities of mainstream New Testament scholarship.[81]

A number of Badiou's statements reveal that he is not as unaware of such mainstream scholarship as either his symbolic reference to Bornkamm or his limited bibliographical debt might indicate. For example, he refers to 'the colossal secondary literature' on Paul.[82] He also makes use of the conclusions of that literature in decisions as to 'authentic' epistles, explicitly citing 'contemporary scholarship' as an authority.[83] Moreover, with a focus on the 'original', Badiou consults the critical Nestlé-Aland edition as his source text – itself a product of this contemporary scholarship.[84] Badiou reveals himself to be more familiar with the contours of this scholarship than at first blush might appear.

[80] Boyarin, 'Radical', x – xi.
[81] Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among.*
[82] Badiou, *Universalism,* 3.
[83] Badiou, *Universalism,* 2; cf. Bornkamm, *Paul,* xiv-xv, 241 – 3.
[84] Badiou, *Universalism,* 2.

We have seen that Badiou's lack of engagement with such scholarship in his reading of Paul has seemed to some to indicate that Badiou's reading is illegitimate. However, Badiou's reading in fact prompts the question as to how to treat readings which refuse to engage with, and acknowledge the authority of, these scholarly dialogue partners. It reveals an assumption on the part of New Testament scholarship that legitimacy of reading is bound up with an acknowledgement of such literature as a frame of reference. Badiou rarely acknowledges this body of literature as a frame of reference.

Badiou's comments on the Pauline engagement of some of his philosophical predecessors also bear consideration in relation to the question of whether his reading is to be regarded an appropriative mis-reading. Badiou points to those who 'have also found it necessary to examine the figure of Paul'.[85] He notes how they have done so 'in order to organize their own speculative discourses'.[86] He is therefore aware of the potential for employing the Pauline text for some other end, such as the organisation of discourse. However, Badiou's awareness that the interpretation of a text may be put to such an end is not a sufficient condition to conclude that he is himself doing the same. Moreover, the utilisation of the Pauline text for such an end does not preclude actual reading, since Badiou notes that it is 'necessary to examine' the Pauline text before the text is so utilised.

[85] Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.
[86] Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.

Those who have accused Badiou of 'appropriating' the Pauline text have often suggested that the Pauline text offers a legitimisation to Badiou's project that he (and the philosophical left generally) sorely need. They suggest reasons why Badiou, and others, might need to borrow the "authority" of the Pauline text in order to bolster their own. The identification of such putative reasons for Badiou's interest in Paul is often taken as evidence that Badiou's reading isn't a genuine reading of the Pauline text. Such reasons tend to include a general description of the malaise of the intellectual left since the fall of Soviet communism. For example, Jennings notes:

> 'the reading of Paul has more recently been taken to license a more radical political project in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rising hegemony of the hyper-power of American military force placed at the service of global capital'.[87]

Critchley proffers a similar analysis:

> 'Paul's political theology … (is) a means of finding a new figure of activism and militancy around a universalistic claim to equality'.[88]

It may be the case that the political left is currently in need of rejuvenation. A flurry of recent publications points to need for such a project.[89] This is not limited to the political left. Griffiths notes that contemporary cultural theory is in a similar state and needs intellectual rejuvenation, a state Griffiths describes as 'yearning'.[90] However, whilst the identification of such need might give reasons why Badiou is attracted to Paul, it is not a sufficient condition to establish that Badiou and others are not genuinely reading the Apostle.

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87 Jennings, 'Sons', 87.

88 Critchley, *Faithless*, 13.

89 For example Žižek, S. and Douzinas, C. (eds.), *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso 2010); cf. Butler, J., Laclau, E., Žižek, S., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso 2000). Žižek, S., *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso 2009) (esp. chapter 2) 'offers a diagnosis of our predicament, outlining the utopian core of the capitalist ideology which determined both the [financial] crisis itself and our perceptions of and reactions to it... (and) endeavours to locate aspects of our situation which open up the space for new forms of communist praxis' [Žižek, *Farce,* 5]. This theme of the renewal of communism in the face of the hegemonic position of advanced capitalism is a theme of Badiou's own work and *The Idea of Communism* is written in response to Badiou, A., *The Communist Hypothesis* (London: Verso 2010), itself especially relevant to this theme. See also his own contribution to the *Idea of Communism*: Badiou, A. 'The Idea of Communism' in Žižek, Douzinas (eds.), *Idea,* 1 – 14.

90 Griffiths, 'Christ', 46 – 55.

This is particularly the case when one considers the reasons *against* the suitability of Paul as a means for such rejuvenation of the political and cultural left. The unlikeliness of Paul as a suitable candidate for this purpose has been noted:

> 'How has it happened that the very Paul so often jealously possessed by dogmatic protestant theology with a bent for interior piety (and sometimes, reactionary politics) suddenly becomes a radical political thinker at home among the cadres of militant Marxism, and the avatar of a Lacanian critique of the service of goods"? How does it happen, on the other hand, that the very Paul who is regarded with embarrassment by some progressive academic NT scholars who lock him away in some retirement home as a dotty uncle with decidedly misogynistic and hierarchical tendencies comes to be regarded as the herald of something like a democratic egalitarian project that aims to shatter all forms of hegemony, hierarchy and false consciousness?'[91]

Flynn also notes the threat to philosophical credibility represented by an engagement with the Pauline epistles.[92] Badiou himself raises precisely the issue of the inappropriateness of Paul for a credible project as he begins his Pauline exploration:

> 'why solicit this 'apostle' who is all the more suspect for having, it seems, proclaimed himself such and whose name is frequently tied to Christianity's least open, most institutional aspects: the Church, moral discipline, social conservatism, suspiciousness toward Jews?'[93]

Paul does not, therefore, obviously provide an opportunistic resource for the resuscitation of a leftist project. Those critics who have claimed that the identification of reasons that such a leftist project is in need of resuscitation are grounds enough for a turn to Paul must also explain the sheer unlikeliness of Paul as a source for such resuscitation.

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[91] Jennings, 'Sons', 86.

[92] Flynn, T. R., 'The Religious (Re)Turn in Recent French Philosophy' in Hackett, J., Wallulis, J (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion for a New Century: Essays in Honor of Thomas Eugene Long* (Dordrecht: Kluwer 2004) 173 – 186, 181; cf. Badiou, *Universalism*, 4.

[93] Badiou, *Universalism*, 4. It is especially important to note Badiou's awareness of the possible effects of Paul's 'suspiciousness toward Jews'. We noted above that the readings of the 'New Moment' have often been criticised for adopting a supersessionist position with regards to Judaism. It is thus significant that Badiou notes the negative connotations of such a position.

If such an explanation is not forthcoming, other reasons for Badiou's interest in Paul must be considered. Badiou's own account of his reasons for the sustained reading of Paul published as *Universalism* are not based on the state of contemporary cultural theory or the political left. Indeed, Badiou's own account of his interest in Paul is almost entirely absent from the accounts of those who criticise Badiou for appropriating the Apostle.

Speaking of his own turn to Paul, Badiou describes how, following a wave of theoretical confidence in the wake of the publication of *Being and Event*, he began to doubt the theoretical system set out in that work.[94] These included doubts over his central concept of the 'Event' (see below) set forth in that work.[95] In particular he was struck by the question:

> 'How does one account for the following obvious fact: just as new things can be progressive, so also they can be reactionary. How can it be that something new and novel can also be reactive?'[96]

In seeking to answer this question, he describes his turn to a number of thinkers from whom he felt 'very far in spirit'.[97] It is in the course of this process of refining his theory of the subject that Badiou 'also returned to a source that was both heterogeneous and very powerful in (his) view: The apostle Paul'.[98] We note here that Badiou 'returned' to Paul – this is not his first engagement with the Apostle. Fowl has noted that Badiou's interest in subjectivity and the nature of the subject mean that it is 'evident why Paul might become a figure of interest for Badiou'.[99]

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94 Badiou, A., 'Preface to the English Edition' in *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise On Transitory Ontology* (trans. Madarasz, N.) (New York: SUNY Press 2006) i - xii, ix.
95 'Preface', ix, xi.
96 'Preface', x.
97 'Preface', x.
98 'Preface', x.
99 Fowl, 'Particular', 120 – 121.

Writing in *Universalism*, Badiou sets out further conditions which occasioned his engagement with Paul:

> 'Breaking with all this (neither monetary homogeneity nor identitarian protest: neither the abstract universality of capital nor the particularity of interests proper to a subset) our question can be clearly formulated: what are the conditions for a *universal singularity*? It is on this point that we invoke Saint Paul'.[100]

Badiou's own account of his turn to Paul is, having read the Apostle, he 'returns' to him for the purpose of furthering his own exploration of the conditions of subjectivity. For this, Badiou has been criticised for the Badiouan nature of the Paul that emerges from his reading. However, it is not that Badiou reads his own concerns into Paul, but that he 'returns' to Paul because he finds that the concepts with which Paul deals are concepts in which he too is interested:

> '[Paul] is the one who, assigning to the universal a specific connection of law and the subject, asks himself with the most extreme vigour what price is to be paid for this assignment, by the law as well as the subject. This interrogation is precisely our own'.[101]

Badiou does not appropriate Paul for his own ends without reading the Pauline text. He finds a shared interest having read the Apostle. If 'appropriation' can be established, it does not occur at the expense of reading.

We must put off ultimate evaluation of Badiou's reading, and a decision as to whether it constitutes an appropriation, for our conclusion. We now consider another charge which has been raised against Badiou. This is the charge that Badiou's reading is a Marcionite *mis*reading of Paul. This will in turn lead us to consider the 'atheism' of Badiou's reading, and the problem of 'novelty' such a reading raises in relation to historical criticism.

[100] Badiou, *Universalism*, 13.
[101] Badiou, *Universalism,* 7.

2.4 Badiou versus Marcion

The charge of Marcionism is one commonly made against Badiou's reading of Paul. John Milbank, for example, writes:

> 'There is some danger of a Marcionite reading of Paul, denying the God of the Old Testament, as in the renderings of Ernst Bloch and Alain Badiou, for example'.[102]

It is a charge which has also been made against some of the other figures associated with the Apostle's 'New Moment'.[103] It is partly due to New Moment's turn to, or discovery of, Paul as a subject of enquiry that this charge can be made, as Blackman's description of such 'turns' to Paul indicates:

> 'Wherever in the history of religion there occurs a revolt of mercy against justice, or a rediscovery of Paul, especially if they be in exaggerated forms, we may not inappropriately speak of Marcionism'.[104]

However, it is Badiou, of all those associated with the 'New Moment', against whom the charge is most commonly levelled because of his stress on the novelty of the 'Event'. The critique of Badiou that has labelled him a Marcionite understands Marcionism as comprising these two central tenets: (1) a concern with the absolutely new; and (2) a radical disjunction between 'faith' and 'law'. The combination of Badiou's stress on the novelty of the 'Event' (see below) and his interest in the writings of Paul therefore almost inevitably raises the spectre of the 2nd-century heretic, famously described by Tertullian as:

> 'fouler than any Scythian, more roving than the waggon-life of the Samaritan, more inhuman than the Massagete, more audacious than an Amazon, darker than the cloud (of Pontus) colder than its winter, more brittle than its ice, more deceitful than the Ister, more craggy than Caucasus'[105].

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[102] Milbank, J. in interview with Schneider, N., 'Orthodox paradox: An interview with John Milbank' in *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion and the Public Square* [Blog](17th March 2010) (available at http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2010/03/17/orthodox-paradox-an-interview-with-john-milbank/ accessed 13th July 2012); cf. Bloch, E., 'Second Thoughts about the Exodus Light: Marcion's Gospel of an Alien God Without This World' in *Atheism in Christianity* (London: Verso 2009) 173- 179 [orig. (New York: Herder 1972)].

[103] For Marcionite tendency's in Žižek's thought: Morrison, G. J., 'Book Review: Frederiek Depoortere, *Christ in Postmodern Philosophy*' in *Heythrop Journal, 52(1*) (2011) 172 – 3.

[104] Blackman, *Influence,* 126.

[105] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.1. English translation throughout Roberts, A., Donaldson, J., Coxe, A. C.

We proceed to evaluate Badiou's reading of Paul in order to establish whether the charge of Marcionism made against it holds. Before doing so, it must be noted that the suggestion that Badiou's reading of Paul is Marcionite is at odds with the criticism that Badiou does not produce a reading of Paul at all. If it can be established that Badiou's reading bears affinities with that of Marcion this may suggest that a genuine *reading* is occurring, even if some might wish to regard this as a *mis*-reading. It also raises the question of why a charge of Marcionism may be proffered as criticism of a reading of the Pauline text outside of a confessional context seeking to maintain theological orthodoxy.

Moreover, we note that a criticism of Marcion occurs *within* the 'New Moment' itself. Marcion is discussed, and criticised, by both Taubes and Badiou.[106] Ultimately, we conclude that, despite admitted family resemblances, Badiou's reading of Paul is sufficiently at odds with both a Marcionite reading of Paul, and of Marcionism more generally (especially in relation to the question of God's existence) for this critique to hold. Finally, we conclude that those who make the charge of Marcionism against Badiou operate with an insufficiently nuanced 'spectre' of Marcion, which is therefore inappropriately utilised as a critique of Badiou's reading of the Apostle.

(eds.) *The Ante-Nicene Fathers III: Latin Christianity* (New York: Cosimo 2007) 269 – 476.

[106] Taubes, *Political Theology,* 55 – 62. Taubes sees Marcion as representing the other of two ways out of Paul than that of the 'catholic' reading of the Church in which the thin cord between the God of creation and the God of redemption has snapped; cf. Taubes, 'Iron Cage'.

There is neither space nor scope here for a full presentation of the system of Marcion, or his reading of Paul. We shall present salient details of that system and the manner it is understood by those who charge Badiou with Marcionism. In establishing Marcion's thought, the most important witnesses are Tertullian's *Against Marcion* and *Prescription Against Heretics* (30 – 38), Irenaeus' *Against All Heresies* (1-3), and Epiphanius' *Panarion* (42).[107] In these works we have access to the remains of Marcion's *Antitheses* and a description of the Marcionite canon of Scripture. In scholarly terms, we must note the hegemonic status which the interpretation of Marcion stemming from Adolf von Harnack continues to enjoy.

Von Harnack entertained a life-long love-affair with Marcion, as his 'first love in church history... (not) weakened in the half-century that [he] lived through with him'.[108] This interest culminated in his writing the seminal *Marcion: the Gospel of an Alien God.* Von Harnack's reconstruction of Marcion has been so influential that the terms Marcion and Marcionism function almost as equivalents to *von Harnack's* Marcion and *von Harnack's* Marcionism. When evaluating the charge of Marcionism it is therefore Marcionism as conceived by von Harnack with which one primarily deals.[109] In this manner, Marcion parallels Paul in relation to New Testament scholarship, since von Harnack's reconstruction enjoys an interpretative dominance similar to that of New Testament scholarship in relation to Paul. We saw above that, for some, to read Paul legitimately can only mean to read Paul according to the canons of New Testament scholarship.

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[107] For all the ancient witnesses see Gamble, H. Y., 'Marcion and the Canon' in Mitchell, M. M., Young, F. M. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006) 195 – 213, 195. Gamble also notes that the other form of Christianity known to Celsus in Origen's *Contra Celsum* appears to be a form of Marcionism (Origen: *C. Cels*. 2.6; 5.54; 6.57; 7.25–6).

[108] von Harnack, *Marcion*, preface.

[109] von Harnack, A., *Marcion: the Gospel of the Alien God* (Durham: Labyrinth 1990) [orig. *Marcion: das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig : J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung 1921)]; cf. von Harnack, A., 'The Attempt of Marcion to Set Aside the Old Testament Foundation of Christianity, to Purify the Tradition and Reform Christendom on the Basis of the Pauline Gospel' in von Harnack, A., *History of Dogma Vol I* (trans. Buchanan, N.) (London: Williams & Norgate 1894)] 266 – 285 [orig. 'Das Unternehmen des Marcion, die Atliche Grundlage des Christenthums zu besteigen, die Tradition zu reinigen und auf Grund des paulinischen Evangeliums die Christenheit zu reformiren' in *Lehrbuch der Dogmensgeschichte Erster Band: Die Enstehung Des Kirchlichen Dogmas* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck 1886) 197 – 214].

The presentation of Marcion we find according to von Harnack is as follows. Marcion's system is strongly dualistic. There are two gods: the creating god of the Old Testament and the redeeming god of the New Testament. There is a corresponding division between the realms of 'faith' and of the created order. This contrast finds expression in a strict contrast between law and gospel as a 'point of departure'.[110] Marcion reckons the god of the Hebrew Scriptures to be at odds with, and distinct from, the redeeming god of the New.[111]

The Marcionite system includes an interest in novelty and on the 'newness' of redemption.[112] Von Harnack asserts: 'it appears that no key word was used more frequently in the *Antitheses* than “new”'.[113] Blackman describes Marcion's system as a:

> 'new religion of redemption proclaimed by the emissary of a new god; we may add that this emissary comes from nowhere!'[114]

Von Harnack explains 'the cry of jubilation with which the *Antitheses* begins' through the lens of this novelty.[115] This is the cry:

> 'O wonder of wonders, rapture, power and marvel, that one can neither say nor think anything of the Gospel, nor compare it with anything'.[116]

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[110] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 21; cf. Blackman, E. C., *Marcion and his Influence* (London: SPCK 1948) 103.

[111] It is debated whether Marcion finds the God of the Hebrew Scriptures to be evil or merely judicial – a tension stemming from contrasting statements in the witness of Irenaeus. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.25.1: 'declaring him [the OT god] to be the author of evils'; *contra Adv. Haer.* 3.40.2 'maintaining one to be good and the other judicial'. Irenaeus had earlier ascribed this position to Cerdon (1.24), who he claims Marcion succeeded (1.25.1). See Löhr, W., 'Did Marcion distinguish between a just god and a good god?' in *Marcion und seine kirchengeschichtliche Wirkung* (Berlin: de Gruyter 2002) 131 – 146. Löhr surveys the evidence (136 – 144) and concludes that Marcion taught a good and evil god, which in later Marcionite thought developed into a division between a good and judicial one. cf. Moll, S., *The Arch-Heretic Marcion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010) 47.

[112] See the references in von Harnack, *Marcion*, 59, especially references to a “new God” (Tertullian, *Adv Marc 1.9; IV 20* cf Origen, *Comm in Ioh.* II.82) and the phrase 'novel doctrines of the new Christ' (Tertullian, *Adv Marc* IV.28); cf. Blackman, *Influence*.

[113] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 59, 66, 141.

[114] Blackman, *Influence,* 76.

[115] von Harnack, *Marcion,* 59 cf. Blackman, *Influence*, 75.

[116] Discussing the supposed opening of the *Antitheses*, Taubes notes: 'the totally other cannot be articulated from the safe harbor of this world, for as soon as it is articulated, it has already been distorted'. [Taubes, J., 'The Iron Cage and the Exodus from It, or the Dispute over Marcion, Then and Now (1984)' in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Toward a Critique of Historical Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2010) 137 – 146 [orig. 'Das stählernde Gehäuse und der Exodus daraus, oder Ein Streit um Marcion, einst und jetzt' in Taubes, J. (ed.), *Gnosis und Politik* (Munich and Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1984) 9 – 15].

This novelty brings with it an inability to articulate the Gospel because it is utterly new and therefore bears no relation with that which has gone before. It is therefore indescribable since it is impossible to articulate the novelty of the Gospel in terms of the pre-existent discourse.[117]

Von Harnack finds the basis for Marcion's focus on novelty in the Pauline corpus: 'a new religious foundation on the basis of the Pauline gospel came into view'.[118] The reference here is to the Pauline passages dealing with 'new creation': 'that element in his religious conceptions... Marcion seized upon and moulded'.[119] Hoffman presents the most consistent account of this 'radical Paulinism'. He finds that in Marcion: 'one need not look beyond the epistles of Paul to locate the definitive teaching concerning this revelation'.[120] According to Hoffman's reading of Marcion, 'everything hinged on Paul's gospel'.

[117] See §2.8 below for a comparable discussion of novelty in relation to Badiou's thought and the problem raised for Troeltsch's 'principle of analogy' – a foundational principle for modern historical criticism.

[118] von Harnack, *Marcion*, preface; cf. 123.

[119] von Harnack, *Marcion*, preface. The texts in question are Gal 6.15; 2 Cor 5. 17; cf. von Harnack, *Marcion*, 125. Hubbard, M. V., *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001) 177 – 186; 222f argues strongly for an anthropological understanding of new creation (i.e. the creation of a new believing subject) against ecclesiological and socio-cosmological options. It is not clear that such a strong divide between these three options can be maintained. Howver, our interest here is in novelty per se.

[120] Hoffman, R. J., *Marcion: On the Restitution of Christianity: An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century* (DPhil Thesis) (Oxford: 1982) 170.

Von Harnack finds an emphasis on the epistle to the Galatians in Marcion's Paulinism.[121] There has been some scholarly discussion of Marcion's preference for this epistle. It was assumed that since Galatians heads Marcion's ordering of the Pauline canon that he must, with typical innovation, have placed the epistle at the head of his canon, reflecting the prominence given to it in his system.[122] However, this consensus has been reviewed in the light of seemingly independent attestation of such an ordering of the canon.[123] Whilst this neither tells against the importance of Paul, or Galatians, for Marcion, it suggests that he may have received a canonical ordering with which he works and which was not an innovation of his own.

A number of problems have been raised against von Harnack's reading of Marcion. Such problems were noted from an early stage.[124] However, as we have already noted, von Harnack's reading still achieved 'canonical status'.[125] This status has, however, recently been called into question.[126] Several commentators have pointed to von Harnack's personal enthusiasm as colouring his reading of Marcion.[127]

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[121] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 25.

[122] Marcion's canon appears to have run thus: Galatians; 1 – 2 Corinthians; Romans ; 1 – 2 Thessalonians; Ephesians (called *Laodiceans* by Marcion); Colossians; Philippians; Philemon (see Quispell, G., 'Marcion and the Text of the New Testament' in Van Oort, J. (ed.), *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica. Collected Essays of Gilles Quispell* (Leiden: Brill 2008) 271 – 283 [orig. *Vigilae Christanae 52* (1998) 349 – 60]. Blackman, *Influence,* 42: 'This Epistle [Galatians] stood first in his collection of Paul's writings, probably because it was for him the most important'; Hoffman, 'Radical', 92: 'The anti-legalist theme was of Galatians was probably influential in Marcion's decision to put the epistle first in his collection of Paul's letters.' cf. Hoffman, 'Radical', 130.

[123] Parallels with the *Kanon Sinaiticus* are suggestive of a more wide-spread shared ordering of the canon. This too is indicated by Manichean Scriptural usage, which has a similar ordering of the canon. Mani appears not to have been using the Marcionite canon. The Manichean canon does 'not follow Marcion's text, since the quotation from Gal 1.1 has the phrase καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς which we know Marcion omitted from his text'. [Betz, H. D., 'Paul in the Mani Biography' in *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (Atti del Simposio Internazionale 1984) (Cosenza 1986) 213 – 234] cf. Quispell, 'Text', 277.

[124] cf. the reviews by von Soden, H., 'A. v. Harnacks Marcion' in *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 40* (1922); and Bauer, W., 'Harnack. Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott' in *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeiger 185* (1923).

[125] Löhr, 'Marcion', 133.

[126] Moll, *Marcion.*

[127] Moll, *Marcion*, 1: 'he is even in love with him'; cf. von Harnack, *Marcion*, preface (vi): 'my first love'.

This is especially the case with regards to the “Lutheran” division von Harnack found in Marcion between 'law' and 'grace'.[128] The discovery of a Lutheran division is partly explained by von Harnack's own enthusiasm for the heretic, most famously reflected in his evaluation of the Church's reaction to Marcionism, worth quoting in full:

> 'the rejection of the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the great church rightly avoided; to maintain it in the sixteenth century was a fate from which the Reformation was not yet able to escape; but still to preserve it in Protestantism as a canonical document since the nineteenth century is the consequence of a religious and ecclesiastical crippling'.[129]

Part of this colouring of the heretic can be explained by reflection of von Harnack's understanding of history. Löhr notes that von Harnack:

> 'was no historicist who delight[ed] in exploring the past as another country... for him it is the principal task of the historian to identify those ideas, forces and tendencies in the past which continue to be relevant for the present'.[130]

It is significant for our purposes that Marcion's focus on “novelty” is one aspect of von Harnack's presentation which has been called into question. This is the same feature of Marcion's system which has been the cause of the comparison with the system of Badiou. Moll, however, consistently maintains that Marcion's focus is *not* one on newness or novelty:

> 'Marcion does not think in such categories as 'replacement' or 'old' and 'new', his system is truly dualistic, which is why it cannot exist without a negative counterpart'.[131]

Moll also challenges the role of novelty as a starting-point for Marcion:

> 'Marcion does not understand the Old Testament in light of the New, he interprets the New Testament in light of the Old'.[132]

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[128] Löhr, 'Marcion', 133. cf. Blackman's reservation of the Pauline-Lutheran distinction ('Influence', 104, 110). This Lutheran reading of Marcion parallels the Lutheran reading of Paul challenged by Stendahl, 'Introspective'.

[129] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 134.

[130] Löhr, 'Marcion', 131. We can observe parallels with Williams notion of why we study the past at all in Williams, R., *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church* (London: Dartman, Longman & Todd 2005) 5: 'We don't have a single grid for history; we construct it when we want to resolve certain problems about who we are now... when you sense that you cannot take for granted that things are the same, you begin to write history, to organise the collective memory so that breaches may be mended and identities displayed'; *contra* Fredricksen, 'Integrity'.

[131] Moll, *Marcion*, 162; also 47, 106.

[132] Moll, *Marcion*, 160; also 76, 84.

Finally, Moll finds no distinction between 'law' and 'grace' in Marcion's system.[133] He therefore rejects the “Lutheran” distinction that von Harnack had found in Marcion. Moll, unlike von Harnack, does not read the distinction implied by Tertullian's testimony of Marcion's 'separation of the law and gospel' along the lines of a Lutheran separation of 'law' and 'grace'.[134] Moll finds instead reference here to 'two different testimonies, the Old Testament on the one hand and the New Testament on the other'.[135] This is important in relation to the theme of “novelty”, as the New does not surpass the Old, but persists in addition to the former: 'the Old Testament was anything but obsolete. The Old Testament God is a real figure'.[136]

Marcion's supposed reliance on Paul has also been subject to scholarly revision since von Harnack's presentation.[137] Moll notes that the view 'that Marcion was a loyal disciple of Paul' is itself a feature of von Harnack's legacy.[138] He describes this picture as 'more than exaggerated'.[139] As Blackman notes, in terms of frequency of reference, Marcion's point of departure appears not to be a Pauline emphasis on 'new creation', but a dualistic contrast between old and new in which both persist, based on passages in Luke's Gospel.[140] We therefore note both Marcion's focus on radical novelty and also his reliance on Paul have been challenged. Moreover, these are precisely the grounds on which Badiou's reading is described as 'Marcionite'.

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[133] Moll, *Marcion,* 4, 161. The distinction between 'law' and 'grace' does, however, have some basis in the New Testament (John 1.17; Rom 6.14 – 15; Gal 5.4 cf Rom 5.20).

[134] *Adv. Marc.* 1.19.4.

[135] Moll, *Marcion*, 77.

[136] Moll, *Marcion*, 3; cf. 106.

[137] Blackman, *Influence*, 103 notes that Marcionism, in its strict dichotomy, fails to match the 'richness of ethical content with the faith of the Great Apostle of the Gentiles'; cf. Moll, *Marcion*, 4.

[138] Moll, *Marcion*, 4. He goes so far as to suggest that the stress on the soteriological influence of Christ's death 'forms the only doctrinal parallel between Marcion and the Apostle Paul' [Moll, *Marcion*, 70]. This is surely hyperbole.

[139] Moll, *Marcion*, 70.

[140] Blackman, *Influence*, 109. This is the distinction between the good and corrupt tree (Luke 6.43) and between the new and old wineskins (Luke 5.36f). This points not to a system in which new overcomes old, but one in which both new and old are maintained, distinguished according to a moral evaluation. It therefore remains a dualist system.

We now consider the charge of Marcionism which has been made against Badiou's reading of Paul. This critique finds its most developed form in Simon Critchley's *The Faith of the Faithless*. Critchley claims that:

> 'a certain ultra-Paulinism asserts itself in figures like Agamben, Heidegger, and Badiouthat might lead one to conclude that the contemporary return to Paul is really a return to Marcion'.[141]

Critchley is not critical of Marcionism *per se.* He describes it as 'a fine risk, but one that must ultimately be refused'.[142] In fact, he is in praise of Marcion's reading of Paul:

> And Marcion is surely right here: creation plays a very small role in Paul and his constant preoccupation is redemption'.[143]

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[141] Critchley, *Faithless*, 195.

[142] Critchley, *Faithless*, 195; cf. Critchley, *Faithless,* 202: 'Its dualism leads to a rejection of the world and a conception of religion as a retreat from creation … it is precisely the desire for a blessed alien land that has to be rejected'.

[143] Critchley, *Faithless*, 196. Whilst this reading of Pauline attitudes towards creation finds parallel in conventional New Testament scholarship [See the survey in Worthington, J. D., *Creation in Paul and Philo* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011) 3 – 12], we might wish to take issue with Critchley's reading of the Pauline corpus – not least because the formula which is perhaps most amenable to such a reading, that of the Pauline concept of 'new creation' [Gal 6.15; cf. 2 Cor 5.17], is open both to an interpretation of discontinuity (*new* creation) and continuity (new *creation*). [cf. Yates, J., *The Spirit and Creation in Paul* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008) who finds that the Pauline notion of 'Spirit' is a linking motif between creation and new creation (and in a limited way between other Jewish and Pauline pneumatologies).] J. Worthington's recent monograph argues against Critchley's bald assertion of creation's 'very small role in Paul'. He notes: 'a prime reason given for Paul's alleged lack of "knowledge" of or [*sic*] "interest" in the creation of the world and of the (pre-sin) creation of Adam is Paul's vested interest in Christ and the *new* creation. Supposedly these interests render contemplation on, and discussion of, the "old" virtually pointless'. [*Creation*, 208]. He instead notes the Pauline links between original creation (protology) and 'new creation' (eschatology): 'The original creation, as described in the beginning of Genesis, provides the divinely "desired" structure according to which the End – i.e., the New Beginning – had been marked out by the Creator'. [*Creation*, 209]. He points especially to the use of Gen 1.2 – 5 in 2 Cor 4.6 (89 - 98); Gen 1.6 - 31 in 1 Cor 15.35 – 41 (115 – 135). Whilst deciding on this question for a reading of Paul is not within the scope of this thesis, the continuity of Creator (i.e. God) Paul presupposes will alert us to a central plank in our refutation of the alleged Marcionism of Badiou's reading.

Critchley's presentation of Marcion is heavily indebted to that of von Harnack. Critchley describes how Marcion cuts the bond between creation and redemption.[144] Critchley finds this indicative of an 'ontological dualism' that he will also go on to find in Badiou.[145] He also notes a focus on novelty in Marcion which he finds likewise in Badiou. It is here that his debt to von Harnack is most apparent as he echoes von Harnack almost verbatim: 'no word is more frequently used in Marcion's *Antitheses* than the epithet 'new'.[146] The summary evaluation of Badiou's entire thought system is that it is a Marcionite one:

> 'Badiou's ontological dualism of being and the event, where the latter is always described as utterly new and where Badiou sees his project as the attempt to conceptualise novelty, [it could be considered] a Marcionite radicalisation of Paul... Isn't Badiou's position precisely that of Marcion?'… What, though, is this "pure beginning" but the "absolute beginning" that Badiou attributes to Marcion?"[147]

Critchley also finds a division between faith and law in Badiou, similar to that found by von Harnack in Marcion, as we saw above. He similarly finds a basis for this division in the thought of Paul:

> 'For Paul there is only faith, and Badiou's basic claim is that fidelity to the event is what breaks the order of being... In his insistence on the Pauline figure of Christ as the experience of an event that provokes subjective fidelity, is there not an essential disavowal of law'.[148]

We can therefore summarise Critchley's evaluation of the Badiouan system as Marcionite in respect of a focus on novelty, a division between faith and law, and a particularly strong interest in the text of Paul. We have seen above how these three tenets are the central tenets of Marcionism as conceived by von Harnack. However, we have also seen precisely these tenets questioned in recent Marcion scholarship.

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144 Critchley, *Faithless,* 196.
145 Critchley, *Faithless,* 196.
146 Critchley, *Faithless,* 196. His source his is clearly Harnack, *Marcion,* 59, which he references elsewhere but not in relation to this claim.
147 Critchley, *Faithless*, 200 – 1.
148 Critchley, *Faithless*, 200 – 1.

We must now consider whether the charge of Marcionism holds for Badiou's reading of Paul. Before doing so, we can note that criticism of Badiou's reading as Marcionite is often levelled against Badiou as if the identification of parallels with Marcion is itself a sufficient criticism of a reading of Paul. It is not, however, obvious why this should be so outside of a Christian tradition which seeks to maintain theological orthodoxy. There is no *prima facie* reason for a Marcionite reading to be ruled out as a possible reading of the Pauline text. It may even be possible to go further, as von Harnack suggested, and to ask whether current theological orthodoxy ought to re-evaluate its rejection of Marcion's heresy given a shift in cultural context and reading practice within the church. Such questions are beyond our scope. However, the charge itself may reveal a 'prejudice' in favour of theological (catholic) orthodoxy on the part of such critics, even those operating in the supposedly theologically neutral field of historical criticism.

In order to evaluate the charge of Marcionism against Badiou, it is first necessary to expound the Badiouan notion of the 'Event'. The notion of an 'Event' is a central and consistent feature of Badiou's thought.[149] Badiou refers to an 'Event' non-technically as 'an immanent break with a situation'.[150] 'Events' are situations in which 'the inexistent aspect of a site comes to exist absolutely'.[151] He gives the example of members of the proletariat taking positions of authority in the Committee during the revolutionary war in France:

> 'yesterday's inexistent workers, brought into a provisionally maximal political existence as the consequence of an event'.[152]

[149] On 'Events' see further Bartlett, A. J., Clemens, J. (eds.), *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts* (Durham: Acumen 2010) *passim* and especially Bessana, B., 'The subject' in Bartlett, Clemens, *Concepts,* 38 – 47.
[150] Badiou, 'European Jews', 177.
[151] Badiou, 'Commune', 287.
[152] Badiou, 'Commune', 286.

He also offers a technical and more complex definition of an 'Event':

> 'given a site (a multiple affected with self-belonging) which is a singularity … we will say this site is a strong singularity, or an event, if, in consequence of the (maximal) intensity of the site, something whose value of existence was nil in the situation takes on the positive value of existence... an event has, as a maximally true consequence of its (maximal) intensity of existence, the existence of an inexistent'.[153]

A Badiouan 'Event' is thus something which has nothing in common with that which has gone before. Indeed, it cannot, for it to count as an event it must have nothing in common with the surrounding particularities or circumstances. That is how we know it to be an 'Event'.[154]

Badiou defines such 'Events' as part of his search for a theory of truth. He holds that truth is procedural and to consist in fidelity to these 'Events'. Fidelity means recognising, and proclaiming, an 'Event' to be such. Truth is therefore an attitude in respect of these 'Events'. Badiou identifies four categories in to which such procedures may fall: art, love, science, and politics. This categorisation has been criticised on a number of grounds. Notably, philosophy is absent as a truth procedure. Badiou wishes philosophy to exist across all four procedures.

[153] Badiou, 'Commune', 287.
[154] Badiou, 'Commune', 286: 'We can identify a strong singularity by the fact, that for a given situation, it has the consequence of making an inexistent term exist in it'.

Roland Boer has noted that even though some of Badiou's examples are taken from religion and theology, these are also not represented as a truth procedure.[155] Badiou's notion of the 'Event' has, however, received criticism for its religious resonances. Some see such 'Events' as too closely representing the theological category of the miracle.[156] Others have attempted to redefine the notion of an 'Event' without this miraculous unpredictability, despite this being a necessary feature of a Badiouan 'Event'. Bryant, for example, has attempted to derive procedures by which such 'Events' might be predicted or even forced.[157]

This emphasis on novelty, as we have already noted, almost inevitably invites comparison with the thought of Marcion. The echoes of a Badiouan 'Event' in Gamble's outline of Marcion's belief system are clear:

> '(Marcion) claimed that Christianity represented a radical *novum* – a fresh and unprecedented revelation... This revelation, he insisted, was discontinuous with anything that came before, and so could not have been anticipated or predicted'.[158]

[155] Boer, 'Ambivalence'.

[156] Žižek, *Belief*, 110: 'The standard historicist criticism of Alain Badiou's work, according to which, the intervention *ex nihilo* of Event into the historicity of Being is a laicised version of the religious Revelation through which Eternity directly intervenes in temporal unfolding: is it not that Badiou himself emphasises how one cannot derive the Event from the order of Being, since all we have in the order of Being is *la site evénèmentelle,* the site of the potential emergence of the Event of Truth?'. We are reminded of the problem of miracle for the historical-critical method (on its impossibility see Krentz, *Method*, 59: 'Miracle, the over intrusion of God into history, destroys the neutrality required for the historian's work). A consideration of Badiou's theory of 'Event' reminds us that the discussion previously restrained to miracle in fact includes all which is genuinely new in respect of already-existing systems; cf. Flynn, '(Re)Turn', 181.

[157] Bryant, L. R., 'Symptomal Knots and Evental Ruptures: Žižek, Badiou and Discerning the Indiscernible' in *International Journal of Žižek Studies* 1.2 (2007) at http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/issue/view/4 (accessed 25th February 2012).

[158] Gamble, 'Marcion', 196.

It is therefore obvious why comparisons might be drawn between these two systems of thought and, as such, these two readers of Paul. We can also observe that both have been found to place special emphasis on the epistle to the Galatians. However, they differ markedly in their reading of this epistle. Gal 3.28, a verse which we have seen is important in Badiou's reading, appears to have been excised from Marcion's text of the epistle.[159] This is an important step towards distinguishing these two figures. However, this does not mean that themes found in Gal 3.28-9 are absent from Marcion's reading of Paul, especially in relation to the theme of universality, which is Badiou's key concern. An interest in universality can also be detected in Marcion, to which von Harnack drew attention when he noted Marcion's 'conviction [in] the universality of redemption, as over against its limitation to one people was necessarily included as well'.[160]

These similarities between Badiou and Marcion have been called further into question by those who have defended Badiou's theory of 'Events'. Phelps, for example, challenges the criticism that they are too miraculous in their rupture with the past order of being.[161] He utilises Badiou's own discussion of Marcion to suggest that 'Events' allow for some continuity with that which has gone before. Phelps points to passages in Badiou's corpus which suggest 'Events' are not absolutely novel. He maintains that 'the novelty of the event always maintains a certain connection with the past'.[162] If Phelps' revision of Badiou's understanding of 'Events' can be established, then Badiou's system is unlike the standard presentation of Marcionism in respect of the theme of radical novelty.

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[159] Tertullian (*Adv Marc.* 5.4) suggests Marcion's edition of the text omitted Gal 3.16 to 4.6. This is a reconstruction assuming that Tertullian's silence means Marcion's omission. Even if the entirety of the section contains problematic statements from Marcion's perspective, especially in relation to the figure of Abraham, it is not obvious that this section was any less amenable to the kind of more selective editing treatment at the hand of Marcion than that we see elsewhere (e.g. Gal 1.1 and the omission of καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς).

[160] von Harnack, *Marcion*, 21.

[161] Phelps, H., 'Between Rupture and Repetition: Intervention and Evental Recurrence in the thought of Alain Badiou' in *Parrhesia 5* (2008) 60 – 72 [available at www.parrhesiajournal.org accessed on 13th July 2012] 66.

[162] Phelps, 'Rupture', 60.

We must resist Phelps' re-evaluation of Badiouan 'Events', since it fails to account for genuine absolute novelty. Badiou has insisted upon such novelty as a necessary condition in his definitions of 'Events' as set out above. However, it is important for our purposes to note that Phelps builds his case for a re-evaluation of Badiouan 'Events' 'by focussing on Badiou's reading of St Paul'.[163] In so doing, he relies heavily on Badiou's own critique of Marcion, and makes the important point that this critique 'often goes unnoticed'.[164] Phelps alerts us to this critique of Marcion by Badiou. This critique will be important in considering the charge of Marcionism against Badiou.

Badiou's critique of Marcion is found in *Universalism*.[165] Badiou highlights Marcion's insistence on the different gods of the Old and New testaments. This is in line with the dualistic focus which was highlighted in Moll's scholarly revision of Marcion. Badiou also recognises Marcion's special focus on Paul. However, and importantly, he recognises Marcionism as a misreading of the Pauline text: 'by pushing a little, one could arrive at Marcion's conception'.[166] The key phrase here is 'pushing a little', since it demonstrates that Badiou regards Marcion's reading as a distortion of the Pauline text. He continues:

> 'Nevertheless, there is no question that this was an instance of manipulation. There is no text of Paul's from which one could draw anything resembling Marcion's doctrine'.[167]

For those who claim that Badiou is not reading the Pauline text, this evaluation of Marcion's reading of Paul is telling since it reveals that Badiou is able to judge between the relative merits of various readings of the Pauline text. Badiou's final evaluation of Marcionism is that it counts as a 'dangerous heresy'.[168]

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[163] Phelps, 'Rupture', 60.
[164] Phelps, 'Rupture', 63.
[165] Badiou, *Universalism*, 34 – 5.
[166] Badiou, *Universalism*, 35.
[167] Badiou, *Universalism*, 35.
[168] Badiou, *Universalism*, 35.

Not only does Badiou distance himself from Marcion's reading of Paul, and the Marcionite system more generally, but he also demonstrates the distance between his own thought and that of Paul. Badiou highlights Paul's insistence on the continuity of identity between the God of the Old and New Testaments: 'the God whose son is Jesus Christ is the God spoken of in the Old Testament'.[169] Pauline passages indicative of rupture between the two testaments are taken as militant (or rhetorical) rather than ontological (or assertive). This demonstrates that Badiou is not simply reading his own thought into the Apostle's text as some have alleged.

Phelps holds that Badiou's contrast between Paul and Marcion is that with 'which Badiou qualifies Paul's understanding of the novelty of the resurrection-event'.[170] Phelps builds on the distinction Badiou makes between 'militant' and 'ontological' statements to develop his case against the absolute novelty of an 'Event'. Phelps will find a similar distinction in Badiou's own work:

> 'Problems arise when the militant aspects of Badiou's philosophy are taken on their own terms, which is what the critics mentioned above tend to do [those who ascribe sheer novelty to the event]. That is to say, they repeat the move that Marcion makes in reference to Paul, in that they mistake Badiou's militant atheism for strict ontological theses'.[171]

Phelps' utilisation of Badiou's reading of Marcion spares Badiou the charge of Marcionism. He does so not only by refuting Badiou's Marcionism, but also by reversing the charge. He finds those who consider Badiouan 'Events' as cases of absolute novelty are themselves guilty of a Marcionite misreading of Badiou, since they confuse the 'militant' and 'ontological' senses of Badiou's description of an 'Event'. Phelps wishes to defend this position in order to prevent Badiouan 'Events' from being reduced to acts of sheer nomination.[172]

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[169] Badiou, *Universalism*, 35.
[170] Phelps, 'Rupture', 63.
[171] Phelps, 'Rupture', 68.
[172] As an example of such 'nomination', Žižek gives the example of Lyotard, *Postmodern* who, he claims, 'elevated the term ('postmodern') from simply naming certain artistic tendencies (especially in writing and architecture) to designating a new historical epoch, there was an element of authentic *nomination* in his act'. [Žižek, *Farce*, 52]. This example also serves as an example of the 'new' existing unnamed in the 'old'. It has been noted that the 'postmodern' shift with which Lyotard is associated had already occurred before Lyotard's description of it,

Our evaluation of the charge of Marcionism against Badiou cannot, however, utilise the defence of Phelps. Phelps attempts to protect Badiou from the charge of 'nominalism' but, in doing so, fails to provide an account of Badiouan 'Events' which coheres with the 'immanent breaks' of Badiou's technical definitions of 'Events'. Moreover, in drawing a distinction between 'ontological' and 'militant' claims (similar to that which Badiou draws in the texts of Paul), Phelps mistakes Badiou's own thought for his reading of Paul.[173] Phelps assumes that Badiou's denouncing of Marcion as a reader of Paul is a denouncing novelty as such. These two are distinct. Badiou's treatment of Marcion is therefore important evidence against those who claim that Badiou merely reads his own thought into Paul. Badiou's treatment of Marcion reveals the distance between Paul and Marcion, in respect of the issue of absolute novelty which Phelps seeks to remove from Badiou's theory. Badiou, however, reacts against a reading of Paul which focusses on 'absolute beginning'.[174] In doing so, he does not relinquish such beginnings as a theme of his own thought, and therefore does not read his own thought into the text of Paul:

> 'As for myself, however, I cannot bring myself to think that the new is a fold of the past, or that thinking can be reduced to philosophy or a single configuration of its act. This is why I conceptualize absolute beginnings'.[175]

We are therefore not able to distinguish Marcion from Badiou on the issue of novelty by denying a place for genuinely absolute novelty in the thought of Badiou. We have seen above that the place of such novelty in Marcion's system has been questioned in recent scholarship. However, beyond pointing to Badiou's own criticism of Marcion's reading of Paul, we are also able to refute the charge of Marcionism on other grounds. These further grounds on which we shall refute the charge of Marcionism in Badiou's reading of Paul concern the place of God, the place of the Resurrection, and the number of 'Events'.

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as shown by the very use of his term 'narrative' in his classic definition. Here, postmodernism is understood not as the death of all grand-narratives, but belief in the concept of narrative as such.

[173] Phelps, 'Rupture', 68.

[174] Badiou, *Universalism*, 35/

[175] Badiou, A., *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (trans. Burchill, L.)(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 64.

Badiou has remained dogged in his atheism. As part of his critique of transcendence, there is no room for God in Badiou's thought.[176] Badiou's account of the 'fable' of the resurrection is based on his denial of the possibility of God.[177] Moreover, as we have seen, Badiou reads the text of Paul in an atheistic direction. In contrast, the central feature of Marcion's system is the assumption of not one, but two gods.[178] This introduction of the novel deity is the central concern of Tertullian's case against Marcion.[179] Moll notes how: 'this evil God is as important for Marcion's doctrine as the good God is'.[180] Badiou's reading therefore avoids the charge of Marcionism in respect of Marcion's belief in the twin deities of the Old and New Testaments respectively.

Moreover, Badiou's reading of Paul escapes the charge of Marcionism in respect of the emphasis he places on the Resurrection. Paul's account of the Resurrection is the exemplary 'Event' for Badiou.[181] Marcion's focus meanwhile is the coming of Christ in the 'fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius'. This event constitutes the beginning of the Gospel and the start of the process of redemption. Marcion pays some, but less, attention to the events of the crucifixion as that through which the creator God is 'paid off' in a soteriological exchange. Badiou's Paul has little interest in that which occurs before the Resurrection. Marcion, however, makes little of the Resurrection. This might be due to Marcion's fears over the Resurrection of the body which belongs to the created order of the inferior deity.[182] We note Tertullian's inclusion of Marcion amongst the 'impugners of the Resurrection'.[183]

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176 cf. Badiou, *Deleuze*.

177 Badiou, *Universalism,* 4-6, 18, 81, 108. Some scholars have suggested the contrary and attempted to find space for a transcendent Deity in Badiou's thought. Foremost among which is Depoortere, F., *Badiou and Theology* (London: Continuum 2009) in which Depoortere attempts to find a space for God within Badiou's system via the potential of the infinite in set theory. We note too those critics mentioned above which see in Badiou a theologising tendency viz. the Event.

178 Moll, *Marcion*, 3.

179 Tertullian, *Adv Marc*, 2; 8.

180 Moll, *Marcion*, 85.

181 See §2.7 below.

182 Tertullian, *Adv Marc,* 24.

183 Tertullian, *Praesc,* 33.

Moreover, whilst we find the later Marcionite Church is capable of articulating similar rupturous 'event-like' instances, these do not include the Resurrection as a central 'Event' in the manner we have seen in features in the reading of Badiou. It is telling that later Marcionites will date the origins of Marcionism instead to the date of Marcion's departure from the church in Rome.

For these reasons we find that the charge of Marcionism against Badiou's reading of Paul cannot hold. Central to this refutation is Badiou's own critique of a Marcionite reading of Paul. Moreover, the example of Marcion in fact serves to demonstrate that Badiou is not simply reading his own thought into the Pauline text, as Marcion's focus on novelty bears a resemblance to Badiou's thought, which Badiou recognises is absent in Paul.

The charge of Marcionism against Badiou's thought system as a whole also cannot be maintained. Whilst we have noted some family resemblances with regards to the theme of genuine novelty and the primacy of grace over 'law' in the thought of both Badiou and Marcion, there remain fundamental differences between them. We have also noted that these resemblances are challenged by the scholarly revision of Marcion away from von Harnack's hegemonic reading. A Marcion in the reading of Moll, which downplays absolute novelty, and instead gives primacy to the old, has little in common with Badiou. Moreover, both von Harnack and Moll agree on the fundamental dualism of Marcion's creator and redeemer gods. This contrasts further to Badiou's radical atheism. We will now go on to explore this atheism as a theme of enquiry in its own right. We must take seriously Badiou's distancing of a Marcionite reading of Paul from that of his own, and conclude that the charge of Marcionism will not hold.

2.5 Badiou as Atheist

The question of Badiou's atheism, and the atheistic reading of Paul he produces, has already been encountered in this thesis. We noted above that a charge of Marcionism against Badiou and *Universalism* could not be maintained, and that Badiou's atheism provided at least one ground for denying this charge. Badiou's reading of Paul in *Universalism* is a reading of Paul stripped of the concept of God, as we saw in his reading of Rom 2.10 above. It is this issue we must now explore. The extent of atheism in his thought and work has lead to the charge that Badiou separates Pauline form from content in his reading of Paul. This is taken as evidence for the appropriation of Paul in the service of Badiou's own project. Moreover, it has caused Badiou's reading to be deemed illegitimate for not sharing the religious concerns of his subject. An exploration of Badiou's atheism, and reactions to it, also reveals much about the assumptions as to what constitutes legitimacy of interpretation with which critics of Badiou operate.

The question of legitimacy has been raised in Badiou's reception of Paul. Jennings describes Badiou and the other thinkers who have been associated with the New Moment who:

> 'seem to stand outside what might be deemed a legitimate descent from Paul – whose "materialist" and political readings place them outside both the theological line of inheritance and the guild of academic Pauline studies'.[184]

Jennings also notes that these philosophical readings:

> 'claim Paul as their ancestor in ways that may trouble the cultures of Pauline possession'.[185]

This reveals a debate about who 'owns' Paul and the canons of Pauline interpretation.

[184] Jennings, 'Sons', 86, 87.
[185] Jennings, 'Sons', 86.

This raises the question of what constitutes a legitimate approach to Pauline interpretation. It also raises the question of how the criteria of legitimacy are decided. The superiority of the historical-critical method cannot merely be assumed. Criticisms of Badiou's reading of Paul have included criticism of the historical-critical method, and have suggested that both are illegitimate methods of approaching the Pauline text. Noting this is an important first step in raising the issue of legitimacy of interpretation as one consequence of Badiou's reception of Paul.

Douglas Harink offers one such example. He finds the appropriate context of Pauline interpretation to be a reconstructed apocalyptic messianism against which all interpretations must be judged. He takes the Pauline concept of the *apokalypsis Theou* (the revelation of God) as that which:

> 'generates philosophical and political thought, yet always draws us back to itself as beginning, context, and end'.[186]

[186] Harink, 'Introduction', 4. The importance of recognising apocalyptic themes in Paul has been noted in New Testament study since Schweitzer, A., *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: A&C Black 1931) [orig. *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr 1930)] (see Blanton, W., 'On The Post-Liberal Paul and A Mystical Militancy of the Everyday' in *Angelaki* (12.1) 27 – 35). However, Ernst Käsemann is regarded as making the recognition of Paul as an apocalyptic thinker mainstream in New Testament study (Käsemann, E., 'On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic' in Käsemann, E., *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM 1969) 108 – 137; cf. also 'The Beginnings of Christian Theology', 82 – 107. J. L. Martyn is perhaps most associated with this emphasis (a point repeatedly made in Harink (ed.), *Theopolitical,* 2 + passim). See Martyn, J. L., *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh; T&T Clark 1997), esp. 'Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages' 89 - 110 and 'Apocalyptic Antinomies', 111 – 124. See also Rowland, C., *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK 1982) 374 – 386; Bockmuehl, M., *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr 1990); Beker, J.C., *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1992); Segal, A., *Paul the Convert* (Yale: Yale University Press 1992) esp. 158f.; Morray-Jones, C. R. A., 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12.1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate: Part 1: The Jewish Sources' in *Harvard Theological Review 86.2* (April 1993) 177 – 217 and 'Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12.1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate: Part 2: Paul's Heavenly Ascent and its Significance' in *Harvard Theological Review 86.3* (July 1993) 265 – 292; Rowland, C. and Morray-Jones, C. R. A., *Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (Brill: Leiden 2009).

Harink distinguishes his reading of Paul from both philosophical and historical-critical approaches. He does so because he sees that his method allows Paul to speak in his own: 'messianic apocalyptic – that is, his distinctly theological – voice'.[187] This becomes the criterion by which interpretation is judged. Paul must be allowed to speak in his own voice.

Harink therefore also questions the legitimacy of the historical-critical method, because it is does not share Paul's understanding of time.[188] However, we must observe the circularity of his method. He first locates a central tenet of Pauline thought as 'Paul's voice' – the *apokalypsis Theou* – and thereby proceeds to judge interpretations according to that criterion.

Badiou's atheism has been an area in which the distance between Paul's voice and Badiou's own has been noted. This is despite Badiou being numbered among those contemporary philosophers and critical theorists who have increasingly investigated themes of a religious, and particularly Christian, nature.[189] The religious and theological resonances of Badiou's system have been noted.[190] These resonances, as well as the subject matter of Badiou's *Universalism*, have given rise Badiou being included amongst those turning to religion. However, there is wide-ranging disagreement as to whether Badiou should be so included or whether, in fact, there are religious and theological claims to be found in Badiou at all.

[187] Harink, 'Introduction', 3.
[188] Harink, 'Introduction', 9: 'as it locates itself in a temporal world completely other than Paul's, which is constituted by the *apokalypsis Theou* in Jesus Christ'. See further Harink, D., 'Time and Politics in Four Commentaries on Romans' in Harink (ed.), 'Theopolitical' 282 – 312.
[189] Flynn, '(Re)Turn', 173. See further Janicaud, *Phenomenology.*
[190] Žižek, *On Belief*, 110; Flynn '(Re) Turn', 181 – 2.

Whilst the lack of a religious truth-procedure from Badiou's list of four (science, art, politics, love) has been noted, for fellow atheistic thinkers, his system is suspiciously religious as a whole.[191] Žižek suggests that the lack of a religious truth-procedure points to a circularity revealed in Badiou's reading of Paul. For Žižek, Badiou's focus on the Resurrection reveals the overtly religious nature of his system as a whole:

> 'The point is that his supreme example of a truth-procedure – event, and so on – its implicit model is a kind of religious interpellation. So no wonder that the best example is religious!'[192]

Meanwhile, others have found the reverse. Harink suggests that all of the 'New Moment' thinkers, including especially Badiou, 'studiously refrain from making any theological claims'.[193] This is almost certainly incorrect. Badiou is quite willing to make claims on the nature of God, insofar as he is willing to argue strongly for God's non-existence. Badiou has declared all three possible ways he identifies of arriving at God (religion, metaphysics and poetics) as finished.[194]

[191] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, J., 'An Interview with Slavoj Žižek "On Divine Self-Limitation and Revolutionary Love"' in the *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture 1.2* (Spring 2004) 32 – 8, 32; Boer, R., 'Theology and the Event: The Ambivalence of Alain Badiou' in *The Heythrop Journal 52.2* (March 2011) 234 – 249.

[192] Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 32.

[193] Harink, 'Introduction', 2.

[194] Badiou, A., 'Prologue: God is Dead' in Badiou, A., *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise On Transitory Ontology* (trans. Madarasz, N.) (New York: SUNY Press 2006) [orig. *Court Traité d'ontologie transitoire* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1998) 21 – 32].

It is significant that Badiou has received criticism both for the extent of his theological engagement, and for the lack of it. This situation can be explained when we reflect on Badiou's own intention to explore Christian or religious form, whilst denying any validity to its content.[195] This division of form and content is characteristic of the nature of Badiou's theological engagement, and is echoed in his reading of Paul, as we saw above. It is the sustained procedure of *Universalism*: 'that the content of the fable must be abandoned leaves as its remainder the form of these conditions'.[196] This division has been criticised from those (Christian) theologians who wish to maintain both the form and the content of a theological system, and also those who see the borrowing of a theological form as an unnecessary religious intervention in to philosophy.[197] Flynn, for example, questions the possibility of entirely divorcing form from content in this manner.[198] However, Badiou is not unaware of this difficulty:

> 'What use do we claim to make of the apparatus of Christian faith, an apparatus from which it seems strictly impossible to dissociate the figure and texts of Paul?'[199]

Fowl alludes to such a difficulty in his discussion of Badiou's interest in the nature of the Pauline subject: 'He has no interest in Christian particularities that, one might argue, comprise the heart of Paul's subjectivity'.[200] Parallels between this separation of form and content, and the Bultmannian process of demythologisation have been made. Fowl uses the term 'demythologize' to refer to Badiou's division: 'Paul will have to be demythologized if he is to be of any real use to Badiou'.[201]

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[195] Badiou, *Universalism*, 6f.
[196] Badiou, *Universalism*, 6.
[197] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 183; Boer, 'Ambivalence', 234.
[198] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 183 grants the possibility for the sake of argument; Boer, 'Ambivalence', 234.
[199] Badiou, *Universalism*, 4.
[200] Fowl, 'Particular', 121.
[201] Fowl, 'Particular', 121.

It is worth outlining Badiou's reasons for division of form and content. He maintains it is 'rigorously impossible to believe in the resurrection'. Badiou provides no argument for this.[202] Similarly, he simply declares the end of the God of religions: 'regarding the God of religions, its death must simply be declared'.[203] Once declared, this atheism functions almost as a necessary postulate, which demands the separation of the theistic content of the Pauline material from its form.[204] We note the difference in impulse which resulted in Bultmann's project. Bultmann's drive toward demythologisation was not primarily rooted in a belief about the nature or existence of God, but in a belief about the nature of human existence.[205]

Central to this denial of Pauline content is Badiou's repeatedly self-professed atheism. However, the question of the nature of Badiou's atheism is rarely treated with any nuance. Watkin is an important exception to this. He seeks to nuance discussion of the turn to religion in contemporary theory by drawing a distinction between the different possibilities which present themselves to an atheological or atheist project. He divides the kinds of atheism available to such thinkers into two forms: imitative atheism or parasitism ('seeking to be rid of God in ways that assume or require God') and residual atheism or asceticism ('renouncing, along with God, the notions of truth, goodness and beauty he underwrites').[206] It is the latter, residual atheism, which he considers responsible for the oft-noted 'cliché' of a religious or theological turn in much contemporary philosophical thought. He sees this turn as 'theology's colonisation of residual atheism by exploiting its gesture of 'making room''.[207]

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[202] Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.

[203] Badiou, A., 'God is Dead', 30. He writes elsewhere of the death of God as 'the end of the idea that posits truth and meaning as the same thing' going on to state that where this separation occurs in the field of history, it constitutes 'the death of communism' in Badiou, A., "A conversation with Alain Badiou" in *lacanian ink* 23 (2004) 100 – 1 cited in Žižek, Farce, 149.

[204] cf. Badiou, *Incident*, xi: *leaving aside the twin oppositions of ... the religious spirit vs atheism*'.

[205] In this sense (the continuity of human nature) Bultmann's demythologising principle also shares affinities with Troeltsch's principle of the interconnectedness of history, which we discuss below.

[206] Watkin, *Difficult*, 2 – 8, 22 – 23.

[207] Watkin, *Difficult*, 10. An excellent example of an attempted theological colonisation, in Watkin's sense, is Depoortere, *Badiou and Theology*. Depoortere suggests that it is possible to make room for God in Badiou's thought by returning to Cantor, and seeing a space for God within the notions of infinity in set-theory which Badiou had, according to Depoortere, prematurely ruled out.

Watkin sees these two possible atheistic positions as an *impasse*, and suggests that Badiou and others offer a third post-theological way which attempts truly to shake off the concept of God. Watkin describes how in this third way atheological thought is combined with those notions which ascetic or residual atheism sought to do away with:

> 'it is this integration that makes the new post-theological thought truly new: it is a turn to religion in order to turn the pages on religion'.[208]

We are reminded of the wider context of Badiou's reading of Paul within Badiou's intellectual output. We have seen that Badiou's philosophy, foremost in *Being and Event*, is a wider project to arrive at an understanding of truth. Badiou's interest in truth as a concept is therefore, in Watkin's analysis, a key example of this third way of post-theological thought.

There is a 'further twist' in the post-theological mode beyond serious engagement with themes such as truth, which had been avoided in previous thinkers as being areas of concern which were too 'metaphysical' or tied to a concept of God. This 'further twist' is the 'frequent foregrounding of religious ideas, languages and themes'.[209] Badiou is also an important example here. Watkin notes Badiou's "use of terms 'grace' and 'faith', 'hope' and 'love'".[210] The use of such terms constitutes the novelty of what he deems the 'post-theological':

> 'taking terms and patterns of thought previously connected with theism and reinscribing them'.[211]

So, for Watkin, the presence of theological motifs is not an area of criticism for such atheistic projects but is an act of re-inscription characteristic of the post-theological.

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[208] Watkin, *Difficult*, 13. This has much resonance with Žižek's account of atheism. We note also the persistence of the notions of the true and the just in Badiou which fit Watkin's third category of classification; cf. Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.
[209] Watkin, *Difficult*, 13.
[210] Watkin, *Difficult*, 13 (see below).
[211] Watkin, *Difficult*, 14.

Watkin's treatment is therefore one of the most sophisticated in respect to the presence of theological or religious themes in Badiou's work. Others, however, have questioned the sincerity of Badiou's atheism. Flynn wonders whether Badiou's reading of Paul might therefore be considered 'religious'.[212] Flynn makes no attempt at a precise definition of what he means by the use of the term but his examples are suggestive of traditional Christian 'theological' themes. For Flynn, the use of such themes betrays an insincere atheism on Badiou's part. Instead, he considers the profession of atheism by Badiou in this context: 'a telling gesture to maintain philosophical credibility'.[213] Badiou preempts this objection: 'it will be objected that, in the present case, for us "truth" designates mere fable. Granted'.[214] Similarly, Boer has found that Badiou's apparent atheism betrays an underlying theological basis: 'Theology has a ghostly presence in what appears for all the world like a fifth procedure of truth'.[215]

The resonances between Badiou's system and a religious or theological one are most apparent in his concept of the 'Event'.[216] As such, these 'Events' have been regarded by some as secularised versions of traditional Christian themes of 'miracle' or 'grace'.[217] A theistic resonance can be identified in their previous impossibility from the view of pre-'Event' situation.[218] This is resonant of Hume's classic definition of a miracle as a violation of a law of nature.

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[212] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 174. Note especially his persistent use of scare-quotes in the case of Badiou.

[213] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 174.

[214] Badiou, *Universalism,* 6.

[215] Boer, 'Ambivalence', 234. See Badiou, A., 'Politics as Truth-Procedure' in Badiou, A., *Theoretical Writings* (ed. and trans. Brassier, R., Toscano, A.) 153 – 162 [orig. in *Abrégé de métapolitique* (Paris: Seuil 1998) 155 – 167].

[216] Badiou, 'Dictionary', 506 – 7: 'Event: An event – of a given evental site – is the multiple composed of: on the one hand, elements of the site, and on the other hand, itself (the event)'. In other words, an occurrence which has nothing in common to that which has gone before according to the perspective of the system in which the Event occurs. See *Being and Event,* 178 – 183. See below for the potential hermeneutical problems posed by such 'Events'.

[217] Žižek, *On Belief*, 112: 'laicised grace'; Bensaid, D., 'Alain Badiou and the Miracle of the Event' in Hallward, P. (ed.), *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (London: Continuum 2004) 94 - 105; Smith, D. W., 'Badiou and Deleuze on the Ontology of Mathematics' in Hallward, *Think Again,* 77 - 93; Critchley, S., 'On the Ethics of Alain Badiou' in Riera, G. (ed.), *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and its Conditions* (New York: SUNY Press 2005) 215 – 236; cf. Phelps "Rupture' 61.

[218] Note especially the parallels between Martyn's description of God's action in the gospel and Badiou's theory of Event in Martyn, J. L., 'The Gospel Invades Philosophy' in Harink, *Theopolitical*, 13 – 33, 32 – 3: 'The gospel is the *dynamis Theou*, the present, powerful, intrusive *act* of the God who raised his crucified Son from the grave... This God *comes* invasively and causatively, inciting faith where there was none'.

We have seen that the question of Badiou's atheism is a complex one. It has been the cause of criticism from both those for whom Badiou's work is too atheistic, and from those for whom Badiou's work is too religious. Watkin's treatment is an important example of a more nuanced approach to the question of religious themes appearing in the course of an atheistic project. For our purposes, it is important to note how the evaluation of the critic in regards to the value of theology, and of a concept of God in the Pauline text, impacts upon the manner in which Badiou's religious and theological themes are perceived. Flynn suggests there is fruitful ground in a more careful consideration of the religious and theological resonances of Badiou's thought[219]. We now turn to one such example.

[219] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 183.

2.6 Badiou and the Resurrection

The place of the Resurrection in Badiou's thought is perhaps the best example of the problems raised in the last section. It offers a clear example of the paradox we observed there. Badiou's treatment of the Resurrection has been seen as both too religious and too atheistic. This reveals again the division between form and content with which Badiou reads Paul. However, the Resurrection, and, in particular, Paul's proclamation of that Resurrection, has important currency for Badiou. Badiou regards Paul's understanding of the Resurrection, and his proclamation of it, as exemplifying his notions of 'Event', and the idea of 'fidelity' to such Events, as being the constitutive elements of a theory of truth.[220] In his reading of Paul, Badiou identifies the Resurrection in Paul as paradigmatic of the Event. We must explore the nature of Badiouan 'Events' in order to understand how the Resurrection functions as a paradigmatic example.

In Anglophone scholarship, we note a tendency to allow the term 'Event' a wider remit than Badiou himself would allow, through the use of some or other qualifying term. 'Events' are often referred to in critical commentary as “truth-events”. We have established that Badiou's interest in 'Events' is their place in his procedural theory of truth. However, labelling 'Events' as “truth-events” confuses Badiou's distinction between Events which give rise to the possibility of truth and truth-procedures in which truth consists in relation to 'Events'. This confusion was introduced to an Anglophone audience via Žižek, who introduces Badiouan 'Events' with the term 'truth-events' and is the first to use the term.[221]

[220] Flynn, '(Re) Turn', 181. For a definition of 'fidelity to the Event' see Badiou, 'Dictionary', 507 – 508: 'The procedure by which one discerns, in a situation, the multiples whose existence is linked to the name of the event that has been put into circulation by an intervention. Fidelity distinguishes and gathers together the becoming of what is connected to the name of the event. It is a post-evental quasi-state.' See Badiou, *Being and Event*, 232 – 239.

[221] Žižek, 'Badiou as a Reader of St Paul'.

In its theological reception, the term 'Event' has been qualified by other epithets. Harink renders them messianically:

> 'the messianic event, as the interruption, qualification, and transfiguration of all discourses'.[222]

Incidentally, of these descriptions, only 'interruption' is appropriate for a Badiouan 'Event'. 'Qualification' suggests a permanent validity for some kind of pre-'Event' symbolic discourse which Badiou is keen to reject. The same holds for transfiguration depending on the sense in which this word is taken. If understood as transformation of the pre-existent, the same criticism holds as for 'qualification'.[223] If, however, 'transfiguration' is understood not to presuppose continuing validity of any pre-transfiguration discourse it might serve as an appropriate descriptor of such an 'Event'. The term 'messianic' is equally problematic as a qualifier for the 'Event'. Harink emphasises the concepts of the apocalyptic and the messianic throughout his introduction to the recent philosophical interpretation of Paul.[224] He finds Paul's 'apocalyptic messianism' to be the starting point of all of these philosophical readings.[225] It features so importantly that it forms the basis of the somewhat devotional conclusion to his essay where he notes:

> 'the theological significance of the philosophers' [...] contribution to strengthening the witness of the messianic community, in its thought and action, to the Messiah Jesus who has called and created it.'[226]

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[222] Harink, 'Introduction', 1 – 2. He goes on to say that such a 'messianic event... marks the common theme of the essays of this volume', and by extension reflects his early claim that what characterises Badiou's Pauline reading is representative of the reading of the 'New Moment' as a whole. He recognises, but in so doing underemphasises, the different foci of each philosophical reading in terms of what characterises this messianic event. The problems of this description become especially clear as he is only able to describe the foci of Agamben (and Walter Benjamin) broadly, and with circularity, as 'the messianic'.

[223] This is one way of understanding the Gospel Transfiguration narratives (Matt 17.1-13; Mark 9.2-13; Luke 9.28-36) if seen through the motif of a Sinaitic visionary experience or if the presence of Elijah and Moses indicates a continued permanence of their narratives here.

[224] Harink, 'Introduction', *passim* and especially p. 2: 'If Paul becomes important for philosophical and political theory, therefore, he does so through a *messianic apocalypse* and because of it' (emphasis original); cf. Kroeker, T., 'Living "As If Not": Messianic Becoming or the Practice of Nihilism?' in Harink, *Theopolitical,* 37 – 63*,* 40, 51.

[225] Harink,'Introduction', 2: 'The philosophers studied here have found in Paul's apocalyptic messianism a point of departure'.

[226] Harink, 'Introduction', 10.

Harink's identification of the messianic as an important starting point, and reason, for the philosophical interest in Paul reveals as much about Harink himself as Badiou and those others who have turned to Paul. As we have seen above, it is through the *apokalypsis Theou* that Harink reads Paul. Harink finds this *apokalypsis Theou* to be the key to understanding the Pauline epistles and is the theme by which he critiques the reading of others. He then goes on to find the same starting point for the other philosophers who have turned to Paul. This reveals the centrality of the *apokalypsis Theou* as a theme for Harink himself.

We have noted the central place Badiou gives to the Resurrection in his treatment of Paul. In so doing, it has been noted that Badiou underemphasises the crucifixion as the cause and site of the Resurrection (i.e. the death that gave rise to Christ's Resurrection).[227] Kroeker suggests that this underemphasis is a result of an ahistoricising focus in Badiou's reading, in which the historical events before the Resurrection are deliberately ignored:

> '[It] must be detached from any historical particularity... the Christian subject is not a matter of historical content'.[228]

Such ahistoricising is evident from the outset with Badiou's first subtitle: 'Paul: our contemporary'.[229]

[227] Kroeker, 'As If Not', 41.
[228] Kroeker, 'As If Not', 41.
[229] Badiou, *Universalism*, 4. The term which might be identified as Badiou's watchword here is 'contemporary' (*contemporanéité*). It is both the title of his first chapter and the arena in which his interpretation occurs. He refers to it as 'a contemporary necessity'. The centrality which Badiou gives to the necessary contemporary standing of the interpreter, and his corresponding (though not necessary) disinterest in the historical, will form the basis of our enquiry into the exegetical ramifications of Badiou's reading below.

However, Badiou's ahistoricising is not simply the blindness to the historical situation of the Apostle which Kroeker suggests. Badiou notes the historical distance between himself and the Apostle as he notes: 'his historical site; his role as Church founder; and … centering of thought upon its fabulous element'.[230] Rather than simply robbing Paul of this historical situation, Badiou seeks to '(invest) this distance with the weight of a philosophical proximity'.[231] This process is elsewhere described as 'reactivation'.[232] This reactivation is the means by which Badiou reads Paul. We saw above that Badiou's desire to understand Paul's text within Badiou's own context was not accompanied by the complete historical blindness Kroeker suggests.

Badiou does not ignore the historical conditions in which Paul wrote but instead seeks to reassess their value in establishing the meaning of the Pauline text. It is partly along these lines that he distinguishes between form and content. He attempts to understand the form of the Pauline proclamation without reference solely to the historical conditions that gave rise to the nature of their content. This is not merely his approach to Paul, but an approach he finds taken by Paul himself who seeks:

> 'to sharply separate each truth procedure from the cultural "historicity" whereby opinion presumes to dissolve it: such is the operation in which Paul is our guide'.[233]

Badiou's attempts to understand Paul beyond the historical conditions that gave rise to his thought may offer one reason for Badiou's timidity over the crucifixion. Badiou's atheism may also be a reason.[234] However, this holds true as much, if not more so, for the Resurrection itself.[235] It has also been suggested that Badiou does not wish to focus on the morbidity, or possible fetishising of suffering, represented by the Cross.[236]

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230 Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.
231 Badiou, *Universalism*, 5.
232 Badiou, *Universalism*, 2.
233 Badiou, *Universalism*, 6.
234 Kroeker, 'As If Not', 42: 'Like any good worldly philosopher Badiou too is finally scandalized by both the cross and a resurrection that testifies to a Messiah raised up by divine agency, the Holy Spirit'.
235 Badiou constantly refers to the 'fabulous' nature of the Resurrection.
236 Kroeker, 'As If Not', 56 – 7.

Badiou does not entirely ignore the crucifixion in his account. He recognises that it is the site of the Resurrection. However, it does not feature in his summary of the Pauline gospel which he thinks may be reduced to a single statement: Jesus is resurrected'.[237] Some have considered this move illegitimate as a reading of Paul. Kroeker considers that 'this new gnostic politics of fabulation divides what Paul's messianism unites: the cross and resurrection'.[238] Here we can observe the difficulty of Badiou's project to divorce form from content, since the Resurrection is coloured by the crucifixion in a fairly obvious sense. The Resurrection follows, and is dependent upon, the crucifixion.[239] There is a problem with Badiou's claim that Paul reduces Christianity to the statement that Jesus is resurrected. This statement does not take account of passages in Paul which make the crucifixion central, such as, 'We preach Christ crucified' (1 Cor 1.23).[240] However, for all his emphasis on the Resurrection, Badiou is not blind to the relation to the crucifixion. It is the crucifixion which must be rejected, as Badiou insists that it is the Resurrection of the crucified he cannot believe.[241] This alerts us that his focus on the Resurrection is a self-conscious limitation, rather than a blind omission.

Badiou therefore strips the form of the Pauline proclamation (a Resurrection) from its content (the Resurrection of one crucified). He is aware of, but underemphasises, the historical conditions of Paul, and of the circumstances of Christ's death which enabled the Resurrection. This move raises the question of why the historical-critical method does not similarly entertain such ahistoricisation. A more serious challenge to the historical-critical method is raised by the Badiouan theory of 'Events' itself, especially if the New Testament contains the description of the 'Event' which is paradigmatic for Badiou of all 'Events': the Resurrection of Christ.

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[237] Badiou, *Universalism*, 4.
[238] Kroeker, 'As If Not', 42.
[239] We see this also in Eagleton's tragic christology (see below) where the utter failure and hopelessness of Christ from the point of view of the crucifixion is necessary to give the Resurrection its power. A point made by Eagleton in 'Compassion and Power' a lecture at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, London on 16th November 2011.
[240] 1 Cor 1.17-18, 23; 2.2; Gal 6.14; Phil 2.8 cf. 1 Cor 1.13; 2 Cor 13.4; Gal 3.1.
[241] Badiou, *Universalism*, 5

2.7 Consequences for "Historical Criticism"

Badiou's reading of Paul has raised the question of the appropriateness of historicism as a means of reading the text of Paul. This question has been a dominant thread of this chapter, and will be a dominant concern of this thesis more generally. We have encountered the theme of novelty as it relates to the charge of Marcionism and we must now consider its implications for the task of exegesis and establishing the meaning of the Pauline text. In particular, we seek to explore the problems that a Badiouan event would pose for Troeltsch's principle of analogy, which is a foundational principle of modern historical-critical New Testament study.

"Always historicize!"[242] This is the slogan with which the Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson begins his *Political Unconscious.*[243] The theory of interpretation found there, especially Jameson's 'transcoding', ought to provide food for thought for the reader of biblical text/s in its/their own right, but is not our concern here.[244] Instead, we are interested in the truth of the opening dictum of that work – "Always historicize!"[245] The fact that this injunction is an imperative means that it is already indicative of other possibilities. It is a command to do something which one may otherwise not do. It is therefore anything but self-evident.

[242] On this phrase see Buchanan, I., 'Metacommentary on Utopia or Jameson's dialectic of hope' in *Utopian Studies* (9.2) (1998) 18 – 30, 28.

[243] Jameson, F., *The Political Unconscious: Narrative As A Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press 1981).

[244] Note the parallels between 'transcoding' and the sense of 'inscription' and 're-inscription' we discovered in our discussion of 'appropriation', see §1.4 above.

[245] Boyarin raises Jameson's motto against Žižek to criticise Žižek's ahistoricism. Žižek responds by reading Jameson as a demonstration of the limits of an historicising project. See Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among* 173 – 4, cf. 171.

The situation in which New Testament interpretation finds itself today could not be more different from the situation in 1900 which occasioned the writing of Troeltsch's 'On the historic and dogmatic methods in theology'.[246] No longer is the central role of the historic, and of the historical, something for which one needs to argue. That this is so seems obviously true from the majority of publications in the field of New Testament study which simply assume the historical-critical method.[247] This can also be seen in debates on the nature of biblical theology. Amidst hard-fought debates concerning the interplay of ancient and contemporary meaning, and the relationship between exegesis and systematic thought, the assumption that the historicising impulse is the correct and basic one for interpretation is an assumption which rarely goes unchallenged. Morgan, in his essay on 'New Testament Theology', refers to a central role for the historical as 'naturally' featuring in the discipline of New Testament studies.[248] In 1975, Krentz was able to write: 'today historical criticism is taken for granted'.[249] Krentz could cite R. P. C. Hanson in support:

> 'the battle for the acceptance of historical criticism as applied to the Bible has been won'.[250]

To question the role of the historical in textual interpretation is obviously beyond our scope. We will attempt instead to consider one aspect of the role of analogy in biblical interpretation by exploring the consequences for the role of analogy in historical-criticism posed by Badiou's theory of the 'Event'.

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[246] Wells, P., 'The Lasting Significance of Ernst Troeltsch's Critical Moment' in *Westminster Theological Journal* 72 (2010): 199 – 217. Troeltsch's essay is sometimes dated to 1898 but discussion with Mark Chapman has clarified that this is an error which crept in during the collation of his collected works.

[247] Wells, 'Lasting', 201: 'Even if addiction to the elixir of historical criticism is in rehab today and the obsession has been loosened by linguistics and narrative interests, it still holds thrall in biblical studies at least as prolegomena. Its methods define the conditions of what is considered "scientific."'

[248] Morgan, R., 'New Testament Theology' in Kraftchick, S., Myers, C., Ollenburger, B. (eds.), *Biblical Theology: Problems and Perspectives: in honour of J. C. Beker* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1995) 104 – 130.

[249] Krentz, E., *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) 33.

[250] Hanson, R. P. C., *Biblical Criticism* (Baltimore: Penguin Books 1970) 13 [cited Krentz, *Method*, 33].

In what follows, we set out the place given to analogy in Troeltsch's programmatic statement of the central tenets of historical method.[251] We then consider the problems a Badiouan 'Event' might raise for such a method. Further, we see that such an enquiry reveals an important founding principle of historical-criticism itself, and helps to uncover the 'prejudice', in a Gadamerean sense, with which such interpreters operate.

Troeltsch's principle of analogy is found in his programmatic essay, 'On the historical and dogmatic methods in theology'. The near universal acceptance of Troeltsch's argument for the historical-critical method has been noted.[252] Troeltsch seeks to examine 'the effect of the modern historical method on the whole conception of Christianity'. He takes as his starting point the consequences of such a method for Biblical studies. He considers the application of the historical method:

> 'a leaven that permeates everything and that finally blows open the whole earlier form of theological method'.

His argument has three fundamental concerns which must be accepted by such a method:

> 'the fundamental practice of historical criticism, the meaning of analogy, and the interconnection of all events of past history'.

'Analogy' is given a crowning role. The application of 'analogy' is 'the means by which criticism is made possible'. This 'analogy' between our time and the time of the antiquarian text is central to diligent historical criticism:

> 'Analogy with the things that happen before our eyes and take place in our midst is the key to criticism'.[253]

Our interest in analogy includes, but is not limited to, the analogy between the subject-matter of the text and of our day. It must also include ancient analogies which are contemporary with the texts under examination.

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[251] Well, 'Lasting', 205; Krentz, *Method,* 56 – 61 especially 55: 'the essay still haunts theology'.
[252] Krentz, *Method*, 57.
[253] We see here the seeds of a demythologising project.

It is important to recognise that there is a general philosophical theory at work even within Troeltsch's essay.[254] Troeltsch's essay is itself an interjection aimed at opponents for whom the principle of analogy is not an accepted critical norm. Troeltsch assumes a general philosophy of history in which 'analogy' functions as a foundational presupposition through a rejection of the very opposite presupposition:

> 'We cannot presuppose or prove that Christianity is something totally different from the non-Christian religion'.[255]

Troeltsch does not recognise this. He insists on the contrary that the historical-critical method is not itself indicative or reliant on a 'general philosophical theory':

> 'The historical method, through criticism, analogy, and correlation, and with indisputable necessity, leads entirely from itself to the positing of such a fabric of mutually conditioning strands'.

The phrase 'entirely from itself' suggests that the historical method exists in a vacuum whereby it is not reliant, or influenced, by anything like the 'general philosophical theories' of which Troeltsch is suspicious. However, that Troeltsch operates with his own systematic understanding of history, as we have seen, indicates that no such separation from general theory is possible. Troeltsch doesn't deny that the historical method is not independent 'in its origins'. However, he implies that the method has moved beyond those origins to become a stand-alone method of enquiry, which is no longer driven by a theory or system, but simply by the object of its enquiry and the results it bears:

> 'it has brought forth remarkably illuminating results and that trust in it has stood the test everywhere by clarifying items that were obscure. Such a power of clarification is unique to the historical method, and it is also its fully sufficient proof'.

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[254] See Chapman, M. D., *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001) especially 45 – 75.

[255] Troeltsch, E., 'Geschichte und Metaphysik' in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche 8* (January/February 1898) 1 – 69.

Method becomes the central focus of Troeltsch's thesis:

> 'I will only emphasize that despite all the value I attribute to the many lines of investigation that have been carried out, for me it is essentially a question of the method.'[256]

Whilst Moore and Sherwood do not cite or refer to Troeltsch at all in their discussion, Troeltsch's focus on method is an early example of the phenomenon of methodomania of which they note:

> 'What defines biblical studies discipline is less that it *possesses* method than that it is *obsessed with* method and is *possessed by* method. Biblical scholarship seems to turn everything it touches into method'.[257]

We have already encountered the centrality of method in contemporary biblical scholarship in our survey of the reception of Gadamer above.[258] There we saw how biblical scholarship would not let Gadamer's disavowal of method as an object of hermeneutical enquiry stand. We can now see that this is in large part as a result of the legacy of Troeltsch.

We now move to consider how Troeltsch's programme for the historical-critical method stands in light of the possibility of absolute novelty, such as that indicated by Badiou's theory of 'Events'. For Badiou, we have seen that an 'Event' is something which has nothing in common with that which has gone before. Indeed, it cannot, for it to count as an 'Event' it must have nothing in common with the surrounding particularities or circumstances - that is how we know it to be an 'Event'. In terms of Badiou's thought, the necessary 'loss of words' in the face of the 'new' has been noted:

> 'This “lost for words” aspect of a subject working under the aegis of a truth condition is integral to Badiou's theory. Since a truth procedure is the production of the new by means of subjective struggle, there is no existing language in which its status can be propounded by any subject of that truth.'[259]

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[256] Troeltsch: 'I will only emphasize that despite all the value I attribute to the many lines of investigation that have been carried out, for me it is essentially a question of the method'.

[257] Moore, S., Sherwood, Y., *The Invention of the Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto (Minneapolis:* Fortress Press 2010).

[258] See §1.5.

[259] Clemens, J., 'The conditions' in Bartlett, A. J., Clemens, J. (eds.) *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts* (Durham:

This raises an important question for readers of the New Testament: how and with what apparatus does one read texts that deal with the genuinely novel? How do contemporaneous and pre-existing texts illuminate the understanding of a text which seeks to describe that novelty? That this is a central issue, which strikes at the heart of *New* Testament scholarship, is indicated by the discipline's very name, and the centrality of the concept of 'novelty' in the New Testament texts themselves.[260]

We must consider Troeltsch's 'principle of analogy' against the prospect of the genuinely novel. This is not a problem of which Troeltsch was unaware philosophically, but he does not raise the issue in relation to his principle of analogy. Elsewhere, in an encyclopedia entry on 'contingency', he notes the problem of the novel in respect of a purely rational philosophical system. Under the heading 'the problem of the new' he recognises that in such a system

> 'nothing new would ever emerge in the world of the real. Everything would be involved in the existence of the whole, and therefore eternally present therein; or the apparently new would only be a phase and forms of forces always present in unvarying quantity'[261].

He concludes that a logical solution to this problem is 'beyond us'.

Acumen 2010) 25 – 35, 33.

[260] Matt 9.17; 13.52; Mark 1.27; 2.21-2; [16.17]; Luke 5.36, 38; 22.20 (!); John 13.34; Acts 17.19, 21; 1 Cor 11.25; 2 Cor 3.6;2 Cor 5.17; Gal 6.15; Eph 2.15; 4.24; Heb 8.8, 13; 9.15; 2 Pet 3.13; 1 Jn 2.8; Rev 2.17; 3.12; 5.9; 14.3; 21.1, 2, 5.

[261] Troeltsch, E., 'Contingency' in Hastings, J., (ed.) *Encyclopedia for Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scriber 1913) [Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994] 87 – 89; cf. 'Historiography' in Hastings, J. (ed.), *Encyclopedia for Religion and Ethics* (New York: Charles Scriber 1913) [Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1994] 716 – 723.

When considering the manner in which an author of a text can deal with the genuinely novel, the conceptual and linguistic tools available can only be those of pre- and currently-existing languages and motifs.[262] Such borrowing is inevitable and is required for the communication of the nature of that which is 'new' to fellow contemporaries, whilst maintaining the essence of the novelty which the communicator seeks to express. This has been noted as a problem for the early Church. We are reminded of Lessing's description of the teachings of Christianity:

> 'Eighteen hundred years ago they were so new, so alien, so foreign to the entire mass of truths recognized in that age, that nothing less than miracles and fulfilled prophecies were required if the multitude were attend to them at all'.[263]

The fulfilled prophecies described here see the novel recast in the terms of the old. This process looks back to understand the novel, and in order to communicate this novelty to the 'multitude'.

Events of genuine novelty are immediately, by definition, *disanalogous* with that which is contemporaneous and has gone before. They are also, potentially, unique in terms of what comes after. This raises the question of the value of the historical-critical method's search for contemporary analogies when it comes to describing the unique. Ultimately, it causes us to question the value of Troeltsch's 'principle of analogy' between the subject-matter of the text and that of our own time, as well as that of texts contemporary to the author seeking to describe the novel.

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[262] This problematic is not the same as its reverse, as Vahanian notes: 'the unsaid is not necessarily consummate with the new' [Vahanian, G., 'The Utopianism of Language' in *Lacan and Theological Discourse* (Albany: SUNY Press 1989) 119 – 130, 125]. This brings our concern with novelty into the realm of the psychoanalytic (Lacanian) concern for the 'unsaid' which bears mention here (especially given the Lacanian focus of Žižek's Pauline engagement we will encounter below in ch. 3).

[263] Lessing, G., 'On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power' in Chadwick, H., (ed.) *Lessing's Theological Writings* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1956) 51 – 6, 55.

Badiou's theory of 'Events' offer us a means to conceptualise such novelty, and to observe a theoretical system at odds with those principles which form the basis of the historical-critical method and stemming from Troeltsch's foundational essay. Badiouan 'Events', as occasions of genuine novelty, challenge two of Troeltsch's principles: the fundamental interconnectedness of history and the use of analogy in criticism. If Badiouan 'Events' are possible, then history loses its fundamental interconnectedness and is marked more meaningfully by periods of fundamental disconnectedness. Secondly, such 'Events' are necessarily disanalogous with that which has gone before, and potentially *disanalogous* with our own time.

A solution to this impasse is beyond our scope. However, we can suggest one possible move that seeks to emphasise a sense of analogy distinct from that intended by Troeltsch. We might suggest that because the genuinely new is disconnected from all that has gone before, all discourse about it can only, *at best*, be analogous. This understanding does not emphasise the similarity implied by 'analogy', but the dissimilarity. Analogy implies similarity, but also dissimilarity, as it acknowledges within itself the limits of the analogy. Since the new cannot be described using pre-existent language patterns, analogies are developed to enable the effective communication of the new. We saw Lessing's description of realised prophecies as fulfilling this role.

2.8 Conclusion

Our enquiry into Badiou has observed the manner in which he reads the Pauline text and considered the charges of appropriation and Marcionism made against him. We have subjected both charges to sustained scrutiny in order to arrive at a more precise understanding of the manner of 'appropriation' in Badiou. We have also considered the place of atheism in Badiou's thought, both as an example of the manner in which Badiou's contemporary situation illuminates his reading of the Pauline text, but also in what it reveals about those who have criticised Badiou's work.

Badiou claims to be reading Paul.[264] We have observed that he does so, although in a manner distinct from historical-critical readings of Paul. For Badiou, the primary frame of reference is not the ancient context prioritised by historical-critical readings, but his own contemporary situation. We must postpone final conclusions as to the question of 'appropriation' on the part of these readers of the New Moment until our final conclusion. However, we note that since Badiou extends his frame of reference for the understanding of a text to include his present situation, this necessarily leads to readings reflective of the interpreter's own interests. These readings are not *mis*-readings. Rather, they are readings which are appropriative in the positive sense we outlined above: 'Appropriation' consists in the inscription of the discourse of one text (in our case the Pauline epistles) into the present discourse of the 'appropriator' through which the 'appropriator's' own self-understanding is enlarged.[265] This 'inscription' is found in exemplary fashion in Badiou's process of 'reactivation' of the Pauline text.

[264] Badiou, 'Preface', x.
[265] See p. 32 above.

However, our survey of Badiou's Pauline engagement has also demonstrated the role that one's own interests have in the interpretation of a text, even when not explicitly seeking to 'reactivate' that text. We have observed readers, such as Harink, reading both Paul and subsequent interpreters of Paul through their own particular leitmotif of Pauline interpretation.[266] Similarly, we have observed through figures such as Troeltsch how general theories, such as those concerning time, philosophy or history, can exercise influence on the manner one approaches the task of reading the Pauline text. We have seen in the scholarly treatment of Marcion, and the dominance of von Harnack's interpretation of him, the manner in which scholarly consensus can impact upon interpretation and evaluation. Finally, in considering the atheistic nature of Badiou's thought, we have observed how one's own standing in relation to an issue affects the subsequent evaluation of that issue.

In sum, we have begun to observe a situation in which the project upon which Badiou deliberately engages in his reception of Paul can also be observed happening incidentally in the reception of Badiou's Paul. Badiou deliberately seeks to make Paul a contemporary figure who is made to speak to Badiou's own frame of reference. However, we have also seen how scholarly reception of Badiou's work reveals as much about the scholar in question as it does about either Paul or Badiou themselves. The reception of Badiou's reading of Paul has revealed the extent to which one's own frame of reference shapes both one's response to a text and also to an interpretation of that text. Badiou's interpretation of Paul is also significant not only for the manner in which he reads the Pauline text, but also because of the more general questions it raises for the task of reading that text. It is also significant in generating readings that have followed in its wake. It is to those we now turn.

[266] In Harink's case, this leitmotif was the *apokalypsis Theou.*

3. EAGLETON'S PAUL

3.1 Introduction

In this section we continue our exploration of the Paul that emerges as part of the Pauline 'New Moment'. We now consider the second of our figures, Terence (Terry) Eagleton and seek to expound his recent (and not so recent) engagement with the Pauline text. In doing so, we first introduce and describe that engagement. We then survey the passages which make up Eagleton's own turn to Paul. We explore how Eagleton reads Paul, and the figure of the Apostle that emerges on the pages of Eagleton's reading. We then move to consider the central question of this thesis – 'why Paul?'. We raise explicitly the charge of appropriation that has been levelled at such readings.

Eagleton might appear the 'odd one out' in our trio. His inclusion alongside a study of the Paul of Badiou and Žižek in this thesis requires some explanation. This is despite Eagleton's description of St Paul as potentially the 'greatest theologian... who ever wrote'.[1] When the turn to Paul is discussed, Eagleton is less often associated with the group.[2] The readings of Agamben and Taubes are more usually associated with that of Badiou and Žižek.

[1] Eagleton, T., 'The New Atheism and the War on Terror' a lecture given to the Heyman Center for the Humanities and the Institute of Religion, Culture and Public Life at Columbia University on 10th November 2010, available online at http://vimeo.com/16769197 [accessed on 24th March 2014].

[2] Ward, G., *The Politics of Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press 2009) 156, 177; Griffiths, P. J., 'Christ and Critical Theory' in *First Things* (August/September 2004) 45 – 54; cf. Schwartz, R., 'Revelation and Revolution' in Davis, C., Milbank, J., Žižek, S. (eds.), *Theology and the Political* (Durham, NC: Duke 2005) 102 – 124.

However, as demonstrated in our introduction, we may isolate Eagleton, Badiou and Žižek as a sub-group within the genealogy of this renewed 'philosophical' interest in Paul.[3] Eagleton's Paul is discussed in order to discover the commonalities of this group, as well as being a deserving object of study itself. Griffiths highlights Eagleton's importance for understanding the turn to, and 'yearning' for, Christianity in contemporary cultural theory as 'an important part of the story that explains those yearnings'.[4]

Eagleton's engagement with Paul is, however, distinct both in terms of the context in which his reading of Paul occurs, and in terms of his length of engagement with the Apostle. Unlike Badiou and Žižek, he is not considered, and does not consider himself, a 'philosopher'. He notes of himself that he has 'never had any professional training', coming to philosophy 'very much through other avenues – through sociology, through theology, through political theory'.[5] There is, therefore, a legitimate sense in which the inclusion of Eagleton as part of a study of the 'philosophical' turn to Paul might be questioned. However, it shall become obvious from the range of figures upon which Eagleton draws, and the ideas and works with which Eagleton engages (as well as debates to which Eagleton has contributed), that his concerns include those which are philosophical in nature. This is demonstrated by reference to his *Trouble with Strangers*, which is a book length study of ethical theory, that is, moral philosophy.[6] Moreover, Sigurdson, who also affirms the appropriateness of Eagleton's inclusion in such a study, notes:

> 'several of the other philosophers who also are relevant to this "theological turn" of Marxism and radical philosophy themselves are related to Eagleton and Žižek's work'.[7]

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[3] We here can affirm the view of Sigurdson: 'The work of genealogy, then, is a complex work of unweaving threads of thoughts that long since have merged with each other' [Sigurdson, O. *Theology and Marxism: A Conspiracy of Hope* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2012) 2].

[4] Griffiths, 'Christ', 47.

[5] Eagleton, T., Beaumont, M., *The Task of the Critic: Terry Eagleton in Dialogue* (London: Verso 2009) 86. This answer is given in response to Beaumont's question: 'What about philosophy more generally [as a kind of meta-discourse]? Was it effectively subsumed for you under theology at this time?'. The relation between philosophy and the theological is a theme in the writing of all of our figures.

[6] Eagleton, T., *Trouble with Strangers: A Study in Ethics* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2008). Note also Eagleton T., *On Evil* (Yale: Yale University Press 2010).

[7] Sigurdson, *Theology,* 2. Throughout this work Sigurdson opposes Žižek and Eagleton on the grounds of their perceived 'Protestantism' and 'Catholicism' respectively: 'Eagleton and Žižek are good choices as they,

If Eagleton's inclusion within this philosophical turn can be questioned on the grounds of the suitability of the description 'philosophical', it can also be questioned on the suitability of the description 'turn'. Again, Eagleton himself notes that his engagement with the theological and the metaphysical (and therefore his engagement with Pauline material) is a *re*-turn.[8] He notes:

> 'the metaphysical or theological turn (or full circle) which my work seems to have taken in recent years'.[9]

In the case of Eagleton it is not only the 'New Moment' of Paul in Eagleton's work that we must explore, but his original 'moment'. We therefore consider Eagleton's early foray into Pauline material. We shall see that both the themes upon which Eagleton draws and his manner of dealing with the Pauline text bear striking similarity across these stages in Eagleton's work. In fact, the similarity is so striking that we may question the appropriateness of the phrase 'New Moment' in relation to Eagleton at all.

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typologically, represent a "Protestant" and a "Catholic" inclination' [Sigurdson, *Theology*, 2]; cf. Ward with Eagleton, 'Monotheism', 88: 'Eagleton's 'appeal to Catholic Christianity as some kind of benchmark'. Whilst we share Sigurdson's description of Eagleton's theological 'system' as Catholic, for reasons we shall see below, the description of Žižek's outlook as 'Protestant' is more problematic. This is not least because of Sigurdson's own suspiciously Catholic sounding observation that 'the kind of Christianity that is of interest to the materialist Žižek therefore is not about "faith" in the sense of some kind of inner state or metaphysical idea, but rather concerns a concretely practiced and therefore also necessarily social and institutionally embodied religion' [Sigurdson, *Theology,* 26] (!). Thus, the value of this contrastive move as the foundation of a comparative study 'through juxtaposing their respective take on theology... to see their theological choices more clearly' [Sigurdson, *Theology*, 2] may be questioned – and, thereby, related questions of whether the claim can be defended that 'it matters politically and theoretically whether they are Catholic or Protestant or any variety of these designators' [Sigurdson, *Theology*, 4]. Boer, *Criticism of Heaven,* 290 – 291 provides a good example of the dangers of operating with fixed broad-brush notions of what constitutes 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' against which our thinkers are evaluated – a practice which goes on to cause problems of its own. Boer, having identified a supposedly Calvinistic theme in Eagleton's thought (human inability to escape the cycle of sin – itself a standard anti-Pelagian feature of Catholic orthodoxy), is then, understandably, surprised to find a slip back toward a perceived Catholicism via Eagleton's understanding of the concept of grace.

8 Eagleton's early theological interest (amongst other early interests) serves to counter Orr's description of Eagleton's 'expansion out of the narrow frame of English literary criticism' in Orr, J., 'Hidden Agenda: Pierre Bordieu and Terry Eagleton' in *Edinburgh Working Papers in Sociology 14* (March 1999) 1. The term *re*-turn is justified by a perceived lack of (Catholic) theological interests in the intervening years cf. Griffiths, 'Christ', 48.

9 Eagleton, T., *Holy Terror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005) Preface. Eagleton goes on: 'one welcomed by some but looked upon with alarm or exasperation by others'; cf. Eagleton, 'Task', 286-7. For the importance of a concept of the metaphysical in Eagleton's work, by implication, note his description of a revitalised form of deconstruction: 'to press its anti-metaphysical, anti-systematic, anti-rationalist claims to flamboyantly anarchic extremes, thus gaining a certain brio and panache at the risk of a drastic loss of intellectual credibility'. Eagleton, T., 'Marxism without Marxism' in Sprinker, M. (ed.), *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's* Spectres of Marx (London: Verso 1999) 83 – 88, 84.

This consistency of reading is, however, itself a significant phenomenon within the study of Eagleton. A common criticism of Eagleton has been precisely the reverse; that he is 'constantly adapting, reacting, and evolving throughout his career'.[10] Responding to this charge, Eagleton has himself expressed surprise:

> 'people sometimes accuse my work of butterflying about, but my own criticism would be that it's far too consistent'.[11]

The context of this personal reflection is significant for our purposes. It occurs after Beaumont confronts Eagleton with the similarity of his reading of the person and death of Christ (his Christology and soteriology) between *The Body as Language* (1977) and his *Sweet Violence* (2003).[12] Beaumont refers to this similarity as a 'pre-echo'.[13] However, as we shall see, the similarity is so strong it might be considered not so much a 'pre-echo' of such a reading, as a 'first outing'. The question of the consistency of Eagleton's Christian and Pauline engagement must be kept in mind throughout, and reasons for it considered. The reasons for this consistency of approach may well illuminate the reasons for the turn to Paul in the Pauline 'New Moment' more generally.

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[10] Smith, J., *Terry Eagleton: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity 2008) 2; cf. Beaumont M., 'Introduction' in Eagleton, Beaumont, *Task*, xi – xxvi, xvi. Beaumont also points to Maley's definition of 'Eagletonism' as 'a flexible polemical device which takes the form of a rhetorical flourish'; Maley, W. 'Brother Tel: The Politics of Eagletonism' in *Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory 1:1* (1991) 270 – 287, 273. We will note a similar inconsistency as a Žižekian characteristic above, and one which, by making each terminological exposition a moving target, poses problems for analysing a Žižekian reading of Paul.

[11] Eagleton in Eagleton, Beaumont, *Task*, 85. cf. Sigurdson on this consistency in relation to the theme of embodiment: 'The emphasis on embodiment is central to Eagleton's thinking and has more or less been so ever since his early and perhaps only sustained theological work from 1970 up to his book on Marx from 2011' [Sigurdson, *Theology*, 34]. Sigurdson is referring here to Eagleton, T., *The Body as Language: Outline of a 'New Left' Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970) and Eagleton, T., *Why Marx Was Right* (London: Yale University Press 2011) 128 – 159.

[12] Beaumont in Eagleton, Beaumont, *Task,* 85; Eagleton, *Body;* Eagleton, T.*, Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* (Oxford: Blackwell 2003).

[13] Beaumont in Eagleton, Beaumont, *Task*, 85.

In what follows, we seek first to introduce the context in which Eagleton's engagement with Paul took shape in its original 'theological' moment. We spell out the Pauline engagement of the movement of which Eagleton was a member. We then move to consider Eagleton's reading against this backdrop, identifying texts and themes key to this engagement, before turning to consider how Eagleton reads Paul and what it is we learn about reading Paul from this sometime leading figure of the Catholic left.

3.2 *Slant* – a journal of the Catholic left

Slant was a journal of the Catholic left.[14] It ran to 30 issues between Spring 1964 and March 1970.[15] Eagleton was initially a significant contributor (of articles and short poems) and member of the editorial board, before subsequently becoming editor.[16] *Slant* found expression not only through this journal, but also a manifesto, symposium, and network of local groups to which Eagleton also contributed.[17] He also authored articles associated with *Slant* which appeared in other journals.[18]

[14] For retrospectives of the *Slant* movement, see Wall, A., '"Slant" and the Language of Revolution' in *New Blackfriars 56 (666)* (November 1975), 506 – 516; Wicker, B., 'Justice, Peace and Dominicans 1216 – 1999: VIII – *Slant*, Marxism and the English Dominicans' in *New Blackfriars 80 (994)* (October 1999) 436 – 443. See also 'New Left/Church' in Eagleton, Beaumont, *Task*, 29 – 65, and also 83 – 91 in *Task*. For the contemporary debate over *Slant* and those involved (especially viz. their relation to Marxism) see Brogan, C., 'The Catholic Marxists' in *The Spectator* (June 24, 1966) 784; McCabe, H., 'Letter to the Editor' in *The Spectator* (July 1, 1966) 13; Baelz, P., 'Letter to the Editor' in *The Spectator* (July 1, 1966) 13; Cunningham, A., 'Letter to the Editor' in *The Spectator* (July 8, 1966) 41; Nicholl, D., 'A Layman's Journal' in *Clergy Review LI (8)* (August 1966) 639 – 642; Redfern, M. [as M. T. R], 'Slant on two kinds of journalism' in *Slant 10* (Vol 2.4) (August – September 1966) 2; Williams, R., 'New Left Catholics' in *New Blackfriars 48 (558)* (November 1966), 74 – 78; 'Slant on Slant' in *Slant 18* (December-January 1967-8) 2; Sharratt, B., 'Locating Theology' in *Slant 22* (4.4) (August-September 1968) 13 – 22.

[15] See 'Slant chronology' in *Slant* 30 (5.6) (March 1970) 31 – 32.

[16] He was editor from *Slant 25* (5.1) May/June 1969 onwards. He authored the following articles: 'Labour in the Vineyard' in *Slant* 1.1 (Spring 1964) 15 – 20; 'Mass and Media' in *Slant* 1.2 (Summer 1964) 12 – 14; 'The Bending of a Twig' in *Slant* 1.4 (Spring 1965) 4 – 9; 'Parish and Politics' in *Slant* 1.5 (Summer 1965) 12 – 15; 'Towards Socialism' in *Slant* 1.6 (Winter 1965) 23 – 26; 'Politics and Benediction' in *Slant* 9 (2.3) (June – July 1966) 16 – 20; "Politics and Benediction: Attacks and Defences: 2. The reply' in *Slant* 10 (2.4) August – September 1966) 24 – 25; 'Why we are still in the church' in *Slant* 14 (3.2) (April – May 1967) 25 – 29; 'Slant and its critics: a comment' in *Slant* 16 (3.4) (August-September 1967) 8 – 11; 'The Slant Symposium' in *Slant* 17 (3.5) (October – November 1967) 8 – 9, 'Review: *The Churches and the Labour Movement*, by Stephen Mayor' in *Slant* 17 (3.5) October – November 1967 27; 'Politics and the Sacred' in *Slant* 20 (4.2) (April-May 1968) 18 – 23; 'Language, reality and the eucharist' in *Slant* 21 (4.3) (June-July 1968) 18 – 23; 'Language, reality and the eucharist 2' in *Slant* 22 (4.4) (August-September 1968) 26 – 31; 'Reluctant heroes: the novels of Graham Greene' in *Slant* 25 (5.1) (May/June 1969) 25 – 31; [As T.E.] 'The God Debate' in *Slant* 26 (5.2) (July 1969) 13 – 14; 'Reluctant heroes: the novels of Graham Greene 1-2' in *Slant* 26 (5.2) July 1969 28 – 31; 'Priesthood and Leninism' in *Slant* 27 (5.3) (Sept 1969) 12 – 17; 'Sector and society: problems of Slant strategy' in *Slant* 30 (5.6) (March 1970) 17 – 21. Eagleton is held up as a 'model' of the Slant movement in Sharratt, 'Locating', 13, 17 and Wall, 'Revolution', 506 – 516. Eagleton's contribution is discussed by Cunningham, A., 'The December Group: Terry Eagleton and the New Left Church' in *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 1(1) (1991) 210 – 215 and Farrell, B., 'Terry Eagleton and the hijacking of the gospel' in *The Catholic Herald* 4th December 1992, 4.

[17] Cunningham, A. (ed.), *Slant Manifesto: Catholics and the Left* (London: Sheed & Ward 1966); P Eagleton, T., Wicker, B. (eds.), *From Culture to Revolution, the Slant Symposium 1967* (London: Sheed & Ward 1968); Eagleton's contribution to local groups can be seen in Eagleton, T., 'The Roots of the Christian Crisis' and (w/ Cunningham, A.) 'Christians Against Capitalism' in *Manifesto*; Eagleton, T., 'The idea of a common culture' in Eagleton, Wicker (eds.), *Symposium,* 35 – 57; Eagleton, T., 'The council and communications' in Eagleton, T. (ed.), *Directions: Pointers for the Post-Conciliar Church* (London: Sheed & Ward 1968) 167 – 178.

[18] Eagleton, T., 'Politics and the Sacred' in *Commonweal Vol. 87 (13)* (December 29 1967) 402 – 406; Eagleton, T., 'Pop Passion Play' in *New Blackfriars 45 (529-30)* (July 1964) 329 – 330; 'Looking at an Election' in *New Blackfriars 46 (5)* (December 1964) 162 – 166; 'Priesthood and Paternalism' in *New Blackfriars 47 (546)* (December 1965) 141 – 157; 'What is Politics About? Terry Eagleton replies to Bernard Bergonzi' in *New*

A number of related publications through publisher Sheed & Ward also appeared, including two monographs by Eagleton himself, with much of the material of these volumes appearing first on the pages of *Slant*.[19]

References to Paul in *Slant* generally are sparse. This proves something of what Ward has described in the case of Eagleton as the 'Catholic reticence' in dealing with the Apostle.[20] As is to be expected of a journal of the left, the text is mostly read within political contexts. This context is either explicitly leftist or concerns the political issues of the day. The Paul that emerges in *Slant* is a political one.

Blackfriars 47 (551) (April 1966) 372 – 373; 'The Limits of Liberalism' in *New Blackfriars 48 (563)* (April 1967) 353 – 357; 'Faith and Revolution' in *New Blackfriars 52* (611) (April 1971) 158 – 163; 'Criticism and Politics: A Rejoinder' in *New Blackfriars 53 (623)* (April 1972) 163 – 165; 'Alice and Anarchy' in *New Blackfriars 53 (629)* (October 1972) 447 – 455; 'Comment' in *New Blackfriars 55 (652)* (September 1974) 390-1; 'The Form of His Fiction' in *New Blackfriars 55 (653)* (October 1974) 477 – 481; 'Marxists and Christians: Answers for Brian Wicker' in *New Blackfriars 56 (665)* (October 1975) 465 – 470; 'What is Fascism?' in *New Blackfriars 57 (670)* (March 1976) 100 – 106; "Decentring' God' in *New Blackfriars 57 (671)* (April 1976) 148 – 151.

[19] Eagleton, T., *The New Left Church* (London: Sheed & Ward 1966); Eagleton, *Body*; cf. Eagleton, T., 'Language, reality and the eucharist' in *Slant* 21, 18 – 23; 'Language, reality and the eucharist 2' in *Slant* 22, 26 – 31 and Eagleton, *Body,* chapters 6 – 7 reproducing Eagleton, 'Politics and the Sacred' and 'Priesthood and Leninism'.

[20] Ward, *Discipleship,* 177. Ward's focus on the Catholicity of this movement bears reflection on whether this reticence is specifically towards Paul or Scriptural interpretation more generally. *Slant* initially coincides with the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 65) and those associated with the *Slant* movement reflect on the happenings of the council throughout *Directions*. To some extent it is therefore bound up with the change in attitude towards Scriptural interpretation that occurred within Roman Catholicism across the 20th-century, away from the position marked by Leo XIII's rejection of the 'higher criticism' (*Providentissimus Deus* (1893)) and of which Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* is reflective. The often held assumption that *Dei Verbum* initiates such a change (see Dulles, A., 'Vatican II and the Interpretation of Scripture' in *Letter & Spirit 2* (2006) 17 – 26) neglects movements towards a greater appreciation of critical readings of Scripture in 20th-century Roman Catholicism reflected in documents such as *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943), which simultaneously stress the need to protect the laity from false opinion. For the relevant documents see Bechard, D. (ed.), *The Scripture Documents: An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings* (Collegevile, Minn.: Liturgical Press 2002). Therefore, *Slant*'s awareness of, and attitude towards, critical exegesis (e.g. Grant, P., 'Slant on the incarnation' in *Slant 29* (5.5) (January 1970) 2) is both indicative of, and to be seen within, these shifts in the Catholic interpretation of Scripture. Attitudes to Pauline texts are a subset of this engagement.

This political focus is apparent in an article which takes the question to Paul and Silas in Acts 16.30 'in political terms'.[21] Elsewhere, Rom 14.17 is understood to indicate that the 'church is in our midst'.[22] This is understood along with 1 Cor 13.13 to describe the church's task in society: to 'fully represent the kingdom of Christ' as a *sign*'. The political nature of the church is not seen as equivalent to this kingdom but pointing forwards toward it. Likewise, 'body of Christ' imagery is seen as inherently political, 'in that all man's relationships are redefined in his incorporation'.[23]

Rosemary Sheed, in an article exploring the distinctiveness of *Christian* action, takes Paul as a model for general Christian behaviour in the present:

> 'What St Paul spoke of as 'begetting' his converts in Christ, in other words, procreating them, can be applied to what Christians are to do for society'.[24]

The love which the Christian would have for the neighbour in such a parental relationship is then spelt out with a citation from 1 Cor 13.7: 'bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things'. Whilst not overtly political, Paul is taken as the model of an exemplary Christian social attitude.

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[21] Livingstone, D., 'Synkatabasis' in *Slant 21 (4.3)* (June-July 1968), 8 – 11, 8. In doing so, at p.11, the perennial failure of revolution is adduced from Rom 3.12; without it being acknowledged that this passage is itself derived from Pss 14.3; 53.3.

[22] Davis, M., 'Slant and the Kingdom: a critique' in *Slant 23 (4.5) January 1969* 11 – 15, 12. Rom 14.17: οὐ γάρ ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ βρῶσις καὶ πόσις ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνη καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ χαρὰ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ· [For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit].

[23] Davis, 'Kingdom', 13; cf. Ward, *Politics of Discipleship,* 221f.

[24] Sheed, R. 'Worldly Christianity' in *Slant 11 (2.5)* (October – November 1966) 9 – 13, 13. cf. 1 Cor 4.15; Phlm 10.

Other political readings of Paul are found in *Slant* which find in Paul the inevitability of a socialist or 'revolutionary programme'.[25] Vass arrives here through a focus on eschatological freedom which draws upon Paul. Firstly, in a move we shall see is similar to the case of Žižek below, he plays with common sense notions of theism and atheism: 'christianity is beyond theism and atheism'.[26] This notion of Christianity is related to the issue of freedom with which Vass is concerned:

> 'in it [Christianity] *God* and *freedom* are not mutually exclusive terms but in fact coincide'.[27]

Paul features here as the supreme anti-atheist:

> 'Paul converts the argument of modern atheism: we are not free because we have freed ourselves from God, but rather our freedom is only complete by becoming one with God through Christ'.[28]

The kind of 'freedom' envisaged here is not a negative freedom. It is not a freedom from the restraints imposed by a divine overlord. Rather, this freedom is achieved through relationship with God and Christ and is recognised as a Pauline theme.[29] However, the nuanced qualification of its relation to notions of service in the Pauline texts is not mentioned.[30] The later Eagleton will bring together these notions of freedom and service:

> 'this kind of dependency [on God as creatures] was therefore the reverse of slavery, as St Paul is eager to point out'.[31]

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25 Vass, G. 'Last April in Marienbad: 1. The christians [*sic*]' in *Slant 18* (December – January 1967 – 8) 3 – 10, 9.
26 Vass, 'Last April', 9; cf. Boscaljon, D., 'Žižek's Atheist Theology' in *International Journal of Žižek Studies 4.4* (2010)Available: http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/271 (accessed 20th March 2013).
27 Vass, 'Last April', 9.
28 Vass, 'Last April', 9.
29 Rom 7.3; 8.2, 21; 2 Cor 3.17; Gal 2.4; 5.1, 13; 1 Cor 9.1; cf 1 Cor 7.22; Gal 4.26, 31.
30 1 Cor 7.22; cf. Rom 6.18.
31 Eagleton, *Terror,* 74.

For Vass, the theme of freedom echoes the teaching of Christ that regards 'faith as basic presupposition of freedom rather than an independent and privileged power of the jewish [*sic*] people'.[32] Vass is here drawing upon the role of faith in the Gospel tradition (e.g. Mark 9.23). Freedom is thus akin to salvation as a state intended by God, rather than a state in which one is free *from* God. We see then that Vass's claim that *God* and *freedom* coincide is not something for which he has argued, but which he has assumed already in the notion of freedom with which he operates. This freedom is of the sort identified in Paul as a freedom from law and prescription (Rom 7.3; 8.2). Furthermore, the eschatological basis of this freedom also finds its basis in Pauline thought. Vass describes this as 'not yet to be seen yet patiently expected'.[33] Vass draws on the Pauline theme of 'new creation':

> 'This eschatological kingdom of freedom presupposes, according to Paul, the transformation of the present world and its nature into a new creation, not apart from and beyond present human history'.[34]

We note how Vass's persistent association of the 'new creation' with present history differs from a Badiouan 'Event' in that it is not an *ex nihilo* break with what has gone before but a means by which 'solidarity with all creation' through the adoption of a 'revolutionary' programme can be expressed.[35]

This Pauline theme of 'new creation' is found elsewhere in *Slant.* It is, importantly, alluded to by Eagleton (see below). Sharratt draws upon the theme but does not cite any Pauline reference.[36] He reads the theme into the beginning of John's gospel, and seeks to apply it in an analysis of race relations:

> 'after the struggle for inclusion of the gentiles was over, [John] could begin his gospel with what is almost explicitly an account of a 'new creation"[37]

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[32] Vass, 'Marienbad', 9.
[33] Vass, 'Marienbad', 9.
[34] Vass, 'Marienbad', 9; cf. Gal 6.13; 2 Cor 5.17.
[35] Vass, 'Marienbad', 9. See §2.5 above for the definition of an 'Event'.
[36] Sharratt, 'Locating', 17.
[37] Sharratt, 'Locating', 17.

Davies also reads the theme of 'new creation' in a concretely political sense. For Davies, the theme speaks to the whole of a human life, and therefore includes a political dimension:

> 'a new creation of the world which affected all man's doings'.[38]

Another Pauline topic which features in *Slant* in a political register is the discussion of the role of women. Pyle recognises Paul's use by 'anti-feminists' but contrasts this with reference to Pauline texts which offer a positive view of the role of women.[39] Pyle highlights that the logic of these passages demands the necessity of mutual submission on the part of each gender. This focus on mutual submission culminates in an appeal to Gal 3.28, read through that lens:

> 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are equal, and subject to one another in love'.[40]

Pyle makes no reference to the christological focus of this unity, but we can note that the theme of mutual submission is one that is taken up by Paul later in the Epistle (Gal 5.13; 6.2). This focus on Gal 3.28 is significant for our enquiry, since it has already featured as indicative of Badiou's reading of Paul, and is a passage which both he and Pyle (albeit differently) make central in their reading of Paul.

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38 Davies, 'Kingdom', 13.

39 Pyle, D., 'Glory, jest and riddle: woman in a man's world' in *Slant 13 (3.3)* (February March 1967) 10 – 14, 13. Pyle cites Tit 2.5 and 1 Tim 2.11 as examples of the negative view of women favoured by 'anti-feminists' and highlights the positive role implied by passages such as 1 Cor 7.4; 11.11 and Eph 5.22.

40 Pyle, 'Glory', 13.

Gal 3.28 also features elsewhere in *Slant* from the perspective of both class and race relations.[41] An editorial piece draws on this passage to critique the prevailing Catholic stance on race relations by pointing to a prevailing confusion in its interpretation:

> 'The quotation from Galatians... gives a clue to what is happening. The argument rests on a common Catholic confusion whereby descriptions which are at least in part eschatological are taken as descriptions of the church as it exists at present. It would certainly seem truer to say that 'neither Jew nor Greek' was an ideal to which the church constantly had to be converted rather than an attribute it possessed fully at present'.[42]

We saw above the manner in which Badiou read Gal 3.28 as part of his interest in the nature of universalism. This related theme of universalism is also found within *Slant.* Sharratt regards Paul's mission as tending towards a universal audience as 'the practical assertion and effect' of the realisation that 'the preaching to all men is an essential dimension of the church's existence'.[43] He sees Paul as the originator of the connection between 'the first coming of Christ and an extension of salvation to all men'.[44] Gal 6.13/2 Cor 5.17 is then read, again with John 1, to relate the 'new creation' in a universal direction towards the enlightenment of 'every man' (John 1.9). Paul is classified, without comment, as 'christian' [*sic*]. Sharratt sees the attitude to the inclusion of Gentiles adopted by Christianity, for which Paul is held to be responsible, as a 'radical break' from Judaism.[45] However, this is not a rupture, but a continuation, and a 'further exploration of the prophetic theme of God as the 'Lord of history''.[46] Once again we note that the 'radical break' assumed here is not one which breaks ties with all discourses that have gone before it.[47]

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41 Vass, 'Marienbad: 1', 9: 'in this spirit there are no class-distinctions'; Unascribed, 'Slant on Heenan on race' in *Slant 21 (4.3)* (June-July 1968) 2.

42 Unascribed, 'on Heenan on race', 2.

43 Sharratt, 'Locating', 13.

44 Sharratt, 'Locating', 13.

45 On this and the related issues of attitudes to mission and universalism see McKnight, S., *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1991); Goodman, M., *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Donaldson, T. L., *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2007); Bird, M. F., *Jesus and the Origins of Gentile Mission* (London: T&T Clark 2007); Bird, M. F., *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson 2010).

46 Sharratt, 'Locating', 13.

47 These breaks therefore are in contrast to Badiouan 'Events'.

Before turning to consider the similarity of Eagleton's engagement with Paul to that of the Pauline interpretation elsewhere in *Slant,* we must note that *Slant* also includes discussion of the process of Scriptural interpretation which is of interest to us. This discussion of the hermeneutical process in *Slant* appears here as a bridge between the discussion of Paul in *Slant*, and Eagleton's Paul, since Eagleton is held up as a model of *Slant's* reading process. Therefore, discussion of the hermeneutical procedure in *Slant* acts as an appropriate introduction to our engagement with Eagleton.

The overall mission statement of *Slant* is given in most succinct form by Peter Grant in the issue which would become the penultimate issue of the journal. It also functions as a summary of the *Slant* movement as a whole:

> 'to turn to the documents of scripture, and the historical experience of the christian people, and try to say how, if at all, and in what precise ways, these cultural phenomena affect, or perhaps should affect our political praxis?'[48]

Not only is this of interest because of the hermeneutical position it outlines, it also features an instance of Pauline reception. Grant reads Phil 2.6-9 as the basis of an allusion which sets out this hermeneutical aspiration:

> 'to discover the flesh which our words about the self-emptying incarnation of Christ mustassume today'.[49]

This reading process is two-fold. Firstly, the distance between the original and present context is recognised, and the question asked:

> 'by what sophisticated process can we apply the words and deeds of Christ, which belong to an ancient (and largely lost) context, to our own situation?'.[50]

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[48] Grant, 'incarnation', 2. This occurs in the penultimate edition of *Slant* and is something of a summary of the movement.
[49] Grant, 'incarnation', 2.
[50] Grant, 'incarnation', 2.

Significantly, Grant does not draw the conclusion that the meaning of the text must only be found in this ancient context. He does not draw the conclusion that historicisation is the inevitable response to the recognition of the text's origin in an ancient context. Instead of limiting reading to that original context, Grant spells out a process of 're-presentation':[51]

> '*Slant* has insisted that the movement of the word into flesh must be made new and real in the christian [*sic*] community – in any community of christians – by a re-presentation of the incarnating sacrifice of Christ in terms of the particular situation of post-imperialist society'.[52]

Grant therefore claims that representation in contemporary terms is not appropriation but a necessary part of New Testament interpretation. Grant is not alone amongst *Slant* authors in recognising this distinction of context. Whyte also considers the tension between original and present 'understanding that we live in a different historical time'.[53] He does not seek to focus on the task of understanding the early Christian movement in one's own academic setting, but seeks to assert the priority of the early Christian model as a model for conduct and praxis today. He attempts, that is, to base a model for contemporary living on a putative model from the early church to 'rediscover the solidarity of the early church'.[54]

Once again, Whyte's hermeneutical contribution features an example of Pauline interpretation. Whyte reveals his concept of history as christocentric and liturgically focussed in citation of 1 Cor 11.26:

> 'the insistent recollection of one particular moment of human history... of universal significance for the history of man'.[55]

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[51] Note here similarities to principles of liberation exegesis. cf. n. 31 in chapter 2 above.
[52] Grant, 'incarnation', 2.
[53] Whyte, B., 'Towards a radical ministry' in *Slant 28 (5.4)* (November 1969) 16-20, 18.
[54] Whyte, 'ministry', 18; cf. Boff in n. 31 in chapter 2 above.
[55] Whyte, 'ministry', 18. 1 Cor 11.26: For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (ὁσάκις γὰρ ἐὰν ἐσθίητε τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον καὶ τὸ ποτήριον πίνητε, τὸν θάνατον τοῦ κυρίου καταγγέλλετε ἄχρι οὗ ἔλθῃ).

This historical sensitivity (towards the particularity of the New Testament context) does not, however, prevent him from reading contemporary significance into those passages of the New Testament.[56] However, he understands this historical context as generating a contemporary demand to ensure 'the recognition of community as understood in New Testament times'.[57] The manner in which he arrives at this conclusion is of note, since he employs a process of translation which enables the New Testament to be 'characterised most fully in the modern world'.[58] He finds this translation is achieved most fully in modern socialist politics:

> 'the political struggle that is attempting to transcend the competitive framework of bourgeois society by the creation of a socialist community'.[59]

There is one last example of *Slant's* recognition of the distinction between ancient and modern contexts. The question of the precise relation between these contexts is raised by Hibbert. He understands that the task of contemporary interpretation is to recognise:

> 'the value of taking a new and intelligent look at so much of what we have simply been taking for granted... [towards] genuine interpretation to our present needs'.[60]

He derives this focus on the importance of the present as a context for 'genuine interpretation' by reflection on the nature of the Incarnation:

> 'truth and its expression is something lived through as an experience and necessarily incarnate.'[61]

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[56] Perhaps having in mind, amongst others, such oft-quoted passages as Acts 2.44-5; 4.32, 34-5 but also those which focus on mutuality or communality e.g. Rom 12. 5; Gal 5.13 (cf Pyle's focus on mutuality viz. gender relations).
[57] Whyte, 'ministry', 18.
[58] Whyte, 'ministry', 18.
[59] Whyte, 'ministry', 18.
[60] Hibbert, G., 'Is this christianity?' [*sic*] in *Slant 14* (April-May 1967) 3 – 8, 3.
[61] Hibbert, 'christianity?', 3.

This Incarnational focus leads him to praise Bultmann for his programme of *demythologisation*. He notes, however, that this 'demythologisation' must not be identified solely with the existentialist project embarked upon by Bultmann. Instead, Hibbert understands the Incarnation to necessitate a process of constant re-presentation to the present context of the interpreter:

> 'true interpretation is at once a demythologisation followed by some form of remythologisation – a continuous process of artistic and cultural appreciation'.[62]

This survey of Pauline reception, as found on the pages of *Slant,* is itself an important window into the Scriptural interpretation of that movement. However, it has also demonstrated two particular features which we must bear in mind when we turn to survey the reception of Paul in Eagleton. Firstly, we saw how Pauline passages are read in a political register, and how that register was a contemporary political register to the authors of *Slant.* Moreover, it was a political register which touched upon issues which were pressing for the authors involved in *Slant*, in particular, the attitudes of the Catholic Church. Secondly, we have seen reflection on the hermeneutical process of *Slant* on the pages of *Slant* itself. This reflection reveals that these authors were neither unaware of the ancient context of the New Testament nor did they solely read their present contexts into the text. Rather, they engaged upon a process of translation, or reinterpretation, which sought to fuse these two contexts. In this light, we see that the political register of *Slant's* Pauline interpretation is not an arbitrary thematic interest, but is an example of the process set out in this hermeneutical reflection and is reflective of the context in which this process occurs. With this in mind, we now turn to the Pauline interpretation of Eagleton.

[62] Hibbert, 'christianity?', 4.

3.3 Eagleton's Paul

In what follows, we trace the reception of the Pauline text by Eagleton, both to discover which passages occur in that engagement, and to trace the nature of that engagement. In so doing, we will discover Eagleton's process of reading the Pauline text. The duration of this engagement, across Eagleton's career, means that we must also read Eagleton's recent Pauline reading alongside, and against, its early leftist Catholic forebear. A similar approach has also been taken by Roland Boer, who attempts to trace the development of Eagleton's christological thought in order to examine and push 'the move from theology to politics to its dialectical extreme'.[63] We also look first at the early Paul of Eagleton's theological output, before moving to consider his later political and theoretical work. Our interest overlaps with, but is different from, Boer's, as we seek to discover how Eagleton reads the Pauline text, and are interested in Eagleton's christology insofar as it draws upon Pauline material.

A major theme of Eagleton's early engagement with Paul is that of the *anawim.* This term is derived from ענה, which refers to the poor and socially excluded.[64] Eagleton first explores this concept in *Slant* and the *anawim* remain a feature of his Pauline interpretation to date. Eagleton is not the first author to engage with this concept in *Slant*. Ernst had earlier explored the *anawim* in an article which may have provided the source of Eagleton's subsequent use of the concept.[65] Ernst describes the *anawim* as that class of people on whom 'the 'beatitudes' declare 'that God's eschatological favour and good pleasure rest'.[66] The *anawim* are those 'of the old testament [*sic*], the 'poor' who have no other support by God alone, who 'stand' by faith alone'.[67]

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63 Boer, *Vicissitudes*, §52.

64 Gen 15.13; 16.9; Exod 10.3; Lev 23.29; Num 24.24; Deut 21.14; Judg 16.5; 1 Kings 2.26; 11.39; Job 37.23; Pss 105. 18; 107.17; 116.10; 119.67; 132.1; Isa 31.4; 53.4; 58.10; Zech 10.2; Nah 1.12.

65 Ernst, C., 'Charity and revolution in the gospel' in *Slant 8 (2.2)* (April – May 1966) 3 – 9, 7.

66 Ernst, 'Revolution', 7; Luz, U., *Matthew 1-7* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007)191 on the possible nuances of οἱ πτωχοὶ [τῷ πνεύματι] (Matt 5.3; Luke 6.20); and 194n88 for οἱ πραεῖς (Matt 5.5) both of which can render עָנָו/עָנִי.

67 Ernst, 'Revolution', 7. We note that whilst continuity with the Old Testament notion is asserted both by

Eagleton initially discusses the *anawim* in an important article entitled: 'Politics and the Sacred'.[68] In the then-contemporary debate about the distinction between liberalism and radicalism on the Catholic left, this article was described as 'the most important piece so far'.[69] Eagleton regards the *anawim* as those in 'the Old Testament whom Christ speaks of in the beatitudes'.[70] We see echoes of Ernst's description of the *anawim* in this reference to the beatitudes. This suggests that it is from Ernst that the notion ultimately derives in Eagleton's thought.[71] Eagleton subsequently identifies the *anawim* as the 'dirt' which falls beyond 'the carefully wrought political structures of society'.[72] As such, they represent 'a living challenge' to the nature of society. Further, for the Christian, they are symbols of the 'eschatological reversal which will bring them to power at the end of history'.[73] They are also symbols of social action 'because they symbolise what is now still to be done – what areas of life are still unstructured by human institutions'.[74]

Eagleton develops this notion further in subsequent publications. In his *Body as Language*, the *anawim* are translated into Marxist terms. He compares the *anawim* to the proletariat of Marx's *Critique of the Philosophy of Right*: 'a class ... within human society which is the distinction of all classes'.[75] This description also betrays the continuing influence of Ernst's understanding of *anawim.* Eagleton description shares Ernst's understanding of the *anawim* as 'a single class, variously denominated' with no structural support (except that of God alone).[76]

Eagleton and Ernst. Elsewhere in *Slant* Sharratt refers to them as 'the' Christian notion. [Sharratt, 'locating', 13].

68 Eagleton, T., 'Politics and the Sacred' in *Commonweal Vol. 87 (13)* (December 29 1967) 402 – 406; reprinted in *Slant* 20 (4.2) (April-May 1968) 18 – 23.

69 Kerr, F., 'Politics and Theology: Retrospect and Agenda' in *New Blackfriars 49 (579)* August 1968, 572 – 581

70 Eagleton, 'Sacred', 21. References are to the *Slant* version of this article.

71 Ernst, 'Revolution', 7.

72 The article borrows this focus from Douglas, M., *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1966).

73 Eagleton, 'Sacred', 21.

74 Eagleton, 'Sacred', 21.

75 Marx, K., 'Contribution to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right′ in Marx, K. *Early Writings* (trans. Bottomore, T.) (London: Watts 1963) 41 – 60, 58.This passage is cited repeatedly by Eagleton in introductory contexts: e.g. Eagleton, T., 'Marx and Freedom' in *The Great Philosophers: From Socrates to Turing* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000) 265 – 307, 302; *Why Marx Was Right,* 165 – 166.

76 Ernst, 'Revolution', 7; note the echo of Gal 3.28 in the description of class relations in Vass, 'Marienbad', 9.

This lack of structural support afforded to the *anawim* in society is grounds for Eagleton's inclusion of them in a discussion of the 'double-edged quality of the christian idea of freedom'.[77] We note that this topic has already been a topic of discussion in *Slant*.[78] Eagleton outlines a Christian understanding of freedom based on 'the new testament [*sic*]'.[79] He understands this freedom as having a two-fold basis. Firstly, freedom obtains in a life which is:

> 'sharing in the ultimate reality revealed in Christ, in a life which has overcome the world and set the man at the controlling centre of creation'.[80]

Secondly, freedom comes from the nature of the church, and its own lack of societal support:

> '[the] church's status as *anawim*... who are free because they have no stake in civil society'.[81]

Eagleton then takes the Marxist analysis of the *anawim* further by modifying a Trotskyist concept through reflection on the *anawim*. A Christian approach to outcasts represented by the *anawim* is distinct in that it abandons the notion of a single dissolution and integration of political structures. Eagleton modifies Trotsky's notion of a permanent revolution.[82] Whereas Trotsky understood the permanency of revolution to be the one-off elevation of a single class into the political structure, Eagleton develops a Christian theory of permanent revolution. This theory is based on Christ's reminder to his disciples that they will always have the poor with them.[83] Eagleton understands this to indicate the distinctiveness of the Christian revolution as a constant re-ordering of social structure, in which the Church itself becomes *anawim* as she identifies with each new group of fellow *anawim*:

> 'Each laborious breaking down and reconstruction, will in turn generate a new kind of exclusion and poverty: wherever the lines and structures are drawn, they will create fresh margins and fresh *anawim*, new regions of waste which will point again to limitation, and to the new revolution needed to surpass it'.[84]

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77 Eagleton, *Body,* 74n2.
78 Vass, 'Marienbad'.
79 Eagleton, *Body,* 74n2.
80 Eagleton, *Body,* 74n2.
81 Eagleton, *Body,* 74n2.
82 This notion echoes the 'permanent revolution' of Trotsky, L., *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (London New Park 1962) [orig. *Permanentnaia͡ revoli͡utsi͡ia͡* (Berlin: Granit 1930)].
83 Matt 26.11; Mark 14.7; John 12.8.
84 Eagleton, 'Sacred', 22. This point is not recognised by Wall, 'Language of Revolution', 514 who complains that

In 'Priesthood and Leninism' this process of breaking down and reconstruction is put into theological terms, and Eagleton draws a model of Christian action from the role of the *anawim*:

> 'Because the *anawim* can be incorporated into the culture which excludes them only by a radical refashioning of that culture's most fundamental structures, a commitment to them is inescapably a commitment to historical death and resurrection'.[85]

This commitment is then further rendered into theological terms through this focus on death and resurrection. Christ himself becomes 'the type of the *anawim*' through the association of his death and Resurrection with this commitment to the process of death and resurrection.[86]

We have given the contours of Eagleton's thought on the *anawim* as background to that term in order to observe how it functions within Eagleton's discussion of Paul. We now move to consider the *anawim* in relation to Paul. Eagleton reads one Pauline passage in relation to the *anawim* more than any other. This passage is 1 Cor 4.13, racily rendered by Eagleton as the 'scum' or 'shit of the earth'.[87] The influence of this reading can be seen in Critchley's summary of the project of St Paul. Critchley echoes Eagleton's phrasing and focus on this passage: 'the addressee[s] of Paul's call ... are identified as the refuse of the world, the scum of the earth'.[88] Eagleton's association of *anawim* and the 'shit of the earth' of 1 Cor 4.13 is first found in 'Priesthood and Leninism'.[89] In this article, he reads 1 Cor 4.13 in two ways. First, he associates the 'shit of the earth' with the 'city on a hill' (Matt 5.14). He understands both as images of the church united 'dialectically'. He does not point out that the 'we' of 1 Cor 4, who become the 'shit of the earth' here, are the apostles (1 Cor 4.9). Secondly, 'shit of the earth' is understood as referring to the *anawim*, 'the scum and refuse of society'.

'the identification is being made between the *anawim* and the proletariat, echoing presumably the statement that the poor are always with us, but failing to take note of the fact that they change in their historical size, shape and class position.'

85 Eagleton, T., 'Priesthood and Leninism', *Slant 27 (5.3)* (Sept 1969) 12 – 17, 12.

86 Eagleton, *Body as Language,* 73 – 4.

87 περικαθάρματα τοῦ κόσμου cf. Sheed's use of 1 Cor 4.15 ['Worldly', 13] above.

88 Critchley, *Faithless*, 13.

89 Eagleton, 'Leninism', 12 – 17.

Eagleton's reading ignores the ὡς (like) of 1 Cor 4.13 which sets up a comparison of similarity between Paul's addressee and the 'shit of the earth' or the 'rubbish of the world' – 'we become *like* the shit of the earth'. He does so in order to maintain a relation of identity between the church and the *anawim*. The church is called to be the 'shit' or the *anawim*. Once again, this reading of the *anawim* culminates in the person of the Christ. However, Eagleton goes further than the symbolic understanding of Christ's life as we saw above in relation to his theory of permanent revolution. Instead, Christ functions as the apex of this reading in terms of presence in the *anawim* themselves 'present, more fundamentally, in the oppressed and the exploited' but also through the fact that the church, like the *anawim*, is 'the efficacious sign and instrument of the future'.[90]

There is, however, an ambiguity in this identification of the Church and the *anawim.* The identity of the Church and the *anawim* is rendered unclear when another Pauline passage is read by Eagleton. The 'folly of the cross' (1 Cor 1.18, 23) is read as the act of society embracing the *anawim*:

> 'when a society opens itself to its *anawim* it commits the folly of the cross'.[91]

The Church is no longer identified with the *anawim.* Instead, Church is identifed with the society in the act of embracing the *anawim*. This apparent contradiction may betray a less than fully developed ecclesiology.[92] However, it also demonstrates the provisionality of both the *anawim* and the sacramental system to which they are compared:

> '[the *anawim*] show forth quasi-sacramentally, the growthpoints of new human integration ... the *anawim*, like the ecclesial sacraments, are signs effective only insofar as they tend to their own abolition'.[93]

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[90] Eagleton, 'Priesthood and Leninism', 14. cf. the *anawim*: 'point to the eschatological reversal which will bring them to power' [Eagleton, 'Sacred', 22].

[91] Eagleton, 'Priesthood and Leninism', 14.

[92] Eagleton, 'still in the church', 25 – 29; The flux of Eagleton's developing ecclesiology can be seen throughout his early theological material. However, it must also be seen against the backdrop of the rapid shifts ecclesiology which the Catholic church was undergoing in that same period. (cf. Eagleton (ed.), *Pointers*). This ecclesiological theme would be entirely abandoned in the later Eagleton. cf. Boer, *Vicissitudes*, §24.

[93] cf. 'the sacraments are not eternal' in Eagleton, 'Politics and Benediction', 17.1. The question of the persistence

Eagleton sees both the sacraments and the *anawim* as inherently provisional. This provisionality provides the tension which accounts for the ambiguity of the Church's relation to the *anawim* and on which Eagleton reflects:

> '[A] tension – a disparity, conflict, incongruity – between the order to be established and the order involved in its establishing'.[94]

Importantly for our purposes, Eagleton illustrates this tension with a play on the King James rendering of 1 Cor 13.13, contrasting the 'faith, hope, and clarity' [*sic*] of this order, with 'discontinuity, struggle, and obscurity'.[95]

The *anawim* are, as we have said, a persistent feature of Eagleton's Pauline interpretation. We now turn to consider the *anawim* in the recent publications of Eagleton in which engagement with Paul and the New Testament has made a return.[96] The *anawim* once again take centre stage. The ecclesiological lens is replaced with a Mariological one. Eagleton holds that in the Magnificat (Luke 1.46-55):

> 'Luke sets Mary up as a sign of what the Old Testament calls the *anawim,* and St Paul rather more racily refers to as the "shit of the earth" – the useless, vulnerable and discarded in whom the approaching kingdom is most powerfully prefigured'.[97]

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of the sacramental system in the face of a globally successful socialist revolution (i.e. the question of the equivalence of the soteriologies supposed in each) is raised by Turner, D., 'Can A Christian Be A Marxist?' in *New Blackfriars 56 (661)* (June 1975) 244 – 253, 253. See also Turner, D., 'Morality is Marxism' in *New Blackfriars Vol 54* (633) (February 1973) 57 – 66 and *Vol 54 (634)* (March 1973) 117 – 125; Turner, D., 'Marxism, Christianity and Morality: Replies to Francis Barker and Brian Wicker' in *New Blackfriars (58) (683)* (April 1977) 181-199; Turner, D. *Marxism and Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell 1983).

94 Eagleton, 'Priesthood and Leninism', 14.

95 Eagleton, 'Priesthood and Leninism', 15.

96 Note engagement with Christian material in between these years: Eagleton, T., 'Jesus, bane of the powers that be' in *The Catholic Herald* (20th November 1992) 5.

97 Eagleton, T. 'Introduction' in Eagleton, T., Fraser, G. (ed.), *Terry Eagleton Presents Jesus Christ: The Gospels* (London: Verso 2007) vii – xxxii, xx. This essay also betrays the influence of McCabe on Eagleton (see below n. 187). Compare Eagleton's account of the reasons for Christ's crucifixion [Eagleton, 'Introduction' ix – xvi]: 'It is likely that Jesus ended up on Calvary because of his enormous popularity with the poor' ['Introduction', xi] with McCabe, H., 'He was Crucified, Suffered Death and was Buried' in McCabe, H., *God Still Matters* (London: Continuum 2005) 92 – 101: 'This I think broadly explains how Jesus came to be crucified... when it was obvious that Jesus had very widespread and enthusiastic support' ['Crucified', 100]; cf. McCabe, H., 'Christ and Politics' in McCabe, *Still Matters*, 79 – 91.

The *anawim* are, once again rendered as the 'shit of the earth'. This is of note, as it demonstrates a continuity between the early and late Eagleton.[98] We note, however, the absence of the ecclesiological lens.

The ecclesiological lens is also absent from Eagleton's understanding of the *anawim* in his *After Theory*.[99] The *anawim* appear here in Eagleton's discussion of the nature of objectivity, and his criticism of liberal forms of universality.[100] Significantly these themes feature predominantly in the Pauline readings of Badiou and Žižek. Eagleton argues against those who aim toward a positionless, uninvolved objectivity:[101]

> 'Objectivity does not mean judging from nowhere. On the contrary, you can only know how the situation is if you are in a *situation* to know. Only by standing at a certain angle to reality can it be illuminated for you'.[102]

The *anawim* are then invoked as an example of such engaged or vested objectivity. However, Eagleton makes no reference to the Biblical basis of the concept. They are referred to without reference or citation as the 'wretched of the earth'.[103]

Leaving aside the concept of the *anawim,* we must return to Eagleton's earlier Pauline engagement on the pages of *Slant.* 'Priesthood and Leninism' is an important article for Eagleton's reading of Paul beyond the concept of the *anawim*. Eagleton refers to Paul in this article as an example of what he thinks a priest ought to be. Eagleton compares him (in a general statement with no citations or perceivable allusions) to the kind of Leninist vanguard he thinks the priest must become:

> 'working, like St Paul, to dissipate the layers of false consciousness (the taboos, the idolatry, ritual displacements, conservative pieties) of the present'.[104]

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98 cf. Boer, *Vicissitudes,* §§17 – 25.
99 Eagleton, T., *After Theory* (New York: Basic 2003).
100 Eagleton, *After Theory*, 136.
101 cf. Nagel, T., *The View From Nowhere* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986).
102 Eagleton, *After Theory,* 135.
103 Eagleton, *After Theory,* 135.
104 Eagleton, 'Priesthood and Leninism', 14. This same freedom from law motif as running against prescriptions of

Eagleton is alluding to an understanding of Paul's attitude toward the law that sees him overcoming the perceived legalism of 'Torah'.[105] 'Ritual displacements' and 'conservative pieties' here may be an allusion to Paul's discussion of the place of circumcision.[106] He does not mention the ambiguity of Paul's position on the value of the law, where Paul appears at times to give value to such 'ritual displacements'.[107] The Law becomes an important lens of Eagleton's Pauline interpretation as a whole, and will be the focus of our next section.

At this point, it is important to note that Eagleton's early Pauline engagement, and the articles in which this engagement features, are the subject of comment on the pages of *Slant* itself. This concerns Eagleton's reading practice. It benefits consideration for the hermeneutical assumptions it reveals. Eagleton's 'Politics and the Sacred' is taken as a 'convenient example' of *Slant's* 'undeniably idiosyncratic theologising'.[108] Eagleton is regarded as exemplary for *Slant* as a whole. Sharratt examines Eagleton's reading practice.[109] He notes Eagleton's use of two parallels, 'primitive notions of dirt and of the sacred and the christian notion of *anawim Yahweh*' as 'illuminating one set of terms by reference to another'.[110] He also highlights Eagleton's use of the terms 'connection', 'parallel' and, in one article, 'image' to connect two sets of ideas.[111] Sharratt sees in this reading process a 'thomist [*sic*] insistence on analogy ... a kind of rhetoric relying on metaphors'.[112]

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the present in Vass, 'Marienbad', 9. Other comparisons between Paul and Lenin have been made: Žižek, S., *On Belief* (London: Routledge 2001) 1- 2; Boyarin, D., 'Paul Among the Antiphilosophers' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among* 109 – 141, 110, 121; Alinksy, S., *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House 1971) 20.

105 See below §3.4.

106 1 Cor 7.19; Gal 5.6.

107 e.g. Rom 3.1-2; cf. Rom 2.25.

108 Sharratt, 'Locating', 13. He includes discussion of Eagleton, 'Politics and Benediction' and 'Why we are still in the church'.

109 He continues the political focus by emphasising the political as the context from which none of the alternatives for theology he surveys can be isolated [Sharratt, 'Locating', 22].

110 Sharratt, 'Locating', 13 (see below on *anawim*).

111 in Eagleton, 'Why we are still in the church'.

112 Sharratt's identification of Eagleton's process of analogical reading as 'thomist' might mislead as a descriptor of Eagleton's process of parallel reading. Sharatt describes how Eagleton's reading sees him 'bringing together... disparate language games' [Sharratt, 'Locating', 22]. The sense of analogy as used by S.Thomas focusses on a linguistic and metaphysical conundrum viz. the manner in which we may make meaningful statements with respect to God. See S. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Volume 3 (1a. 12 – 13): Knowing and Naming*

Sharratt describes this process:

> 'what Eagleton is basically doing is trying in fact to use one language to describe both phenomena, but there is still felt to be a disparity between the two descriptions requiring 'translation".[113]

This process of translation between two discourses bears affinities with the process of 'reactivation' we saw above in Badiou. However, the process of translation which Sharratt identifies is not described in terms of a translation between the ancient and contemporary contexts, but a translation between discourses. It therefore fulfils our definition of appropriation in the positive sense of re-inscription of one discourse into another. A final evaluation of the reading process of Eagleton must await the completion of our survey of Eagleton's Pauline engagement.

God (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006) 1a.13 [but McCabe, H., 'Appendix 4: Analogy' in *Summa Vol. 3,* 106 – 107 :'[Thomistic] analogy is not a way of getting to know about God, nor is it a theory of the structure of the universe, it is a comment on our use of certain words' (106); cf. McCabe, *Evil,* 56 – 8; Eagleton, 'Foreword', x: 'Aquina's notion of analogy, Herbert comments, is concerned with the failure of words to behave in the ways that might be expected of them'. Such a reading finds its basis in Cajetan's *De nominum analogia* (1498) understood as a piece of Thomist interpretation [cf. McInerny, R., *The Logic of Analogy: An Interpretation of St Thomas* (The Hague: Nijhoff 1961)] – a reading challenged by amongst others Hochschild, J. P., *The Semantics of Analogy: Rereading Cajetan's* De Nominum Analogia (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press 2011) and in his earlier doctoral thesis *The Semantics of Analogy According to Thomas De Vio Cajetan's* De Nominum Analogia (Indiana: University of Notre Dame, Department of Philosophy 2001) available at http://www.phil-inst.hu/~gyula/files/josh-thesis.pdf (accessed 2nd February 2013). However, even if a Thomist understanding of analogy is as much linguistic as it is metaphysical, Sharratt's use of the term here is still too strong as a description for the reading process at work.

[113] Sharratt, 'Locating', 13; cf. 22: 'Eagleton's *Slant* articles are a kind of 'model' of this theological activity: the process of bringing together, of collapsing into one language, apparently disparate language games in a way that not so much constitutes an argument as provides for a shift in focus'.

3.4 Eagleton and the Law

The lion's share of Eagleton's engagement with Paul concerns his attitude to the Law. We begin by considering that attitude, where Eagleton is describing a general Pauline attitude toward the Law, before turning to consider particular passages he reads in the course of his exploration.

In *Holy Terror,* Eagleton points out that Paul's reference to the 'curse of the law', as at Gal 3.13, is 'quite a turn-about'.[114] Eagleton explores the nature of this 'curse' further:

> 'the law is not cursed *tout court.* How could it be if it is the law of God?'.[115]

Eagleton does not seek to resolve this ambiguity. He does not, that is, attempt to decide whether Paul is in favour of or against a concept of 'law' continuing to exert moral force. He does not attempt to balance the passages in which Paul seems to assume a positive place for the 'law' against those which appear to argue for the 'law' as a negative force. Instead, Eagleton notes and upholds this ambiguity. He describes how for Paul the 'law' remains 'both cursed and holy' or 'morally two-faced'.[116]

[114] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 34. For Paul's Pharisaism see Acts 23.6; Acts 26.5; and especially Phil 3.5 with respect to the link between law and Pharisaism. See also Žižek on this passage (along with Rom 3.20; 1 Cor 15.56; 2 Cor 3.6) as revealing Paul's 'negative appreciation of the Law'. [Žižek, S., *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce* (London: Verso 2009) 271].

[115] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35; a similar point is made by Žižek regarding the identity of the Fall and Redemption as a means of safeguarding the fidelity of God in respect of the giving of the Law [Žižek, *Farce*, 272-3].

[116] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35; 121.

This ambiguity is reflected in Eagleton's own summary of Paul's view of the 'law'. On the one hand, Eagleton describes the Pauline attitude to the 'law' as a form of 'high-minded terrorism'.[117] On the other hand, he regards the 'law' as holy in St Paul's account because of the end which it has in mind: that which we ought to do.[118] Eagleton builds an analysis of the 'law' from the Pauline text which contains within itself this ambiguity. The concept of 'law' is inherently ambiguous as it seeks the point where it is no longer needed, the point where:

> 'if we could really live according to its injunctions we would no longer have need of them'.[119]

In addition to Gal 3.13, Gal 3.24 also features in Eagleton's analysis of the 'law'. Eagleton's reading of this passage also draws out this ambivalent attitude to the 'law' in Paul. Gal 3.24 reads:

> 'the law was our disciplinarian (παιδαγωγὸς) until Christ came'.[120]

Eagleton reads a somewhat positive value in the concept of 'law' here:

> 'the law of love, but, so to speak, a version of it for beginners. It is propaedeutic'.[121]

He understands Gal 3.24 as demonstrating that the 'law' is a concept which seeks its own eradication (the day when it is no longer needed):

> 'the mosaic code for St Paul, is merely a ladder to be kicked away once mounted'.[122]

This is another theme which is carried over from Eagleton's early Pauline engagement to his more recent:

> 'once it is has brought about its goal, it ceases to be relevant and can wither away'.[123]

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[117] Eagleton, T., *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso 2007) 273 [orig. (London: Verso 1991)].
[118] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35.
[119] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35.
[120] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35; *Strangers*, 121. Note, however, Eagleton, *Ideology,* 273: 'the Mosaic code in the judgement of St Paul will... give us no pedagogical aid in how to achieve the ideals it brandishes before us'.
[121] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35; *Strangers*, 121. Note however, Eagleton, *Ideology,* 273: 'the Mosaic code in the judgement of St Paul will... give us no pedagogical aid in how to achieve the ideals it brandishes before us'.
[122] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 255.
[123] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 35. Note that Eagleton compares the law here to radical politics: 'Like radical politics, the law must contain a self-destruct device' [Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 35]. Such a comparison is an important contrast to the casting of Paul as a radical figure after the manner of Lenin (see on Žižek above) cf. Eagleton on Paul's 'revolutionary transition' (*Faith and Revolution*, 91).

It is important to note that this is not the rejection of the 'law', but its fulfilment. In his earlier work, Eagleton describes this state as an interior one in which the 'law' is the 'interiorised rather than the abolished law'.[124]

In recent publications he describes this same state in similar words:

> 'the law being inscribed on the heart rather than codified on tablets of stone'.[125]

This more recent statement of Eagleton's contains a further allusion to a Pauline text, 2 Cor 3.3, in which the Apostle describes the audience of his epistle themselves as:

> 'a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts'.[126]

Eagleton extends the audience of this passage beyond that of Paul's envisaged intended audience. Instead, Eagleton understands the state of having the 'law' inscribed on the heart as having been achieved by all those who internalise the 'law's' external promptings. This understanding of the 'law' as a temporary expediency which will be surpassed when the end of the 'law' in question has been achieved is a theme familiar in Paul. We can note, for example, those Pauline passages which speak of the fulfilment of law through love.[127] However, Eagleton makes no such reference.

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[124] Eagleton, *Body as Language*, 9.
[125] Eagleton, *Strangers*, 121; *Sweet Violence*, 166.
[126] Paul draws here on Ezek 11.19 but note that the contrast between Paul's view and the author of Ezekiel who envisages closer observance of the commandments as the consequence of this internalisation. He is closer to the internalisation of Jer 31.33 with the law written on the 'inward parts and upon their hearts'.
[127] Rom 13.8; Gal 5.14; cf. Rom 8.14.

Instead, Eagleton describes the state at which the law has been fulfilled as a state of 'grace'.[128] This is resonant of other Pauline passages, but none is referenced.[129] Eagleton plays on the sense of grace as both gift and elegance to describe this state:

> 'one speaks or dances gracefully once we have climbed the ladder when one no longer needs to keep thinking about the rules'.[130]

We have observed that the themes of the temporary nature of 'law' and the aim of the 'law' to be internalised are shared between the early and contemporary Pauline readings of Eagleton. However, we can note one difference between early and recent readings of Eagleton, which concerns the value of the 'law' before it has achieved this state of interiorisation.

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[128] Eagleton develops an account of Paul's understanding of Grace in which the Freudian death-drive is contrasted as a '"bad" infinity' with 'the "good" infinity of what Saint Paul calls Grace or charity: 'Just as there is no end to desire, so there is no end to charity' [Eagleton, *On Evil,* 114]. The concepts of 'good' and 'bad' infinity are Hegelian. See Hegel, G. W. F., *The Science of Logic* (1812) (trans. di Giovanni, G.)(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010) 108 – 113. It is not immediately obvious how Eagleton arrives at understanding the Pauline concept of grace as 'infinite'. Little in the text appears to suggest this. The closest we find are 2 Thess 2.16, which speaks of the 'everlasting consolation and good hope through grace' (*paraklēsin aiōnian*) and 1 Tim 1.14, with 'the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant' (*huperpleonasen*). However, when understood in the context of a discussion of the death-drive, as a form of desire for annihilation, we can suggest a possible further reason for Eagleton's reading of infinity – a reading that the introductory 'we can contrast' suggests is an interpretation Eagleton invites us to make with him. In order to set up the comparison between the death-drive, which tends towards infinity, and Grace, infinity is introduced as a hallmark of the latter. This contrast between Grace and desire is a hallmark of Eagleton's developing theological system as the breaking in of God's 'love and forgiveness' are something which arises not from our own desires but constitute 'ruthlessly unforgiving powers which break violently into our protective, self-rationalizing little sphere, smashing our sentimental illusions and turning our world brutally upside down' [Eagleton, *Faith and Revolution,* 22) [cf. 'God's love itself is a traumatizing, disruptive demand' (Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 28; cf. Eagleton, *Strangers,* 266). We can see the influence of McCabe here (see below n. 187) especially on the 'destructive creative power of love'. See McCabe, H. *God Matters* (London: Continuum 2005) [orig. 1987] esp. 90-101.

[129] Rom 6.14 – 15.

[130] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 35. This image is used by the early Eagleton in a communitarian register: 'the form and structure of the community – the law of the dance – has been so fully interiorised by each member that each acts spontaneously in terms of the others – each acts *gracefully.* The freedom of the dance is the freedom of the interiorised rather than abolished law, of communal rather than private self-orientation' [Eagleton, *Body*, 9]. The communitarian emphasis can be explained as reflective of the general thrust of the *Slant* movement.

Above we noted a basically positive evaluation of the 'law' as a feature of his recent engagement because of the end to which the 'law' aimed. However, in discussing the 'old' and 'new' law in the *New Left Church* (1966), the early Eagleton sees the pedagogical nature of the 'old law' as a negative kind of 'paternalism'. Such 'paternalism' is not the flourishing presumed in Eagleton's later work, but a kind of stifling: insofar as it stifles 'the achievement of full and free selfhood... paternalism of any kind is one of the ways of life [Christianity] condemns most harshly'.[131] Moreover, the new and old laws are explicitly contrasted. With the new law Christianity presumed to usher in a:

> 'dangerous era of open freedom ... where existence is significant because ... the kind parent who kindly hid the knives in case we cut ourselves is thankfully not around'.[132]

This reminds us that we must consider the other side of Eagleton's ambiguous reading of the 'law'. This is the side of the 'law' that reveals the 'curse' which Eagleton found in Paul's description of the 'law'. The early Eagleton's focus on the 'stifling' of the 'law' before it is interiorised, demonstrates that this period of 'curse' obtains as long as the 'law' is a state which is external to (and controlling) the moral agent. This 'curse' was already prefigured by the mere fact of the law's existence, since the fact that we needed a moral guide at all pointed to our own failure to be able to fulfil the law's demands as:

> 'an ominous sign of our frailty... [rubbing] our noses in our failings simply by existing'.[133]

However, the curse of the law runs deeper than this in two ways. Firstly, Eagleton suggests that the exterior law is liable to become an object of desire to the moral agent herself:

> 'we can find ourselves infatuated with the coach rather than the enthusiasts of the game'.[134]

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[131] Eagleton, *New Left,* 98.
[132] Eagleton, *New Left*, 98. This aspect perseveres in the later Eagleton. See for example: 'the law is our friend because its whole effort is to bring us to this exciting yet alarming point' [Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 36]. However, note the later Eagleton's positive evaluation of this preparatory role.
[133] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* 35 – 36.
[134] Eagleton, *Trouble*, 121.

Eagleton identifies this group of legal enthusiasts as 'Pharisees'. This gives us insight into the view which he understands Paul to be renouncing as a 'former-Pharisee'. Eagleton's describes 'Pharisees' as 'those who fall in love with the law for its own sake, missing the content for the form'.[135] The 'curse' of Gal 3.13 is therefore understood as the deadlock between law and desire, which means we morbidly fall in love with the 'law' and the oppressive nature of its external demands.[136]

Secondly, Eagleton reads another Pauline text as describing this cycle of sin and desire in his recent Pauline engagement. This is the discussion of 'law' and sin in Romans 7. This goes further than the above discussion of the 'curse' of the 'law', since it goes further than suggesting we merely fall in love with the law. This passage suggests the 'law' itself generates its own transgression. Eagleton illuminates this cycle with reference to terms from Freudian psychoanalysis which relate to the death-drive.[137] Eagleton thus shares the Freudian-Lacanian lens which we shall see is a feature of the Pauline 'New Moment' more generally. This is found first in an implicit allusion to Rom 7 in his *Holy Terror*: 'without the law, there would be no sin'.[138] Eagleton bases this mechanism on how bad the law makes us feel in respect of our ability to live up to its prescriptions:

> 'by showing us how shoddy we are, the moral law diminishes our self-love to the point where we slide deeper into self-destructive guilt, and so become even less capable of living up to its intractable demands'.[139]

[135] Eagleton, *Trouble*, 121. cf. Phil 3.5 for Paul's identification as a Pharisee.
[136] He appeals to Lacan's notion of the Real; Eagleton, *Faith and Revolution*, 21.
[137] Eagleton, *Faith and Revolution,* 21.
[138] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 37.
[139] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 37.

This allusion is made explicit in his late *On Evil* (2010). Here Eagleton cites Romans 7.7 and 11 (and gives us grounds for recognising the allusion to Romans 7 in the above):

> 'Without the superego's paranoid prohibition, we would not be aware of crime and guilt in the first place. As Saint Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans: If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin ... the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me'.[140]

Here, Eagleton identifies the Pauline 'law' with the Freudian 'Superego'. The law's generation of its own violation, reflects Freud's notion of the Superego's generation of its own transgression. The passage from Romans is identified as explicitly Freudian: '[Rom 7.7] if you like is the Freudian version of original sin'.[141] The 'vicious circle' that Paul describes is taken by Eagleton to be the same as that identified by Freud. This is the 'vicious circle of guilt and transgression of 'law' and desire:

> 'the more we try to placate this pitiless Law, the more we are inclined to tear ourselves apart'.[142]

[140] Eagleton, *Evil*, 110; Romans 7.7-11.

[141] Eagleton, *Evil*, 110. Boer, *Criticism of Heaven,* 289 – 290 underestimates this more precise focus on sin over above evil in general: 'Psychoanalysis, then, particularly Lacan's version of it, becomes for Eagleton, a way of speaking about evil' [Boer, *Criticism of Heaven,* 289].

[142] Eagleton, *Evil*, 109. It must be noted that Eagleton's view of Freud's death-drive is thoroughly tragic. There is none of the comic irony of the sense of return of the original. This is a feature of Eagleton's thought in general and we note this interest in tragedy as being one that has been career long, featuring both in *Body* and the more recent *Sweet Violence.* There are two possible, but not mutually exclusive reasons, for this tragic fascination: a personal tragedy and the early study of tragedy through the Cambridge literature syllabus. He reveals in *Task of the Critic,* 283 : 'I knew a personal tragedy, the death of my father, on the very brink of entering an institution, Cambridge University, where I was invited to investigate the meaning of tragedy. I could no[t]... dissociate this study from the broken, unfulfilled life of my father'. The impact of this on his writing continues, and explains the tragic shot-through nature of Eagleton's work: 'Every word I have written has been in the name of my father and people like him' [Eagleton, *Task,* 284]. *Pace* Boer who confuses Eagleton's increasingly witty (at times comic) style generally for a corresponding thematic lightness which Boer will go on to contrast with his apparent theological seriousness. [Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 278 – 282]. Witty style must not be confused with conceptual humour – Eagleton's lack of seriousness serves at times only to highlight the malaise of which he writes.

Two features of Eagleton's interpretation of the text can be observed. Firstly, he does not discuss the identity of the speaker in Romans 7 but reads the text as a description of a universal psychological condition which, as such, is of relevance today. Secondly, the 'law' in question is not limited to the Jewish law, but describes the experience of any notion of law.[143] Even where Eagleton specifies it is the Mosaic law in question, he soon generalises this to moral 'law' as such.[144]

This tendency to move quickly from a discussion of the Mosaic law to a consideration of moral 'law' generally, along with the positive status granted to the interior disposition in contrast to the old external law which it replaces, has given rise to the criticism that Eagleton's reading (and those of the 'New Moment' generally) is supersessionist. We first raised this criticism of the readings of the 'New Moment' in our introduction above[145]. The assertion of such a supersessionist paradigm has received scholarly criticism in a post-holocaust situation and since the 'New Perspective' on Paul challenged the reading of Paul[146].

[143] It is not 'law' in general as the circle is broken not through the abolition of law as such but through its transformation (see below).

[144] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 34.

[145] Caputo, 'Postcards', 10; Crossley, *Reading,*107; see §1.3 above.

[146] The New Perspective is a revisionist scholarly movement within Pauline studies. It is often seen as beginning with the essay Stendahl, K., 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West' in *Harvard Theological Review 56.3* (1963) 199 – 215, which sought to argue that our reading of Paul has been marred by a context of false reading which reflects Western (post-Reformation) concerns about the nature of 'law' and conscience. The New Perspective sought instead to return the debates preserved on the pages of the Pauline text to an ancient context. As such, the 'New Perspective' also featured a new understanding of the nature of Second Temple Judaism and Paul's place within it. [cf. esp. Sanders, E., *Paul, the Law and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1983)]. It operated with a renewed understanding of Paul within Second Temple Judaism, based in part of a renewed study of that field. The term 'New Perspective itself comes from a lecture by Dunn, and reprinted in Dunn, J., *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: John Knox Press 1990). See also Dunn, J., *The New Perspective on Paul* (Manchester: John Rylands 1983); Dunn, J., *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005); Westerholm, S., *Perspectives New and Old on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2004). However, the New Perspective itself is increasingly challenged by a new generation of Pauline scholars [e.g. Stuhlmacher, P., *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press 2001)]. Indeed, recent publications speak of the New Perspective as an historical scholarly movement which Pauline studies has moved on from: Nanos, M.D., Zetterholm, M. (eds.), *Paul Within Judaism: A Post "New Perspective Approach to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2014).

Criticism of the readings of Paul in which we are interested often utilises the term 'supersession' with little or no nuance. For example, a reading which suggests that Paul holds to a Christian theory of atonement or justification is elided with a view that Paul thinks that the Christian people have superseded Jews or Judaism *per se*. Wright's understanding of supersessionism betrays such a confusion:

> 'I take the word to refer to that which Paul is manifestly opposing in Romans 11: the belief on the part of Gentile Christians that Jews have been cast off irrevocably... so that the church was now an exclusively Gentile family'.[147]

The need for such a nuanced application of the term 'supersessionist' is highlighted by Longenecker in an analysis of the application of the term that deserves citing in full:

> 'christocentric supersessionism was not necessarily and inevitably a form of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism – although it clearly can be one or both, and all too often has been. But there is no justification in seeing Paul's supersessionism as anti-Jewish simply because it is supersessionism. If we were to imagine that supersessionism *per se* is anti-Jewish, then perhaps swaths of Early Jewish literature would need to be similarly characterised – a bizarre result, itself indicating that something is wrong in the house of supersessionist studies'. [148]

This need for nuance when criticising a reading of Paul as 'supersessionist' means that we must be clear as to how we understand the term when applying it to a reading of Paul. We need especially to be clear about what aspect of Paul's thought the reading finds to be supersessionist. Therefore, we must be clear as to whether Eagleton finds Paul supersessionist with regard to the Jewish law as a whole, or some part of it, or whether some particular practice (and so on) is superseded by Pauline thought.

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[147] Wright, N.T., 'Romans 9-11 and the 'New Perspective' in Wilk, F., Wagner, J. R., *Between Gospel and Election: Explorations in the Interpretations of Romans 9-11* (Tübingen: Mohr 2010) 37 – 54; cf. the same move from an understanding of supersessionism as the rejection of the Jewish people *tout court* to the denial of *any* supersessionist reading of Paul is made by Martin, 'Constraints', 98n.35, 100.

[148] Longenecker, B., 'On Israel's God and God's Israel: Assessing Supersessionism in Paul' in *Journal of Theological Studies* 58 (2007), 26 – 44, 40.

When viewed in this manner, Paul's understanding of the 'law' in Eagleton's reading escapes the charge of supersessionism, since Eagleton does not find an antithesis between the realms of 'law' and love.[149] It is not that that the 'law' is abolished (as we have seen) but that it is transformed 'when love dispels the false consciousness that law was what the law was about all along'.[150] Eagleton cites Rom 13.8 and Gal 5.14 as support for this passage from 'law' to love in which the 'law' is fulfilled.[151] He does not read Paul as claiming the 'law' is done away with *tout court*, but transformed from:

> 'the law of censure and condemnation into the Law of love and forgiveness'.[152]

Eagleton makes clear that such a transformation is not an abrogation of 'law'. In *Holy Terror* he describes this process instead as a 'shift':

> 'a shift in the ways of acting and understanding rather than a move from one dispensation to another'.[153]

Eagleton in fact discusses the issue of supersessionism in relation to Paul's understanding of the law himself. He repeatedly claims that the opposition of 'law' and love is one only made by anti-semitic Christians (those who view Christianity as entirely superseding Judaism):

> 'it is only anti-semitic Christians who oppose law to love, defining the Judaic law as callously legalistic so that they can contrast its strictures unfavourably with their own tender hearts'.[154]

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[149] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 30, 38; contra Žižek, S., 'Dialectical Clarity Versus the Misty Conceit of Paradox' in Žižek, S., Milbank, J., Davis, C. (ed.), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox of Dialectic* (London: MIT Press 2009) 234 – 306, 281.

[150] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 38.

[151] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 38.

[152] Eagleton, *On Evil*, 110. This formula is not found in any Pauline text; but for the persistent validity of an understanding of law note such formulae as 'law of God' (Rom 7.22, 25; 8.7); 'of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Rom 8.2); 'of righteousness' (Rom 9.31); 'of Christ' (Gal 6.2); 'of faith' (Rom 3.27); cf 'of my mind' (Rom 7.23); cf. Eagleton, 'Introduction', xxv: 'Jesus saw himself as the fulfilment of the law of the Father in the sense that his own person revealed it to be the law of love'.

[153] Eagleton, *Holy Terro*r, 38.

[154] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 30, 38; cf. 'For the Judaeo-Christian tradition, this inhuman form of compassion is known as the law of love. To see the Old Testament as concerned with ritual observance, and the New Testament as ousting this legalism with love and interiority, is a sophisticated piece of Christian anti-semitism' [Eagleton, *Sweet Violence,* 165-6].

In seeking to develop a 'subtle' account of the relationship between 'law' and love, Eagleton rejects making Paul into a: 'political irresponsible theorist who regards all law as darkly authoritarian'.[155]

However, despite Eagleton's care in the discussion of the two domains of 'law' and love, there are features of Eagleton's reading of Paul which seem to betray a dismissal of the Jewish 'law' as such. There are statements in Eagleton's reading which imply that the post-'law' state is an improvement upon, and hence supersession of, the previous understanding of 'law'. Eagleton identifies Paul's view of the transition from law to love or law to grace as 'a passage from childhood to maturity'.[156] Pre-Pauline views of the law are regarded as childish 'infantile idols and superstition'.[157] Eagleton is therefore in a tradition of Pauline interpretation that reads Paul as viewing the 'law' as something that is not entirely surpassed until maturity.[158]

Such a reading implies a view of Judaism in which the Pauline attitude to 'law' supersedes competing Jewish understandings of the 'law'. Eagleton's reading of Paul is, in this sense, supersessionist. However, we must raise the relevance of a charge of supersessionism in scholarly interpretation. The desire to avoid supersessionistic readings of Paul and aspects of Pauline thought seems to reflect a prevailing interpretative situation in a post-holocaust context, in which interpretations which have the potential to be regarded in any way anti-"Jewish" are considered value judgements to be relegated to an embarrassing past. Eagleton's willingness to engage in a value based assessment of the role of Law in Paul is a marked feature of his reading of Paul. It is also that which leads to this charge of supersessionism.

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155 Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 34.

156 Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 38. See especially Gal 3.14. cf Paul's implied division of these realms: Rom 6.14 – 15; Gal 5.4; cf. Gal 2.21.

157 To be contrasted to the 'adult' 'order of grace' [Eagleton, *Faith and Revolution,* 76].

158 From an historical-critical point of view the notion that there were different ways to regard the value of the law amongst Paul's contemporaries is well known. So, for example, Philo's allegorisers in Philo, *On the Migration of Abraham* §§89 – 93 or the implied existence of contrastive readings of the Law implied by Phil 3.5 lived his former life according to the Law as a Pharisee.

It is important to distinguish between anti-Semitic and supersessionistic readings. In doing so, we are able to draw on Longenecker's distinction between supersessionistic readings and anti-Semitism. A reading of Paul which argues strongly for the view that the 'law' is suspended or that its value has been transformed does not mean that Judaism generally, or any group of Jews in particular (historic or contemporary), are the object of scorn. Christian views of the 'law' are almost inevitably supersessionistic as Christ is understood to supersede some aspect of Jewish thought. It is not that Jews are seen as 'childish' by either Eagleton or the Paul of his reading in their view of 'law'. In fact, Eagleton views all people as 'childish'. Jews are no more childish than any other human beings in Eagleton's understanding, since he views moral infancy as an inescapable human condition.[159]

Moreover, it is important to understand that Eagleton's understanding of the 'law' has a wider concept of the 'law' as a referent than the Mosaic law alone. The Mosaic law becomes an example of how 'law' functions generally. This is shown in the way that the term 'Mosaic law' is quickly replaced by a more general referent to 'moral law' in Eagleton's reading.[160] This is an important move. We can observe an historical reading of Paul where the 'law' in view is the Mosaic law, which gives way to a more general understanding of law. Eagleton derives a description of our standing with regard to law as human beings from the historical context of Paul's view of the Mosaic law, which is the form of moral 'law' known to Paul. It is therefore neither a condemnation of a particularly Jewish understanding of law nor the understanding of a particular group of Jews contemporary to Paul.

[159] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 38; *Trouble*, 121.
[160] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 35.

This is shown above all by Eagleton's identification of Kant's view of 'law' as the kind which Paul seeks to transform. Eagleton understands Kant's view of 'law' as of the type which Paul is seeking to overcome, since Kant holds:

> 'that the law should be loved and respected for its own sake, rather than for the sake of what it enjoins'.[161]

Eagleton's interpretation of the 'law' in Paul reveals a tendency to read Paul's discussion of the Mosaic 'law' in order to derive an understanding of the concept of 'moral' law generally. This concept is related to a general understanding of the manner in which human beings relate to the 'law' and therefore the manner Paul's text describes a situation with regards to systems of law in a contemporary setting. This is illuminated with terms from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, a theory which also aims for a general theory of human understanding. It is important for us to note the role of both psychoanalytic theory and Romans 7 in this appeal.

[161] Eagleton, *Trouble*, 121.

3.5 Eagleton 'Dying Every Moment'

It is not only in relation to the concept of the 'law' that Eagleton draws on psychoanalytic theory in his reading of Paul. He utilises psychoanalytic theory also in his discussion of 'death' and 'dying', and in particular reads Paul's text in relation to the Freudian concept of the 'death-drive'. Eagleton's favoured Pauline phrase here is a composite reference derived from 1 Cor 15.30-31.[162] Eagleton persistently elides verses 30 and 31 and reads the phrase: 'we die every moment'. In this phrase Eagleton unites the concepts of running risk or danger every moment of verse 30 with Paul's claim that he dies every day.

This reading of 1 Cor 15.30-1 is a feature of Eagleton's reading of Paul in both his early and recent engagement. In the *New Left Church* Eagleton writes:

> 'All Christians must be martyrs, they must die physically in Christ and the moment of death, according to St Paul... is every moment'.[163]

We note here that the claim that Christians must die physically in Christ is Eagleton's and not Paul's. In a number of places Paul sees the reverse: life, not death, is that which is experienced 'in Christ'.[164] Death belongs to Adam, life belongs to Christ. At 1 Cor 15.18 Paul refers to those who have died in Christ. However, context suggests that this death is not a spiritual death-in-Christ but a natural or biological death. This biological death is used as a foil to argue against those who claim that there is no resurrection of the dead.[165] The closest one gets in Paul to a sense of death in Christ is 2 Cor 5.17 where the state of being 'in Christ' involves the passing away of the old in a 'new creation'.

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[162] 1 Cor 15.30-31: Τί καὶ ἡμεῖς κινδυνεύομεν πᾶσαν ὥραν; καθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἀποθνῄσκω, νὴ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν, [ἀδελφοί], ἣν ἔχω ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν [And why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour? I die every day! That is as certain, brothers and sisters, as my boasting of you—a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord].

[163] Eagleton, *New Left,* 8.

[164] Rom 6.11, 23; 8.2; 1 Cor 15. 22; cf 1 Cor 1.30.

[165] 1 Cor 15.13; cf. 1 Thess 4.16 for the phrase 'dead (ones) in Christ' (οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν Χριστῷ).

Eagleton persistently reads Paul as claiming that Christians 'die every moment'. He sees the Christian in a state where the 'moment of death' is extended throughout and considered definitive of the Christian life.[166] This theme is, as we have said, shared with Eagleton's recent Pauline engagement. However, the sense of 'death' here has shifted from a physical understanding to an existential attitude informed with reference to existentialist philosophy. 'Dying every moment' becomes an approach toward life:

> 'living in the perpetual knowledge of death, which both St Paul and Heidegger recommend as one constituent of authentic human existence, allows us to sit loose to life and therefore relish it more fully. By relativizing life in carnivalesque style, death relaxes our neurotic grip upon it and sets us free for a deeper enjoyment'.[167]

Elsewhere in his recent engagement Eagleton retains the sense of physical death in his reading of the passage:

> 'It is the martyr's meaning of death-in-life which St Paul has in mind when he comments that we die every moment'.[168]

However, we note that even this description of biological death has a wider focus than that death itself, as the focus is now on the 'meaning' and practical consequences of the fact of that death. This brings Eagleton to focus on the state of anticipation lived in the face of biological death:

> 'true self-abnegation is not a matter of political submissiveness or the heady *jouissance* of sexual pleasure, but of anticipating one's death by living in the service of others'.[169]

We note here a shift in Eagleton's understanding of the impulse to social action. In Eagleton's recent Pauline engagement, social action is the consequence of the knowledge of one's own death. In his early theological output, the grounding of social action was explicitly theological:

> 'now Christ, through his cross, has gained kingship and mastery over all things; he is reconciling all creation to himself through our work'.[170]

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166 Eagleton, T., *The Meaning of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007) 158.

167 Eagleton, *Violence,* 36 (epecially the Heideggerean notion of being-towards-death). On Heidegger's reading of Paul see above §1.2. Eagleton does not appear aware of these lectures, and the relative lack of awareness on the part of commentators more generally is a feature in the broad topic of 'philosophical' readings of Paul.

168 Eagleton, T., *Figures of Dissent: Critical Essays on Fish, Spivak, Žižek and Others* (London: Verso 2003) 125.

169 Eagleton, *Dissent,* 125.

170 Eagleton, 'New Left', 8.

3.6 Eagleton and the Scapegoat

In this section we consider another regular theme of Eagleton's reading of Paul. This is Eagleton's reading of 2 Cor 5.21. He repeatedly employs the phrase 'made sin' from this passage, which reads:

> 'For our sake he made him (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God'.

Eagleton explores what it means for Christ to be 'made sin' in the course of the development of his own Christology and theory of atonement. The soteriology which Eagleton outlines bears a striking resemblance to that of René Girard, a figure to whom Eagleton refers only once in passing, and then not in relation to soteriology.[171]

Eagleton's soteriology is spelled out in a number of places. It has been repeated in an almost unvaried form in public addresses.[172] Eagleton depicts Christ as a tragic figure. Christ in Eagleton's reading has no hope of salvation at the point of crucifixion. Christ must truly experience abandonment and forsakenness for the conditions of abandonment and forsakenness to be redeemed.[173]

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[171] This 'omission' of Girard is the starting point of Ward's interview with Eagleton published as 'Monotheism and Violence' in Hoezl, Ward (eds.), *Visibility,* 88 – 96. Eagleton recognises this similarity: 'I kept thinking that I must go back and read Girard while I was working on this project [*Sweet Violence*]... I didn't find his work as useful as I had expected' [Eagleton, 'Monotheism and Violence', 88]. See Girard's own contribution to that volume: Eagleton, T., Palaver, W., 'The Bloody Skin of the Victim' in Hoezl, Ward (eds.), *Visibility,* 59 – 67.

[172] Eagleton, T., 'Compassion and Power' – a lecture given at St Martin in the Fields Church, London on 16 November 2011; Eagleton, T., 'Jesus and Tragedy' – a lecture given at the University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford on 11 February 2013.

[173] cf. Ward, G., 'Steiner and Eagleton: The Practice of Hope and the Idea of the Tragic' in *Journal of Literature and Theology 19.2* (2005) 100 – 111, 104. Ward's analysis of Eagleton's atonement theory is perhaps a little too Badiouan in its novelty: 'That a new beginning is made possible issues from from a point beyond human comprehension something like the operation of grace'. Eagleton himself is hesitant to affirm such 'Events' as being too atomistic. See Eagleton. T., 'Subjects and Truths' in *New Left Review 9* (May-June 2001) 155 – 160 (also, Eagleton, T. 'Alain Badiou' in Eagleton, *Dissent*, 246 – 253).

In *Sweet Violence* (2003), he outlines this scapegoat soteriology. A scapegoat, Christ, must undergo fully the extremes of life and death:[174]

> 'Only by being 'made sin' in the Pauline phrase, turned into some monstrous, outcast, symbol of inhumanity, can the scapegoat go all the way through the condition to emerge somewhere on the other side'.[175]

Likewise, in *On Evil* (2010)*,* he writes:

> 'Saint Paul observes that [Christ] was "made sin" for the sake of humanity. A redeemer must know in his bones what he is redeeming, rather than being monkishly remote from it. Otherwise the situation cannot be salvaged from the inside, which is the only form of salvation that works'.[176]

Eagleton's attention is focussed on the phrase 'made sin'. He reads for 'our' sake to include the whole of humanity. This extends the circle of those for whom he died to all of humanity. Eagleton does not read the 'our' as referring to a more limited circle, i.e. those 'in Christ' (cf. 2 Cor 5.17). Eagleton then expounds his theory of redemption. He focuses on the necessity of Christ's involvement on behalf of others in that which is to be redeemed. Only the scapegoat who faces death in full tragic despair is able to redeem:

> 'the destitute condition of humanity if it was to be fully restored, had to be lived all the way through, pressed to the extreme limit of a descent into the hell of meaninglessness and desolation'.[177]

In *Holy Terror* (2005), this is spelled out in the language of 'solidarity'. The phrase 'made sin' is understood in terms of the solidarity of condition into which Christ enters:

> 'in being 'made sin', in St Paul's phrase, this humiliated creature enters into suffering solidarity with all ... mutilated victims'.[178]

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[174] cf. Eagleton, *Trouble*, 208 where Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* is compared to Christ in his 'becoming sin'. On Richardson's *Clarissa* see Eagleton, T., *The Rape of Clarissa* (Minnesota: University of Minneapolis Press 1982).

[175] Eagleton, *Sweet Violence,* 37.

[176] Eagleton, *On Evil,* 56.

[177] Eagleton, *Sweet Violence,* 37.

[178] Eagleton, *Holy Terror*, 29; cf. 'Introduction', xxvi: 'In his crucifixion and descent into hell, Jesus in St Paul's view is "made sin," identifying with the scum and refuse of the earth, enduring a solidarity with suffering evil and despair in order to transfigure it through his resurrection'.

Eagleton focuses on Christ as the figure of solidarity. It is Christ who is in solidarity with the suffering of other human beings. Eagleton makes nothing of the motif of solidarity which could be applied to those followers of Christ who, in 2 Cor 4.9, are always 'carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifest'.[179] The theme of solidarity between Christians and Christ is however found in Eagleton's earlier theological work. The crucifixion enables us to enter into solidarity with Christ, so that we might associate with the saving act on the cross:

> 'Before the redemption things were brute and meaningless, insubordinate to human control, but now Christ, through his cross, has gained kingship and mastery over all things; he is reconciling all creation to himself through our work'.[180]

The theme of solidarity is thus one shared across the duration of Eagleton's theological engagement. Eagleton reads 2 Cor 5.21 by setting the phrase 'made sin' in the context of a larger soteriological theory. The phrase 'made sin' is understood to mean 'experience the full depths of human abandonment and despair'. It is therefore read within Eagleton's tragic soteriology.

Eagleton's interest in tragedy can be traced through his debt to his Cambridge tutor Raymond Williams' *Modern Tragedy* (1966) and the Cambridge tradition of English Literature to which Eagleton is indebted.[181] Eagleton first engages with the genre of tragedy from a theological point of view in his *Body as Language.* We have already noted it is a feature in the title of his recent public addresses. Beaumont notes how both the manner in which this interest in tragedy is broached, and the interest itself, is 'strikingly consistent with those … later books'.[182] Eagleton devotes a recent monograph to the genre (*Sweet Violence*). He also explores the theme in his most recent overtly theological piece.[183] In this essay, Eagleton outlines the political necessity of a theological metaphysic.

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[179] For thhe theme of co-suffering with Christ more generally see Rom 8.17.
[180] Eagleton, *New Left,* 8.
[181] Steiner, G., *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber & Faber 1961).
[182] Beaumont, *Task*, 84.
[183] Eagleton, 'Tragedy and Revolution'.

2 Cor 5.21 is read by Eagleton within the context of his interest in tragedy both as a genre and source for theological reflection. This is particularly the case in his development of a theory of atonement. The words 'made sin' in 2 Cor 5.21 form the basis of Eagleton's soteriology, since it describes the process of Christ's descent to the full depths of tragic despair.

3.7 Eagleton and the 'Flesh/Spirit' Distinction

We now consider Eagleton's reception of the Pauline distinction between 'flesh' and 'spirit'. It is significant for our purposes that the next feature of Eagleton's Pauline reception is one that he shares with Badiou's reading of Paul. Eagleton praises Badiou as

> 'one of the few non-Christian philosophers to have grasped the point that the Pauline distinction between 'flesh' and 'spirit' is not one between body and soul'.[184]

We see here further reason for our inclusion of Eagleton's reading of Paul as part of this sub-group of the 'New Moment', and the benefits of reading Eagleton alongside Badiou and Žižek. Eagleton shares with Badiou an understanding of the 'flesh' and 'spirit' distinction as

> 'a contrast between two forms of life – the former a question of violence and appetite, the latter a matter of justice and compassion. The one falls under law, while the other is grounded in love'.[185]

This distinction between these two domains is one with which we are familiar given our discussion of 'law' above. It also enables us to consider the debt of Eagleton to Herbert McCabe.

[184] Eagleton, *Terror*, 98; cf. Badiou, *Universalism,* 55 – 6.
[185] Eagleton, *Terror*, 98.

The divide between the domains of law and love marks a contrast between Eagleton and McCabe, even though Eagleton repeatedly claims an ongoing debt to McCabe.[186] It is significant therefore that McCabe's view of the relationship between law and love is distinct from that of Eagleton:

> 'it is one thing to say that love may in a new situation make demands which could not be anticipated within our systems of rules, and quite another to say that love is separate to such rules. The new and unpredictable act of love belongs to a framework of such rules because it changes them'.[187]

Eagleton, however, links 'flesh' to 'law' and 'spirit' to 'love' in what he calls a 'Pauline distinction'. Elsewhere, Eagleton refers to the 'supposedly anti-fleshly St Paul'.[188] This alludes to those Pauline passages which imply a denigration of the flesh.[189] Against this reading of Paul, Eagleton alludes to Ephesians 5.22-23, in which Paul compares the relationship between Christ and the church as to that between man and wife:

> 'it is the sexual coupling of bodies which symbolises the relationship between Christ and his people'.[190]

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[186] Eagleton, *Body*, ix: 'I also have a particular debt to many discussions with Fr Herbert McCabe OP, whose seminal work stands behind most of the chapters of this book, and from whom I have learned continually'; Eagleton, *After Theory,* ix: 'The influence of the later Herbert McCabe is so pervasive on my argument that it is impossible to localize'. Note the dedication of Eagleton, *Sweet Violence*; cf. Smith, *Eagleton*, 29 – 31. Eagleton writes the foreword for the posthumously published: McCabe, H., *God and Evil in the Theology of Aquinas* (London: Continuum 2010) [Eagleton, 'Foreword' , vii – xi]. The 2013 lecture 'Jesus and Tragedy' referred to above (n. 173) began with an outline of creation and *creatio ex nihilo* that was rather out of place with the rest of the substance of the lecture and surprising given Eagleton's earlier (erroneous) statement (cf. 2 Cor 4.6): 'Interestingly, the New Testament has nothing to say of God as creator, that image of him which so enrages the Richard Dawkins school'. It is to be noted that creation is also the starting point of McCabe's, *God Matters* [McCabe, H., 'Creation' in McCabe, *God Matters,* 2 – 9]; cf. Greydanus, 'Creation'. Due to the limited publication of McCabe, it is sometimes easier to identify parallels between those who share the status of disciple of McCabe. For example we note the similarity between Eagleton, 'Pretty', 7: 'There will be no radicals in the New Jerusalem, since their discourse belongs to the present as much as the language of man-management' and Turner, D., 'Can a Christian be a Marxist?' in *New Blackfriars 56 (661)* (June 1975) 244 – 253, 249: 'In the New Jerusalem, there will be no churches, no priests, no sacraments, no faith, no hope, only love, a fully socialised humanity and a fully humanised society. Christianity, in the end will realise itself as a fully human reality by abolishing itself as a sacred one'. Turner also makes clear this debt to McCabe: '[This essay] owes so much of its inspiration-and indeed of its arguments-to the work of Herbert McCabe OP that it would be as pedantic as impossible to note every point where this influence has made itself felt' [Turner, 'Marxist?', 244 n1); cf. Griffiths, 'Christ', 48.

[187] McCabe, H., *Law, Love and Language* (London: Continuum 2003) [orig. (London: Sheed & Ward 1968)] 24.

[188] Eagleton, *Dissent*, 124; cf. Eagleton, *Reason*, 30.

[189] Rom 7.5, 18, 25; 8.3-9, 13; 13.14; 1 Cor 3.3; 15.20; Gal 3.3; 5.17, 19, 24; 6.8 cf. Eph 2.3.

[190] Eagleton, *Dissen*t, 124.

Eagleton makes no reference to the disputed authorship of the Epistle. He seemingly regards the letter as authentically Pauline, by attributing this image to Paul himself. There are however candidates from the undisputed epistles (2 Cor 11.2) in which Paul uses similar imagery and in which Paul compares his role in bringing believers to Christ as the marrying of bride and husband. Eagleton extends this fleshly appreciation to Christianity as a whole: 'in the Christian tradition, celibacy is meant to be a sacrifice'.[191]

This celebration of the fleshly reveals a focus on the particular through a focus on the embodiment of such flesh. A similar focus on the particular is revealed in his tragic soteriology. The redemptive quality of the suffering is through Christ's experience of suffering 'in his bones'.[192] We might therefore expect Eagleton to argue for a similar focus on the particular within post-modern thought. However, this celebration of the particular is not found. Instead, he writes frequently against the celebration of the particular in the contemporary thought. He raises this question in discussion of the inherent relativism of post-modern thought in a review of David Harvey's *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*.[193] Eagleton explores Harvey's discussion of the relationship between the concept of justice and the dialectic between difference and universality.[194] The question this dialectic raises for Eagleton is:

> 'how are we to avoid at once a fetish of the particular and a universalism cruelly indifferent to difference?'[195]

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[191] The topic is dominated in the literature by the question of priestly celibacy e.g. Cavadini, J. C., *The Charism of Priestly Celibacy: Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Reflections* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria 2012); Parish, H., *Clerical Celibacy in the West, c. 1100 – 1700* (Farnham: Ashgate 2010). For a reflection on the role of celibacy and sexuality in boundary-making and identity formation in ancient Christianity and Judaism see Koltun-Fromm, N., *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010).

[192] Eagleton, *On Evil,* 56.

[193] Eagleton, T., 'Spaced out' in *London Review of Books 19 (8)* (24 April 1997) 22 – 23; Harvey, D., *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996). This discussion of the dangers of relativism is relevant to our purposes because of the charge of hopeless relativism that has been made against a hermeneutics in the tradition of Gadamer.

[194] Eagleton, 'spaced', 23.

[195] Eagleton, 'spaced', 23.

This reveals that an interest in the conditions and nature of universalism is one shared by all of our readers of Paul. This is in part due to the prevalence of discussion around this issue in contemporary leftist discussions.[196] An interest in the tension between the particular and the universal is likely to surface at some point in Marxist-inspired thinkers since, as a breed of Hegelianism, Marxism takes over Hegel's notion of the concrete universal. In the cases of Badiou and Žižek, this interest in the nature of universalism lies at the heart of their stated reason for interest in Paul at all.

We have already seen that the concept of universalism is one shared between Eagleton, Žižek and Badiou. In the cases of Badiou and Žižek, this theme forms part of the reason for their interest in Paul. Another reason for the interest in Paul we see in both Badiou and Žižek is the recent proliferation of interest-based identity politics.[197] This issue is also found in Eagleton's thought. Moreover, Eagleton's aversion to such politics is based on their focus on particularity. For Eagleton, like Badiou, an aversion to identity-politics stems from a suspicion that such politics fetishizes the particular at the expense of the universal. Eagleton critiques the contemporary discussions of such politics:

> 'sex, body, the Post-Modern politics which have followed old-fashioned Left internationalism have too often been unable to raise their eyes above their bellies... the Post-Modern vision is at once too parochial and too cosmopolitan, delighting in disconnection while for the most part blandly endorsing an increasingly regimented world order'.[198]

[196] Butler, J., Laclau, E., Žižek, S., *Contingency, Hegemony and Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso 2000).
[197] For the relationship between Marxism and such interest-based groups see Eagleton, *Why Marx,* 211 – 237.
[198] Eagleton, 'spaced', 23.

It is important, finally, to note that Eagleton discusses the problems of this post-modern tendency in relation to hermeneutical theory. He considers the awareness of cultural otherness which leads to this post-modern identity politics. Eagleton is not led to such disconnected identity politics by this awareness of cultural otherness. Instead, he raises the question of hermeneutical theory and especially that of Schleiermacher:

> 'Postmodernists will be intrigued to learn ... that the problem of understanding from which [Schleiermacher] took off was a question of cultural otherness'.[199]

Eagleton notes that this awareness of otherness led to the development of Schleiermacher's hermeneutical theory.[200] Eagleton points out that the manner in which the awareness of such difference leads to hermeneutical reflection:

> 'Truth, in short, is born of error: it is non-understanding which first breeds in us the need to understand our understanding. Here as elsewhere, 'theory', arises when our routine practices become unstuck, and so become freshly estranged'.[201]

Hermeneutical reflection begins where we encounter a foreign practice of reading. It is precisely such an encounter between historical-critical readings and the readings of the New Moment which have been the central object of enquiry of this thesis.[202] Elsewhere, Eagleton will attempt to show how a similar encounter is at work in the genre of utopia.[203]

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[199] Eagleton, T., 'The miracle of meaning' in *Radical Philosophy 96* (July – August 1999) 42 – 44, 44.

[200] Eagleton's article is a review of Schleiermacher, F., *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings* (ed. Bowie, A.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998).

[201] Eagleton, 'miracle', 42 – 44; cf. Williams, *Past,* 5: 'when you sense that you cannot take for granted that things are the same, you begin to write history, to organise the collective memory so that breaches may be mended and identities displayed'.

[202] Eagleton is here following Schleiermacher, in particular his reflection on the cultural otherness of the confrontation in religious values between an English and aboriginal group in New South Wales which came as a result of his translation of Collins, D., *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales* (London: Caddell and Davies 1798 – 1802). See Eagleton, 'miracle', 42; Bowie, A., 'Introduction' in Schleiermacher, *Criticism*, vii-xxxi, xix; Crouter, R., 'Introduction' in Schleiermacher, F., *On Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) xi – xxxix, xvii; Wellmon, C., *Becoming Human: Romantic Anthropology and the Crisis of Freedom* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press 2010) 199f. For the consequences of the strangeness of the other in relation to the alien and the utopic see Eagleton, T., 'Pretty Much like Ourselves (Review: Claeys, G. (ed.), *Modern British Utopias* (London: Pickering and Chatto 1996))' in *London Review of Books 19 (17)* (4 September 1997) 6 – 7: 'UFOs, like utopias, are epiphanies of the beyond which bear witness to the face that we can never attain it... (colonialism) is unavoidably confronted with the scandalous truth that these cultures are at once profoundly alien and in ostensibly good working order'. It is worth noting the connection between the cultural otherness of the colony and of the utopia cf. Eagleton's reference to Lady Mary Fox's *Account of an Expedition to the Interior of New Holland* (London: 1837), Eagleton, 'Pretty', 6.

[203] Eagleton, 'Pretty', 6.

Eagleton also notes the theological context which gave rise to the modern study of hermeneutics: 'the theological task of deciphering the scriptures'.[204] Eagleton's awareness of the theological context of this hermeneutical task, and the discussion of post-modern politics that his own reading of the flesh in Paul has engendered, leads us to consider the reasons for Eagleton's metaphysical and theological 'full circle'.

[204] Eagleton, 'miracle', 42. We have seen this Scriptural and theological legacy of hermeneutical thought elsewhere; cf. Dilthey's identification of Flacius's *Clavis* [Flacius, M. I., *How to Understand the Sacred Scriptures: from* Clavis Scripturae Sacrae (1567) (trans. Kilcrease, J., Johnston, W. R.) (Michigan: Madeburg Press 2011) as the first most important work of hermeneutics in Dilthey, W., 'The Rise of Hermeneutics (1900)' (Jameson, F. trans.) in *New Literary History 3.2 On Interpretation: 1* (Winter 1972) 229 – 244, 237.

3.8 Conclusion: Why Paul?

One of the reasons suggested by the critics of this recent turn to Paul has been that a crisis within the contemporary left has drawn leftist and Marxist thinkers toward Paul and Christianity as a legitimating resource.[205] It is possible to point to events such as the collapse of the Eastern Bloc as indicative of the left's dire straits. However, the Berlin Wall was not torn down yesterday. The question 'why Paul?' therefore cannot simply be answered in relation to the failure of Soviet communism or the current standing of Western leftist politics. Indeed, the question 'Why Paul?' implies 'Why Paul *now?*'. If critics of this turn to Paul wish simply to point to the legitimating appeal of Paul against this 'dire' backdrop, their explanation must also include reasons for this delay between the failure of political communism and the turn to Paul.

A perceived crisis on the left is nothing new. It does not therefore provide us with the necessary condition for the turn to Paul which we seek. For evidence that a perceived crisis is nothing new on the left, and in Eagleton's thought especially, we can point to evidence from Eagleton's output itself. We can point to his inaugural lecture for the Thomas Wharton chair at this University: *The Crisis of Contemporary Culture*.[206] This 'crisis' is one perceived by Eagleton as 'a pervasive crisis of Western culture'. This means that the crisis has been in full swing since at least 1992!

[205] This process is similar to one of which Marx is aware when he speaks of those revolutionary thinkers who: 'appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not yet exist, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them, they borrow their names, slogans and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language' [Marx, K., 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' in Marx, K., *Surveys from Exile* (trans. Fernbach, D.) (London: Verso 2010)].

[206] Eagleton, T., *The Crisis of Contemporary Culture: An Inaugural Lecture delivered before the University of Oxford on 27 November 1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1993).

This means that the question of why Eagleton has returned to consider theological ideas and themes remains unanswered. We must seek another solution for his metaphysical 'full circle'.[207] An answer to this question is a preliminary answer to the question 'why Paul?'. Eagleton's turn to Christian writing does not include the central focus on Paul which marks the interpretations of Badiou, and Žižek, to a lesser extent, but we must seek reasons for Eagleton's interest in Paul. Eagleton's own comments might be read to reveal precisely what his critics fear. He describes why radical thinkers might be interested in the Biblical text:

> 'radicals might discover there [in the Bible] some valuable insights into human emancipation in an era where the political left stands in dire need of good ideas'.[208]

This could suggest a negative appropriation, in which the Pauline text provides good ideas for the discourse of the political left.[209] However, Eagleton's claims concern the quality of ideas, which means the texts have already been read. He does not attempt to derive authority from them.

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[207] Eagleton, *Holy Terror,* preface.

[208] Eagleton, *Reason,* xi. This is the central theme of the analysis of Griffiths, 'Christ', 45: 'The current condition of cultural theory should evoke Christian pity and concern. Cultural theorists today lack the theoretical resources necessary for interesting intellectual work'. Eagleton repeats the assertion in interview with Ward, 'Monotheism', 90: 'In an era when religion is in one sense at it most obnoxious all the way from Texas to the Taliban, theology in some of its guises is providing radical political resources for a world bereft of them'.

[209] This relationship between theological and political thought is complicated, as Eagleton notes, by their inter-relationship in interview with Ward, 'Monotheism', 91 – 92 : 'are we shorn of secular political resources that we have to turn to the science of God? *Or were those secular resources in fact versions of that science all along?*' [emphasis mine]. For the classic expression of this influential thesis: Milbank, J., *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell 1990). As Kerr summarises in Kerr, F., 'Simplicity Itself: Milbank's Thesis' in *New Blackfriars 73* (1992) 305 – 10, 305 -6: 'John Milbank's simple but ingenious thesis is that, far from being two separate and self-sustaining disciplines, theology already contains a great deal of social theory while the social sciences are steeped in theology' (with thanks to Fisher-Hoyrem, S for alerting me to this article). One contribution of our thesis is to document an instance of social and political theorists coming to terms with this being 'steeped' in its turn to Paul.

Paul Griffiths notes that this move toward the Biblical text is 'already interesting. Eagleton does not turn to classical Marxist theory'.[210] However, we may contest this claim. Eagleton's recent publications do indicate precisely such a re-turn to, or continued reliance on, Marx.[211] However, the theological aspect of Griffiths' claim deserves closer attention:

> 'it is not only Eagleton's Catholic heritage that predisposes him to look at Aristotle and Aquinas ... it is also that there really is nowhere else to look'.[212]

Griffiths' claim is a strong one. He claims that the paucity of resources necessarily leads to a religious turn. This claim seems too strong. Griffiths does, however, remind us that these ideas are taken from those religious traditions as such. We do not observe them taken over as sources of legitimacy or authority. Indeed, for a political left deeply suspicious of religious traditions generally they cannot be sources of authority. Eagleton himself alerts us to this suspicion when he notes that in a situation in which the left needs good ideas, the left itself:

> 'becomes ... less stiffly orthodox and appreciates that there are heterodox sources (theology among them) which it now doesn't have the luxury to look in the mouth'.[213]

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[210] Griffiths, 'Christ', 48.

[211] Eagleton, T., *Marx and Freedom* (London: Phoenix 1997). The persistence of a Marxist analysis in Eagleton's work is almost too well-known to need mention. See Eagleton, T., *Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës* (London: Macmillan 1975); *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: New Left Books 1976); *Marxism and Literary Theory* (London: Methuen 1976); Eagleton, T., Milne, D. (eds.), *Marxist Literary Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell 1995); Eagleton, T., 'Marxist Literary Criticism' in *Sociological Review Monograph* 25 (1977) and Schiff, H. *Contemporary Approaches to Literary Studies* (London: Heinemann 1977) 94 – 103; 'Marxism and Deconstruction' in *Contemporary Literature 22.4* (1981) 477 – 88; 'Pierre Macherey and Marxist Literary Theory' *Philosophy 14* (1982) 14 – 22 and in Parkinson, G. H. R. (ed.), *Marx and Marxisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 145 – 155; 'Marxism and the Past' in *Salmagundi 66 – 8* (1985) 271 – 90; 'Marxism, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism' in *Diacritics* 15.4 (1985) 2 – 12; 'History, Narrative and Marxism' in Phelan, J. (ed.), *Reading Narrative: Form, Ethics, Ideology* (Columbus: Ohio State University 1989); 'Marxism and the Future of Criticism' in David Wood (ed.), *Writing the Future* (London: Routledge 1990) 177-80; 'Marxism without Marxism' in *Radical Philosophy 73* (1995) 35 – 7; 'Ideology and its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism' in Žižek, S. (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London:Verso 1995) 179 – 226. In the parallel case of Žižek, we note a similar 're-turn' to Marx, and post-Marx, thinkers. We note especially a turn to Lenin. See Žižek, S., *Repeating Lenin (*Zagreb : Arkzin, 2001); 'Introduction: Between the Two Revolutions' in Lenin, V., *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings from February to October 1917* (London: Verso 2004) 1 – 14 and 'Lenin's Choice' in Lenin, *Revolution*, 165 – 336. Note Eagleton's own interest in Lenin: 'Lenin in the Postmodern Age' in Budgen, S., Kouvelakis, S., Žižek, S. (eds.), *Lenin Reloaded: Towards a Politics of Truth* (Durham: Duke University Press 2007) 42 – 58 cf. Orr, 'Hidden', 2: 'Eagleton nurtured a Leninist infatuation with the philosophy of Louis Althusser'. The figure of Lenin stands in an important relation to the figure of Paul, as it is the parallel between the Lenin-Marx relation and the Christ-Paul relation that gives grounds to the comparisons between Lenin and Paul as the relation between inspiration/leader of a thought-system and its first proponent.

[212] Griffiths, 'Christ', 48. We might add Paul to this list.

[213] Eagleton in Eagleton with Ward, 'Monotheism', 92.

We cannot find reason enough to support the charge of appropriation in terms of securing legitimacy or authority. Moreover, we should note Eagleton's own aversion to a similar appropriation of the Marxist tradition. This example also gives further reason to question Griffiths' claim that there is no return to Marx in Eagleton's work. In a discussion of Derrida's *Spectres of Marx,* Eagleton chastises Derrida for precisely such an appropriation of Marxism, similar in form to that which the 'New Moment' readings have been accused of in relation to Paul:[214]

> 'what he [Derrida] wants, in effect is a Marxism without Marxism, which is to say a Marxism on his own coolly appropriative terms'.[215]

Moreover, in critiquing Derrida's 'appropriation' of Marx, Eagleton employs a theological illustration, which illuminates our consideration of the charge in relation to his reading of Paul. He notes that Derrida claims to be able to distil the 'spirit' of Marx from the Marxist movement':

> 'We would be tempted to distinguish this spirit of the Marxist critique … at once from Marxism as ontology, philosophical or metaphysical system'.[216]

Eagleton rejects such a move as an inauthentic engagement with the Marxist tradition. He considers Derrida's reading of Marx to be an attempt to derive credibility from interaction with Marx. He compares this move to the attempts of some liberal Christians to distil the spirit of Christianity out of its context in the Church:

> 'It would not to be difficult to translate this into the tones of a (suitably caricatured) liberal Anglicanism: we must distinguish the *spirit* of Christianity from such metaphysical baggage as the existence of God, the divinity of Christ, organized religion, the doctrine of the resurrection, the superstition of the Eucharist and the rest'.[217]

This parallel demonstrates that Eagleton is aware of the dangers of an appropriative 'distillation' of a text. Whilst, this does not rule out the possibility that Eagleton does the same to Paul, it renders it less likely, because of Eagleton's awareness and criticism of such a move.

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[214] Derrida, J., *Spectres of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (London: Routledge 1994).
[215] Eagleton, 'Marxism' 86.
[216] Eagleton, 'Marxism', 86; cf. Derrida, *Spectres*, 85.
[217] Eagleton, 'Marxism', 86.

Moreover, Eagleton's 'caricature' of liberal Anglicanism reveals a distaste for presentations of Christianity which divorces the 'spirit' of Christianity from its doctrine or metaphysical context. This prompts us to recognise a feature of Eagleton's reading which is distinct from Badiou and Žižek. This concerns the metaphysical presuppositions with which Eagleton operates. The theological and metaphysical content of his turn to Paul then must be recognised as a feature which marks him out from Badiou and also, but to a lesser extent, Žižek. Eagleton's reading of Paul betrays a level of commitment to the metaphysical content of the Christianity with which Eagleton began his career. This means that the term 'full circle' he uses of his own work must be taken seriously.[218] The extent to which this translates into a "religious" commitment is unclear, but statements indicative of this, though circumlocutory, can be found.[219]

We might suppose that this 'full circle' is a sufficient condition for Eagleton's turn to Paul. His own interests become once more theological and his (re)turn to Pauline texts reflects this. However, we must note that an interest in religious themes was not entirely absent in these intervening years.[220] When this theological interest does return, we have observed that Eagleton betrays a striking consistency in both the passages upon which he draws and the manner in which he draws upon them. There is some evidence of progression of thought in relation to the manner in which he draws upon certain passages. We noted, for example, that in his recent work Eagleton retained the focus of death in his reading of 1 Cor 15.30-31, but now read this through a lens of existentialist philosophy. Similarly, Romans 7 is now read through the lens of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis.

[218] Ward, 'Steiner', 105 notes how this Christian interest (along with an interest in Marxism and the genre of tragedy) are not subsidiary motifs but integral to Eagleton's attempt to rethink a political culture. See also in that volume Surin, K., 'Theology and Marxism: The Tragic and the Tragi-Comic' in *Journal of Literature and Theology 19.2* (2005) 112 – 131 and Eagleton's response to both Ward and Surin: Eagleton, T., 'A Response' in in *Journal of Literature and Theology 19.2* (2005) 132 – 138.

[219] Eagleton in Ward with Eagleton, 'Monotheism', 91: 'God is active, so to speak, on both sides of the fence'.

[220] Eagleton, T., 'Jesus, bane of the powers that be' in *The Catholic Herald* (20th November 1992) 5. However, note that when including Eagleton as an example of the potential of Marxist biblical criticism Boer, R., 'Terry Eagleton: The Class Struggles of Ruth' in *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: Continuum 2003) 65 – 86 has such a paucity of Eagletonian biblical material to turn to at that time that his essay does not move beyond a parallel reading of the biblical book of Ruth with Eagleton's *Clarissa.*

We must explain both why it is Eagleton returns to Paul and also why that return involves such a striking similarity in terms of passages read and the manner in which they are understood. This similarity can best be explained as the application of ideas generated in one context to the new context of Eagleton's recent Pauline engagement. We see Eagleton revisiting Pauline texts which he read in his early theological phase. However, he returns to this theological material only when the state of contemporary critical theory allowed for such reflection on religious and theological themes. Eagleton is more or less silent on Paul in these intervening years, during which he is writing in a context which is hostile to such theological reflection. Once the ground had shifted, and the likes of Badiou and Žižek began writing in a theological register, Eagleton was encouraged to resurrect this theological vein of enquiry. He says as much himself:

> 'by this point I had overcome a certain materialist coyness and was able to talk openly about certain metaphysical or theological matters that concerned me; and in this I was greatly inspired by the theological upfrontness of atheists like Badiou, Agamben and Žižek. I mean, if they could do it, couldn't a former altar boy do it too?'[221]

[221] Eagleton, 'Task', 277. The role of Richard Dawkins in this turn to religion must also not be underestimated, as Eagleton's theological pen is also taken up against the version of Christianity attacked by Dawkins. See Eagleton, *Reason* and Eagleton, T., 'Lunging, Flailing, Mispunching' in *London Review of Books 28 (20)* (19 October 2006) 32 – 34. This is a review of Dawkins, R., *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan 2006).

4. ŽIŽEK'S PAUL

4. 1 Introduction to Žižek

We now consider the turn to Paul which can be observed in the writings of Slavoj Žižek. This turn to Paul has been a recent feature of Žižek's intellectual output. He is best known in the English-speaking world as a cultural theorist, reader of Lacan and self-professed Marxist intellectual. He is also a, and perhaps *the*, key figure in the turn to Paul whose contours we have been tracing. As we have seen, Žižek is responsible both for the Pauline reading of Badiou being brought to the attention of an Anglophone audience and also part of the inspiration for Eagleton having taken up his Pauline pen.[1] Žižek is therefore rightfully included in the branch of the genealogy of the Pauline 'New Moment' which this thesis is seeking to evaluate.

[1] Žižek, *Ticklish Subject,* 145 – 197 is responsible for Badiou's reading coming to the attention of a wider audience. See §1.1-2 above. For Eagleton's debt to Žižek see: Eagleton, *Task*, 277: 'I was greatly inspired by the theological upfrontness of atheists like Badiou, Agamben and Žižek. I mean, if they could do it, couldn't a former altar boy do it too?'

Žižek's own interests are wide ranging and encompass a range of (leftist) political interests.[2] These include the state (or 'crisis') of advanced capitalism, the nature of communism, and the writings and careers of revolutionary figures.[3] Psychoanalysis is a persistent theme of his work, especially as it is developed by Lacan.[4] This reveals that psychoanalysis, especially Lacanian psychoanalysis, is a common interest of all three of our readers of Paul.

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[2] The sheer range and nature of Žižek's writing (see below on the problems this raises) mean that the task of describing his interests in a concise form is not an easy one. The classifications presumed in the following notes reflect what I discern to be the overarching thrust of the volume. I have attempted to keep multiple 'classification' to a minimum except where it may be illuminating for Žižek's interest in that theme or figure. The volumes mentioned here are thus inevitably selective. For fuller bibliographies see: http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/bibliography/ (accessed 18th March 2013); http://www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/ (accessed 18th March 2013); http://www.lacan.com/bibliographyzi.htm (accessed 18th March 2013). See also edited collections: Žižek, S., Wright, E., Wright, E., *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell 1999); Žižek, S., *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum 2006); *The Universal Exception* (London: Continuum 2007); *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile 2008) cf. Daly, G., Žižek, S., *Conversations with Žižek* (London: Polity 2003). For a broad scope of his leftist political interest see: Žižek, S., *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso 1991); [cf. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1993)]; *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Four Interventions in the (Mis)Use of a Notion* (London: Verso 2001); *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso 2002); *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* (London: Verso 2005); *In Defence of Lost Causes* (London: Verso 2008); *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso 2008); *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso 2009); *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* (London: Verso 2012) – a work about the monumental political shifts of 2011 i.e. the Arab 'Spring' and 'Occupy' Movement; Žižek, S. 'Against an Ideology of Human Rights' in Tunstall, K.(ed.), *Displacement, Asylum, Migration: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 2004* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004) 56 – 85; Žižek, S., 'The Spectre of Ideology' in Žižek, S. (ed.), *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso 1995) 1 – 33; cf. Žižek, S., *Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso 1997); Žižek, S., Butler, J., Laclau, E., *Contingency, Hegemony and Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso 2000).

[3] Žižek, S., *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso 2010); *First as Tragedy, Then As Farce* (London: Verso 2009); Žižek, S., 'How Did Marx Invent the Symptom?' in Žižek, *Mapping,* 296 – 331; Žižek, S., *The Spectre is Still Roaming Around: An Introduction to the 150th Anniversary Edition of the Communist Manifesto* (Zagreb: Arkzin 1998); 'How to Begin from the Beginning' in Žižek, S., Douzinas, C. (eds.), *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso 2010) 209 – 226. Note the parallels between Žižek's concept of beginning and fidelity to a beginning that has already happened in global communism and the thought and Pauline reading of Badiou we expounded above; cf. Žižek, S., Zedong, M., *Slavoj Žižek Presents Mao: On Practice and Contradiction* (London: Verso 2007); Žižek, S., Trotsky, L., *Slavoj Žižek Presents Trotsky:Terrorism and Communism* (London: Verso 2007); Žižek, S., Robespierre, M., *Slavoj Žižek Presents Robespierre: Virtue and Terror* (London: Verso 2007).

[4] Žižek, S., *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta Books 2006); Žižek, S. (ed.), *Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory (4 Vols)* (London: Routledge 2002); Žižek, S. (ed.), *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London: Verso 2006); cf. Žižek, S., *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso 2005); Žižek, *Know Not*; 'Four Discourses, Four Subjects' in Žižek, S. (ed.), *Cogito and the Unconscious* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1998) 74 – 116.

Žižek's work also reveals an interest in, and debt to, a number of significant individual thinkers, among them Deleuze, Schelling, and Hegel.[5] He also betrays an interest in a variety of contemporary media and cultural artefacts.[6] These interests reveal an overlap of interests between Badiou and Žižek, especially with regards to the figures of Mao and Lacan. They also share an interest in the question of what form philosophy ought to take in the present.[7]

[5] For Žižek's interest in Deleuze see: Žižek, S., *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (London: Routledge 2003); 'The Descent of Transcendence into Immanence, or Deleuze as a Hegelian' in Schwartz, R. (ed.), *Transcendence: Philosophy, Literature, and Theology Approach the Beyond* (Abingdon: Routledge 2004) 235 – 248. It is the insistence on a radical immanence (no 'big Other') [Žižek, 'Transcendence', 247] that is a shared feature of Badiou and Žižek's thought, although Žižek's kenotic immanence has a distinctly Christian/Hegelian flavour as compared to Badiou's, contrast for example: Žižek, 'Transcendence', 246 – 7 and Badiou, *Clamor*, 1 – 9. For Žižek's interest in Schelling see: Žižek, S., *The Indivisible Remainder: On Schelling and Related Matters* (London: Verso 2007); Schelling, F. W. J., Žižek, S. (ed.), *Abyss of Freedom* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press 1997). For Žižek's interest in Hegel see: Žižek, S., *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso 2013).

[6] For Žižek's interest in the internet see: Žižek, S., 'Is It Possible to Traverse the Fantasy in Cyberspace?' in Žižek, *Reader,* 102 – 124. For his interest in film see: Žižek, S. (ed.), *Everything You Wanted To Know About Lacan: But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock* (London: Verso 1992); Žižek, S., *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway* (University of Washington Press 2000); Žižek, S., (dir. Fiennes, S.) *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (Film) (Lone Star, Mischief, Amoeba Films 2006); Žižek, S., 'What Does A Jew Want?: On the Film *Local Angel*' in Aloni, U., *What Does a Jew Want?: On Binationalism and Other Specters* (New York: Columbia University Press 2011) 173 – 178; Žižek, S., "I Will Tremble the Underground: On the Film *Forgiveness*' in Aloni, *Jew*, 179 – 183. Note the psychoanalytic focus of Žižek's interest in film esp. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (London: MIT Press 1991); *Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (London: Routledge 1993); see also Flisfeder, M., *The Symbolic, the Sublime and Slavoj Žižek's Theory of Film* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2012). For Žižek's interest in music see: Dolar, M, Žižek, S., *Opera's Second Death* (London: Routledge 2002) 103f.; Žižek, S., 'The Politics of Redemption, or, Why Richard Wagner is Worth Saving' in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture 2.1* (Fall 2004) 18 – 30 [reprinted: Žižek, S. (ed.), *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (London: Verso 2006) 231 – 269].

[7] Žižek, S., Badiou, A., *Philosophy in the Present* (London: Polity 2009); cf. Badiou, *Manifesto.*

Žižek has shown a recent, and increasing, interest in a range of theological topics.[8] At times, Žižek betrays such levels of theological engagement, that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Žižek has moved from writing on Christianity, and on themes of general theological interest, to the business of writing 'theology' proper.[9] A corresponding interest among Christians and theologians in Žižek's writings on Christianity, and on Žižek's thought as a resource for theological enquiry can also be observed.[10]

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[8] Žižek, S., *The Fragile Absolute: Or Why the Christian Legacy is Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso 2000); *On Belief* (London: Routledge 2001); Žižek, S., 'Christ's Breaking of the 'Great Chain of Being" in Schad, J. (ed.), *Writing the Bodies of Christ: The Church from Carlyle to Derrida* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2001) 105 – 112; Žižek, S., Santner, E., Reinhard, K., *The Neighbor: Three Enquiries into Political Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2006); Žižek, S., 'The Fear of Four Words: A Modest Plea for the Hegelian Reading of Christianity' in Žižek, S., Milbank, J., Davis, C. (ed.), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (London: MIT Press 2009) 24 – 109; 'Dialectical Clarity Versus the Misty Conceit of Paradox' in *Monstrosity*, 234 – 306. Note the apocalyptic register of *End Times* and Gunjevic, B., Žižek, S., *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse* (New York: Seven Stores 2012). Hegel, whose reading of Christianity [along with that of Chesterton see Žižek, S., 'The "Thrilling Romance of Orthodoxy"' in Davis, C., Milbank, J., Žižek, S.(eds.), *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (Durham, NC.: Duke University Press 2005) 52 – 71 and 'From Job to Christ: A Paulinian Reading of Chesterton' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among*, 39 – 60] is influential on Žižek's own (as will become apparent below), is an interest of Žižek's beyond his theological concern. Hegel is an observable influence and subject of enquiry in a number of the works above and the subject of *Less Than Nothing* and 'Hegel and Shitting: The Idea's Constipation' in Žižek, S., Crockett, C., Davis, C. (eds.), *Hegel and the Infinite: Religion, Politics and Dialectic* (New York: Columbia University Press 2003) 221 – 232.

[9] Žižek, *Know Not*; Benson, 'Continental', 428: 'As much as Slavoj Žižek makes clear that he is a Marxist, Leninist, atheist thinker, one can hardly read him apart from theology and religion'; cf. Caputo, J.D., 'The Return of Anti-Religion: From Radical Atheism to Radical Theology' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 11.2* (Spring 2011) 32 – 124.

[10] Hewitt-Horsman, S., 'Žižek on Christianity' in *Theology 109 (848)* (2006) 103 – 110; Raschke, C.A., 'The Monstrosity of Žižek's Christianity' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 11.2* (Spring 2011) 13 – 20; Moody, K. S., 'Retrospective Speculative Philosophy: Looking for Traces of Žižek's Communist Collective in Emerging Christian Praxis' in *Political Theology 13.2* (April 2012) 183 – 199; Kotsko, A., *Žižek and Theology* (London: T&T Clark 2008); Depoortere, F., *Christ in Postmodern Philosophy: Gianni Vattimo, Rene Girard and Slavoj Žižek* (London: T&T Clark 2008); Breger, C., 'The Leader's Two Bodies: Slavoj Žižek's Postmodern Political Theology' in *Diacritics 31.1* (2001) 73 – 90; Reader, J., 'Truth in Science and Theology: Latour, Žižek and the Theory of Circulating Reference' in Reader, J., Baker, C. R. (eds.), *Entering the New Theological Space: Blurred Encounters of Faith, Politics and Community* (Farnham: Ashgate 2009) 197 – 208; Blanton, W., 'Apocalyptic Materiality: Return(s) of Early Christian Motifs in Slavoj Žižek's Depiction of the Material Subject' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 6.1 (2004) 10 - 27; Depoortere, F., 'The End of God's Transcendence? On Incarnation in the Work of Slavoj Žižek' in *Modern Theology 23.4* (2007) 497 – 523; Sigurdson, O., 'Beyond Secularism? Towards A Post-Secular Political Theology' in *Modern Theology 26.2* (April 2010) 177 – 196; O'Regan, C., 'Žižek, Milbank and the Hegelian Death of God' in *Modern Theology* 26.2 (April 2010) 278 – 286; Cauchi, M., 'Creation and the Critique of Capitalism in Marx, Nancy and Žižek' in *Political Theology 12.4* (August 2011) 531 – 552; cf. Žižek, Santner, Reinhard, *Neighbor*; Žižek, Milbank, Davis (ed.), *Monstrosity*; Milbank, J., 'Without Heaven There is Only Hell on Earth: 15 Verdicts on Žižek's Response' in *Political Theology 11.1* (2010) 126 – 135; Žižek, S., 'The Atheist Wager' in *Political Theology 11.1* (2010) 136 – 140; Crockett, C., 'The Monstrosity of the Other' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 11.2* (Spring 2011) 27 – 31; Taylor, V., 'Absolute Christ or "WDCD?": The Question of Christian Materiality in *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic*' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory 11.2* (Spring 2011) 1 – 12; cf. Gunjevic, Žižek, *God in Pain.*

Žižek embodies one feature of the turn to religion we have been tracing and of the turn to Paul in particular. This is the blurring of the traditional boundaries of intellectual disciplines as a range of thinkers discover the potential of theological enquiry.[11] This includes, as we have seen, a turn to religion within intellectual disciplines which have traditionally been hostile to theology. Blanton notes that Žižek's belief in the necessity of the atheist undergoing the Christian experience inverts 'more than a few intellectual hierarchies' and causes 'more than a few contemporary identities to become as if they were not'.[12] Blanton even goes so far to describe this moment as one of 'apocalyptic reversal'.[13]

It is important to note from the outset the special place occupied by Paul in Žižek's turn to theology. We shall see below that Žižek's increased theological interest begins at the same time as his turn to Paul. A Pauline interest and a theological one thus emerge coterminously in Žižek's work. However, as we shall see, it is via Paul that Žižek's theological interest is mediated and not vice versa. For Žižek there is no theology and no Christianity outside Saint Paul.[14]

[11] See above for our discussion of the blurring of disciplinary boundaries and Kant's *Conflict* in §1.3 above.

[12] Blanton, W., *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007) 4; cf. *End Times*, 402.

[13] Blanton is here alluding to 1 Cor 7.29 – 30: 'The appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.' Thus, the Žižekian 'apocalyptic reversal' of which Blanton speaks suggests that there is something pressing (verging on the apocalyptic) about this Pauline 'moment'. It also alerts us to the timeliness of this 'moment'.

[14] Žižek, *Fragile,* xxx.

In what follows, we explore the reasons for Žižek's turn to Paul. We analyse Žižek's use of the term 'Christianity', both as an example of Žižek's theological output and also as an introduction to his Pauline engagement. We then consider a number of passages which are both key to, and indicative of, Žižek's turn to Paul. We conclude by raising the question 'why Paul?' as a means of analysing the method of reading Paul we find in Žižek. Finally, we explore the charge of negative appropriation against Žižek's reading of Paul and evaluate a significant, but flawed, account of Žižek's turn to Paul.

4.2 Žižek's Pauline Turn

We begin by describing Žižek's place in the Pauline 'New Moment' and the turn to Paul within his work. Žižek's intellectual biography makes clear that the home of this discourse is not within the field of New Testament studies as standardly conceived.[15] Žižek does not work within the historical-critical method nor subscribe to the canons of the Society of Biblical Literature.[16] Instead, Žižek's intellectual home is amongst contemporary post-modern philosophy and critical theory. Such theory can broadly be described as 'continental' and stands in the legacy of Kant, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud and their interpreters.[17]

Žižek's sustained engagement of Paul begins with his reading Badiou's *Universalism* in *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (1999).[18] In a chapter entitled 'The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St Paul', Žižek not only begins an extended reading of Paul, but also, in doing so, brings Badiou's Paul to the attention of the wider (English-speaking) academy.[19] At this stage, Žižek's engagement with Paul is mostly mediated as a description of, and reaction to, Badiou's reading.

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15 The work of Boer, R., Blanton,W., and others suggests a new mode of New Testament study is developing which finds itself more at home with this approach to Paul. See Blanton, *Displacing*; Boer, R., *Novel Histories: The Fiction of Biblical Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997); Boer, R., *Marxist Criticism of the Bible* (London: Continuum 2003); Boer, R., *Criticism of Heaven: on Marxism and Theology* (Brill: Leiden 2007); Boer, R., *Criticism of Religion: on Marxism and Theology II* (Brill: Leiden 2009); Boer, R., *Criticism of Theology: on Marxism and Theology III* (Brill: Leiden 2010); Boer, R., *Knockin' on Heaven's Door: the Bible and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge 1999).

16 For the history of this organisation founded to further the science of biblical criticism as being practiced in Europe in America see Saunders, E. W., *Searching the Scriptures: A History of the Society of Biblical Literature 1880 – 1980* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press 1996).

17 cf. Benson, 'Continental', 428 – 430.

18 Žižek's early awareness of Paul (1991) [Žižek, *Know Not*, 29, 78] means that it is not the case that Žižek discovers Paul via Badiou, but that Badiou forces Žižek's thinking on Paul to be developed.

19 Žižek, *Ticklish Subject,* 145 – 197; see §1.1-2 above.

It is important to note that these sections of the *Ticklish Subject* do not contain the first reference to Paul in Žižek's work. We shall see below, and it will become important, that the first time we find reference to Paul is as early as 1991.[20] As we also observed in the case of Eagleton, the apparent 'newness' of this Pauline moment cannot be taken for granted.[21]

Žižek's subsequent reading of Paul is distinct from Badiou's insofar as it does not occur within a work whose central subject matter is Paul.[22] As also with Eagleton, Žižek's engagement with Paul is sporadic and eclectic. It is found in the course of articles and monographs whose central object of enquiry is not Paul himself. This is a notable feature of Žižek's Pauline engagement. Žižek often reads the Pauline text in the course of a much larger intellectual framework and series of ideas. The sporadic nature of this engagement has consequences for our ability to analyse Žižek's reading of Paul. Firstly, it makes it more difficult to trace that engagement. Secondly, it reveals that his reading of Paul is no different from his style of engagement with the other wide-range of topics upon which he has written. Žižek's output is characterised, as Butler and Stephens have described:

> 'by a process of *capitonnage*, with certain terms and examples momentarily 'bound' within an otherwise free-ranging discourse... the same terms do no not always play the same role in Žižek's work'.[23]

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[20] Žižek, *Know Not*, 29. This early appearance goes some way to explain the phenomenon noted by Blanton, *Displacing,* 178 n19: 'One of the more striking things about Žižek's more recent writings on Christianity is that they do not skip a beat from the style, motifs, and theoretical descriptions of his earlier work. Readers are left to puzzle over this strange continuity, wondering *whether Žižek must have been writing about Christianity even before he began to do so explicitly*' [emphasis mine].

[21] cf. Blanton, *Displacing*, 179.

[22] In this respect, Žižek's reading of Paul can also be contrasted to that of Taubes, *Political Theology* and Agamben, *Time That Remains* – both of whose major contributions to the Pauline 'New Moment' are found in a sustained, self-contained treatment (and both of which are for the most part commentaries on Romans). However, recently essays of Žižek's have appeared in edited volumes devoted solely to the study of Paul: Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among*; Milbank, Žižek, Davis (eds.), *Monstrosity.* However, even these essays do not deal with Paul solely or throughout. So, Žižek, S., 'From Job to Christ: A Paulinian Reading of Chesterton' in Caputo; Alcoff (eds.), *Philosophers,* 39 – 60 mentions Paul infrequently, instead tracing 'Paulinian' themes.

[23] Butler, R, Stephens, S., 'Glossary' in Žižek, S., *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum 2005) 356 – 374, 356; Butler, R., Stephens, S., 'Editor's Introduction' in Žižek, *Interrogating*, 1 – 8, 5; cf. Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 338: 'Žižek's many volumes may well be read as one continuous text, cut off arbitrarily due to the material limits of paper publication'.

This feature of Žižek's thought means that it can be extremely difficult to build an evaluation of his reading of Paul, or any concept or reading of a text, as a whole. It is, however, possible to find patterns and shifts of Žižek's thought amidst this butterflying about. We can observe, for example, one such shift which is important for our study. This is Žižek's shift in understanding of Christianity and the changing nature of his interest, and awareness of, theological issues. Žižek moves from an initial acknowledgement of a parallel between Marxist materialism and Christianity, through an advocation of the formal content of Christianity, to direct engagement with the concept of God.[24]

[24] Žižek describes his position with respect to the formal content of Christianity as 'Paulinian': 'If I were asked to provide a one-line description of where I stand, I would probably choose the paradoxical self-designation of a *Paulinian materialist*' in Žižek, S., 'Preface: Burning the Bridges' in Wright, E., Wright, E. (eds.), *The Žižek Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell 1999) vii – x, ix; cf. Žižek, 'From Job'. His most direct engagements with the concept of God come in Žižek, Milbank, Davis, *Monstrosity*; and Žižek, Gunjevic, *God in Pain.*

4.3 Žižek and Christianity

Before turning to consider St Paul according to Žižek, it is necessary to consider Christianity according to Žižek. We do so for two reasons. Firstly, in order to understand how Paul functions for Žižek (and how he reads Paul) we must understand the concept of Christianity with which Žižek is working. Secondly, it is necessary to realise that for Žižek there is no Christianity without St Paul, and no St Paul without Christianity. This is already revealing of the kind of Paul that emerges in Žižek's Christian engagement. The Pauline focus of this engagement has resulted in Žižek's thought being labelled as strangely "Protestant".

We argued above that Badiou's insistence on the atheism of his system must be taken seriously. We held that it was wrong to move too quickly towards a theistic reading of the Badiouan system. In the case of Žižek, we might say that the reverse is true. Žižek first turns toward Christianity as a paradigmatic truth system:

> 'the paradigmatic example of the Truth-Event is not only religion in general but, specifically, *Christian* religion centred on the Event of Christ's arrival and death'.[25]

In successive publications, we observe a shift (to which we have already referred above) from engagement with themes of theological interest, whilst maintaining an atheistic position, to a self-identification with the Christian system.[26] Žižek now not only acknowledges, but celebrates, the 'direct lineage from Christianity to Marxism'.[27] This lineage itself becomes the subject of *The Fragile Absolute* (2000).[28]

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[25] Žižek, *Ticklish,* 163; cf. 'the definitive form of the Christian religion' [Žižek, *Know Not ,* 29].

[26] Žižek, 'Wager'; Žižek, 'Glance', 5: 'Paulinian materialist'; Žižek, 'Class Struggle', 119: 'we, Christians'; cf Boer, Heaven, 336; Jennings, 'Sons', 92 – 3.

[27] Žižek, *Fragile,* xxix; An acknowledgement he attributes to Badiou: 'For years the parallel between revolutionary Marxism and Messianic Christianity was a common topic among liberal critics like Bertrand Russell, who dismissed Marxism as a secularized version of Messianic religious ideology; Badiou, in contrast (following a line from Engels to Fredric Jameson), fully endorses this homology'. [Žižek*, Ticklish,* 142].

[28] Žižek, *Fragile,* 2: 'Yes, Christianity and Marxism *should* fight on the same side against the onslaught of new spiritualisms – the authentic Christian legacy is much too precious to be left to the fundamentalist freaks.'

Žižek moves from an atheistic position in which the possibility of God is simply denied, through an appreciation of the Christian legacy to atheistic materialism, before evaluating his previous atheistic position with the concept of God found in that Christian legacy.[29] He describes this process in Hegelian terms:

> 'while the positive statement "I believe in God" can be negated as "I don't believe in God," we can also imagine a kind of "infinite" negation, not so much "I believe in un-God" (which would be closer to negative theology) but, rather, something like "unbelief," the pure form of belief deprived of its substantialization – "unbelief" is still the form of belief'.[30]

Žižek further develops this evaluation of 'un-belief' in an Hegelian direction, by placing the death of God in Christ in the centre of his theological system.[31] For these reasons, affinities can be found between Žižek and the death-of-God theologians.[32]

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[29] Žižek, 'Dialectical Clarity', 287: '"Only an atheism which envisages the reality of its Christian provenance can be relevant today". With some reservations I cannot but agree"'. The citation is from Nancy, J-L., 'La Déconstruction du christianisme" in *Les Etudes Philosophiques 4* (1998) 503 – 19; cf. Nancy, J-L., "The Deconstruction of Christianity" (trans. Spark, S.) in de Vries, H., Weber, S. (eds.), *Religion and Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2001); cf. Žižek, 'Wager'.

[30] Harink's assertion that such 'philosophers (at least *qua* philosophers...) studiously refrain from making any theological claim' [Harink, 'Introduction', 2] needs to be qualified by making apparent the concept of theology with which one is operating. Several statements of Žižek see him producing an atheism in a theological register, e.g.: 'One can argue that atheism is thinkable only within monotheism: it is this reduction of many (gods) to one (god) that enables us to confront directly 1 and 0, i.e. to erase 1 and thus obtain 0.... What if, in a kind of negation of negation, true atheism should return to belief (faith?), asserting it without reference to god?' [Žižek, 'Modest Plea', 96; cf. *End Times*, 118)]. cf. Žižek, 'Transcendence', 246 – 7; Caputo: 'a "postmodern a/theology"' [Caputo, 'Postcards', 13]. Žižek's atheism is described by Boscaljon as 'a Lacanian atheism which demands the elimination of a big Other' [in Boscaljon, 'Atheist']. Boscaljon's insight is crucial in understanding Žižek's move here. Žižek's 'big Other' reveals a Lacanian inheritance, and also reveals Žižek reading Lacan in a theological register. He is not the first to do so, for the identification of the Lacanian 'Other' with God see Wyschogrod, E., 'Recontextualising the Ontological Argument: A Lacanian Analysis' in Wyschogrod, E., Crownfield, D., Raschke, C. A. (eds.), *Lacan and Theological Discourse* (Albany: SUNY Press 1989) 97 – 113. Harink's claim operates with a notion of theology which differs from that which Žižek seeks to mould traditional theological reflection into, 'not by way of supplying a divine "big Other" ... but, on the contrary, as a token of our radical freedom in having no big Other to rely on' [Žižek, *End Times,* 401].

[31] On the importance of the death-of-God in (post)modern theology see Franke, W., 'The Deaths of God in Hegel and Nietzsche and the Crisis of Values in Secular Modernity and Post-Secular Modernity' in *Religion and the Arts 11* (2007) 214 – 241.

[32] See especially Altizer, T., (with Hamilton, W.), *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill 1966); Altizer, T., *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press 1966).

Žižek, like Badiou, distinguishes between the form and content of Christian belief. As an example, we can take Paul's proclamation of the resurrection, which Žižek reads along these lines.[33] Žižek distinguishes between the content of the Resurrection and its form:

> 'one can no longer accept the fable of the miracle of the Resurrection as the form of the Truth-Event'.[34]

His reasons for this division concern the difference in contexts between the present and that in which Paul wrote. Whilst it was possible to believe in the Resurrection in Paul's context, since the modern turn towards scientific and empirical thought, this no longer holds true:

> 'Today, any location of the Truth-Event at the level of supernatural miracles necessarily entails regression into obscurantism, since the event of Science is irreducible and cannot be undone.'[35]

We note that Žižek here simply asserts the impossibility of belief in the Resurrection. He gives no reasons as to why it is impossible to believe in the Resurrection in a scientific world. However, we find an argument in *Living in the End Times* (2010). As Žižek's thought develops, he finds a basis for the denial of the Resurrection within Christianity itself. He turns to Hegel whose account of the death of God provides Žižek with the means of arguing against the content of the Resurrection whilst retaining its form:[36]

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[33] Rom 1.3-4; 4.24; 6.4, 9; 8.11, 34; 10.9; 1 Cor 15.4-8, 12-17, 20-21; Gal 1.1; 1 Thess 1.10; 4.14.

[34] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 164; cf. Žižek, *Ticklish*, 165; cf. Caputo: 'these are secular philosophers who do not share Paul's core belief in the resurrection of Christ, but regard his project as centrally important for contemporary political life' [Caputo, 'Postcards', 2].

[35] Žižek, *Ticklish,* 164. Žižek's 'translation' of Badiouan 'Events' as 'Truth-events' in this introduction of Badiouan thought to a wider Anglophone audience has been influential as to the manner in which those 'Events' and therefore Badiou's theory of 'Event/s' as a whole has been understood. Žižek's term has become something of a commonplace in rendering Badiouan 'events' – a rendering which invites a distortion in the Badiouan understanding of truth (towards a "higher" theory). The term is translated in this way in a number important articles which trace the theological implications of such Badiouan events, for example, Schwartz. R. M., Revelation and Revolution' in *Crosscurrents* (Fall 2006) 376 – 382 [an except from her 'Revelation and Revolution' in Davis, C. (ed.), *Theology and the Political* (Duke University Press)]; Welborn, L. L., 'Extraction from the Mortal Site: Badiou on the Resurrection in Paul' in *Journal of New Testament Studies 55* (2009) 295-314; Boer, R., 'Theology and the Event: The Ambivalence of Alain Badiou' in *Heythrop Journal LII (*2011) 234-249; Woodward, J., 'Faith, Hope and Love: The Inducement of the Subject in Badiou' in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture 3.1* (Fall 2005) 28 – 37. This tendency is not confined solely to theologically interested articles, e.g. Phelps, H., 'Between Rupture and Repetition: Intervention and Evental Occurence in the Thought of Alain Badiou' in *Parrhesia 5* (2008) 60 – 72. For discussion of Žižek's rejection of the supernatural in relation to capitalist economics, and its place in the Milbank-Žižek interaction published as Žižek, Milbank, Davis, *Monstrosity* see Delpech-Ramey, J., 'Supernatural Capital: A Note on the Žižek-Milbank Debate' in *Political Theology 11.1* (Jan 2010) 121 – 125.

[36] *contra* Benson, 'Continental', 428: 'Unlike theorists such as Derrida, Vattimo, and Caputo, who are interested in the structure of Christianity stripped from its dogmatic and institutional elements, Žižek is interested precisely in these dogmatic and institutional elements'.

> 'this "emptying the form of its content" already takes place within Christianity itself, at its very core – the name for this emptying is *kenosis*: God dies and is resurrected as the Holy Ghost, as the form of collective belief'.[37]

Žižek therefore regards retaining belief in the reality of the Resurrection as:

> 'a fetishistic mistake to search for the material support of this form'.[38]

Žižek's reading of Paul is central to his understanding of Christianity and the division of form and content which he attempts. James Crossley notes that the kernel of this atheistic theology is found by Žižek in his reading of Paul.[39] However, we can be more specific. It is Paul as mediated via Badiou that provides Žižek with the separation of form and content:

> 'His proposed solution is that St Paul is the anti-philosophical *theoretician of the formal conditions of the truth-procedure*'.[40]

We note that in Badiou this separation of form and content concerns the Resurrection. We have seen that this is initially the case for Žižek. However, in order to maintain the fabulous nature of the Resurrection, and with the help of Hegel, Žižek moves to focus on the Crucifixion as grounds for this division of form and content. This is an important distinction between his reading and that of Badiou.

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[37] Žižek, *End Times*, 118, 402; Žižek: 'He is the one who passes from being a transcendent substantial reality to a virtual/ideal entity which exists only as the "presupposition" of acting individuals.' [Žižek, 'From Job', 57]; Žižek, 'Modest Plea'; Žižek, 'Suffering God' in *God in Pain,* 172; *Puppet*, 171; Žižek, 'Transcendence', 246 – 7 cf. Benson, 'Continental', 429: 'Žižek, however, insists that there *is* a Holy Spirit: it is the very Christian community itself that becomes the Holy Spirit. This new community is formed by way of Christian *agape*, which is the practice of love that upsets the very balance of the organic, cosmic totality'. For the importance of the role of this collective of the Spirit in Žižek's emerging thought see Žižek, *Dreaming*, 82 where the events of the Occupy movement in 2011 are seen as manifestations of that Spirit. Žižek, *End Times* ends with a charge for this doctrine of God to be embraced by the Left: 'This the kind of God needed by the radical Left today: … [who] accepts his own erasure, passing over entirely into the love that binds all members of the "Holy Ghost," that is, of the Party or emancipatory collective' [Žižek, *End Times*, 402].

[38] Žižek, *End Times*, 118.

[39] Crossley, *Reading,* 105. This is particularly the case with regards to Pauline pneumatology. For Žižek, the Spirit is: 'similar to that of an ideological cause like communism or nation: it is the substance of the individuals who recognize themselves in it, the ground of their entire existence, the point of reference which provides the ultimate horizon of meaning of their lives, something for which these individuals are ready to give their lives, yet the only thing that really exists are these individuals and their activity, so this substance is actual only insofar as individuals believe in it and act accordingly' [Žižek, 'Job to Christ', 56 – 7]. For another treatment of the atheistic potential of Christianity see Bloch, E., *Atheism in Christianity* (London: Verso 2009)[orig. (New York: Herder 1972)].

[40] Žižek, *Ticklish,* 165; Žižek, 'Truth Event', 90.

The question remains whether the distinction between the form and content of the Pauline proclamation of either the Crucifixion or Resurrection can be maintained as either Žižek or Badiou intend.[41] Žižek himself notes this problem and asks:

> 'how it was possible for the first and still most pertinent description of the mode of operation of the fidelity to a Truth-Event to occur apropos of a Truth-Event that is mere semblance, not an actual Truth'.[42]

Further, we might ask whether the content of a truth-claim can ever be fully isolated from its form or whether content is always to some extent dependent upon form (and vice versa). Žižek contributes to an important debate with Butler and Laclau around precisely these issues. This debate is published as *Contingency, Hegemony and Universality*.[43] It will also become important for our analysis of the reasons for Žižek's turn to Paul.[44] For now, it is sufficient note that one of the themes which all three of those authors share, and which emerges in the course of that debate, is that of the difficulty or impossibility of absolute separation between form and content.[45] In the course of this debate, however, Žižek reveals a consistency between his position in *CHU* and his reading of Paul, since he maintains the possibility of removing certain specific pieces of content in order to derive an empty form:

> 'which specific content has to be excluded so that the very *empty form* of universality emerges as the 'battlefield' for hegemony?'[46]

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41 The division between form and content is a move with its own theological pedigree. Not only does it find parallels in Hegelian kenotic (negative) theology – a modern incarnation of which we see in Žižek – but also in Bultmann's demythologising project. Demythologising sees the maintenance of form at the expense of, or in the form of existentially reconstituted, content.

42 Žižek, *Ticklish*, 165; cf. 'Truth Event', 90.

43 Hereafter *CHU*.

44 See §4.8 below.

45 Butler: 'formalism itself is a product of abstraction, and this abstraction requires separation from the concrete, one that leaves the trace or remainder of this situation in the very working of abstraction itself' [Butler, J., 'Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 11 – 43, 18]; Laclau: 'Now dialectical logic presupposes that you cannot dissociate form and content, that the content is actually named is an integral part of the whole logical movement of the concept' [Laclau, E., 'Identity and Hegemony: The Role of Universality in the Constitution of Political Logics' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 44 – 89, 63]; and even Žižek himself: 'the crucial point is that the very *form*, in its universality, is always rooted, like an umbilical cord, in a particular content' [Žižek, S., 'Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please!' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 90 – 135, 109]. Žižek may be saved from inconsistency here (with regard to the truth-content of the Resurrection) as he goes on: 'the very form of universality emerges through a radical dislocation, through some more radical impossibility or primordial repression'.

46 Žižek, 'Class Struggle', 109; Butler questions this: Butler, J., 'Competing Universalities' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 136 – 181, 137, 167.

Žižek's Christianity, as we have seen, centres on the crucifixion as the site of the death of God.[47] This enables Žižek both to view belief in God as unnecessary whilst at the same time defending the form of the Christian system and the use of concepts derived from that system. We have mentioned above that this has resulted in Žižek's being numbered amongst the death-of-God theologians. There have been some who have sought to separate Žižek from such theologians. Boscaljon, for example, notes a gap between:

> 'the system that Žižek continues to develop and the history of theology that has come before'.[48]

For Boscaljon, this gap arises between Žižek and other death-of-God theologians because:

> '[Žižek's] unique theological formulation is predicated on material philosophy instead of spiritual revelation'.[49]

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to decide whether Žižek is appropriately labelled a death-of-God theologian. It is however appropriate for us to note that Žižek's evaluation of Christianity as a whole draws on the death-of-God tradition. This further demonstrates the affinities between that theological movement and Žižek's work:

> 'the only way to redeem the subversive core of Christianity is to therefore to return to death of God theology, especially Thomas Altizer, to repeat its gesture today'.[50]

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47 cf. O'Regan, 'Hegelian Death'; 278 – 286.
48 Boscaljon, 'Atheist', 1.
49 Boscaljon, 'Atheist', 1.
50 Žižek, 'Dialectical Clarity', 260. The extent of influence of Altizer is not limited to the explicitly theological, note Žižek's use of personal communication with Altizer in the course of the argument of *Farce,* 72 n54 on the political consequences of the Taliban.

4.4 Žižek and Judaism

One of the problems facing interpreters of Žižek is that it soon becomes apparent that he develops pieces of terminology within his discourse, which do not always bear an obvious relation to the general sense of those terms. This is the case especially for the terms 'Jews' and 'Judaism'. As a result, caution is needed when reading these terms as relating to actually existing or perceived notions of Judaism.

This can be demonstrated by way of an example. In an essay devoted to the notion of 'Jew', and the corresponding notion of anti-Semitism, Žižek considers the 'paradoxical entwinement' of these two terms.[51] The term 'Jew' becomes symbolic for a general feature of human self-understanding. The relation between Jew and Gentile is not one of opposed identities, but the Jew is:

> 'what is "in Gentiles more than Gentiles themselves," not another subject I encounter in front of me, but an alien, a foreign intruder *within* me'.[52]

This notion of 'paradoxical entwinement' of Judaism and anti-Semitism reveals a feature of Žižek's understanding of the terms which, as we shall see, runs throughout his work. In Žižek's understanding, the terms 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' are defined primarily in contradistinction to each other.[53]

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[51] Žižek, S., 'The Jew is Within You, But You, You Are in the Jew' in Aloni, U., *What Does a Jew Want?: On Binationalism and Other Specters* (New York: Columbia University Press 2011) 159 – 172, 161.
[52] Žižek, 'Jew is Within', 160.
[53] See also Lyotard, Gruber, *Hyphen.*

This principle of contradistinction also betrays other features of Žižek's use of the terms 'Jews' and 'Judaism'. Žižek's use of these terms as pieces of terminology also reflects their prior use within the Marxist and Freudian discourses in which Žižek stands.[54] For example, Žižek distinguishes Judaism from Christianity in terms of their relation to the respective 'founding gesture' of each.[55] He holds that Judaism is defined by a secret repression of its 'founding gesture'. This 'gesture' is the murder of a father figure (Moses) in line with Freud's account of the history of Judaism in *Moses and Monotheism*.[56] In contrast, Christianity confesses its own founding gesture, albeit in the displaced form of the murder of the Son.[57]

The contradistinction of 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' also reveals Žižek's interest in the theme of universality. The distinction between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' becomes one between two kinds of universality.[58] This distinction has become an area of increased interest in his work and further betrays the influence of Hegel.[59] Žižek does not contrast Jewish particularism to Christian universalism. Instead, 'Judaism' is distinguished from 'Christianity' in terms of the kind of universalism found in each. The Jewish concept of the Law reveals the kind of universalism Žižek associates with 'Judaism':

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54 Marx, K., 'On the Jewish Question' available at http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/staff/emeritus/robertfine/home/teachingmaterial/humanrights/pdfreadings/on_the_jewish_question_by_karl_marx.pdf (accessed 21st October 2013) [orig. in *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (February, 1844)]. Žižek's tendency towards using these terms symbolically is prefigured by Marx in this essay in which the term 'Jew' functions symbolically for the existence of any minority position of religious adherence which Marx holds society must overcome. So he concludes: 'The social emancipation of the Jew is the emancipation of society from Judaism'. We see here Marx playing with everyday notions of 'Jew' and 'Christian' (e.g.: 'From the outset, the Christian was the theorizing Jew, the Jew is, therefore, the practical Christian, and the practical Christian has become a Jew again). The manner in which he does so strikes the modern reader as alarming in terms of the consequences of such portrayals of Judaism in the political history of Germany. For the Freudian tradition, see n. 56 below.

55 Žižek, *Fragile,* 89-90; Žižek, S., 'Preface to the New Edition: *A Glance into the Archives of Islam*' in Žižek, *Fragile,* vii – xxvii, viii; also Žižek, *God in Pain,* 103 – 126. Judaism and Christianity are also distinguished from Islam in their relation to Abraham.

56 Freud, S., *Moses and Monotheism* (London: Hogarth 1939); as read by Santner, E., 'Traumatic Revelations: Freud's "Moses" and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire' in *October 88* (Spring 1999) 3 – 41; Santner, E., 'Traumatic Revelations: Freud's "Moses" and the Ethics of Nomotropic Desire' in Salecl, R. (ed.), *Sexuation* (Durham: Durham University Press 2000) 57 – 105. It should be noted that whenever Žižek refers to this essay he does so apparently incorrectly as 'Traumatic Revelations: Freud's Moses and the Origins of Antisemitism' cf. Žižek, *Belief,* 164; 'Glance', viii; *Fragile*, 90 and elsewhere.

57 Žižek, *Fragile*, 90.

58 See §4.7 below.

59 Butler; Stephens, 'Glossary', 367.

> '[Judaism's] stubborn sticking to a set of arbitrary particular prescriptions, is none other than the assertion of actual Universality'.[60]

In 'Judaism', the assertion of an arbitrary particular is the basis for its brand of universalism. The universalism of 'Christianity', in contrast, is based on the denial of any such particular. Žižek finds 'agape' to be the basis of Christian universalism. Christian 'agape' he maintains:

> 'enjoins us to 'unplug' from the organic community into which we were born'.[61]

For our purposes, it is significant that Žižek supports this claim with reference to Gal 3.28.[62] This process of 'unplugging', guided by 'agape', distinguishes 'Christianity' from 'Judaism', in that Christianity does not seek to stick to particular prescriptions, but to escape them.[63]

Žižek's understanding of universality also illuminates the attraction of Paul as a figure. In the debate with Butler and Laclau, to which we have already referred, Žižek notes how notions of universality function in different ways in each epoch. He highlights the need, therefore, to consider the:

> '*emergence of the very form of universality*: how, in what specific historical conditions, does abstract universality itself emerge'.[64]

Žižek's own claims about the conditions of emergence (the 'site of political universality') may help to explain, in part, his attraction to Pauline thought. He describes the conditions of universality thus:

> 'universality is asserted when such an agent with no proper place, 'out of joint', posits itself as a direct embodiment of universality against all those who have a place in the global order'.[65]

This understanding of universality may explain the attraction of Paul to Žižek. Paul is an example of an 'out of joint' agent, both in respect of his fellow Jews and also those who would deny him the status of an Apostle.

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[60] Žižek, *Fragile*, 91.
[61] Žižek, *Fragile*, 111.
[62] See §4.7 below.
[63] Žižek, *Fragile*, 111.
[64] Žižek, 'Struggle', 104 – 5.
[65] Žižek, S., 'Holding the Place' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 308 – 329, 313.

Moreover, we find Žižek's account of universality explains the reasons for his initial interest in Badiou's account of Paul. He describes the need for political universality to be grounded in an impossibility:

> 'The only 'realistic' project is to ground a new political universality by opting for the *impossible*, fully assuming the place of the exception'.[66]

We see here the attraction of Badiou's reading of St Paul. Badiou and Žižek share the belief that universalism must be founded on that which is impossible from the point of view of the previous system. The Resurrection therefore serves as an example of such an impossibility. Žižek differs from Badiou in that he does not focus his interest in the impossible Event solely on the Resurrection. Instead, he refers to a more general Christian 'magic break'.[67] The term 'break' echoes the language of his first engagement with Paul (before the reading of Badiou) and his consideration of 'the Pauline break'.[68] Žižek's notion of 'Christianity' is therefore inextricably linked to his understanding of Paul. For him, '*there is no Christ outside Saint Paul*'.[69] Žižek holds that Paul is the inventor of 'Christianity' as a thought-system.[70]

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66 Žižek, 'Holding the Place', 326.
67 Žižek, *Ticklish,*175.
68 Žižek, *Know Not,* 29.
69 Žižek, *Fragile Absolute,* 2.
70 Martin rejects the Žižekian reading most strongly here: 'current philosophical readers get him wrong on one very important point: their desire to see in him the founder of a new people, a new ethnicity, a new religion' [Martin, 'Teleology', 98]. Martin instead sees in Paul a commitment to the people of Israel [Martin, 'Constraints']; *contra* Taubes, *Political,* 28.

Žižek's understanding of the relationship between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity' is revealed by this language of 'break'. He writes of nascent Christianity:

> 'almost all of its elements were already there in the Dead Sea Scrolls … but this is not enough to explain the Event of Christianity'.[71]

We have already considered the problem of novelty for the historical-critical method above.[72] If a description of early Christianity, such as Žižek's, is correct, it also raises the question of the value of reading the texts of early Christianity solely against their non-Christian contemporaries and early forebears. It therefore also raises the question of how the historical-critical method deals with the genuinely new. The description of Christianity as constituting a 'magic break' from Judaism has also been criticised for its apparent supersessionism and the implied superiority of the Christian thought-system.[73] We can once again note the resistance of such a value judgement in the scholarly reception of Žižek's thought.

Žižek's understanding of 'Judaism' illuminates his reading of Paul because it reveals that Žižek reads Paul as a *de facto* Christian. Žižek regards Paul as responsible for the intellectual position, which he understands to be the basic Christian notion. There is no Christianity outside Paul; and no Paul outside Christianity.[74]

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71 Žižek, S., '*Da Capo senza Fine*' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 213 – 262.

72 See above §2.8 for the discussion of genuine novelty in relation to historical criticism.

73 Caputo, 'Postcards'; cf. Crossley, *Reading,* 107.

74 Žižek, S., 'Concluding Roundtable: St Paul Among the Historians and the Systematizers' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among,* 160 – 183, 164. Žižek proposes a 'dialectical compromise' whereby 'in order to see the radical break of a Paul, one has to read him precisely as a Jew, from within, not already adopting Christian terms ... not in being Christian but Christianity in becoming, what Christianity was before it became Christianity'. This compromise position still makes Paul a representative of Christianity whereby Paul's Jewish context is affirmed, only to remove him from it and highlight the extent of the 'break'; cf. *Puppet,* 9.

4.5 Žižek and the Law

We now come to consider themes arising from Žižek's reading of Paul. We shall see that the concepts of 'Judaism', 'Christianity', and the nature of universalism we discussed above are important features of Žižek's reading of the Apostle. Žižek rarely presents sections of sustained exegesis. Instead, he reads Paul as he goes, and Žižek's interpretation of Paul is almost always found in the course of (and as a means to exploring) some wider argument.[75]

It is important to note, when analysing Žižek's reading of Paul, that Žižek is himself aware of the charge of anachronism. For example, in discussing the Pauline flesh/spirit distinction, Žižek describes this distinction as one of two competing 'existential attitudes', but notes that to do so is 'to use this modern term anachronistically'.[76] However, it must also be noted that a number of references to Paul in Žižek strike the reader as surprising and indicative of a *mis*-reading. For example, his account of the replacement of Judas in the Twelve does not seem to be borne by the New Testament witness:

> 'Paul literally replaces Judas, taking his absent place among the twelve in a kind of metaphoric substitution'.[77]

Such a claim finds no textual support in the account preserved in a standard reading of Acts or in Paul's self-claims to apostleship.[78] This discussion of Judas once again demonstrates Žižek's interest in the concept of universality. Judas' betrayal provokes a discussion of the conditions for the emergence of universality:

> 'the path to universality goes through the murder of the particularity'.[79]

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[75] There are notable exceptions in Žižek's Pauline engagement, especially his extended discussion of the slave and the free woman of Gal 4.21 – 31 and his discussion of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar as delineating the boundaries between Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Žižek, 'Glance'; *God in Pain,* 103 – 126.

[76] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 168 – 9: 'two subjective stances, two ways to live one's life'; cf. Rom 8.6, 12-13; Gal 3.3; 5.16-25; Keener, C.A., "Fleshly" Versus Spirit Perspectives in Rom 8.5-8' in Porter, S. (ed), *Paul: Jew, Greek and Roman* (Leiden: Brill 2008) 211 – 229.

[77] Žižek, *Puppet*, 17.

[78] Acts 1.12-26.

[79] Žižek, *Puppet,* 18.

A member of Christ's inner-circle betrays, and falls out of, that circle, to enable an outsider to fulfil the conditions needed for universality. In this version of early Christianity, Žižek will make a number of parallels between the relationship of Paul to Christ, and Lenin to Marx.[80] We shall discuss this parallel in more detail below.

The first reference we find to Paul in Žižek's work comes as early as 1991. At this point, Žižek does not provide any exegesis of the Pauline text when discussing early Christianity. He describes:

> 'the decisive turning from which the definitive form of the Christian religion, the form which has shown its worth in the tradition which is ours, resulted: the Pauline break'.[81]

Firstly, we already see the seeds of Žižek's later argument for a theologically aware materialism, which draws parallels between Christianity and the Marxist tradition ('the tradition which is ours'). We should note here both the political emphasis of this account and Žižek focus on Pauline Christianity.[82] Secondly, Žižek's description of the 'Pauline break' prefigures many of the themes which he will develop in his subsequent Pauline engagement. With no textual support offered, Žižek describes Paul as 'rereading' the death of Christ:

> 'to remark as the greatest triumph... what was before experienced as traumatic loss'.[83]

We already here see that Žižek focusses on the Crucifixion of Christ, more than the Resurrection, as a resource for thought. We see this further when Žižek describes how Paul does 'not add any new content to the already-existing dogmas'.[84]

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[80] Žižek, *Fragile,* xxx.

[81] Žižek, *Know Not,* 29. Note here too the claim that the left and Christianity are both traditions sharing in the same Pauline stem.

[82] 'Saint Paul made of this final defeat of Christ's earthly mission (which was, of course, the deliverance of the Jews from the Roman domination) the very act of salvation' [Žižek, *Know Not,* 29]. This anti-Imperialist reading of Paul is also a theme of the results of contemporary historical-critical exegesis. See above in chapter 2 n. 34. Žižek uses 'remark' here in a technical technical sense (“re-mark”) taken over from Derrida as 'a reversal of perspective by means of which we perceive how the scission is in itself already reconciliation' [see Žižek, *Know Not,* 75 – 89].

[83] Žižek, *Know Not*, 78; cf. 29.

[84] Žižek, *Know Not,* 78.

Žižek holds that it is Paul himself who turns the trauma of the death of Christ into an occasion of triumph. Žižek therefore reads early Christianity without reference to the Resurrection, since he holds that Paul does not add any new content to 'already-existing dogmas'. Žižek instead understands the contribution of Paul's thought to be a re-evaluation of the crucifixion itself.

We now move to explore Žižek's subsequent engagement with the Pauline text. In this section, we consider Žižek's reception of two passages from Romans central to his reading of Paul. Creston Davis has described how Žižek's engagement with Paul is 'visible most poignantly in his reading of St Paul's letters to the Christians in Rome'.[85] Žižek returns repeatedly to these passages and they are indicative of his reading practice. Kotsko argues that Žižek's reading of Romans is more substantial than that of Badiou and is a 'significant advance over that of Badiou's, particularly on the question of the law in Romans 7'.[86] It is therefore on Žižek's reading of Romans we shall focus, and in particular Romans 7.

Žižek's interests in legal and psychoanalytical theory mean that it is perhaps no surprise that Romans 7 receives this focus in Žižek's work. Romans 7.7 is a special focus of his reading.[87] This same passage is, significantly, shared in the Pauline readings of all three of the figures who are our focus. Moreover, within psychoanalytical theory, Romans 7.7 is cited by Jacques Lacan in his *Seminar VII: On the Ethics of Psychoanalysis* and described thus:

> 'the relationship between the Thing and the Law could not be better defined than in these terms'.[88]

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85 Davis, C., 'Paul and Subtraction' in *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press 2010) 100.

86 Kotsko, A., 'Politics and Perversion: Situating Žižek's Paul' in *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9.2 (Summer 2008) 43 – 52, 43.

87 Rom 7.7: 'What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν; ὁ νόμος ἁμαρτία; μὴ γένοιτο· ἀλλὰ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔγνων εἰ μὴ διὰ νόμου· τήν τε γὰρ ἐπιθυμίαν οὐκ ᾔδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ νόμος ἔλεγεν· οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις.

88 Lacan, J., *On the Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge 1992).

Žižek himself alerts us to this Lacanian reading of Romans 7.[89] It is as an interpreter of Lacan that Žižek is perhaps most renowned.[90] Lacan's reading of Roman 7 will go on to play an important part in Žižek's reading of Romans 7 as a whole.

Žižek sees the analysis of Law, and the individual in relation to the Law, as central to Paul's system. He sees the cycle of sin as that which Paul recognizes and seeks to overcome. Žižek holds that Paul recognises that it is the act of prohibition which encourages violation of the very act or acts which the law sought to prevent:

> 'the form of prohibition as such which gives rise to sin (I desire what is prohibited because it is prohibited)'.[91]

Further, Žižek regards Paul's thought as descriptive of Christianity as a whole:

> 'Christianity, on the contrary, endeavour(s) to break the very vicious cycle of prohibition that generates the desire to transgress it, the cycle described by Saint Paul in Romans 7.7.[92]

In the course of his reading of Romans 7, we can observe a feature of Žižek's reading for which he has been criticised. Boer criticises Žižek for displaying 'a pattern that has become thoroughly familiar, Žižek throws together a whole series of variations'.[93] Žižek reads Paul's description of the cycle of Romans 7 alongside 1 Cor 13:

> 'together with its corollary, Saint Paul's other paradigmatic passage, the one on love from 1 Cor 13'.[94]

However, we note that 'love' is not alien to Romans generally nor in relation to the concept of law in that epistle. We can point to passages such as Rom 13.8-10: 'love is the fulfilling of the law'.[95]

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89 Žižek, *Puppet*, 114; *Ticklish*, 176-9; *Fragile,* 136.
90 Žižek, S., *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan* (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock) (London: Verso 1992); *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta 2006).
91 'Modest Plea', 282 .
92 Žižek, *Fragile*, 125-6; cf. 91-92, 133.
93 Boer, *Criticism of Heaven,* 368.
94 Žižek, *Fragile,* 136 – 7; see below §4.6.
95 πλήρωμαοὖννόμουἠἀγάπη; cf. Rom 12.10.

Žižek may have Romans 13 in mind when he writes:

> 'What Christianity did with regard to the Roman Empire, this global multiculturalist polity, we should do with regard to today's Empire'.[96]

Žižek has good reason not to draw attention to Romans 13 within the course of his *revolutionary* project since that text advocates a conciliatory position towards those exercising power.[97] For our purposes, the reference to love as the fulfilment of the law in Romans 13 is sufficient to undermine Boer's criticism that the term is not mentioned in 'verses surrounding Romans 7 as a whole'.[98]

Žižek's reading of Romans 7 is not, however, consistent. On the one hand, whilst alluding to Romans 7.7, he writes:

> 'As a good Pauline, I claim that Law and "sin" form a vicious cycle, reinforcing each other, so that there is no way to "line up" Law and Agape: we attain Agape only when we break out of the entire cycle of Law and "sin".[99]

Here love (agape) can only be obtained when the cycle of Law and "sin" is broken. However, later in the same essay it is the experience of love (agape) which enables the cycle of sin and law to be broken. Now, the cycle:

> 'is (not so much overcome as) broken, one breaks out of it, with the experience of love – more precisely: with the experience of the radical gap that separates love from the Law'.[100]

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96 Žižek, *Belief,* 4.

97 cf. Žižek, *Know Not,* 29: 'Saint Paul made of this final defeat of Christ's earthly mission (which was, of course, the deliverance of the Jews from the Roman domination) the very act of salvation'.

98 Boer, *Criticism of Heaven,* 368.

99 Žižek, 'Modest Plea', 245 – 6. Note his self-identification as Pauline; cf. Žižek, 'Glance', 5: 'Pauline materialist'. We see a similar self-definition in Taubes, *Political,* 88.

100 Žižek, 'Modest Plea', 271 – 2; cf. 'Great Chain', 109.

This reading of Romans 7 is central to Žižek's reading of Romans as a whole. Žižek takes the cycle described in Romans 7.7 to be the interpretative key for the entire letter. He refers to this cycle of law which generates its own transgression as 'the trap of *perversion*'.[101] Žižek sees Paul in Romans wrestling with how this cycle is to be overcome. Žižek both draws on other passages in Romans in support of his reading of Romans 7 and also reads other passages through this lens. He points to the 'barrage of desperate questions' in Romans 3.25 – 8 as an example of Paul's struggle with this problem:[102]

> 'This 'Let us do evil so that good may come [from it]' is the most succinct definition of the short circuit of the perverse position'.[103]

The cycle of law and transgression is understood positively here. The violation of the law is taken as a perverse good. The law must prohibit that which it seeks to encourage. This also demonstrates Žižek's translation of the cycle of transgression in Romans 7.7 into terms from Žižek's own discourse. The term 'short circuit' is a favourite piece of Žižekian terminology:

> 'a wrong connection in the network—wrong, of course, from the standpoint of the smooth functioning of the network'.[104]

The cycle of the law which generates its own transgression is understood as one of these 'short circuits' or 'a wrong connection in the network'. Žižek then reads the problem of this perverse deadlock against statements about the action of God, in order to explore the nature of a God who would set up such a system.

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[101] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 171 – 2.

[102] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 172; Rom 3.25 – 8: 'But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) By no means! For then how could God judge the world? But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved!' [εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀδικία ἡμῶν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην συνίστησιν, τί ἐροῦμεν; μὴ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιφέρων τὴν ὀργήν; κατὰ ἄνθρωπον λέγω. 6 μὴ γένοιτο· ἐπεὶ πῶς κρινεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον; 7 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ψεύσματι ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, τί ἔτι κἀγὼ ὡς ἁμαρτωλὸς κρίνομαι; 8 καὶ μὴ καθὼς βλασφημούμεθα καὶ καθώς φασίν τινες ἡμᾶς λέγειν ὅτι ποιήσωμεν τὰ κακά, ἵνα ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀγαθά; ὧν τὸ κρίμα ἔνδικόν ἐστιν.].

[103] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 172.

[104] Žižek, S., Series description of the 'Short Circuit' series published by MIT Press of which Žižek is Series Editor: http://mitpress.mit.edu/catalog/browse/browse.asp?btype=6&serid=138 (accessed 15th June 2011).

Žižek reads a number of Paul's questions in Romans as questions about this cycle of law and transgression. Romans 11.11 is read as a question about God's role in establishing this perverse cycle:

> 'Does this make God a closet pervert who brings about our fall so that He may redeem us?'.[105]

Žižek also reads Romans 6.1 through the same lens. Paul's '(should) we continue to sin in order that grace may abound?' is read as a question about the logic of this cycle in which the law must prohibit that which it seeks to encourage.[106] Žižek sees Paul as providing the conditions which enable this deadlock to be overcome. This leads Žižek to consider the topic of soteriology. Soteriology is understood as the overcoming of the cycle in which law generates prohibition.

This interest in soteriology emerges in Zizek's reading of Romans 6. He reads Romans 6.1 as revealing the question:

> 'whether by indulging in Sin that we enable God to play His part as Saviour?'.[107]

He reads Romans 6.3–4 in the light of a distinction between 'sacrificial' and 'participationist' understandings of the salvific nature of Christ's death, which he obtains from Horrell.[108] Žižek illustrates 'participationist' theories of atonement, with reference to 1 Cor 15.22.[109] He understands salvation by 'participation' as a subjective disposition:

> 'by sharing in Christ's death, by dying to sin, to the way of the flesh'.

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[105] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 172; Rom 11.11: 'Have they stumbled so as to fall?' ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν.

[106] Rom 6.1b: 'Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?' ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ.

[107] Žižek, *Ticklish*, 172.

[108] Žižek, *Puppet*, 102; cf. Horrell, D. G., *An Introduction to the Study of St Paul* (London: T&T Clark 2006) 61 – 3 This distinction is further explored in Žižek, 'Great Chain', 105 – 109. On Žižek's soteriological interest see: Benson, 'Continental, 428 – 429; Žižek, 'Great Chain'. Rom 6.3 – 4: 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life'. [ἢ ἀγνοεῖτε ὅτι, ὅσοι ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν, εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν; 4 συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρός, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν].

[109] 1 Cor 15.22: For as in Adam all die, so all will be made alive in Christ [ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνήσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζῳοποιηθήσονται].

Žižek explores Horell's distinction between 'sacrificial' and 'participationist' soteriologies.[110] He considers that this division betrays a difference of perspective from where the death of Christ is viewed. Christ's death is viewed as 'sacrificial' from the point of view of the sacrificial system, and 'participationist' when viewed from a position in which that system is overcome. This soteriology echoes Žižek's notion of the 'parallax view', whereby a shift of perspective demands a shift of understanding.[111] Žižek understands this system of sacrifice as 'the very horizon that Christ wanted to leave behind'.[112] However, Žižek does not see the 'participationist' understanding of atonement as distinct from a 'sacrificial' one. Instead, he understands the 'participationist' understanding as dependent upon, but superior to, the 'sacrificial':

> 'the only way to the participationist reading, however, is through the sacrificial one, through its inherent overcoming'.[113]

'Participation' is the act of rejecting the logic of the sacrifical system 'for which we die in identifying with Christ'.[114] Zizek thus rules out the 'sacrificial' understanding of atonement:

> 'Christ redeems humanity not by paying the price for our sins, but by demonstrating that we can break out of the vicious cycle of sin and payment. Instead of paying for our sins, Christ literally *erases* them, retroactively 'undoing' them through love'.[115]

[110] Sacrificial understandings of the atonement in Paul see that Christ paid a price or debt which needed to be paid to satisfy God and earn the salvation of human beings. Participationist understandings of atonement in Paul see the salvation of human beings as a participation in the death of Christ which means their own death is overcome.
[111] Žižek, S., *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT 2006).
[112] Žižek, *Puppet*, 103-4; cf. Bird, M., *Jesus and the Origins of Gentile Mission* (London: T & T Clark 2006).
[113] Žižek, *Puppet*, 103.
[114] Žižek, *Puppet*, 103.
[115] Žižek, 'Great Chain', 109; cf. §4.6 below.

Žižek's finds that the cycle of law and sin is overcome by rejecting the law itself and the sacrificial system with which it is associated. This feature of Žižek's reading of Paul has been criticised as supersessionist because of its rejection of the Jewish Law.[116] Kotsko criticises Žižek for assuming that the law in question is the Jewish Law, rather than a more general theory of human agency in the face of legal prohibition. However, Žižek concurs:

> 'Paul was wrong in his description of the Law as that which solicits its own violation – wrong insofar as he attributed this notion of Law to the Jews'.[117]

Kotsko defends Žižek against the charge of supersessionism by stating that Žižek does not see Paul as a Jew, but a 'Christian-in-becoming'. This nascent Christianity is understood to carry over the systematic structure of Judaism, so that a criticism of that structure is not a criticism of Judaism per se. Rather, it is a rejection of that structure within developing Christianity. In Kotsko's view, Žižek's Paul must not be read as rejecting Judaism but:

> 'in relation to later Christianity ... insisting that every philosophical interpretation of Paul and of Christianity must necessarily also be an interpretation of Judaism, not as a dispensable historical preface, but as that which Christianity constitutively betrays'.[118]

The charge of supersessionism against him is open to the same caveats as we discussed in the case of Eagleton above. It is sufficient for us to note that this has been a feature of the scholarly reception of Žižek's reading of Paul. However, Kotsko's defence of Žižek alerts us to an important feature of his reading of Paul. Žižek reads Paul primarily not as a Jew but as an early Christian. This will enable a further defence of Žižek's reading against the charge of supersessionism, since Žižek shows important awareness of the recently scholarly trend to read Paul primarily against his Jewish context.

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[116] cf. Kotsko, 'Perversion'.
[117] Žižek, 'Neighbours', 151 – 2.
[118] Kotsko, 'Perversion', 52.

Žižek notes the scholarly attempts to read Paul not as a Christian but as a first-century Jew:

> 'which reinscribes him back in the Jewish legacy – Paul as a radical Jew, an author of Jewish political theology'.[119]

He recognises that this scholarly trend may be useful for his own purposes, since it breaks Paul's association as 'the very symbol of the establishment of Christian orthodoxy'.[120] However, he argues that such attempts to rehabilitate Paul into Jewish tradition may have consequences 'more catastrophic than they may appear'.[121] He notes that if the scholarly attempt to re-read Paul as a first-century Jew is driven in part by the desire to avoid the charges of supersessionism and anti-semitism, it can actually have the opposite effect:

> 'precisely such a reading brings home the true radicality of his break, the way he undermined the Jewish tradition from within... Paul did not simply pass from the Jewish position to another position; he did something with, within, and to the Jewish position itself'.[122]

Žižek notes that reading Paul not as a Christian, but as a Jew, serves only to highlight the differences between Paul and the thought of Jewish contemporaries. This is an important argument given this prevailing scholarly movement which seeks to do just that.[123]

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[119] Žižek, *Puppet*, 9.

[120] Žižek, *Puppet*, 9. Žižek's recognition that it would be beneficial for themes derived from Paul to be separated from his Christian legacy is also important evidence against those who see Žižek borrowing legitimacy or authority from his reading of Paul.

[121] Žižek, *Puppet*, 9.

[122] Žižek, *Puppet*, 10; cf. 'Concluding Roundtable',164; Kotsko: 'This revolutionary potential [of Christianity] is encapsulated in the founding gesture of St. Paul— a gesture that Žižek argues is only possible within the Jewish context' in Kotsko, 'Perversion', 49.

[123] See Eisenbaum, P., 'Is Paul the Father of Misogyny and Anti-Semitism?' in *CrossCurrents 50* (Winter 2000-1) 506 – 524; Eisenbaum, P., 'Following in the Footnotes of the Apostle Paul' in *Identity and the Politics of Scholarship in the Study of Religions* (London: Routledge 2004) 77 – 98; Nanos, M. D., *The Mystery of Romans: The Jewish Context of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1996); Nanos, M.D., *Paul's Judaism: How to Read the Apostle's Letters from a Jewish Perspective* (Eugene: Cascade 2014 [forthcoming]) Eisenbaum, P., *Paul was not a Christian: the Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: Harper Collins 2009); Segal, *Convert*; Taubes, *Political*, is also of note here.

A striking feature of this scholarly attempt to reclaim Paul as a first-century Jew is that many of the most influential 'historical' critics responsible for this turn are themselves Jewish.[124] We note a tension between their claims to dispassionate scholarly objectivity on the one hand, in which their own Jewish identity does not impact upon their readings of Paul, and, on the other hand, an affirmation that their Jewishness privileges their ability to understand and read the Apostle.[125] This reveals the manner in which prevailing interests and identities can influence the exercise of the historical-critical method, and also that readings of Paul can be generated which reflect the prevailing interests of the interpreter.

Žižek notes the result of some of this scholarship is to describe Paul as a 'radical Jew'.[126] This term comes from the work of Boyarin.[127] It is helpful to compare Boyarin's reading of Paul with that of Žižek and the 'New Moment' more generally. Boyarin's reading of Paul has been compared with those of Žižek, and the 'New Moment' more generally, as an example of an intellectual from outside the conventional New Testament guild reading Paul.[128] Moreover, they share a focus on the concept of universalism in Paul's thought.[129] We have already seen interest in this concept in Badiou and Žižek (and will consider another example of Žižek's interest in universalism below).[130]

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[124] For more on the Jewish interpretation of Paul: Bird, M.F., Sprinkle, P. M., 'Jewish Interpretation of Paul in the Last Thirty Years' in *Currents in Biblical Research 6.3* (2008) 355 – 376; Brumberg-Kraus, J. D., 'A Jewish Ideological Perspective on the Study of Christian Scripture' in *Jewish Social Studies 4.1* (1997) 121 – 152; Langton, D., 'The Myth of the "Traditional" View of Paul: and the Role of the Apostle in Modern Jewish-Christian Polemics' in *Journal for Study of the New Testament* (2005) 69 – 104; Langton, D., *The Apostle Paul in the Jewish Imagination: A Study in Modern Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009) Nanos, M. D., 'A Jewish View' in Bird, M. (et al.) *Four Views on the Apostle Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2012) 159 – 193. It is worth noting, however, that Jewishness itself does not necessarily preclude hostility to the Apostle's Jewish credentials. See Maccoby, H., *The Myth-maker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins 1986).

[125] Segal, Convert, xv – xvi: 'Contemporary Jewish scholars who might be able to read Paul with new insights for Christians, rarely read Paul at all'; cf. Eisenbaum, 'Footnotes'.

[126] Žižek, *Puppet*, 9.

[127] Boyarin, *Radical.*

[128] Especially Badiou: Klassen, 'Heidegger's', 64; Fowl, 'Particular', 119 – 120; 127 – 128; cf. Fowl, 'Particular', 119.

[129] Badiou, *Universalism*; Boyarin, *Radical*, 7 – 8, 52 – 53, 57 – 59, 106, 111 – 112, 201 – 205, 234 – 235.

[130] See §4.7.

For Boyarin, universalism was the central focus of Paul's thought:

> '[The] primary motivation, not only for his mission but indeed for his "conversion," was a passionate desire that humanity be One under the sign of the One God – a universalism ... born of the union of Hebraic monotheism and Greek desire for unity'.[131]

It is apparent that the kind of universalism which Boyarin finds as central to Paul's thought is distinct from that found by Badiou and Žižek. It is distinct not only conceptually, but also with respect to the manner of reading the Pauline text which generates this understanding of universalism. Fowl observes that in Boyarin's reading of Paul, Boyarin has essentially adopted the mode of interpretation of conventional Pauline studies.[132] Boyarin does not reinscribe Paul into his own scholarly discourse, but rather reinscribes himself and his own scholarly practices into the discourse of conventional Pauline studies. The objects of focus of this thesis, significantly, do not make this move. Instead, Paul is read alongside, and contributes to, the scholarly discourses which the readers of the 'New Moment' already inhabit.

[131] Boyarin, *Radical*, 106; cf 7: 'Paul was motivated by a Hellenistic desire for the One, which among other things produced an ideal of a universal human essence, beyond difference and hierarchy'.

[132] Fowl, 'Particular', 119: 'There is no doubt that Boyarin would be counted as a member of the guild of Pauline scholars'. He goes on 'this may be a dubious distinction, but it is not easy to attain'.

4.6 Žižek and Love

In this section, we move to consider Žižek's reading of 1 Corinthians. We saw in his reading of Romans that Romans 7 became the key to his understanding of the epistle as a whole. In the case of 1 Corinthians, 1 Cor 13 is the key chapter in Žižek's reading. Žižek explores the concept of 'love' as it emerges in this chapter. He reads 1 Cor 13 as the description of a mystery concerning 'two versions' of love'.[133] The versions of 'love' both demonstrate that 'love' is a kind of 'radical imbalance':

> 'Love – you find this in Christianity – is one-sided, unilateral. Love means "I love you more than everything"... Love is a kind of radical imbalance'.[134]

He illustrates this with reference to 1 Cor 13.4 – 7.[135]

Žižek finds the description of the first version of 'love' in 1 Cor 13.1-3. Žižek notes that 1 Cor 13.1-3 is 'a radical affirmation of love's priority'.[136] Love is that which must take priority over all else. Žižek paraphrases this as "even if I got to know everything, and have all the power, without love I would be nothing, etc".[137] We might go further than Žižek here. Paul does not conceive of 'love' as merely a 'priority', but a necessary condition.

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[133] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 34.
[134] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 34.
[135] 1 Cor 13.4-7: 'Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' [Ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐ ζηλοῖ, [ἡ ἀγάπη] οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται, οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ, οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς, οὐ παροξύνεται, οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν, οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ, συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ· πάντα στέγει, πάντα πιστεύει, πάντα ἐλπίζει, πάντα ὑπομένει].
[136] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 34.
[137] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 34.

The second version alludes to 1 Cor 13.12.[138] Love is all that we have: 'as if since now we don't know everything – all that we have is love'.[139] Žižek reads the 'now' and 'abide' (μένει) in 1 Cor 13.13 as an indication that the state of 'love' already obtains. He does not focus on the theme of 'love' as that which remains into the future or at the eschaton (as indicated by Paul's distinction between 'now' and 'then').[140] Žižek reads 'love' as that which compensates for our ignorance. It is not clear from where Žižek draws support for this reading. There are passages in 1 Corinthians which describe a relationship between love and knowledge, in which love is superior.[141] Knowledge is a focus of 1 Corinthians more generally. The frequency with which the term 'γνῶσις' occurs is unusual compared to the rest of the New Testament and Paul's epistles.[142] There has been much discussion in exegetical literature as to whether the term is used in a technical sense or has associations with (proto-)gnosticism.[143] Thiselton notes:

> 'syntax, context of argument, and rhetorical strategy ... [suggest] the term γνῶσις is borrowed here from the use made of it by the Corinthians themselves'.[144]

Some exegetes have found everyday 'knowledge phrases' in 1 Cor 8, which they postulate were in circulation amongst the Corinthian community at the time.[145]

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[138] 1 Cor 13.12: 'For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known[βλέπομεν γὰρ ἄρτι δι’ ἐσόπτρου ἐν αἰνίγματι, τότε δὲ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον· ἄρτι γινώσκω ἐκ μέρους, τότε δὲ ἐπιγνώσομαι καθὼς καὶ ἐπεγνώσθην].

[139] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 34.

[140] Žižek focus on the 'now' of Paul's 'now'...'then' pattern. [1 Cor 13.12-13; cf. 1 Cor 13.8-10].

[141] 1 Cor 8.1; 13.2, 8.

[142] The term appears more times here (nine)[1 Cor 1.5; 8.1, 7, 10, 11; 12.8; 13.2, 8; 14.6] than anywhere else in the New Testament (28 occurrences). It occurs 6 times in 2 Cor (2.14; 4.6; 6.6; 8.7; 10.5; 11.6).

[143] Famously Bultmann, R., 'γινώσκω' in Kittel, G. (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. Bromiley, G.) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1964) 689 – 718. 'Paul for his part maintains the uniqueness of genuine Christian knowledge, but in so doing he appropriates to some extent the vocabulary and approach of the Gnostics' (709). cf. Horsley, R. A., 'Gnosis in 1 Corinthians 8:1- 6' in *Journal of New Testament Studies 27* (1980) 32 – 51. On the dangers of modern gnosticism see: von Balthasar, H., 'Introduction' in *The Scandal of the Incarnation: Irenaeus Against the Heresies* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1990) 1 – 11.

[144] Thiselton, A., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Cambridge: Eerdmans 2000) at 1 Cor 8.1 (621); Horsley, 'Gnosis', 43: 'Paul is repeatedly taking up language of the Corinthians in his arguments against their principles and self-understanding'.

[145] Thiselton refers to 'the Corinthian catchphrase' [Thiselton, 'First', 620]. 'We all have knowledge' (1 Cor 8.1) but questions whether οἴδαμεν ὅτι should be included. Other candidates for such catchphrases (introduced by ὅτι) include 'no idol exists in the world', 'there is no god but One' (1 Cor 8.4). [Horsley, 'Gnosis', 32]; cf. Thiselton, 'First', 629-63. The extent to which any or all of these are particular to the Corinthian situation, and which reflect a general Jewish/Christian understanding is disputed. cf. Thiselton, 'First', 629. Note that Thiselton, A., *I Corinthians: A Shorter Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary* (Cambridge: Eerdmans 2006) 125 ascribes those in 1 Cor 8.4 more readily as general credal formulae. Horsley, 'Gnosis', 48 situates them

The centrality of 'knowledge' as a concept both in 1 Cor 13, and as a theme in the surrounding historical-critical literature, is significant. It highlights that Žižek's reading of 1 Corinthians shares a focus on the relationship between 'knowledge' and love with the exegetical literature. The historical-critical reading attempts to reconstruct the nature of the debates in which Paul is engaged. They read Paul's references to 'knowledge' as contributions to an historical struggle in which the implied author is engaged, for example:

> 'Paul's central response to this situation of struggle is to assert his authority ... by upending their ranking of spiritual gifts and by insisting that love trumps knowledge'.[146]

For our purpose, we can note Žižek does not engage in such an historicising reading. Žižek's focus is not on the historical proponents of 'knowledge' of which Paul writes. Instead, Žižek reads the text as illuminating an understanding of the relationhip between 'love' and 'knowledge' in the present.[147] Žižek renders Paul's discussion of 'love' and 'knowledge' as a contribution to modern epistemology. This move is not unknown in more mainstream New Testament scholarship. Thiselton, whilst not representative of all Pauline scholarship in the place he gives to hermeneutical and philosophical topics, also notes that in 1 Corinthians Paul begins a Christian “theory of knowledge” in which knowledge is qualified by love.[148] However, we note that Thiselton's temporal language of 'begins' reflects an historical focus which is not shared with Žižek's reading. Reasons for the foregrounding of the primary context by the historical-critical must be given.

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in a general Hellenistic Jewish milieu understanding 'gnosis' as 'Hellenistic Jewish religion of enlightenment'.

146 Nasrallah, L., '“Now I Know in Part”: Historiography and Epistemology in Early Christian Debates about Prophecy' in Matthews, C., Kittredge, C. B., Johnson-Debaufre, M., *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüsser Fiorenza* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International 2003) 244 – 268, 261. See also Goulder, M., 'Vision and Knowledge' in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament 56* (1994) 53 – 71 notes that claims to visionary experience by other groups are, in part, behind Paul's analysis of knowledge as part of a struggle for influence within the early Christian communities, see especially 62 – 3 on 1 Cor 2.9 as Paul's attempt to wrestle knowledge of God from those who claim to have visionary privilege. cf. Nasrallah, “Know in Part”, 245: 'who has access to what sort of knowledge and when'.

147 Blanton, *Displacing,* 178 n17 sees Žižek's recent engagement with Christianity as 'contending against ... a (deconstructionist) Gnosticism' in the present.

148 Thiselton, '1 Cor', 125 ('Technical Note on “Knowledge”').

A final theme running through Žižek's understanding of Christian 'love' is found in relation to the concept of universalism. We find a Christian universalism centred on 'agape'. This notion of 'agape' is understood by Žižek as that which 'enjoins us to 'unplug' from the organic community into which we were born'.[149] This 'agape' is also that which binds the pneumatological collective of the struggling community following the 'death of God' in Žižek's reading of Christianity, as we noted above. His analysis of universalism in the Pauline epistles centres on Gal 3.28, and it is to that passage we now turn.

[149] Žižek, *Fragile*, 111.

4.7 Žižek and Universalism

Žižek's discussion of universalism in Paul, and the central place of Gal 3.28 in that discussion, is where Žižek comes closest to Badiou in his reading of Paul. In an interview with Delpech-Ramey, Žižek discusses his agreement with Badiou. He refers to Gal 3.28 here.[150] The frequency with which the passage is found in readings of the 'New Moment' has been noted by critics of these readings. These critics see the use of such famous or memorable passages as evidence that the readings of the 'New Moment' are not genuine readings of Paul. Instead, they see the appeal to Gal 3.28 as an attempt to use the Pauline text to shore up a kind of liberal sentiment that is currently in vogue.[151] Žižek notes how the themes of this passage might easily be misunderstood as a description of modern liberalism:

> 'This focus on the walls that separate the Excluded from the Included may easily be misunderstood as a clandestine return to the liberal-tolerant-multicultural topic of "openness" ("no one should be left out, all minority groups, lifestyles, etc., should be allowed in")'.[152]

It is therefore significant that this is precisely not how Žižek reads Gal 3.28:

> 'I do not agree with his critics who think Paul's famous "for me there are no Jews nor Greeks" simply means everybody can become a member, it is universally open'.[153]

Žižek rejects liberal universality as a false universalism:

> 'the subject advocates freedom or equality, while being unaware of implicit qualifications which, in their very form, constrain its scope (the privileging of certain social strata: being rich, or male, or female, or belonging to a certain culture, etc.)'.[154]

The social strata to which Žižek points are allusions of those found in Gal 3.28. He therefore recognises the potential of a "liberal" reading of Gal 3.28.

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[150] Gal 3.28: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' [οὐκ ἔνι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλλην, οὐκ ἔνι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.] It is also central to understanding of Pauline universalism developed in Boyarin, *Radical.*

[151] Caputo, 'Postcards', 1.

[152] Žižek, *Farce,* 100.

[153] Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 35.

[154] Žižek, *Farce*, 66.

Žižek's own reading of Gal 3.28 is, however, directly opposed to such a liberal notion of universalism. Referring to this passage he notes:

> 'what this all inclusive attitude ... involves is a thorough exclusion of those who do not accept inclusion into the Christian community ... Christian universalism tendentiously excludes non-believers from the very universality of humankind'.[155]

Far from shoring up a liberal sentiment currently in vogue, Gal 3.28 is used as part of a critique of such a 'blank notion' of universalism.[156] He maintains that liberal universalism is grounded on 'this blank notion of 'we are all together in it, we all share it'.[157] Žižek finds the universalism of Gal 3.28 to be the reverse of such a liberal universalistic reading. For Paul:

> 'if you are out, then you are not even human, there are only my brothers and if you are not my brother you are not even people'.[158]

Žižek does not read Gal 3.28 as suggesting the eradication of all divisions. Rather, Gal 3.28 describes a new and fundamental division, which serves to relativise and undermine the old divisions:

> 'the shattering point is that truth is unilateral, that universal truth, no less universal for that reason, is accessible only from an engaged position'.[159]

Gal 3.28 is read not as a liberal eradication of division, but the foundation of a new perspective of division ('in Christ') from which Paul writes. The starting point of Žižek's reading is the phrase 'in Christ'. He does not point to the baptismal context of this passage (Gal 3.27). He does not read the social strata, which being 'in Christ' overcomes as pointing to the liberal inclusiveness of this passage. Rather, the negations of Gal 3.28 are as understood as claims for the non-being of lives outside of Christ altogether: 'you are not even people'.[160]

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155 Žižek, *Belief* , 143.
156 Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable', 165.
157 Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable', 165.
158 Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 35.
159 Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 35. We can note the manner in which such a reading of Gal 3.28 contrasts with the way in which the passage had been understood in the *Slant* movement as pointing to the overcoming of divisions such as those of race and class. See Unascribed, 'Slant on Heenan on race' in *Slant 21 (4.3)* (June-July 1968) 2.
160 Žižek, in Delpech-Ramey, 'Interview', 35.

We have seen that such a reading of Gal 3.28 is not one that we might expect of a liberal inclusivist. Žižek's reading, in fact, bears more similarities to a Christian exclusivism. It would perhaps be more surprising that a liberal inclusivist reading of Gal 3.28 be found in Žižek's work, given his alignment with non-liberal political theory, which we have seen above has been a feature of his entire career. His political interest in developing an alternative to global capitalism sees his reading of Gal 3.28 applied in this direction. Žižek finds the conceptual problem of the relationship between the 'included' and the 'excluded', which he found at the heart of Gal 3.28, also to be the 'crucial' antagonism within 'today's global capitalism'.[161]

The importance of Gal 3.28 here is its argument that 'ethnic roots, national identities, etc. are *not a category of truth*'.[162] We see that Žižek shares with Badiou an interest in the theory of truth which may be derived from the Pauline text. Moreover, the theme of the relationship between universalism and ethnicity is discussed elsewhere in Žižek's biblical interpretation, and bears consideration here.

[161] Žižek, *Farce*, 91; cf. 98. He lists the other three as ecological, private (intellectual) property, socio-political ethical implications of scientific interventions.
[162] Žižek, *Farce*, 104.

Žižek reads the discussion of the make-up of Christ's family in Matthew 12.46 – 50 alongside an allusion to the logic of Paul's discussion of the make-up of Israel in Romans 9 – 11.[163] He describes this logic as the 'transubstantiation' of the Jews from a particular nation into a universal family of believers. We see the image of family membership acts as the bridge which causes Žižek to read Matt 12.46 – 50 alongside Romans 9 – 11. Here, the universal is:

> 'sustained by the emergence of the singular subjectivity extracted from its particular group'.[164]

Žižek understands both Matt 12.46 – 50 and Romans 9-11 as describing the process by which universality is achieved. A particular unit (the family, or Israel, or 'in Christ') is transfigured into a universal (anyone or all) which maintains a singular subjectivity (the language of family). Davis describes this process:

> 'The universal is effectively reduced to the mode of particularity, whereas the particular, seen in its exceptionality (which cannot fit into the coordinates of the law/prohibition/transgression matrix) as divine grace, paradoxically becomes the foundation of a universality'.[165]

[163] This is an important reminder that Žižek's Scriptural engagement is not limited to a reading of Paul. Matt 12.46 – 50: 'While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” [Ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος τοῖς ὄχλοις ἰδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτοῦ εἱστήκεισαν ἔξω ζητοῦντες αὐτῷ λαλῆσαι. εἶπεν δέ τις αὐτῷ· ἰδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ σου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί σου ἔξω ἑστήκασιν ζητοῦντές σοι λαλῆσαι. ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν τῷ λέγοντι αὐτῷ· τίς ἐστιν ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ τίνες εἰσὶν οἱ ἀδελφοί μου; καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς μαθητὰς αὐτοῦ εἶπεν· ἰδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ μου καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοί μου. ὅστις γὰρ ἂν ποιήσῃ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς αὐτός μου ἀδελφὸς καὶ ἀδελφὴ καὶ μήτηρ ἐστίν].

[164] Žižek, 'Dialectical', 252.

[165] Davis, 'Subtraction', 102.

This process is a central feature of Žižek's Pauline interpretation. Žižek describes the universal, which is derived from the particular, as the 'Pauline collective'.[166] The themes which we have seen as central to Žižek's reading of Paul culminate in the process of universalism. The place of 'love' in this collective is essential, since Žižek holds that Christian love (agape) is that which:

> 'enjoins us to 'unplug' from the organic community into which we were born'.[167]

Gal 3.28 is once again referred to as an example of this process.[168] Moreover, the 'exclusive' nature of this universalism is once again asserted. Žižek contrasts this not only to liberal universalism, but also the prevailing attitude of the Christian Church:

> 'institutionalized Christianity ... wants to have its cake and eat it: the tension between the particular and the universal is lost, the universal frame of the community of believers turns into a kind of protective umbrella of our particular groups, the disruptive aspect of universality is obliterated'.[169]

[166] Žižek, 'Dialectical', 295.
[167] Žižek, *Fragile*, 111.
[168] Žižek, *Fragile*, 111.
[169] Žižek, 'Dialectical', 252.

4.8 Why Paul?

In this section we turn to raise the question of 'why Paul?'. We consider the reasons for Žižek's recent interest in the Pauline text and evaluate an influential account of Žižek's Pauline turn. The reasons for Žižek's interest in Paul, and the interest of contemporary political philosophy in the Apostle more generally, is a matter of intense debate. In scholarly reception, we have encountered above the argument that Paul provides legitimation for a failing leftist political project. For these reasons the readings of the 'New Moment' have been charged with 'appropriating' the Pauline text.[170] Crossley suggests that for Žižek, and the Left more generally, Paul fulfils the need for:

> 'a credible figure for Marxist thinkers after the not-particularly-credible Marxism associated with the Stalin and Mao'.[171]

Crossley suggests Pauline themes which might be reasons for Žižek's attraction to the Apostle. He notes Paul's anti-imperialism may be attractive as an analogy to the theme of anti-capitalism on the contemporary left.[172] He also suggests that parallel between Marxism and other "religions" 'has something to it' which he does not go on to specify.[173] Most of these suggestions are of a summary and cursory nature. As for Badiou and Eagleton, we may also question just how "credible" Paul is as a thinker in a leftist context which can be hostile to religious figures and whose commonly regarded misogyny and homophobia may render him just as *in*credible.[174]

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[170] See §§1.3-4.

[171] Crossley, *Reading*, 106.

[172] Crossley, *Reading*, 99; cf. Žižek, *Farce*, 16: 'There is a real possibility that the main victim of the the ongoing crisis will not be capitalism, but the Left itself, insofar as its inability to offer a viable global alternative was again made visible to everyone'. On anti-Imperialism see chapter 2 n. 34 above.

[173] Crossley, *Reading,* 106.

[174] On a related topic Caputo notes that the appeal in these works to passages such as Gal 3.28 is because they contain 'exactly what we want Paul to say, we being democratic, fair-minded pluralists' [Caputo, 'Postcards', 1]. Such a criticism cannot be levelled against these figures who are on the (radical) Left, since the radical Left is precisely seeking to challenge this pluralist liberal-democratic hegemony. Note Badiou's stance against the proliferation of particularist-identities in Badiou, *Universalism,* 10. See also Žižek, *Defence,* 404-5; *Ticklish*, 209; *Belief*, 1; cf. Žižek, *Plague,* 33; Žižek, *Opera's Second Death,* 143. Moreover, Žižek's exegesis of, for example, Gal 3.28 tends against such a modern inclusivism: 'What is perceived here as the problem is precisely the Christian *universalism*: what this all inclusive attitude ... involves is a thorough

There is an important account of Žižek's turn to Paul by Roland Boer, which we now consider. This account broadly agrees with the prevailing narrative that sees Žižek's turn to Paul as a means to shore up his leftist political philosophy. However, this account is particularly (and, as our example from Crossley has shown, unusually) precise about the reasons and circumstances for the start of Žižek's engagement with Paul. Boer suggests that the turn to Paul is a necessary step for Žižek's development of a more sophisticated form of Marxism.[175] Boer has argued that Žižek's attraction to early Christianity, and to Paul in particular, is because of the challenge posed by Butler and Laclau in the volume which was published as *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality.*[176] Žižek begins his engagement with Paul's text as a means to answer these challenges.

The challenges to Žižek must be briefly spelled out. Butler holds that Žižek succeeds only in 'showing us how power compels us to consent to that which constrains us' but fails to 'demonstrate how one moves beyond such a dialectical reversal to something new'.[177] Laclau notes that Žižek's political thought remains 'fixed in very traditional categories'.[178] According to Boer's thesis, Žižek turns to Paul against Butler as a means to demonstrate the possibility of a new intervention in the political sphere (via the Pauline break), and turns to Paul against Laclau as the means of developing a more sophisticated form of Marxism, and Marxist thought, mediated via Leninism. Boer holds that Žižek turns to Lenin as a means of demonstrating a more sophisticated form of Marxism *pace* Laclau.

exclusion of those who do not accept inclusion into the Christian community... Christian universalism tendentiously excludes non-believers from the very universality of humankind' [Žižek, *Belief*, 143 – 144].

175 Boer, *Criticism of Heaven*, 335 – 390; cf. 'Limits'. For the problems Boer's evidence for this position see below.

176 Boer, 'Limits'; *Criticism of Heaven*, 335 – 390

177 Butler, 'Restaging', 29.

178 Laclau, E., 'Structure, History and the Political' in Butler, Laclau, Žižek, *Contingency*, 182 – 212, 206.

The period after *CHU* does see an increased interest in Lenin's writings on the part of Žižek.[179] However, there are a number of problems with Boer's thesis. It is the case that *On Belief* the first book Žižek publishes after *CHU* does seek to demonstrate the possibility of breaking 'the liberal-democratic hegemony', breaking 'out of this deadlock' and to resuscitate a radical politics of a Leninist form.[180] Žižek therefore may answer both Butler and Laclau in a single move. A turn to Leninism, may provide him with both a more sophisticated form of Marxist category (to answer Laclau), and also a means to break out of the deadlock of liberal-democratic hegemony (to answer Butler). However, whilst the language of liberal-democratic hegemony used here is reminiscent of the confrontation in *CHU*, he nowhere refers to either Butler or Laclau in *On Belief.* Moreover, the theme of breaking out of this non-democratic hegemony is one found in Žižek's work before the challenge made by Butler:

> 'only a repoliticization of our predicament can break the vicious cycle of liberal globalization destined to engender the most regressive forms of fundamentalist hatred'.[181]

It does not seem that Žižek turns to Paul as a means of answering the challenge of Butler. Rather, the means of breaking out of such a deadlock seems to be an already existing, and independent interest, of Žižek's.

[179] Žižek, *Repeating*; Žižek, 'Two Revolutions'; Žižek, 'Lenin's Choice'.
[180] Žižek, *Belief,* 1 – 2.
[181] Žižek, S., 'For a leftist appropriation of the European legacy' in *Journal of Political Ideologies 3.1* (1998) 63 – 78.

We must continue to explore whether Žižek's turn to Paul, via a turn to Lenin, is a means to answer the criticism of Laclau. Boer claims that:

> 'Žižek the Leninist emerges because of these debates [with Laclau], but he could only become a Leninist with and by means of Paul in the New Testament'.[182]

There are problems with Boer's thesis. Firstly, we can point to evidence of Žižek's Leninism before the Laclau encounter.[183] Secondly, Žižek even ends his first essay in the *CHU* encounter (before the responses of Butler and Laclau) by asking 'Lenin's old question 'what is to be done?'.[184] Moreover, in *The Fragile Absolute,* published at the same time as *CHU,* Žižek is already aware of the importance of a Leninist Marxism, before he has the chance to respond to the challenges posed by *CHU* to his work:

> 'there is no 'authentic Marx' that can be approached directly, bypassing Lenin'.[185]

It does not seem that Laclau's challenge lead Žižek towards Lenin. Therefore, Boer's thesis does not hold. Žižek does not turn toward Lenin as a result of Laclau's challenge.

It only remains to be seen whether Žižek turns to Lenin by means of Paul, even if this turn is not in response to Laclau's challenge. Žižek does parallel Lenin to Paul as a figure of 'externality' in relation to a founding figure.[186] Žižek parallels not only Lenin to Marx and Paul to Christ , but also Lacan to Freud. The political need for a 'return to Lenin' is described in terms which draw upon the relationship between Paul and Christ for support:

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[182] Boer, 'Limits', 10-1; cf. *Criticism of Heaven*, 335 – 389.

[183] Žižek: 'It is only the Leninist revolutionary … who thus occupies the properly perverse position of the pure instrument of historical Necessity made accessible by means of scientific knowledge.' [Žižek, *Ticklish,* 192]. Further: 'a true Leninist, is not, however, afraid to pass to the act and bear all the consequences, unpleasant as these may be, of realizing a political project ... a Leninist is, like a conservative, authentic in the sense of fully assuming the consequences of his politics, of being fully aware of what it actually means to take power and exert it' [Žižek, *Ticklish,* 236].

[184] Žižek, 'Struggle', 127.

[185] Žižek, *Fragile*, xxx.

[186] cf. Badiou, *Universalism,* 10; Oosterling, H., 'From Russia With Love: Avoiding the Subject: *Why is Žižek's St Paul a Leninist?*' in *Bijdragen, International Journal in Philosophy and Theology 70* (2009) 236 – 253 identifies Žižek's Paul as a Leninist *tout court,* an identification based on Žižek's perceived need 'to reinforce the very thought that the present co-ordinates of the system radically need to be changed' [Oosterling, 'Russia', 252]. Such a reduction of Žižek's Paul into a simple Leninist seems a step beyond the parallelism which we have identified (not least as it fails to highlight the psychoanalytic features of Žižek's Pauline reading).

> 'it is only possible to retrieve the theory's original impulse from this external position in the exact same way St. Paul who formulated the basic tenets of Christianity, was not part of Christ's inner circle'.[187]

This external position shows Žižek's awareness of Paul's disputed apostleship.[188] He describes the consequences of the relationship which Paul, Lenin and Lacan each have to their founding figures. He also notes that it generates a need to 'displace' the thought of the founding figure in order to 'reinscribe the original teaching into a different context'.[189] The result is that the thought of the founding figure undergoes 'universalisation'.[190] By 'universalisation', Žižek means the 'violent displacement' of the founding figure which:

> 'tears his theory out of original context, placing it in another historical moment'.[191]

'Displacement' enables the thought of the founding figure to be expressed within a wider context. The readings of these figures interest Žižek as they are engaged in a similar project to himself. They are each attempting a 'displacement' or 'repetition' of a body of thought in a contemporary context. Displacement is at the heart of Žižek's political aim, since:

> 'it aims neither at nostalgically reenacting the "good old revolutionary times", nor the opportunistic-pragmatic *adjustment* of the old program to "new conditions", but at *repeating*, in the present world-wide conditions... as intervening in the present global situation from the standpoint of repressed truth'.[192]

It is the process of such 'displacement' of thought, and the ability it brings to intervene on a contemporary situation, which first attracts Žižek to early Christian thought:

> 'what Christianity did with regard to the Roman Empire, this global "multiculturalist" polity, we should do with regard to today's Empire'.[193]

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[187] Žižek, *Belief*, 2; cf. *Belief,* 1.
[188] cf. 1 Cor 9.5; Gal 1.15-17.
[189] The term 'displacement' may sound odd given the Pauline emphasis on 'commission'. However, that these terms need not be opposed for Žižek is seen in his description of Freud and Jung: 'Freud was aware of this necessity [of entrusting community survival to an external figure], which is why he put his trust in a non-Jew, and outsider – Jung – to break out of this closed circle of community based on initiation through wisdom' [Žižek *Belief*, 2; cf. *Fragile*, 91].
[190] Žižek, *Belief,* 2.
[191] Žižek, *Belief*, 2.
[192] Žižek, *Belief*, 4 – 5.
[193] Žižek, *Belief*, 1.

Boer's thesis does not hold. It is not that Lenin becomes an attractive figure for Žižek because of his parallels to Paul. Rather, Paul becomes a figure of interest for Žižek *because* of his parallels with Lenin as an 'external' figure in relation to a founding figure.[194] It is not that Žižek becomes first attracted to Paul, and then to Lenin. Instead, Žižek is aware first of the importance of the relationship between Lenin and Marx and *then* discovers:

> '*there is no Christ outside Saint Paul*; in exactly the same way'.[195]

[194] Žižek is not the first figure on the left to make comparisons between Lenin and Paul. See Alinsky, S., *Rules for Radicals: A Pragmatic Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House 1971) 20; cf. Boyarin, 'Antiphilosophers', 110, 121.

[195] Žižek, *Fragile*, xxx. It should also be noted that Žižek is not the first Marxist-influenced thinker to find an attraction in Paul. See, for example, Engels: 'I should like to see the old "International" who can read, for example, the so-called Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians [cf. 2 Cor 8-9] without old-wounds re-opening, at least in one respect. The whole epistle, from chapter eight onwards, echoes the eternal, and oh! so well-known complaint: les cotisations ne rentrent pas -- contributions are not coming in! How many of the most zealous propagandists of the sixties would sympathizingly squeeze the hand of the author of that epistle, whoever he may be, and whisper: "So it was like that with you too!" We too – Corinthians were legion in our Association – can sing a song about contributions not coming in but tantalizing us as they floated elusively before our eyes.' in Engels, F., 'On The History of Early Christianity' in Marx, K., Engels, F., *On Religion* (New York: Dover Publications 2008) 316 – 383 [orig. in *Die Neue Zeit 1* (1894 – 1895) 4 – 13; 36 – 43]; cf. Engels, F., 'Bruno Bauer and Early Christianity' in Marx, Engels, *Religion,* 194 – 204 [orig. *Der Sozialdemokrat*, May 4 and 11, 1882]; Kautsky, K., *Foundations of Christianity: A Study in Christian Origins* (London: Orbach and Chambers 1925) [orig. *Der Ursprung des Christentums* (Stuttgart: Verlag von J.H.W. Dietz Nachf 1908)]. This is not restricted to the communist left. See, for example, Alinsky, S., *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Random House 1969) xv [orig. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1946)]; Alinsky, *Rules,* 20, 152. cf. 'the revolutionary force('s)... young protagonists are one moment reminiscent of the idealistic early Christians' [Alinsky, *Rules*, xiii]. Alinksy's epistolary relationship with the Catholic theologian Jacques Maritain and Saul Alinsky is an important example of an earlier confrontation between Catholic theological enquiry and the project of a non-Christian radical. See Alinsky, S., Maritain, J., *The Philosopher and the Provocateur: The Correspondence of Jacques Maritain and Saul Alinsky* (Doering, B. ed.) (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1994).

4. 9 Conclusion

It comes for us to conclude our reading of Žižek's Paul. Žižek is himself suspicious of the cheap appropriation of discourses for some other end.[196] We should therefore be surprised to find him engaged in a similar activity with regard to the text of Paul. Why does Žižek turn to Paul?

The reasons for Žižek's interest in Paul are bound up with the contours of the Pauline system Žižek uncovers. These contours are identified by Žižek as those needed for the construction of a contemporary political project of the sort to which Žižek is committed:

> 'What is missing today is – to put it in philosophico-theological terms – a privileged link of the Idea to a singular historical moment (in the same way that, in Christianity, the whole eternal divine edifice stands and falls with the contingent event of the birth and death of Christ)'.[197]

We can observe the influence of Badiou on Žižek here with the application of the term 'event' to a singular historical moment which is central to his understanding of Christianity. However, we noted above (§4.3), the centrality of the Crucifixion in Žižek's rendering of Christianity. The focus of his reading therefore differs from that of Badiou. This will become important in our comparison below of the three thinkers who make up the objects of study in this thesis.[198] Unlike Badiou, Žižek does not focus on the Resurrection but on the Crucifixion. In an Hegelian move this becomes the site of the death of God and beginning of the collective of Holy Spirit. This process features in Žižek's Pauline reading around the sort of universalism that obtains in this 'collective'.

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[196] Žižek, *Farce*, 37: 'This disgusting spectacle of cheap moralization is an ideological operation if there ever was one: the compulsion (to expand) inscribed into the system itself'.
[197] Žižek, *Farce,* 126.
[198] See §5.3.

We noted above that Žižek, like Badiou, claims not to be interested in the content of the Pauline proclamation.[199] We saw how he claimed to be interested only in the formal structure of Christianity. It is significant therefore that we find Žižek's reading of Paul contradicts these claims. We find that his reading of Paul reveals an interest in the content of the Pauline text, which we would therefore not expect. Our survey of Pauline passages and themes has revealed that Žižek displays an interest not only in the form of Paul's thought, but also in its context. For example, we saw him explore the nature of Christian universalism with reference to Gal 3.28, and explore the relationship between love and knowledge with reference to 1 Cor 13.

In his reading of Romans 7, Žižek for the most part reflects his intellectual debt to Lacan by way of the psychoanalytical register in which the text is read. This psychoanalytical reading of Romans 7.7 is one that we have already seen is shared with the recent Pauline reading of Eagleton. However, Žižek both goes further than a purely Lacanian psychoanalytical interest in his reading of Romans 7. He moves from a psychoanalytical to a soteriological register. He begins to read the cycle described in Romans 7 with regards to the soteriological questions it raises. This is significant as it sees Žižek move beyond a psychoanalytical acceptance of such a cycle, to a discussion of how this cycle might be overcome. Žižek's reading of Romans 7, and his application of themes from psychoanalysis, gives us an example of another intellectual discipline being put to use to illuminate the biblical text by providing a conceptual apparatus with which to criticise the text. The use of psychoanalysis to illuminate the biblical text is not confined to Žižek.[200] Moreover, the use of such conceptual apparatus is nothing new.[201]

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[199] See §4.3.

[200] See Boyle, K., 'Whose Apocalyptic Ruses? Derrida, Psychoanalysis, and Biblical Criticism' in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture 4.1* (Fall 2006) 1 – 20.

[201] cf. Rowland, C., 'Reading the New Testament Sociologically: An Introduction' in *Theology 88* (1985) 358 – 364.

Finally, we refuted Boer's suggestion that it is through Butler, Laclau and, ultimately, Lenin that Žižek arrives at Paul. We found it more likely that his reading of Badiou's text reignited his awareness of the Apostle. The engagement with Badiou's text we saw on the pages of *The Ticklish Subject* brought Žižek back into contact with the Pauline text. We note that detailed readings of Paul follow in the wake of his reading of Badiou's Paul almost immediately.

We are concerned with the reception of Paul by Žižek. We have noted a substantial increase in Žižek's reading of Paul since that early 1991 engagement (in the course of which Žižek cited no single passage of the Pauline corpus explicitly). The more detailed readings of passages which he has recently produced betray an increased activity of reading on Žižek's part. They thus function as genuine readings. However, it is significant that Žižek often presents conclusions of his reading of Paul without presenting the exegetical detail on the page. We have noted that a number of passages are cited without reference or as mere allusions. This is not evidence that Žižek does not genuinely read the Pauline text. The extent of his engagement is evidence enough to suggest that he does, in fact, read the Apostle 'even though he does not perform the close reading before our eyes'.[202]

The features of this reading practice are a thoroughgoing refusal to historicise. Žižek does not isolate meaning to the historical context of the text, nor prioritise a putative "original" context of Paul's letter.[203] Instead, he brings the content of Pauline thought to bear to a number of contemporary contexts and problems. We have argued that it is because of the ability of the Pauline text to be brought to bear to such problems (through a conflation of Paul's and Žižek's own conceptual concerns) that Žižek is at all interested in the Pauline text.

[202] Boyarin, D., 'Paul among the Antiphilosophers; or, Saul among the Sophists' in Caputo, Alcoff (eds.), *Paul Among*, 112.
[203] cf. Žižek, 'Concluding', 178.

This persistent refusal to historicise holds an important mirror to the historical-critical study of the New Testament. In a discussion about his reading of Paul, Žižek argued (and by that reading demonstrated) that those historical-critics who have criticised his reading for not historicising, paradoxically themselves fail to historicise far enough.[204] In this paradoxical statement, Žižek refers to readings that refuse to apply the Pauline text to contemporary concerns, but instead isolate meaning to a reconstructed "original" historical framework. He suggests that a thoroughgoing historical-criticism, which fetishistically maintains an historical framework as the only proper frame of reference for the interpretation of Paul, itself belies an historical ignorance of the contingency of the very mode of criticism with which it approaches the text.[205] If historical-critics were to historicise further they would permit non-historical interpretations of the text, once they realised that their own focus on the original context was itself an historical phenomenon of the tradition of Biblical studies in which they stand:

> '[historical-critical readers of Paul] don't really historicise enough, in the sense that they don't historicize the very conceptual apparatus that they use when they analyze'.[206]

Our consideration of Gadamer's thought above introduced us to the impact of the tradition and situation from which the interpreter approaches the text on the reading produced. [207] Žižek's reading, and the reflection on the historical method that he and his reading of Paul have encouraged, reminds us that this also holds true for mainstream historical-critical scholarship. The practitioners of such historical criticism are themselves unable to get beyond the traditions and situations from which they approach the text. As Bockmuehl notes:

> 'when all is said and done, it may be that progress amounts to rather less than meets the eye. Even supposedly cutting-edge scholarship on Paul... involves a greater element of appearance and fashion than its practitioners like to think'.[208]

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[204] Žižek, 'Concluding', 178.
[205] See §2.8.
[206] Žižek, 'Concluding', 178.
[207] See §1.5.
[208] Bockmuehl, *Remembered*, 36.

What conclusions can we draw from this? If a consistent reading practice can be observed (even if the details of that reading process are not always spelt out), and a sustained attempt to follow the text of the Apostle can be evidenced, as it appears to us above, then we might be open to new of ways of reading the Apostle which might be very different from the conventions of the *Society of Biblical Literature*.[209]

What we have said thus far pre-empts many of the themes of our conclusion. It is sufficient here to note one result of Žižek's reading of Paul. Žižek's reading enables us to see the historical-critical method as one, but by no means the inevitable, way of reading the New Testament. As such, the contingency of our chosen method must constantly be at the forefront of our engagement with the text. Žižek, in characteristic style, may have the last word. He reminds us of Lacan's division of the contemporary intellectual environment into the (left-wing) fools, who question the existing state of things, and the (right-wing) knaves, who take the 'mere existence of the given order as an argument for it'.[210] We must avoid becoming like those knaves.

[209] cf. Jennings, 'Sons', 87. On the 'uneasiness' of the 'Society of Biblical Literature' about these philosophical readings generally, see §1.4 above.
[210] Žižek, *Fantasies,* 54f.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Why Paul?

> *'Saint Paul's Epistle is a work that I recommend to you for your vacation reading, you will find it very good company'.*[1]

In what follows we bring together the threads of our investigation. This conclusion will seek to draw attention to features neglected in the more specific conclusions of the above chapters. Those conclusions will be referred to where necessary. The question that occupies us in this section is the question: 'why Paul?' We have observed above that the question 'why Paul?' cannot be separated from the question 'why Paul now?'

We have seen that in the case of Eagleton, the 'turn' to Paul is in fact a re-turn to themes and ideas that occupied him during his earlier engagement with Paul mediated via Eagleton's association with the Catholic left. His 'turn' to Paul as part of the 'New Moment' is revealed to be an opportunistic one generated by the readings of the Apostle by Badiou, Žižek and others.

Similarly, whilst the language of 're-turn' to Paul is strictly not appropriate as an explanation for Žižek's Pauline engagement, we have witnessed that his engagement with the Apostle pre-dates his association with the 'New Moment'. It is via the reading of Badiou that Žižek's engagement with Apostle is extended and expanded to the point of his inclusion in this 'New Moment'.

[1] Lacan, *Ethics,* 83.

In Badiou's case, it is more difficult than in the cases of Žižek and Eagleton to isolate his interest in the Apostle to the influence of a single figure or figures. However, we have also been able to note that his engagement is in fact a longer-lasting one than the publication of *Universalism* suggests, as the *Incident at Antioch* indicates. We saw above that Taubes' 'earlier' turn to Paul cannot be used to explain Badiou's reading of the Apostle. Badiou shows no awareness of Taubes' reading of Paul. There is therefore no obvious proximate cause for Badiou's turn to Paul.

A common conclusion of each of our surveys has been that Badiou, Eagleton, and Žižek all demonstrate a longer engagement with the Apostle than the prevailing scholarly narrative indicates or is suggested by the epithet 'New'. The first evidence of the text of Paul being read by each pre-dates the standard dating of the 'New Moment'. This suggests that the search for any proximate cause for the 'Newness' of this 'New Moment' may be found wanting. Our study has revealed that for each of our thinkers, Paul's 'New Moment' is in no strict sense 'New' at all.

This has implications for accounts of the general turn to religion, which, as we have seen, have been advanced in contemporary theory. In respect of engagement with Paul, it begins to look much less of a sudden 'turn', and much more the emergence of a theme of study that was there in more or less nascent terms all along. An engagement with Paul has only begun to emerge more visibly in recent enquiry (if it went away at all).[2]

[2] In this sense our study has found that the notion of the 'new visibility' of religion in Hoezl, Ward (eds.), *Visibility* is a good one, as it shares this sense of making apparent or visible what was there all along.

This has implications for those accounts of the 'New Moment', which reduce the reasons for Paul's being an object of study to a set of contingent circumstances based on the fortunes of leftist or cultural thought. Such accounts mostly assume that the recent 'turn to Paul' on the part of our thinkers is their first engagement with the Apostle. These accounts then move to consider what it is that causes this first engagement and suggest reasons why these thinkers may, all of a sudden, be interested in Paul. On the contrary, we have observed in each case that the 'turn to Paul' is, in fact, an extension and renewal of a pre-existent engagement with the Apostle. The reasons for such a renewal must therefore be found. This feature of the 'New Moment' is also overlooked by those who explain this 'turn to Paul' as a negative appropriation of the Pauline text based on the need for intellectual legitimacy.

An important contribution of this thesis is the discovery that the question we must ask is not why these thinkers have begun reading Paul. Instead, this thesis has discovered that the question we must ask is why these thinkers have returned to reading Paul with renewed vigour. The question we must ask is why do Badiou, Eagleton, and Žižek return to Paul now? Why do they commit themselves to reading the Apostle with renewed vigour? This question is not easy to answer.

We have noted that the most substantial difference between the reading of Paul we found in the early theological engagement of Eagleton and the reading of Paul that has been a feature of Eagleton's recent work concern the Pauline passages on law. Eagleton's recent engagement with Paul sees Eagleton reading these passages alongside themes taken from psychoanalysis. He now reinscribes these Pauline passages into terms taken from Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical theory. This is especially the case in his reading of the psychology of sin as it is found in Romans 7. The difference between the Paul of Eagleton's early and recent output is therefore the presence of this psychoanalytical register of interpretation. This is important because it means we can observe an interest in psychoanalysis in all three of our figures in their recent engagement with Paul.

Each of the figures of the 'New Moment' whom we have been investigating are in or, in the case of Eagleton, have their reading influenced by, this psychoanalytical tradition of engagement with Paul. The start of such engagement with the Apostle may have a claim to be responsible for the start of the turn to Paul more generally, and provide reasons for this renewed interest in the text of the Apostle in their work. Jennings identifies a potential starting point of Paul's 'New Moment' along precisely these lines. He notes that:

> 'the philosophical or at least secular retrieval of Paul... seems actually to begin in a lecture delivered by Jacques Lacan two days before Christmas of 1959 as part of a seminar on the Ethics of Psychoanalysis'.[3]

This would give us an approximate date for the start of Paul's 'New Moment' beyond that of the standard narrative of Paul's 'New Moment', which has this 'Moment' beginning through Taubes in 1987. We discussed (and rejected) the prevailing scholarly narrative in §1.1 above.

[3] Jennings, 'Sons', 91. Lacan, *Ethics*. We refer to this reading of Romans 7 in §4.7 above. We, with Jennings, see the legacy of Lacan's use of Paul here in part bears fruit in this recent Pauline moment. Vahanian goes further suggesting that Lacanian theory (particularly in its linguistic turn viz. the Saussurean relationship between the signifier and the signified, which Lacan takes over and modifies giving primacy to the signifier) may itself find basis in a Pauline system: 'could it be that Paul has already discovered [the primacy of the signifier over the signified in Christ]?' [Vahanian, 'Utopianism', 128].

Taubes himself does, however, enable us to make an important observation about the psychoanalytical tradition of Pauline interpretation. He reminds us that the psychoanalytical engagement with Paul itself predates Lacan's Seminar of 1959. This means that the tradition of psychoanalytical interpretation of Paul begins earlier than even Jennings would have us believe. In 1957 Taubes writes:

> 'Never since Paul and Augustine has a theologian taught a more radical doctrine of original guilt than Freud'.[4]

We encountered Freud's interest in ancient Judaism in the discussion of Žižek's account of Judaism above.[5] Taubes reflects further on the relationship between Freud and Paul in his *Political Theology*:

> 'Freud so to speak enters into the role of Paul, of the Paul who supposedly brings redemption only phantasmatically, while Freud realizes it through this new method of healing which is not only an individual method, but also a theory of culture'.[6]

It is ironic that, as the text commonly lauded as inaugurating Paul's 'New Moment', Taubes' *Political Theology* itself points back to yet another forerunner in the tradition of interpretation in which our readers of Paul stand. A recognition of the influence of the psychoanalytic tradition of Pauline interpretation once again calls into the question the 'Newness' of the 'Moment' with which we are concerned.

Two reasons suggest themselves for the sustained engagement with Paul on the part of Badiou and Žižek (and, in turn, Eagleton). The first is that the Lacanian tradition in which Badiou and Žižek stand is already aware of Paul, and in particular, of Romans 7 through Lacan's *Ethics*. However, this is not an exhaustive explanation. It does not explain Eagleton's initial engagement, or the reasons Badiou and Žižek have demonstrated such sustained engagement with the Pauline text.

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4 Taubes, J., 'Religion and the Future of Psychoanalysis (1957)' in Taubes, *Cult*, 334 – 343, 337.
5 §§4.3-4.
6 Taubes, *Theology*, 95.

The second reason is the text of Paul itself. The Pauline epistles themselves provide the reason for the sustained engagements we have surveyed. The search for a reason behind this Pauline turn need not go beyond the Pauline text. We do not need to seek an external explanation for a Pauline reading based on the circumstances of leftist thought or some important forerunner. It is possible that the search for forerunners may be traced back almost *ad Paulum* if narratives of sudden turns are not too quickly and carelessly posited. Moreover, such a search tacitly presupposes that the Pauline texts themselves are not sufficient grounds for the interest of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek. To search for such reasons for their initial interest suggests that there must be some other reason for the interest in Paul, on the part of those who are non-Christians or non-Pauline scholars (those we have seen referred to as being of 'legitimate descent'), beyond simply the meaning that these readers find in the Apostle's text.

We can thus point to an answer to the question 'why Paul?' which takes seriously these figures as *readers* of Paul. It suggests that the attraction of Paul is based not on any external reason or proximate cause for a sudden turn, but in the meaning of the Pauline text for these readers. It should not come as a surprise that the Pauline text can generate interest, as Sigurdson notes:

> 'One reason for the interest in Paul's epistles could be that they must count as "classics" in Gadamer's sense'.[7]

This aspect of our conclusion is surprisingly modest. However, as we shall see in the next section, the arena of New Testament interpretation is a contested space. Those who have considered themselves guardians of the meaning of the New Testament have been keen to assert (by way of the charge of appropriation) that the 'New Moment' constitutes anything but a reading. It is to that charge we now turn.

[7] Sigurdson, 'Reading', 237.

5.2 How Paul?

We have suggested that Paul and the Pauline text are of interest to Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek because of what each of these readers of Paul understands the Pauline text to mean. This conclusion is contingent upon one obvious condition: namely that these thinkers do in fact *read* the Apostle. In order for us to assert this condition, we must have evidence that this is the case. The previous pages stand as evidence for the engagement with the Apostle and that they do in fact read the text of Paul.

We noted in our introduction above, however, that a charge of 'appropriation' has been levelled against the readings of Paul that make up this 'New Moment'.[8] We noted that the charge had been made against the readings of the 'New Moment' in such a way as to suggest that the thinkers of the 'New Moment' are not, in fact, 'reading' Paul at all. We spelled out a more hermeneutically sensitive understanding of 'appropriation' in order to demonstrate that 'appropriation' does not preclude a genuine reading of the text.

In what follows, we first observe the ways in which the charge of 'appropriation' has been levelled against the 'New Moment'. Those who have levelled this charge understand 'appropriation' as ruling out a genuine reading of a text. We explore whether the readings of Paul, which have been our focus, demonstrate this kind of appropriation, and whether this precludes genuine reading. We then remind ourselves of the definition of 'appropriation' we arrived at in our introduction above. We move to conclude whether either or any form of 'appropriation' has been observed in our study of the Pauline engagement of Badiou, Eagleton, and Žižek.

[8] See §1.4.

The charge of 'appropriation' has been made against the readings of the 'New Moment' in three ways:

- 'appropriation' in respect of intended end
- 'appropriation' in respect of legitimacy
- 'appropriation' in respect of frame of reference.

Firstly, we find the charge of 'appropriation' in respect of intended end. 'Appropriation' in this sense is understood as the explicit application of a reading of the Pauline text to an end other than the exposition of the Apostle for its own sake. Bockmuehl, for example, considers the readings of the 'New Moment' as 'appropriations *in the service of* continental political philosophy'.[9] According to this understanding of 'appropriation', the readings of the 'New Moment' are appropriations because they are 'in the service of' an intellectual discourse beyond the “simple” exposition of the New Testament. This understanding of 'appropriation' assumes that an appropriative engagement is one with some wider end to which the text of Paul is applied.[10] This is related to the charge of legitimation or 'borrowing authority' where the reason for the application of the text to this other end is to secure authority from the Pauline text.[11] We have already discussed the problems with this claim by questioning the appropriateness of Paul as a source of legitimacy for the readers of the 'New Moment'.

[9] Bockmuehl, *Remembered,* 36.

[10] cf. Benson, 'Continental' 429: 'Žižek is seeking a way to appropriate Christianity for his own distinctive Marxist cause. In the same way that Žižek freely appropriates from Christianity, so Alain Badiou freely appropriates from Saint Paul.'

[11] Fredricksen, 'Concluding Roundtable', 178.

We have seen that each of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek read the text in the service of their wider intellectual project. For example, Badiou reads Paul as part of his attempt to develop a theory of truth and explore the conditions of universalism. We saw above the manner in which Žižek reads Paul's thought as a contribution to a new global political project. It would seem that the charge of 'appropriation' in this sense therefore does hold. However, we must consider whether 'appropriation' in this sense precludes genuine reading.

It is difficult to conceive of any reading which does not also have some other end as its aim beyond mere exposition. This is the case even within the highly politicised field of New Testament Studies itself.[12] Young has noted that even the historical method has seen:

> 'not infrequently ... different prior agendas produced contradictory conclusions. So the historical method turned out not to bring agreement about objective truth after all'.[13]

Reading almost always occurs in the context of an end or agenda beyond mere exposition, even in the most doggedly historical-critical of readings. Williams notes that historical study is itself driven by present concerns and that historical readings are therefore made 'in the service of' an understanding of the present:

> 'We don't have a single grid for history; we construct it when we want to resolve certain problems about who we are now... when you sense that you cannot take for granted that things are the same, you begin to write history, to organise the collective memory so that breaches may be mended and identities displayed'.[14]

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[12] The politicised nature of New Testament Studies is revealed not only in the reception of the 'New Moment', but can be demonstrated by the very many examples of conservative Christian orthodoxy in whose service readings of the Apostle's text are produced yet remain considered works of conventional New Testament scholarship. Taking one example, Tilling, C., *Paul's Divine Christology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2012) is marked by an overwhelming search for a Paul who fits the categories of Chalcedonian orthodoxy and which is overtly confessional in its preface (vi): 'It was during a season of prayer that the idea behind this thesis developed. During the entire research process, I felt sustained, animated, and inspired by my Heavenly Father... *Soli Deo honor et gloria!*' The conclusions reached are therefore, perhaps, no surprise; cf. Jennings, 'Sons', 86: 'Paul so often jealously possessed by dogmatic protestant theology'.

[13] Young, F., 'Retrospect: Interpretation and Appropriation' in Young, F., Ayres, L., Louth, A., *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) 485 – 494, 486. Gadamer also notes how the ends to which such method can be applied can often amount to triviality. Gadamer, 'L'herméneutique', 12: 'Je m'objecte seulement contre une application sans intelligence et sans intérêt motivé des méthodes, car je sais trop que les méthodes aussi peuvent être excellemment mises au service de trivialités.'

[14] Williams, *Historical Church,* 5; cf. von Harnack's understanding of historical study as being driven by relevance in the present, see Löhr, 'Marcion', 131.

Appropriation in respect of intended end can be observed on the part of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek. They each read the text 'in the service of' their wider intellectual projects. However, this does not preclude reading. Reading is a necessary part of this 'appropriation'. It is the means by which such 'appropriation' can take place. They first read the text in order to appropriate it for this intended end. Our object of enquiry has been the manner in which they have read the text as the first stage of this 'appropriation'.

Secondly, we find the charge of 'appropriation' in respect of legitimacy. 'Appropriation' in this sense describes an activity similar to the notion of 'interfering' which we encountered in Kant's *Conflict*.[15] This understanding of 'appropriation' questions both the legitimacy of the one reading Paul and also of the reading produced. Jennings offers us an example of such 'appropriation' as he attempts to:

> 'attend to the appropriation of the Pauline legacy by thinkers who seem to stand outside what might be deemed legitimate descent from Paul... whose “materialist” and political readings of Paul place them outside both the theological line of inheritance and the guild of academic Pauline studies'.[16]

This notion of appropriation, based on legitimacy of reading produced, operates with a notion of a legitimate manner of reading Paul and also a notion of a legitimate reader. Jennings considers that “materialist” philosophers do not fulfil the criteria of 'legitimate' readers of Paul. We note that Jennings offers no criteria for 'legitimate' descent. Moreover, the criteria of “legitimacy” are highly subjective, based on the decision of a group to recognise legitimacy. We can note that this notion of appropriation also does not preclude reading. When the charge of illegitimacy is made against the reader, it is because the reader in question has produced a reading of the Pauline text. When the charge of illegitimacy is raised against the reading produced, it is because a reading has been produced which differs from those pronounced legitimate. In both cases, the Pauline text has been read.

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[15] See §1.3.
[16] Jennings, 'Sons', 86.

Finally, the third notion of appropriation is 'appropriation' in respect of frame of reference. This charge of 'appropriation' is based on a theory of 'meaning' of a text. This theory of meaning permits only a single frame of reference. The frame of reference permitted is that of the original and historical context in which the text was produced. It is related to 'appropriation' in respect of intended end insofar as it shares a suspicion of readings which have an end beyond a reconstruction of the text's meaning in that original context. 'Appropriation' in respect of frame of reference understands only the original author's frame of reference as the correct one. It regards the purpose of reading as the reconstruction of the intended meaning of the original author. It therefore criticises the readings of the 'New Moment' for failing to share this understanding of meaning and argues that they instead:

> 'appropriate from Paul what each finds usable ... (they) translate via reinterpretation what can be service of articulating the newer system ... and insist that it is the apostle, not they, who speaks'.[17]

Crossley summarises the contours of this notion:

> 'such philosophical readings of Paul have modern contexts predominantly in mind and never did set out to be primarily historical readings in the sense of simply trying to understand the texts in their ancient contexts'.[18]

'Appropriation' in this sense consists in those readings which do not take as their sole or primary frame of reference that of the ancient context of the text. Such 'appropriations' are considered anachronistic by those who make this charge.[19] We have seen that each of our readings above includes a frame of reference beyond that of the ancient context. Eagleton, for example, reads the text as a contribution to contemporary critical theory. Žižek reads the text in the construction of a modern political project. However, such 'appropriations' do not preclude genuine reading, since reading is the means by which the text is applied to these other frames of reference.

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[17] Fredricksen, 'Integrity', 70; cf. as an example of this, Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable', 170: 'Here again my model for Paul is Paul'.
[18] Crossley, *Reading*, 112.
[19] Fredricksen, 'Integrity', 70.

'Appropriation' in respect of legitimacy acts as an umbrella for all three senses in which the term 'appropriation' has been applied in the reception of the 'New Moment'. The charge of 'appropriation' has revealed concerns over readings which are made in respect of an illegitimate end, by illegitimate readers, and which operate with illegitimate frames of reference. Legitimacy of interpretation becomes the organising theme of the manner in which the charge 'appropriation' has been applied. This reflects what Jennings had called 'a certain uneasiness about the rights of these thinkers'.[20]

There is one further feature of the charge of 'appropriation'. This concerns the respective ends to which such 'appropriations' have been applied. Critics have, as we have seen, suggested that the figures associated with Paul's 'New Moment' have begun 'appropriating' the Pauline text because of a crisis in leftist thought.[21] They claim that this crisis has brought about the necessary conditions for a turn to Paul as a means of rescuing a leftist project.[22] The mere concurrence of a need for resources on the left with an observable recent interest in the Pauline text has been suggested as demonstrating the sufficient and necessary conditions for this turn to Paul. However, it must be demonstrated both that these crisis conditions obtain, and also that such conditions preclude a genuine reading of the Pauline text. Moreover, this apparent concurrence of a crisis on the left and a turn to Paul must be the subject of more careful analysis.

[20] Jennings, 'Sons', 86.
[21] Odell-Scott, 'Introduction', 4, 14.
[22] Jennings, 'Sons', 87: 'in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rising hegemony of … global capital'.

We have already had cause to question the standard narrative and genealogy of the 'New Moment' as beginning with Taubes. If we are correct, and this standard dating is to be rejected, then the less sudden and more prolonged engagement with the Apostle, which we have observed, makes the chronology of this “crisis on the left” theory problematic. Moreover, even if we were to accept the beginning of the 'New Moment' with the reading of Taubes, this also does not smoothly overlap with the perceived crisis. Taubes' lectures were delivered two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. If the standard dating is to be questioned, as we have suggested above, and as each of the readings explored in the chapters suggests, then the 'New Moment' of Pauline reading pre-dates in almost every case the reading of Taubes. Thus, the reasons given for this 'appropriation' must be rejected.

We must now remind ourselves of the sense of 'appropriation' we outlined above. This notion sought to be hermeneutically sensitive. This sense of 'appropriation' does not rule out a genuine reading of the Pauline text. It includes the senses in which the charge of 'appropriation' has been made against the 'New Moment'. We saw that these senses also did not rule out the possibility of a genuine reading of the Pauline text. We defined appropriation as the inscription of the discourse of one text (in our case the Pauline epistles) into the present discourse of the 'appropriator' through which the “appropriator's” own self-understanding is enlarged: 'the very act of understanding oneself before the text'.[23]

[23] Ricoeur, 'Idea of Revelation', 30.

We have observed in each of our conclusions above that Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek each demonstrate an 'application' of the text to the present. They each draw lessons from the text, which are of contemporary relevance. These themes are often shared between our figures of enquiry. We have noted that Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek all demonstrate an interest in the contribution of the Pauline text to an analysis of moral law and to the nature of universalism, for example. Moreover, in each case, the text is brought to bear, and serves to illuminate, the contemporary standing of the interpreter. The Pauline text provides each of our thinkers with an analysis which serves to aid in the understanding and critique of the contemporary standing in which they find themselves.

What does this mean for the charge of 'appropriation'? It is not the case that we can conclude that these thinkers demonstrate a process of appropriation in the negative sense, which we outlined above. Such a charge served to suggest that reading was not in fact occurring and operated with a restricted notion of reading that we found to be untenable.

The epistles of Paul are appropriated by Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek, but only insofar as the Pauline text is inscribed into the Badiouean, Žižekian, or Eagletonian discourse, and through that act of inscription something is added to that discourse (and thus to the self-understanding of the interpreter) that was previously lacking, which has been carried over from the text of the Apostle. We might note that this is most obviously the case with Žižek, whose sustained engagement with the Apostle climaxes, as we have seen, in a self-identification with the project of the Apostle. The results of each of these readings thus inevitably have the character of the thinker in question. This is not evidence of an unjust imposition of that identity on the text or author in question, but the 'act of understanding oneself before the text' we found constitutive of genuine appropriation.

Moreover, it is not just the 'New Moment' that is thus “guilty” of appropriative readings in this sense. By reading Paul according to the canons of historical-criticism, those who resist the readings of the 'New Moment', and restrict the Apostle's meaning to the reconstruction of historically-isolated meaning, also fulfil our definition of appropriation. Such historical-critical reading also reinscribes the text of Paul into an alien discourse. Historical-criticism, as practised by the historical-critical interpreter in question, is as much an 'alien' discourse to Paul as that of the psychoanalytical discourse, which has been revealed as key to readings of the 'New Moment'.

5.3 The Triduum

We sought in our introduction to defend the isolation of the sub-group of Paul's 'New Moment'. We noted the need to defend the choice of selection of these figures, since the selection of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek was unusual in the prevailing narratives of the 'New Moment' and those thinkers associated with it. In addition to the reasons for their isolation outlined above, our study has revealed that these three figures bear consideration alongside each other, not only in terms of shared influence, but also in terms of similarity in the passages drawn upon and the manner in which these passages are read. However, it has been a feature of the reception of the 'New Moment' that these individual readings of Paul have often been treated together and distinctions between them have been overlooked. At this stage of our conclusion, it must be noted that each of the Pauline readings of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek is distinct. Moreover, we can note that the individual emphasis of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek is of interest from the perspective of the Christian theological system. The independent foci of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek have revealed that each focus on a distinct aspect of the Christian soteriological narrative in their reading of Paul.

We have seen above that the focus of Žižek's reading of Paul is on the Crucifixion as the site of the death of God (which he elides with Pentecost as the occasion of the sending of the Holy Spirit on the collective of believers).[24] As Benson notes:

> 'it is the central dogma of Christ's crucifixion—both its purpose and Christ's own cry of abandonment—that particularly interests Žižek'.[25]

[24] To so identify Žižek with Good Friday is to emphasise the importance of the Crucifixion and focus on the death-of-God we have observed in Žižek *pace* Davis, C., 'Introduction: Holy Saturday or Resurrection Sunday? Staging An Unlikely Debate' in Davis, Milbank, Žižek, *Monstrosity*, 2 – 23. Davis sets Žižek against Milbank in a Holy Saturday/Resurrection Sunday parallel which identifies Žižek's central thesis on Christianity with Holy Saturday: 'an infinite freedom of a true, disillusioned, and disenchanted love (the dialectic of Holy Saturday) [Davis, 'Unlikely', 21].

[25] Benson, 'Continental', 428.

Meanwhile, we have observed Eagleton's focus on the descent of Christ to the depths of despair that is central to his tragic soteriology:

> 'In his crucifixion and descent into hell, Jesus in St Paul's view is "made sin," identifying with the scum and refuse of the earth, enduring a solidarity with suffering evil and despair".[26]

Eagleton considers Christ's decent into hell soteriologically necessary for complete solidarity with suffering humanity. This soteriology does not see the events of Holy Saturday as a pause between the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday as in many soteriological systems. Rather, Eagleton's soteriology emphasises the importance of Holy Saturday as a theological resource. Eagleton shares this emphasis with Steiner, who acknowledges that all of our life 'is the long day's journey of the Saturday'.[27] Eagleton's reading of Paul thus stands in line with attempts to rehabilitate the concept within a Christian theological system.[28] Christ's descent remains underutilised as a source of theological reflection.[29] It is thus significant that it features as a focus of a reading of the 'New Moment' at all.

Badiou's reading of Paul is, as we have seen, focussed primarily on the Resurrection as the site of universality and as exemplary of the structure of an 'Event'. Badiou has received criticism for robbing the Resurrection of its specificity in his reading, as it becomes merely exemplary of the form of an 'Event'. Jennings argues that Badiou is 'misled... by deflecting attention away from the specific circumstances of Jesus' death'.[30] We saw above that Badiou is aware of such criticism. However, he remains insistent in his focus on the Resurrection as the formal structure of an Event above the site of its occurrence.

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[26] Eagleton, 'Introduction', xxvi.

[27] Steiner, G., *Real Presences* (London: University of Chicago Press 1989) 231 – 232; cf. Ward, 'Steiner and Eagleton'. It is significant that both Steiner and Eagleton are by training literary scholars.

[28] von Balthasar, H., *Mysterium Paschale* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1990); cf. Pitstick, A. L., *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2007); Sara, J. M., '*Descensus Ad Infernos,* Dawn of Hope. Aspects of the Theology of Holy Saturday in the Trilogy of Hans Urs von Balthasar' in *Communio 32* (2005) 541 – 572.

[29] This may be due to scepticism about its Scriptural basis cf. 1 Pet 3.18 – 20 and a perceived association with Catholic dogma.

[30] Jennings, 'Sons', 96.

The focus of the readings of Žižek, Eagleton and Badiou therefore correspond to Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, respectively, as they focus on the events of the death, descent, and Resurrection of Christ. This demonstrates the very different Pauline readings that emerge even within this sub-group of interpretation of the 'New Moment'. It is significant that such distinct foci emerge given that we have shown that these three readings stand in a close relation. Moreover, we have shown that the readings of Žižek and Eagleton rely on Badiou for their initial impetus. Such distinct foci demonstrate that the readings of Paul we have observed above are not simply the rehearsal of a stock psychoanalytic Paul taken over from, for example, Lacan or Badiou, and utilised in another's work as means to appropriate the authority of the Pauline text. Instead, Badiou, Žižek, and Eagleton each produce readings of Paul which are the product of their personal reading and engagement with the Apostle. This further suggests that we are dealing with appropriation in the positive sense we have set out above.

It is through a reading of Paul that these figures come better to understand themselves and their own discourses. This reading is an appropriative 'act of self-understanding'. It therefore should come as no surprise that the Pauline readings of each of these figures is distinct. This leads us to consider the very notion of meaning whose contours we have been tracing throughout.

5.4 The Meaning of Meaning

Our study of Paul's 'New Moment' in the reception of Paul by Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek has revealed a conflict of interpretations in the study of Paul. The readings of the 'New Moment' have been challenged by a body of New Testament scholarship which has insisted on the historical context as the sole legitimate context and frame of reference for interpretation. We saw that the manner in which this same body of scholarship rendered Gadamerean theory revealed a similar prioritisation of the historical context.[31] The reception of the 'New Moment', like the reception of Gadamerean theory, has revealed the extent to which the historical-critical method enjoys a 'magisterium' within New Testament study:

> 'the historical faculty ... opposing itself to the perspectives generated by the pursuit of questions of truth that are constrained not by historical but by philosophical criteria of rigour'.[32]

We noted in our survey of Gadamer's reception by New Testament studies that a restriction of meaning solely to the original historical context of the text and original author was not in line with the hermeneutical project of Gadamer himself. We therefore suggested that the radical potential of a Gadamerean hermeneutic has yet to be realised in the task of New Testament interpretation. The manner in which this thesis has proceeded has shown that there is fruit to be borne in readings which take seriously not only the past and original context of the New Testament text, but which also seek to bring the text fully into conversation with the entire standing-in-life of the interpreter as part of the Gadamerean process of 'application'.

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[31] See §1.5 above.
[32] Jennings, 'Sons', 89.

Our survey of Badiou's, Eagleton's and Žižek's Pauline engagement has enabled us to observe the challenge to conventional historical readings which the 'New Moment' poses. We have observed that the readers of the 'New Moment' operate with a distinct set of reading practices and assumptions. Most importantly, they do not see the historical as the sole context of interpretation. We have observed that each figure, with which we have been concerned, seeks to read and apply the thought of Paul to a modern philosophical project. This process of reading, which regards the present as an appropriate frame of reference, serves to challenge the prevailing assumptions and prejudices of conventional New Testament studies.[33]

We can sum up the central thrust of this challenge to historical reading with the imperative: "Always historicize!"[34] The readings of the 'New Moment' have been criticised for failing to be historically sensitive to the original context of the text. However, those readings have revealed that proponents of the historical-critical method have themselves failed to heed this imperative with respect to their own standing in relation to the text. They have failed sufficiently to historicise the very methods by which they seek to understand the text. A truly historicising reading must involve the historicising of historicism itself. Such an historicism would historicise not only the text but also the interpreter who seeks to understand the text and the interpretative methods with which understanding is sought.

[33] Žižek, 'Concluding Roundtable', 173.
[34] Jameson, *Unconscious*, 1.

A commitment to this process does not limit the canons of meaning, but expands them. Whilst the historians fear that a non-historical reading leads to interpretative anarchy and relativism, we must note some problems with the historical method, which the recognition of a plurality of interpretations may help to overcome. Rosen notes that those who maintain the historical as the sole criterion of legitimacy:

> 'illustrate with depressing frequency the fundamental defect of history as the standard of legitimacy. The thesis that every text must be understood within the context of its historical period ... that there is no enduring stratum of human nature, and consequently no problem, let alone solution, apart from a given historical formulation – leads inexorably to the conclusion that *there is no meaning of the text to be grasped by the reader who belongs to a different historical perspective*'.[35]

The historicising of historicity itself leads not to a restriction of interpretative possibility based on historical actuality (what happened to Paul, or what Paul thought) but to an awareness of the historical standing of the interpreter. This is key to Gadamer's *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*. The standing of the interpreter is not incidental to, but constitutive of, interpretation itself. This may lead to a plurality of interpretations of the Pauline text if such plurality is demanded by the historicity of understanding.[36] A Gadamerean hermeneutic provides one possible means of analysing the conceptual apparatus with which an interpreter approaches a text. Such an hermeneutic does not provide us with a methodology with which to step outside of our interpretative tradition but instead offers a means of understanding the tradition with which we, and other interpreters, approach the text.

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[35] Rosen, *Hermeneutics,* 164. He continues: 'The common assumption that everything must be understood historically leads to the consequence that nothing can be understood, not even the validity of one's methods, let alone their significance. Or else it leads to the consequence that all understanding is self-understanding. To interpret a text is in fact to produce one's own text'.

[36] Guarino, 'Foundationalism', 227.

The central irony of the reception of Paul's New Moment by conventional New Testament scholarship is that, in arguing against an interpretation of the text which appropriates the Pauline text into a particular discourse, New Testament scholarship has revealed its impressive ability to do just that. Moreover, the interpretation of Gadamer in that discourse had provided just such an example of the process of "appropriation" which those same scholars have come out against. In the manner both in which the 'New Moment' has been criticised for failing to be historical enough, and for the historicising reading of Gadamer which prevails in that discipline, New Testament scholars have remained within the stream of historical-criticism they inhabit in *both* their reception of Gadamer *and* of the readings of the 'New Moment'.

This reveals, to return to Jennings' phrase, a "magisterium" of historical-critical scholarship which has achieved dominance within the academy. Such scholarship has assumed a position of acknowledged dominance and consensus from which it can lay down rules for the legitimate interpretation of its objects of study. From this position, it applies those canons of legitimacy to evaluate works from outside of itself, as we have seen in the case of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek. It reads works with which it seeks to illuminate its own object against those same canons, as we have seen in the case of Gadamer. This process is a political one. It is not only political in the sense that it has to do with the intellectual operation of power, but in a more mundane sense of who decides upon a work's publication and the related allocation of academic jobs.

Standard histories of hermeneutics point to the modern flourishing of the discipline in the wake of the Reformation. In the absence of a formal ecclesial magisterium, a means by which the legitimacy of conflicting interpretations could be assessed was needed. The rise of higher or historical criticism is linked to this, as part of a necessary process of dismantling a clerical and ecclesial dominance over the biblical text and subjecting prevailing interpretation to proper scrutiny. In asserting the role of the historical, as a means to undermine such interpretation, such historical-criticism rightly challenged prevailing ecclesially acceptable readings and norms. However, instead of doing away with the principle of magisterium itself, instead of committing to a perpetual disestablishment of dominance, such criticism has seen fit simply to divorce Paul from the Church and to replace one kind of magisterium with another. This magisterium is based not on clerical control but interpretative *method*.

The readings of the 'New Moment', and their subsequent reception, may provide a jolt to all readers of the Pauline text, in a phrase reminiscent of Taubes, to commit themselves anew to the business of interpreting Paul.[37] Only this time, instead of replacing one system of magisterium with another, future interpreters of Paul may be able to do away with the means of achieving interpretative dominance altogether.

[37] Taubes, *Theology*, 95.

5.5 Implications for a Receptive Reading

> *'Individual texts, or for that matter individual subjects, become passing topics in the tradition's garrulous self-communing, but this, in fact, is no mean thing to be. For in being guided by tradition to interpret creatively a text created by the tradition, we are challenged, interrogated, taken out of ourselves, only to be returned to ourselves more thoroughly unified and 'at home' than we were in the first place. The point of tradition, then, is to get us back to where we were, only more radically so'.*[38]

The early analysis of the implications of a Gadamerean hermeneutic by Eagleton has been quoted at length above because it confirms the fruits of the Gadamerean framework which this thesis has sort to utilise. If we are searching for an over-arching description of the readings of the 'New Moment', and the relation of the thinkers of the 'New Moment' to the Apostle, then we can do little better than appropriate Eagleton's analysis of Gadamer. Badiou, Žižek and Eagleton himself are challenged, interrogated, and taken out of themselves through sustained engagement with the text of Paul, only to be returned to themselves more thoroughly unified and 'at home' than they were in the first place.

Our application of the hermeneutical theory of Gadamer thus confirms Eagleton's summary analysis of Gadamerean theory. We have taken proper account of, and given full space to, the traditions and prejudices which make up the figures of Badiou, Eagleton, and Žižek. We have seen that this traditionary hermeneutic enables us to observe how Paul functions for each of these readers. The text of Paul is read by each of these figures before they return to their discourses. The text of Paul is then reinscribed as a conceptual resource in that discourse.

[38] Eagleton, *Benjamin,* 53 – 54.

The readings of Paul we have encountered on the pages of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek have confronted us with a series of interpretations that are mostly, but not entirely, ahistorical and non-historicising in their reading practices.[39] It remains for us to consider the viability of ahistorical readings such as those we have seen in the reading of the 'New Moment' and which this thesis has subsequently sought to defend.

We have seen the difficulties that ahistorical readings have faced and a defence of them is also likely to encounter. These difficulties are in part due to the continuing 'magisterium' and interpretative hegemony enjoyed by the historical mode with the study of the New Testament and the academy generally. It is possible to point to any number of sources for this observation. Bahti notes that within the institutional and political context of the modern university:

> 'the preponderance of historically defined teaching and research in the modern university's study of literature leaves history today a horizon beyond which we can scarcely think'.[40]

However, we must not underestimate the importance of considering the limits of this institutionally embedded horizon (a term which we must take in its fully Gadamerean sense) for the future of biblical studies. We cannot simply assume the historical-critical method without perpetual reflection on the philosophical (and metaphysical) underpinnings of that method:

> 'Historical critical biblical studies are dependent upon the philosophical evaluation of historical methodologies in order to be academically viable'.[41]

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[39] Oddell-Scott, 'Introduction', 4: 'the readings offered by secular philosophers ... are not concerned with matters of historical accuracy and verification of the content of the epistles ... and not as a project whose viability is dependent upon its historical validity'. cf. Bockmuehl, *Peter*, 36. Though, *pace* Bockmuehl we have not found that the problem of 'refractions of Pauline hermeneutics vis-á-vis Israel' and its reception by a Jewish audience is aggravated by this reading.

[40] Bahti, *Allegories*, 291; cf. Jeanrond, *Theological*, 125.

[41] Oddell-Scott, 'Introduction', 18.

Such a process may threaten the dominance of the historical-critical method in New Testament interpretation. It may also lead to the 'radical plurality' of a Gadamerean hermeneutic. The fear of such 'plurality' has caused the reaction which we have observed has been recorded in the face of the 'New Moment'. However, the importance of entertaining the possibility of thinking beyond such dominance is crucial if the historical-critical method is to remain as an hermeneutically responsible approach to the Biblical text. However, Bahti has:

> 'no illusions about the resistances such theory will continue to provoke in a modern [university] that has thoroughly institutionalized historical *Wissenschaft*, but one should be grateful that the university is sufficiently capacious to support its own critical heresy'.[42]

However, such thoroughly ahistorical readings can likewise go too far, even if such readings display appropriate sensitivity and openness to the problems revealed by an awareness of the limitations of the historical method and of the complexities of philosophical hermeneutics. In historicising historicity we cannot do away with history entirely. The historical, as both an end and frame of reference for interpretation, is but one of a handful of tools in the interpretative toolbox of the interpreter who, alive to the Gadamerean insight, reckons fully with the business of interpretation as a genuine fusion of past *and* present horizons.

It will not have escaped the reader's notice that in entertaining fully the possibilities of ahistorical or ahistoricising readings of the Apostle, we have had recourse to historical tools in terms of, for example, the chronology of the 'New Moment' itself and the analysis of the Pauline text. Such historicising is in part as inevitable as the failure Rosen has noted of a totalising historicising project to communicate meaning.

[42] Bahti, *Allegories,* 293.

Myers notes in his attempt to tell 'the story of anti-historicism' the need to fall back on 'an unmistakably historicist perspective':

> 'because experience or belief is almost always refracted through an historicist lens – and will continue to be unless or until a vast epistemological paradigm shift occurs ... perhaps the best consolation to offer is, again, an eminently historicist one: to know not that we can escape the clutches of historicism, but that we have not been alone in our despair'.[43]

The conclusion which we have reached is not one of despair, but a realisation that the readings of the 'New Moment' enable us to reach significant conclusions about the importance of a Gadamerean hermeneutic. Gadamer's fusion of horizons avoids the risk of two kinds of totalising. These are on the one hand the totalising impulse which limits any reading to the solely historical (fixated merely on the past) and, on the other, the totalising impulse which limits any reading to the solely ahistorical (focused merely on the present). Interpretation must inevitably involve both past and present to avoid the short-comings of the totalising of either. This is a true 'fusion of horizons'.

Our enquiry into the reception of Paul in Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek has enabled us to make an important observation for the development of a responsible hermeneutics that takes seriously the 'radical historicity' to which Gadamer has alerted us. Our positive contribution to the fields of philosophical and biblical hermeneutics is the observation, evidenced throughout our investigation above, that the historical context of the interpreter is as important, if not more important, than the historical context in which the text was produced (and in which the author wrote). We have seen this both in the distinctiveness of each of the readings of the Pauline 'New Moment' we have surveyed, and also in the manner that these readings have been received by interpreters from outside the traditions of interpretation which gave rise to them.

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[43] Myers, D. N., *Resisting History: Historicism and Its Discontents in German Jewish Thought* (Woodstock: Princeton University Press 2003) 172.

However, even the 'radical historicity' of hermeneutics as a method of evaluating the readings of the 'New Moment' will only take us so far, and must not itself succumb to the temptation of totalising, whose dangers have been a constant feature of this thesis. We must therefore end on a note of caution, with which each of Badiou, Eagleton and Žižek in their own commitment to an emerging activism as a solution to the problems which beset the created order would seem to be impelled to agree:

> 'Hermeneutics, however, must not be overrated either. It cannot be a replacement for Christian thinking and praxis in this universe'.[44]

[44] Jeanrond, *Theological*, 182.

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