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**The Portraits of the Apostle:
Paul of Tarsus and the Rise of Modern Europe**

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the conversation between the interpretations of Paul's letters and modern European thought. It is a narrative of an oft-neglected relationship; but, more than that, it tries to push this negotiation further than where it is now. Thus, in this project, I intend to play with the many possibilities that poststructuralist theory provides for alternative interpretations of biblical texts, and to uncover the ways that the Bible can offer new solutions to the challenges of modern thought. My study will focus on three issues: power, religion, and gender. I believe that the debates around these three topics have been crucial to the European self-definition. Besides, Paul has been present in the European discourse on politics, law, and sexuality. His letters have been interpreted only based on a certain kind of normativity at the expense of many alternative readings. The reception of Paul, in turn, provided some ground for further discussions on European identity.

In chapter one, I draw on the complications of physical portraits of Paul to indicate the problems in offering a finalized clear picture of his message. Obsession with portraying the Apostle is not dissimilar to the recurrent reference to him in the works of European intellectuals since the Enlightenment. Paul has thus been involved in the construction of European identity. This does not mean that he has always conformed to what Europe wants. Rather, he has challenged the binary identities that European normativity has built. It is precisely in these moments that the arbitrariness of European discourse is betrayed. Relying on Judith Butler's theories on gender normativity, I try to

spot the ways that identity was established through the reiteration of modern categories that may be far from what the text says. In the following chapters, I investigate three passages that signal Paul's challenge to modern normative identities.

In the next chapter, I deal with the interpretation of Romans 13, where Paul tells the Roman Church to be subjected to political authorities. This chapter has troubled the interpreters because it is far from what is expected from Paul – promotion of justice in face of brutal regimes. I demonstrate that the readers of Romans 13 lost touch with Paul's ethos soon after his death. Relying on Hans Blumenberg's description of "secularization by eschatology" at the time of the composition of the New Testament toward the end of the first century CE – i.e. the relegation of the end matters to the transcendental –, I argue that Paul was preaching in the context of what I call the "daily messianic". My formulation of the "daily messianic" consists of what continental philosophers, from Martin Heidegger to Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben see as a rupture within the worldly (i.e. "secular") matters. This mode, which had subsumed Paul's discourse, was permeated by "care" and "anxiety; it was beyond calculation or metaphysical description; it was where the distinction between the body and the soul did not make sense; and it was directed toward justice. When the expectation of the *parousia* lost its immediacy, imminence, and immanence, Paul's words lost their messianic significance. No wonder, then, that with very few exceptions like the Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes, the interpreters have read first and last parts of the chapter (vv. 1-7 on political subjection and vv. 11-14 on eschatology respectively) separately.

In chapter three, I discuss the Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:12-14), where, according to Paul's report, Peter led others to Judaize while he could not do that himself all the time. The interpretation of this passage has been fraught with presuppositions regarding Paul's attitude toward Judaism. I show that the nineteenth century Protestant readings of Paul influenced philosophers, like Nietzsche and Freud, so that the supersession of "guilt-inducing" Judaism by Christianity gave way to the supersession of "guilt-ridden religion" by modernity. This picture has not changed substantially, as I argue, whether for biblical scholars (even the New Perspective theologians) or for the philosophers of the "turn to religion" – Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, or Jacques Derrida. In my alternative interpretation, I emphasize that because Paul's radical Jewishness has often been neglected, he has been taken as some sort of "Lutheran Jewish" man. Read this way, the conflict between Paul and Peter is like any everyday argument between two rabbis. Paul mentions the story, however, in order to establish his authority as a true apostle.

The fourth chapter is about the reception of 1 Corinthians 11:5-16, on women's veiling during prayer and prophecy. My survey of the reinterpretations of the passage in modern times shows that Paul's veiling injunction has often been construed to subdue the categories that at different points in history could not constitute the standard European identity. It has been assumed that the veil belonged to the "Jewish", the ecstatic "Greek", the exotic "Oriental", or that it has been instituted to silence "liberationist" women or to foreclose the possibility of homosexuality (or cross-dressing). In this manner, the veil has been forcefully discarded from the European stage. No wonder, then, that its resurgence functions as a threat to some European states.

In this chapter, with the help of poststructuralists, I question some of the assumptions about the veil, femininity, subjectivity, and the ethnic other. According to my alternative interpretation, there is no need to reinterpret Paul's commandments by othering certain groups or by projecting the encounter between West and its others to the Corinthian correspondence. Paul might have used the veil as a means for integrating women into the church by their inclusion in the "masculine" order.

In conclusion, in response to the claim that modern Europe emerged as a gradual parting of ways between biblical scholarship and secular philosophy, I argue in my work that the conversation between the two has persisted, despite its fluxes throughout history. When this mutual relationship is acknowledged, it can even be pushed to its limits to, on the one hand, read the Bible through the possibilities that poststructuralist theory provides and, on the other, make informed interventions in continental philosophy.

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To my parents

Maryam Nazari

and

Hossein Tofghi

Note on References:

The biblical references are from the following sources:

The Harper Collins Study Bible, Fully Revised and Updated, (New Revised Standard Version). Edited by Wayne Meeks. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989.

Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece. Edited by Kurt Aland et al (27th edn).
Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001.

Septuaginta. Edited by Alfred Rahlfs. New York: American Bible Society, 1979.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Portraits of Paul and Modernity

The modern portraits of Paul are related to two sets of art work: (a) the portraits of the biblical figures, and (b) the portraits of “modernity”. These two sets cannot be separated, as the rise of modernity was linked to a certain perception of biblical figures. After all, the humanist tendencies of the early modern Europe made references to both the Greco-Roman and Hebrew antiquity. Works of art, more particularly, were replete with classical and biblical imagery.

One major example is Michaelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* (1511-12). In this painting, Man’s creation by God in God’s image is depicted. He is separated but reaching out to God’s hand. The modern Man is epitomized in Michaelangelo’s *David*

(1501-04), a robust tense man with big hands, knowing how to handle his tools. As a grand representation of the European Man, *David* is an heir to a hybrid tradition. It belongs to the style of classical Greek sculptures, while it tells a Hebrew story; this David has both (non-Hebrew) foreskin and (supposedly Hebrew) curly hair. Later the dawn of the modern age was portrayed in Jan Matejko's *Astronomer Copernicus, or Conversations with God* (1873). In this painting, Copernicus is sitting on a rooftop, turning his back to the cathedral. His charts, books, and graphs are spread all over the floor. He holds a compass, but is as if shocked in a moment of revelation from above. Modernity was thus a "conversation between God and Man".

In his epiphany, Matejko's Copernicus holds his hands up to protect his eyes from the light that is shining into them. The gesture is not dissimilar to St. Paul's experience on the Road to Damascus, for instance in Caravaggio's adaptation. (These two images contrast with other encounters with the light, say in Mary's annunciation, when the latter is gently receiving the divine rather than being violently struck by it.) The Apostle was temporarily blind after his shocking experience on his way to Damascus (Acts 9). If one were to mix the traditions of Acts with those of the Pauline epistles, it may be said that Paul was soon healed, but his eyesight was always weak (Gal 6:11). That is why another "modern" tool was associated with Paul's vision. An early record of glasses in the *Bible historiale* (1375-80) depicts the Apostle with dark spectacles, perhaps to make him cope with the divine light.¹ In a later work, Georges de la Tour portrayed *St. Paul* (1620) with spectacles reading a letter. Paul was thus present

¹ Frank Joseph Goes, *The Eye in History*, (New Delhi: Brothers Medical Publishers, 2013), 131.

in modern times, wearing modern clothes (or at least a combination of modern and ancient ones), carrying his sword, and most importantly reading and writing. On another level, this indicates how the “weak” Paul could be made strong through modern technology.

Just as Matejko situates the modern Copernicus in a “divine” conversation, these artists and many others transferred Paul into our modern condition. As Pier Paolo Pasolini envisaged him, Paul can be read as “our contemporary”. (In Pasolini’s screenplay, Paul witnesses Stephen’s death in the Vichy Paris, experiences a vision on his way to Barcelona, goes on missions to Geneva, Naples, Rome, etc, and is finally executed in New York.)² Pasolini was not the first to identify with Paul, or see him as our contemporary. There were others before and after him to do so as well. One early modern example belongs to Rembrandt’s collection of paintings. He made five different portraits of Paul. Although the characters portrayed in *Paul in Prison* (1627), *Two Old Men Disputing* (1628), and *Paul at his Writing Desk* (1628/29) are very similar, a new face appears in *The Apostle Paul* (1659) and *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul* (1661). In this “realist” art, it is as if accepted that Paul is not meant to have only one appearance. The artist identifies with Paul to the point that he does not expect the Apostle to have “real” historically identifiable features.

Our knowledge of Paul’s physical appearance is very scant and highly dubitable. The earliest (and perhaps only) record can be found in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*. Paul is, in this story, hosted by Onesiphorus, who is waiting to meet him. The Apostle

² Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saint Paul: A Screenplay*, trans. Elizabeth Castelli, (London: Verso, 2014).

was “a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel” (*Acts of Paul*, 3:3).³ Whether these “fictional” descriptions agree with factual oral reports, physiognomy, or alternatively the Greco-Roman standards of beauty, they are not far from the interpretation of his letters and Acts, in light of the medical and cultural understanding of the time.⁴

Paul’s body was feeble. He suffered from a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7). He even looked like a fool (2 Cor 11:16, 21-33; 12:7-11). He quoted his opponents as saying, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor 10:10). According to later Christian tradition, the letters were at best difficult to understand and at worst prone to misinterpretation: “So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do to the other scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15-17). It is not surprising that several decades after Paul’s death the interpretation of his work was a matter of anxiety, because in his own lifetime his letters were mainly occasioned by misinterpretations of what he had said earlier. He continued to clarify himself. And here we are with seven letters, with rather harmonious messages.

³ *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. Ernst Best et al, (London: SCM Press, 1974), vol 2.

⁴ Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996); Abraham Malherbe, “A Physical Description of Paul,” *Harvard Theological Review* 71, no. 1-3 (1986): 170-75.

The texts continue to be read, interpreted, explained, corrected over and over again. The portrait of Paul is never final. The brush cannot be put aside. In subsequent reworkings, some points are exaggerated, others removed, and so on.

Interpreters of Paul should be aware that the Apostle's "spiritual" or "theological" characteristics are no less ambiguous and obscure than his physical features. Indeed, as a survey of Christian origins literature shows, reconstructions of Jesus and Paul have always plausibly reflected the modern authors as much as the ancient historical figures. This claim was made in Albert Schweitzer's magnum opus, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), where he demonstrated how the scholarly portrayals of Jesus varied based on the authors' experience.⁵

In ways that remain to be analyzed, the authors of these narratives of Christian origins, (1) defined themselves individually and socially; (2) distinguished between themselves and their "others" often through a distinction between "modern" and the "premodern", the true "religion" and the more delimited "positive" religion, philosophy and religion, etc.; and (3) showed how they could outbid those origins or evacuate the "origin" of its limiting quality in order to render it a true universal of modern aspiration. That is, they valued the ancient spirit, only to then surpass it with their own model.⁶ In this manner, while the quest for European identity was defined over against the other, it also included the other.

⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, trans. W. Montgomery et al. (London: SCM Press, 2000).

⁶ Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5-8.

1.2. Research Question

In light of our different and equally “mythical” initial portrayals of Paul in modern times, we can see important, preliminary indications of what is involved in the construction of his identity. The fact that his faces changed invites us to reflect on the changes in the “spirit of the age” as well as the personal experiences of the scholars in question. The construction of Paul and modern Europe has taken place in a reciprocal conversation. It is not only that the interpretations of his works, or the reconstructions of his character, have been at the mercy of personal or political modes. The intellectual history of Europe also bears witness to important “Pauline” imprints on modern mentalities. (Again I emphasize that these traces need not be based on the Paul of history. They are frequently the result of the biblical interpretation of a much later moment.) In modern times, Paul’s letters were cited to promote mild or violent changes. For the French intellectuals, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Ernst Renan, August Comte, Edgar Quinet, Paul Valéry, and others, the Apostle was a hero of social and political reform, against dogmatism (if not the religious establishment itself).⁷ British thinkers, John Locke and Jeremy Bentham, invoked Paul to demonstrate the internal and personal character of religion.⁸ In our own time, the European philosophers, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, and others have written books to

⁷ Jean-Michel Rey, *Paul ou les ambiguïtés*, (Paris: Editions de l’Olivier, 2008).

⁸ Ward Blanton, “Paul and the Philosophers: Return to a New Archive,” in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 16-17.

exemplify their philosophy in Paul or show the compatibility between their worldview and a long-forsaken line of thought in the writings of the Ancient Apostle.⁹

In the context of these conversations, my main questions are: what intellectual trends led to the specific interpretations of Paul? And, how might a different theoretical approach result in an alternative understanding of both the modern reader and the ancient character? Then, how can an alternative interpretation of the Apostle's work expose the underpinnings of modern European thought regarding "politics", "religion", and gender? In a word, how should we understand the vexed social and political role of Paul in the constitution of the modern European subject?

1.3. Approaching "Paul" from a Different Angle, or Constructed "Pauline"

Categories

As I will show, the fact that Paul cannot quite fit without remainder in these differing portraits reflects the identity "trouble" with which our modern sensibilities are engaged. This Paulinist identity trouble is similar to Judith Butler's notion of "gender trouble". Her *Gender Trouble* "sought to uncover the ways in which the very thinking of what is possible in gendered life is foreclosed by certain habitual and violent presumptions. The text also sought to undermine any and all efforts to wield a discourse of truth to delegitimize minority gendered and sexual practices. This doesn't mean that all minority

⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000); Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, (London: Verso, 2003); Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary to the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

practices are to be condoned or celebrated, but it does mean that we ought to be able to think them before we come to any kinds of conclusions about them.”¹⁰ Butler tried to see how a culture’s regime of truth (or normativity) itself determined the wrong and right of our gendered discourses. In the same manner, I will point out the way that certain discourses always cherish one version of “Paul” over other versions. In other words, rather than a right or wrong “Paul” I will propose a multiplicity of “Pauls” (all equally “fictional”, or culturally constructed) who, through their divergences, shed light on the modern discourse of truth.

According to Butler, the gendered regime of truth dictated that there are two sexes (or, for that matter, genders): male and female. This binary did not end with the distinction between sex and gender, as (1) gender is supposed to agree with sex so that “masculine” and “feminine” gender characteristics should belong to men and women respectively, and (2) it is made of only two genders, subscribing to the binary of heterosexual relationships.¹¹ This model was naturalized when humans “performed” a set of behaviors that are within the discursive limits of a certain gender. “Coherent” sexual identity, therefore, presupposes that certain practices and desires cannot “exist” because they disrupt this norm.

The binary character of genders also requires that one perform one’s gender to the extent that one is not another gender. This model even constitutes the replication of heterosexual relationships in the non-heterosexual ones (e.g. in butch or femme

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), viii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

identities). In other words, even the LGBT identities *perform* a certain role within the straight model. When feminists try to reclaim women's rights, they are operating within the same patriarchal discourse. Feminist critique, Butler suggests, "ought also to understand how the category of 'women,' the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought."¹² That is why, Butler argues, heterosexuality is only a "performed" copy without an original. Even if hypothetically there is a reality to gender, it results from the public regulation of a "fantasy" of gender stability. "In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality."¹³

In a similar way, I think of Pauline "identity" as part of a "fabricated" Western identity. Paul plays the role of an elder who directs, leaves everything as it is, and only challenges the "other". I agree with Adams and Horrell that "in much, though by no means all, of [the] sociohistorical research [on the Corinthian correspondence], the portrait of Paul that emerges, implicitly or explicitly, is positive: he challenges the practices of the wealthy on behalf of the poor; he labors to establish alternative communities that stand in opposition to the brutal Roman Empire. Whether this positive evaluation emanates from underlying theological convictions or from sociopolitical ones

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Ibid., 173.

is hard to say, perhaps a measure of both.”¹⁴ Paul’s theological and political identities alike have been defined against imaginary or real other(s).

Like all of our gendered identities, the quest to represent Paul’s identity involves a return to one’s identity through the negation of the other. What Butler’s work makes clear is the arbitrary or free-floating nature of this otherness. Butler also questions the binary character of such identity processes. Following on the poststructuralist ruminations over identity, it may be asked: if the European Paul has multiple identities, how might we explore these as multiple modes of negotiation between identity (Pauline, European) and the negation of a threatening otherness?

As mentioned above Paul is a perennial point of reference in many of the major debates about European self-definition in modern times. Therefore, the interpretations of his “fictional” identities can also point to the European identities that sought to accommodate him to some emerging identity. To play further on the work of Butler, when the textual Paul escapes his easy capture in the constitution of European identity, when he resists the archetypal model wanting to be laid over him, then he comes to resemble the actors of a “drag show”. He seems to be temporarily playing a role which is otherwise discordant and out of place. Paul, often the story goes, must have intended something other than what he was showing. That gesture or costume, it is assumed, could not have been an integral part of his coherent identity. Watching this “drag show” of sorts, I can (together with Judith Butler) emphasize the ways that cross-dressing,

¹⁴ Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, “Scholarly Quest for Paul’s Church at Corinth,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for Pauline Church*, eds. Adams and Horrell, (London and Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 33.

drag, and parody may reveal the arbitrariness of the “normative” within European self-understanding.¹⁵ In other words, if the modern European “identity” is established through the act of (and hence desire for) interpretation, the portraits of Paul are in fact identity performances that give us insights into the desired identity of the interpreters. Any time that these “normative” performances are challenged by the text (and thus the coherence of the subject and its division from the other is threatened) one can peep into the “unreality” of the norms.

In my investigation of Paul’s multiple identities, I am not proposing a simple way to get at what the historical Paul *really* meant, or what his *real* identity was. Rather, I will try to study these interpretations to get at a relational story of the rise of modern European identities. My task is to develop crucial elements of a picture of the emergence of the European “selves” through the construction of the “others” who (1) disturb the coherence of the subject (showing that it does not contain only itself), and (2) point to the difference between the subject and non-subjects, or “insufficient” subjects (e.g. legalistic, ritualistic, fanatical, etc.).

These “disturbing” points of difference had to be overlooked, or resolved. Even when the study is confined to the seven “authentic” letters, Paul’s political (and hence theological) attitude is not the same. While he is known for his slogan of “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ” (Gal 3:28), his opinions about Jews, women, and slaves often do not seem compatible with “oneness”, much less with equality. In the

¹⁵ Butler, *Trouble*, xxii, 174-75, 186.

Letter to Philemon, for example, he sends Onesimus back to a life of slavery. As for the Jews, Paul confirms that some Jews just failed to receive salvation because they were hardened (Rom 11:7-8); but more than that, he calls them “enemies of God for your sake” (Rom 11:28). Sometimes it is unclear whether Paul’s universalism means the inclusion of the Jews in the Gentile ways (Gal 2:14; 5:2-6) or the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Jewish salvation (Rom 11:11ff). He even unusually prescribes dietary laws – prohibition of the food sacrificed to the idols (1 Cor 8). (Here Paul’s care for the name of God in eating is not dissimilar to kosher observance.) A notorious example of “inconsistency” is when he first tells women to cover their heads during “prayer and prophecy” (1 Cor 11:5) and follows it by an injunction that “women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate” (1 Cor 14:34). He forbids the Corinthian Church from taking their lawsuits to the “unbelievers” (1 Cor 6:1-8), whereas he orders the Roman Church to submit to the civil authorities (Rom 13:1-7). In fact, among biblical authors Paul seems almost unique in his struggles with misunderstandings and confusions. Despite all his attempts, he has remained an ambiguous figure. His interpreters likewise struggle to create a consistent, coherent picture of him. Even when they manage to create that consistent image, he disrupts that with the ubiquitous presence of an “inconsistent” detail.

In the reconstructions of Paul’s situation, interpreters ignored certain possibilities. For example, because of a nineteenth century desire to find “rational” explanations for everything, some failed to see the “mystical” character of Pauline teaching. Even after Albert Schweitzer showed that Paul’s ideas originated from some

sort of Christ-mysticism, rarely did interpreters take this claim seriously for some decades.¹⁶ This is perhaps due to the fact that rational thinking has remained a major element of European self-identity, in a way that it was precisely the non-Europeans who were considered at worst “non-rational” and at best “mystical”.¹⁷ A focus on the “mystical” could also help make sense of Paul’s relation to the Law, especially as parallel examples in mystical traditions reflect alternative attitudes toward religious practice than those imagined by nineteenth century Paulinists. In other words, a “mystical” Paul is more likely to be indifferent toward legal observances than a “rational” Paul of modernity is. But only the latter character could find a ready-made place in the post-Enlightenment world of European Christendom.

These “rationalist” readings of Christian origins, in general, and Paul, in particular, have fallen prey to what Elizabeth Castelli calls “fallacy of self-evidence”. By this she means,

a rhetorical move and the more general hermeneutical position undergirding that move, both of which have to do with unexamined and implicit assumptions about the way early Christian social relations must have been constructed. For one thing, scholarship has a remarkable propensity for reconstructing early Christian history as a kind of mirror image of its own social setting, or in accordance with its own tastes about what the origins of the church should look like.... In a similar vein, there appears to be a persistent psychologizing aspect to some reconstructions, in which some

¹⁶ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. William Montgomery, (London: A & C Black, 1931).

¹⁷ Michael Herzfeld, “The European Self: Rethinking an Attitude,” in *The Idea of Europe: From Antiquity to the European Union*, ed. Anthony Padgen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 148; Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East”*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).

rhetorical move on Paul's part, for example is explained in terms of a kind of "natural response to a difficult situation," implying both a unified human nature and a singular mode of social experience.¹⁸

1.4. Critique of Historical Paul

Together with Castelli, I situate my study within the critique of modern historical criticism of the Bible. In recent years, many scholars have questioned what has been produced in biblical criticism since the Enlightenment. Biblical scholarship following the Enlightenment left a strong impact on the Bible. For one, when the letters were put to print, the Enlightenment scholarship tampered with the text. The Protestant canon, which was smaller than the Catholic one, was itself subjected to a kind of mutilation and dissection due to the rigors of "critique". But the story does not end here. According to Jonathan Sheehan, the Enlightenment Bible, which in his definition is the cultural artifact that was composed of debates, translations, and commentaries that have not ceased to shape our modern understanding of the Bible,

had no single center, ... it was not an object as much as a project. If the Bible had always functioned in Christian Europe as an essentially unified text – indeed, its theological importance depended on its unity – the post-theological Enlightenment Bible would build its authority across a diverse set of domains and disciplines. Its authority had no essential center, but instead coalesced around four fundamental nuclei. Philology, pedagogy, poetry, and

¹⁸ Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 17-18.

history: each offered its own answer to the question of biblical authority, answers that were given literary form in the guise of new translations.¹⁹

Stephen Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, however, contend that pedagogy (morality) and poetry (aesthetics), soon evaporated out of these discussions. It was because these questions (and this is true especially of morality) “were deemed to be irresolvable and socially corrosive, whereas historical questions were (or so it was imagined) resolvable and less incendiary”.²⁰ In many cases, textual errors redeemed the Bible from accusations of immorality, which could be avoided by debates over historicity or textual “integrity”. Because it saved the ethical and hence the (increasingly) theological character of the Bible, historical criticism was invigorated to this extent. Those who engaged in textual or historical criticism without criticizing theology could identify themselves as both a skeptic and a believer at one and the same time. It is sufficient to see how, as Moore and Sherwood say, “the question of the miracle as the implausible exception to natural Law was far easier to swallow than the question of morally exceptional divine behavior in deviation from moral principle. Questioning the Bible’s supernaturalism increasingly became a non-controversial practice, while questioning the Bible’s morality became a cultural marker of heterodoxy”.²¹

In important respects, historical criticism of the Bible has followed on the path of theology, even when it presented itself as “scientific” research. A central mythical

¹⁹ Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture*, (Princeton and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 91.

²⁰ Stephen Moore and Yvonne Sherwood, *The Invention of a Biblical Scholar: A Critical Manifesto*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 59-61.

²¹ *Ibid.*

“metanarrative” of historical research has been a reference to the origins, the *arché*, the beginning. This is theological, ideological, and Romantic. In this process, the “scholar wants to make sense of the text, and as the text by itself may not make sense, she replaces the text in its present form with other forms of the text from supposed, but highly speculative, earlier stages in its history (such as Q, or J, E, P, D). The text’s truth, value, or meaning derive finally from its originating source, whether author(s), redactor(s), or historical milieu.”²² This “religious” desire posits “a sacred other ... that gave the profane world its identity and meaning.”²³ Dale Martin has drawn attention to the theological motivations and purposes of historical criticism. This explains the monopoly of historical approaches in biblical studies: “Students are in fact interpreting the Bible theologically, but they are seldom taught to think about how they do or could or should interpret the Bible theologically. Again, they are not taught to think critically and in a self-aware manner about theological interpretation even while they are interpreting theologically. This situation leads, in my view, sometimes simply to unimaginative theological applications of Scripture – and therefore often to dull sermons – but in worse cases to theologically or ethically dangerous interpretations of the Scripture.”²⁴

Besides, historical criticism is problematic because in recent decades, metanarratives of historical objectivity have lost their credit in postmodernist circles.

²²George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh, “An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical and Postmodernist Interpretations of the Bible,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 9 (2009): 395.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dale Martin, *Pedagogy of the Bible: An Analysis and Proposal*, (London and Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 22.

The skeptical scholars claim that “historical evidence” should always be taken with a grain of salt because these records do not reflect “what really happened”, but what was reported, and that only according to the reports that have survived. Furthermore, the evaluation that the present-day readers of the evidence make depends on their particular background, motivation, and approaches. In this regard, Michel de Certeau is right to point to the theological character of history – it is in search for origins, it is informed by certain ideologies, and it tries to make meaning out of disparate data.²⁵

In this sense, not only were the historical records on Christianity written for theological purposes and often reached us for similar reasons, but also the Christian historical critics were reading them with theological motivations and purposes. The reconstruction of early Christian milieu has also been marked by ideological suppositions.²⁶ To use Russell McCutcheon’s terms, one can say that biblical scholars have been unwitting “caretakers” instead of “critics”.²⁷ Postmodern readers of the Bible, rather, “do not ask historical criticism to give up mythmaking, but simply to be more conscious of its mythmaking.... Such mythmaking does not desire a Utopian Eden of complete harmony, but sees human ideals best realized in the recognition and navigation of incongruity as we construct a place to live in the present.”²⁸ This kind of consciously

²⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1-50.

²⁶ For more on the ideological historiography of late ancient Christianity, see Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University press, 2004).

²⁷ Russell McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescriving the Public Study of Religion*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

²⁸ Aichele, Miscall, and Walsh, “Elephant,” 401.

myth-making historical criticism is (ironically claimed to be) “more secular” than the current ecclesiastically-inflected research.²⁹

Moreover, theologians have not been secular enough in separating the Bible from State policies. Since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), eyes have been opened to the impact of colonial agendas on literature, and more generally humanities. Said has influenced the work of several scholars of biblical literature and history. More specifically, the colonial-political undertones of New Testament research have only recently started to preoccupy scholars. Halvor Moxnes, for instance, has demonstrated the influence of particular national policies (as well as the attitudes toward the Orient) on the production of the “life of Jesus” literature.³⁰ Similarly, James Crossley has drawn attention to the Jesus research after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. In line with the Western policies in the Middle East, he argues, the Jesus research has tried to cultivate him in the Holy Land, giving him a Jewish character, and depicting “others” as the Arabs of Orientalist literature were portrayed.³¹

Given the theological and the political undertones of historical criticism, postmodern readers believe that biblical criticism has to be still more radical, more “secular”, and simultaneously less bound by humanist perceptions. They call interpreters to develop and encourage “a sustained criticism of the abuse of the Bible by church and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Halvor Moxnes, *Jesus and the Rise of Nationalism: A New Quest for the Nineteenth-Century Historical Jesus*, (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

³¹ James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century*, (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2008). For research on imperialist or colonial assumptions of research on Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible, see: Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Keith Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

state, as well as a recovery of the revolutionary readings of the Bible”,³² “to break out of this anodyne modernization and humanization of the Bible and explore the clashes between forms of religious and modern dreaming within our ‘home’ scripture”,³³ and even “to take up the modern logic, to push it yet further, to its limit” by uncovering “the shared or contested historical and systemic space within which these conjoined twins [i.e. “non-modern religion” and “modern reason”] emerged and operated so effectively as a culturally central either/or”.³⁴

1.5. “Secular”, and Certainly Not Anti-Historical

I do not discredit historical research on the Bible because of its shortcomings. I am only pointing out that it is not as “objective” as it sometimes claims to be. The Bible has usually been at the hands of theology and politics, whether or not this has been admitted. I contend that historical research should be carried out more rigorously. Historical research on the Bible should acknowledge that it is not free from the factors that inevitably influence any kind of research. James Crossley’s comment that “the history of New Testament scholarship has shown that greater interaction with movements, groups, and individuals who are not necessarily white, middle- or upper-class, god-fearing

³² Roland Boer, “A Manifesto for Biblical Studies,” in *Secularism and Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2010), 38.

³³ Yvonne Sherwood, *Biblical Blaspheming: Trials of the Sacred for a Secular Age*, (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

³⁴ Ward Blanton, “Neither Religious nor Secular: On Saving the Critic in Biblical Criticism,” in *Secularism and Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer, (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2010), 147.

Christian men has made a profound impact on New Testament historical scholarship”³⁵ shows that mainstream research has historically deprived itself of different and very relevant perspectives.

Likewise, as many historical critics have noted, the “turn to religion” movement in philosophy (in the works of Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Giorgio Agamben, and others) has been many times at the mercy of common perceptions about “religion” and religious figures. I will deal with some of these misperceptions in chapter three. Some of what the philosophers elaborate on are mere conjectures, or even ideas that have long since been abandoned. Even when they criticize metaphysics, these thinkers are usually blinded by a metaphysical perception of “religion”.³⁶

Nevertheless, quite unlike many historical critics, I do not believe that the gap between philosophers and biblical scholars is unbridgeable. The two camps can, and must, learn from each other. On the one hand, philosophers should enrich their ideas by the historical research on Paul. For example, Agamben should know that for a few centuries now, “Christ” (literally meaning the Messiah) has been seen as a messianic title for Jesus.³⁷ Badiou should be aware of the eschatological meaning of Paul’s message, as well as the significance of the content of his message (i.e. resurrection) for his “antiphilosophy”. Both Derrida’s and Žižek’s perceptions of the difference between

³⁵ James Crossley, *Why Christianity Happened: A Sociohistorical Account of Christian Origins (26-50 CE)*, (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 34.

³⁶ See Ward Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses: Saint Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

³⁷ Agamben, *Time*, 15-18.

Judaism and Christianity should be corrected.³⁸ Michel Foucault has missed a lot on the Christian attitudes toward sexuality.³⁹

On the other hand, historical critics can be more conscious of what they have missed in their interpretation of early Christianity. For example, Pauline messianism, as well as the bodily practices of the faithful, are not fully explained in the separation of the political and the theological that the Enlightenment “rationality” relies on. Post-colonial criticism, or other kinds of liberationism, can benefit historicists by informing them of the influences of imperialist, colonialist, or patriarchal assumptions that have led to the oppressive abuse of the Bible.⁴⁰

1.6. “Secular”, and Certainly Not a “Muslim” Interpretation

My reading of the New Testament is neither a Christian nor a Muslim interpretation of the Bible. The fact that a Muslim is reading the Bible does not necessarily imply that she is offering a “Muslim reading of the Bible” as such. A “Muslim reading” presupposes approaching the Bible with Islamic/Qur’anic questions in mind and assessing the data against what has been found in Islamic literature. This kind of reading can be found both in polemical literature and interfaith dialogue. Anyone with any background can take up

³⁸ I will deal with Derrida, Badiou, and Žižek (and their inaccurate presuppositions) in chapter three.

³⁹ Jeremy Carrette, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁴⁰ David Jasper also believes that these readings of Christianity by radical philosophers can be good examples of “interdisciplinary” work, which quite surprisingly surpass official theology in making Christianity relevant for the twenty-first century audience. See his “Returning to Thinking Theologically – Breaking Down the Borders between East and West: An Interdisciplinary Exercise,” *Limes: Borderland Studies* 6, no. 2 (2013): 149-158.

a Muslim reading of the Bible, although usually it makes better sense if a Muslim does so. This is different from a “secular” reading of the Bible by a Muslim.

At the time I was doing this research (and while I was now and then preoccupied with similar questions on my approach and agenda), biblical scholarship (as well as social networks) witnessed the Reza Aslan affair. It was sparked by a buzzfeed post about a Fox News interview with the Muslim author Reza Aslan, on his recent book about Jesus.⁴¹ Soon the video went viral and discussions arose on several grounds. A small group assessed the academic credentials that Aslan kept mentioning in the interview. Another group (mostly comprising New Testament scholars) examined the claims that Aslan made in his book.⁴² Finally, a third group was debating whether Muslims are allowed to write about Jesus, and if so, how much their beliefs interfere in their writings. Some even went so far as to argue that Muslims should acknowledge their confessional affiliations when authoring anything about the Bible and Christianity.

The latter kind of debate arises from uncertainties regarding the significance of the subject of knowledge. Since what Foucault dubbed as the “Cartesian moment” in the history of ideas, attention was diverted from the subject of knowing and drawn to the “conditions that are either intrinsic to knowledge or extrinsic to the act of knowledge”.⁴³

⁴¹ Andrew Kaczynski, “Is This the Most Embarrassing Interview Fox News Has Ever Done?” Last modified on 27 July 2013, <<http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/is-this-the-most-embarrassing-interview-fox-news-has-ever-do>>.

⁴² See Dale Martin, “Still a Firebrand, 2,000 Years Later: ‘Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth,’” *The New York Times*, 5 August 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/06/books/reza-aslans-zealot-the-life-and-times-of-jesus-of-nazareth.html?_r=0>; Elizabeth Castelli, “Reza Aslan: Historian?” *The Nation*, 9 August 2013, <<http://www.thenation.com/article/175688/reza-aslan-historian#>>.

⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 17-18.

Since then, it was assumed that “knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to truth... it is when the philosophers (or scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself and solely through his activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as a subject.”⁴⁴ This “Cartesian” spirit can be witnessed in the sciences, or philosophy, and even the study of religion. (Qur’anic studies, for instance, has for long benefited from this sort of “detached” scholarship by non-Muslim readers.)

However, modern biblical scholarship has generally been an exclusive domain of Christian (and Jewish) endeavors in the construction of meaning. Even if it was not claimed that meaning is mediated by the Holy Spirit, an “outsider” perspective could be deemed far from “objective”. In order to be active in certain institutions, the *homo academicus* (to use Pierre Bourdieu’s term in a book with the same title) had to fulfill minimum requirements of confessional obligation.

Recently, the discipline has generally been extended to include people of color, different genders, and ethnic, national, or religious (or for that matter irreligious) backgrounds. From that “Cartesian” perspective, a Muslim can read the Bible, just as a Muslim can study a plant or build a building. Nevertheless, as the debates around the Reza Aslan interview demonstrate, the issue is not yet fully resolved when it comes to Muslim readers of the Bible. Perhaps because in popular imagination Islam is a trope of “religion” par excellence (at least anything but the “secular”), the Muslim scholars of the Bible are prone to be considered outside the “secular” scope of research. After all, in

⁴⁴ Ibid.

contemporary discourse, critique is labelled as “secular”, over against its “other” Islam – the archetype of dogmatic intolerance.⁴⁵ Muslim scholars can thus be only reminiscent of polemicists, whose minimal knowledge of the Bible was only used for attacking it.⁴⁶

Muslims have good reasons to study the Bible without any interest in interreligious polemics. Historically, Christianity and Judaism have always been in the background of Islam. The Prophet Muhammad was accused of getting his information on the earlier prophets from various Judeo-Christian oral and written sources.⁴⁷ Not only does the Qur’an confirm the validity of the previous scriptures, but it also looks like an elliptical (even illegible) text that depends on the preceding literature for a full grasp of its references. Muslim exegetes freely made direct or indirect use of Abrahamic (canonical or non-canonical) sources. More often than not, the data was used without any acknowledgement of the sources. No wonder then that Muslims were very much interested in the Bible.

I cannot, of course, deny that my Muslim background has influenced my research, although I would not call it a “Muslim reading of Paul”. As mentioned above, there are multiple influences on my research – my postmodern approach, my gender, my

⁴⁵ See Talal Asad et al, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013); Mariam Motamedi-Fraser, “But God Is Niether Like Politics Nor Birds: Islam and English Universities,” presented at the British Sociological Association, Sociology of Religion/Higher Education Academy Teaching and Studying Religion Symposium, 2013.

⁴⁶ Interreligious polemics, especially with regards to the Abrahamic scriptures, has been a cutting-edge topic of research. A very concise explanation may be found in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Biblical Criticism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Here she also notes how because of their disbelief in the Bible, Muslim readers found a space to engage critically with the Bible in a way that later modern Biblical scholars did.

⁴⁷ For instance, Qur’an 16:103 reads: “We know that they say that a man teaches the Prophet. But the man that they are referring to speaks another language, while this is clear Arabic.” (My own translation.) Also see Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Bahūrā: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009).

roots in the global South, and of course my religion, among other things. The present work is, then, a reading of Pauline literature by a postmodernist Iranian Muslim woman. (Let us recall that defining any of the above identities is not easy, as they are fluid, changing, and without clear-cut borders.) Accordingly, I cannot claim that my work would have been the same had I had a different background. Rather, although I tried to be immersed in the Western intellectual climate, my critique is many times the result of an “immigrant” perspective on European-Christian thought. In other words, many long-held beliefs in the West (within biblical studies, philosophy, etc.) do not seem to me as “universal”, nor do they indicate “common sense” as many may claim. As a reader with a different gender, religious, and socioeconomic identity, I am suspicious of Europe’s ultimate success in becoming “secular”, “universal”, and “gender-neutral”. Rather than lament cultural difference, I have benefitted from this “outsider” perspective in my discussion of political power (chapter two), religious practice (chapter three), and women’s head-covering (chapter four).

If, as a Muslim woman from the global South, I am bringing anything from my identity to this inquiry it is precisely the fact that the European interpretations of Paul have deprived themselves of alternative readings that fall outside “normative” Europe, and even, more significantly, they have put a “European” tag on the fictional Pauls they kept (re)creating. In turn, the major thinkers of modernity freely borrowed these understandings to (re)build their idea of what “Europe” *is*. Again I emphasize that I am not taking Paul to other contexts to see how his writings could have been read there, much less how he would have meant differently in his “original” milieu. The latter job

does not seem very promising, while the former is a welcome project that I cannot accommodate here. What I intend to do is to investigate how recent debates on sovereignty, power, universality, secularity, and gender, among other things, can shed new light on the modern perceptions of Paul.

1.6. European Paul?

When Paul is called a “European”, one wonders what is particularly “European” about Paul? That is, firstly, which of Paul’s attributes mark him as “European”? And, secondly, why Paul, of all the ancient figures, should be imagined as an exemplary “European”?

“Europe” has been more than the name of a geographical territory. It has come to denote a certain concept or idea. This usage – Europe as an entity against others – has emerged only in the eighteenth century. It replaced “Christendom”, which had been preceded by “Rome” as the heart of Western civilization.⁴⁸ More rigorous discussions of Europe as an idea arose with the development of European phenomenology. For “although ‘Europe’ has been something like a philosopheme since at least the eighteenth century, it is in the phenomenological thought in particular that Europe is explicitly discussed as either a concept or an idea – in other words, as something that is clearly of

⁴⁸ Margaret Heller, “Derrida and the Idea of Europe,” *Dalhousie French Studies* 82 (2008), 93-95.

the order of the philosophical.”⁴⁹ The philosophical discussions on universality, secularity, responsibility, and so on were embedded in this idea of Europe.⁵⁰

Thus, “Europe”, as an abstract entity, is more significant than its material manifestations. It does not start or end anywhere; rather, the construction of Europe has been a process, which depended on defining borders with the other.⁵¹ That is why unlike many other geographical territories, Europe has “vacillating borders”.⁵² Arbitrary border-markings are directly related to the “European” attitude toward “religion”: “Traditionally the disciplines of history and sociology have assigned the differential traits of civilization, in this sense, to the domain of the religious. This is no doubt a consequence of the properly European identification of the general notion of the symbolic with religious idealities – in other words, the fact that the master-signifiers in whose name the interpellation of the individuals as subjects occurs in Europe or, more precisely, in the Mediterranean basin – are religious words, or words with a religious background.”⁵³

There has been this claim that Europe is very eager to preserve its “secularity” by all means. However, as Charles Taylor, Vincent Peccora, and Talal Asad, among others,

⁴⁹ Rodolphe Gasché, *Europe, or the Infinite Task: A Study of a Philosophical Concept*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 17.

⁵⁰ Introduction to *Old Europe, New Europe, Core Europe: Transatlantic Relations After the Iraq War*, eds. Daniel Levy, Marx Pensky, and John Torpey, (London and New York: Verso, 2005), xi-xxix.

⁵¹ Denis Guénoun, *About Europe: Philosophical Hypotheses*, trans. Christine Irizarry, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁵² Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, trans. Christine Jones, James Swenson, and Chris Turner, (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 89-92.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 95.

have demonstrated, Europe has not been a homogenously “secular” society.⁵⁴ Even if some sort of European “secularity” is taken for granted, it has always entailed some sort of relationship with its “religious” other. At the heart of this problem there is the “European” dilemma of reconciling local “Europeanness” with its long-held “universal” values. Again it is here that the European is defined in terms of its borders with the “other”. And “religion” is relationship with the “other” par excellence.

For the definition of the European, Paul Valéry once brings out the origins of Europe in Roman power, Christian morality, and Greek virtue.⁵⁵ But in another occasion, he links the definition of the European to the definition of the “other” – the Persian, the Turk, etc. Taking up the well-known statement in Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721), Valéry rhetorically asks, “How can anyone be a Persian?”. He tries to explain how one’s wonder at the presence of the other can “take us out of ourselves, and at once we see how impossible we are.”⁵⁶ But the invention of this other has also been essential to the existence of the self – and together with it the arbitrariness and relativity of the self.⁵⁷

The “other” resurfaces in Jan Patočka’s critique of the European. According to Patočka, European identity suffers from excessive Platonism – focus on the knowledge of the self, rather than care of the self. This is especially true of Europe after the

⁵⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Vincent Peccora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Paul Valéry, *History and Politics*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 316-23.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 223.

sixteenth century.⁵⁸ Now the task of the Europeans is to regain that “care of the soul” heritage – “the responsibility of the self or of the soul does not derive from knowledge of the Divine, the cosmos, or the Good, but from the soul’s exposure to the gaze of an other, ultimately the gaze of God as a Person, a gaze that constitutes the soul as a person and, for that, as a responsible self.”⁵⁹ Christian “care of the soul” finds its ultimate expression in one’s inevitable exposure to death. Derrida here intervenes to show how a sense of secrecy radicalizes Christian responsibility. Europe has been “political” at the expense of being “mystical”: “Thenceforth, for Europe, and even in modern Europe to inherit, this politics of Greco-Platonic provenance is to neglect, repress, or exclude from itself every essential possibility of secrecy and every link between responsibility and the keeping of a secret; everything that allows responsibility to be dedicated to secrecy.”⁶⁰

For Europe, which has been more concerned with the knowledge of the self, the “secrecy” of the other has usually been repressed through some defense mechanism. One example is Valéry’s point about eighteenth-century Orientalist literature, which always contains “by a kind of law of the genre, representatives of two human types actually very dissimilar: Jesuits and eunuchs.”⁶¹ The presence of the Jesuits is not striking, as they were the teachers of the authors in question. “But who can explain all those eunuchs? I have no doubt that there is some secret and profound reason for the

⁵⁸ Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the History of Philosophy*, trans. Erazim Kohák, (Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1996), 79-93.

⁵⁹ Rodolphe Gasché, “European Memories: Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida on Responsibility,” *Critical Inquiry* 33 (2007), 296.

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret*, trans. David Wills, (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 35.

⁶¹ Valéry, *Politics*, 225.

almost obligatory presence of these persons, so cruelly cut off from many things and, in a way, from themselves.”⁶² The eunuch (like the veiled woman) is thus the symbol of the secrecy that envelopes the “other”.

But the other is not only the distanced other from which the same is detached. The more is it set apart, the more is it contained in the discourse of the same. As Jacques Derrida reminds us in his commentary on Valéry’s work, identity is made of differences without positive terms: “there is no self-relation, no relation to one-self, no identification with oneself, without culture, but a culture of oneself as a culture of the other, a culture of the double genitive and of the difference to oneself.”⁶³ That is why, Derrida maintains, Europe can come into its own when it opens its borders to the other. This also explains why to be “European in every part, that is, European through and through” is “to be and not be European through and through, European in every part.” Therefore, to be “European” one should be “more European” and “less European”. But, in the end “it is up to the others, in any case, and up to me among them, to decide.”⁶⁴

The history of Europe is replete with references to the “spirit”. From Hegel to Valéry, from Husserl to Heidegger, the discourse of Europe is a discourse of the spirit.⁶⁵ Husserl even went so far as to claim that “clearly the title Europe designates the unity of a spiritual life and a creative activity – with all its aims, interests, cares, and troubles,

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, *The Other Heading: Reflections on Today’s Europe*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael B. Naas, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 10.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 82-83.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 27-28; see Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989);

with its plans, its establishments, its institutions”.⁶⁶ This understanding is mainly due to the contrast between the geographical (i.e. physical) and the spiritual (i.e. ideal) concepts of Europe. But can any European contrast between the physical and the spiritual go without any reference to Paul?

In his definition of Europe as “a kind of cap of the old continent”, Valéry highlights the Mediterranean – “that sea, which once tossed the strange thoughts of St. Paul, just as it cradled the dreams and calculations of Bonaparte.”⁶⁷ In another essay he says, “Wherever the names of Caesar, Caius, Trajan, and Virgil, of Moses and St. Paul, and of Aristotle, Plato, and Euclid have had simultaneous meaning and authority, there is Europe.”⁶⁸ But Paul’s European presence is not limited to these dramatic expositions. European thinkers often made references to Paul, identified with him, and even competed to outbid him. (Jacob Taubes has surveyed some of these Paulinist rivalries, with focus on Nietzsche and Freud.)⁶⁹ These intellectuals felt that their task was to draw the lines between what is “proper” to Europe and what is not. Here, an apostle who was coming from outside to correct the wrongs within existing communities was a good model for marking the boundaries. Paul had to establish his authority because he did not belong to the group of the “authentic” twelve disciples. He had to eschew proto-gnostic, as well as Judaizing, tendencies in the Jesus movement. He had to even tell them the details of their daily lives, like eating, or clothing. But he was also different from any

⁶⁶ Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man,” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer, (New York and London: Harper & Row, 1965), 155.

⁶⁷ Valéry, *Politics*, 312.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

⁶⁹ Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 55-95.

everyday “normal” saint. In his daily life, for example, he was always anxious about the coming of the Lord. So, the thinkers of modernity, at least since the Enlightenment, referred to him as a model to distinguish between the past and the way forward, but without causing too much disturbance. Paul was in this sense a genius, who would not disrupt, but only change. He was a character from the past, who could help the present readers move forward toward future.

The anxiety to make “religion” and modernity compatible, through references to Paul, is mostly a European concern. Even when the discussion is confined to geographical territories (and not Europe as an idea), it can be observed that intellectuals in other areas hardly feel the urge to keep together the tradition and modernity. One reason is that in many European countries the religious establishment is linked to the state, if not controlled by it. In the United States, in contrast, with the separation between church and state, the former does not feel a strong need to respond to the modernizing demands of the latter. Middle Eastern nations, on the other hand, have not been swept by the Enlightenment rationality, which is ready to question every long-standing tradition. Most of the interpreters that are considered in this thesis belong to the European tradition. But the European Paul is more a philosophical construct, a product of continental thought.

Sometimes Paul was also present in the post-Enlightenment critique of modernity to remind modern Europeans of what they lost to achieve their Kantian autonomy.

Paul's apocalyptic anxiety was what the early Heidegger saw as authentic life.⁷⁰ Paul's "as if" way of life sparked conversation between Louis Althusser and Stanislas Breton.⁷¹ Paul's revolutionary passion moved materialist thinkers like Badiou, Žižek, and Agamben.

The outcast or wandering modern intellectual could identify with a character who must constantly establish his authority and apostleship. The modern human (from the "modo", i.e. "today"), who struggled between the past and the future, could look up to an apostle whose life was under the shadow of the past resurrection and future *parousia*. The Jewish Messiah on the cross was a paradox that shattered his messianic followers exactly as the modern technology and science ruined the Europeans' belief in a supernatural redemption. For the modern literally God-forsaken humanity, the best role model was a God-forsaken apostle, who after his enlightening vision could no longer care about circumcision or dietary laws. Just like Paul, the modern human lost the past tradition with the death of God (the Father, or the Son, how can it matter?). The problem was, however, that neither Paul nor his modern followers wanted to just put the tradition aside. Living in the present (*as if* not living in the present), Paul and his followers had to find a way to connect the past, the present, and the future.

The history of Paul (i.e. the reception of his character) is closely linked to the history of Europe. Because in writing a story of Paul, the European accepted certain

⁷⁰ Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferenci, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 71-76.

⁷¹ Stanislas Breton, *A Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian, (London: Verso, 2006).

things about the Apostle and rejected others, Europe apparently projected its own story to that of Paul's. In these writings, the "other" does not disappear even when it is intended to be forgotten. In order to write history, Michel de Certeau suggests, one has to select

between what can be *understood* and what must be *forgotten* in order to obtain the representation of a present intelligibility. But whatever this new understanding of the past holds to be irrelevant – shards created by the selection of materials, remainders left aside by an explication – comes back, despite everything, on the edges of discourse or in its rifts and crannies: "resistances," "survivals," or delays discreetly perturb the pretty order of a line of 'progress' or system of interpretation. Therein they symbolize a return of the repressed, that is, a return of what, at a given moment, has *become* unthinkable in order for a new identity to become thinkable.⁷²

It is these moments of "return", "rupture", and "repair" in the story of Paul (as the story of the European) that have made me tick. I especially focus on power, religion, and gender to portray the negotiations between Paul and Europe. The importance of these issues for the European consciousness goes back to its foundations in the Imperial Rome, where they were equally significant but not as clearly distinct as they are assumed to be today.⁷³ This setting encompasses both the early church and the modern West. Many early Christians were executed for not accepting the cult of emperor, which was both political and "religious", and at the same time they were accused of engaging in "unusual" sexual practices. In our own time, the religious allegiance of the political

⁷² Michel de Certeau, *Writing*, 4.

⁷³ Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

leaders, as well as their sex lives, make a lot of difference for their success.⁷⁴ That is why I believe that although clear historical discontinuities must be recognized, many times biblical scholarship has just repeated itself across the centuries. Therefore, although for the purposes of my thesis I focus on post-reformation commentaries, I will mention the earlier Christian literature, as well.

1.7. Outline

In all these modes, Paul has been present in founding our modern world. In fact, it is not accurate to say that he has recently “returned” to the intellectual scene because he never left. As Ward Blanton notes, Paul has been a major marker of the boundary between philosophy and religion, Christianity and Judaism, public thought and private religion, among other things, where the Apostle has usually been associated with the first category of the binary to the exclusion of the second.⁷⁵ In other words, not only has Paul been a point of identification against rival theologies, or social groups, he has also been a point of reference in philosophy. That is why I am preoccupied with the interpretive “fixations” which nourish the European self-definition. I will thus explore the points where Paul, who sometimes cannot fit in the framework of modern self-identification, through an interpretive twist, turns out to be the hero the moderns would identify with.

In Chapter Two, “Paul, the Pious Citizen: Romans 13 between Subjection and Subversion”, I will work through the reception of Paul’s injunction to the Roman

⁷⁴ See Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵ Ward Blanton, “Paul and the Philosophers,” 1-17.

Church to be subjected to the political authorities. Obviously, many political rulers have taken advantage of the Apostle's words, while many activists for social justice have been silenced by them. I will investigate how interpreters tried to overcome the difficulty of this passage. As I will argue in this chapter, biblical interpretation generally failed to see the connection between bodily piety and political action. That is why the first and last parts of Romans 13 (vv. 1-7 and 11-14 respectively) were separated in much of the subsequent exegesis. It was because soon after Paul's death, eschatology was relegated to the transcendent. Since then, the immanent eschatology of Paul ceased to make sense.

I will call the Pauline mode "daily messianic". It is when the messianic becomes so integrated into life that it becomes a daily matter, while it existentially changes the everyday. I will explore the "daily messianic" from a philosophical perspective, based on what Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Gershom Scholem, Hans Blumenberg, Karl Löwith, Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben, Walter Benjamin, Louis Althusser, and others say about the "messianic", as a rupture in the everyday. All of this can help with an interpretation which connects the two parts of Romans 13, as Jacob Taubes did toward the end of the last century.⁷⁶ Paul endorsed the Roman rulers because he was living in the "daily messianic", a specific situation that characteristically escaped any norms. There was no point in rebelling against a government when it would end soon any way. What one could do was to "put on the armor of light" because "the day is

⁷⁶ Taubes, *Paul*, 50-52.

near” (v. 12), as spiritual perfection could contribute to the political well-being of the believers.

After exploring the effect of the separation between politics and religion, I will focus on the role of “religion” in the public sphere. In Chapter Three “Paul’s Faith: Galatians 2:12-14 and the Rise of European ‘Religion’”, I will look at the establishment of the “religious other” in European communities through interpretations of Paul’s ideas about Jews. Here I will focus on the interpretation of the conflict between Paul and Peter over eating with Gentiles. This story has been situated in the larger context of a supersessionist mythology – that the “Christian” Paul supplemented Judaism with the gospel, after which salvation can only be attained through faith. But his remarks, especially in their Lutheran retellings, have been used to mark Christianity from Judaism, faith from guilt, spirit from flesh, and universality from particularity. This is true for both biblical scholars and philosophers alike. From F.C. Baur to the New Perspective theologians, from Friedrich Nietzsche to Alain Badiou, Paul has been used to mark one from its “others”. It is true that Luther’s guilty Jew has been replaced with James Dunn’s “particularist” Jew, while Freud’s obsessional neurotic “religious” person has developed into Žižek’s obsessional modern humanity. Yet, the Protestant spirit still persists in readings of Paul and Christianity, even in the works of Jacques Derrida. I suggest that if Paul is put back in his role as a Jewish thinker, his discourse does not bear upon the modern issues of “religion”, “universality”, etc. In Antioch, the Jewish Paul is merely arguing with another Jewish leader, just like the Jewish rabbis after them

did. The Apostle reports this argument, however, to show that his authority was not less than Peter.

After this discussion of “religion” on the European stage, I will deal with the most provocative of the “religious symbols”, i.e. women’s head-covering. The laity are often surprised to learn that the veil was once taken as a serious part of the European tradition. Many legislators and journalists alike put so much effort to handle the unwelcome presence of the veil. One reason for this is the fact that the veil exposed some of the paradoxes of liberal democracies. Two major questions were asked: Is anyone free not to be free? Can a “religious”, and hence “private”, choice be a matter of public decision?

But besides these legal questions, several cultural issues also come to the fore. Sexual slurs are usually the first things that the East and West use to label each other. This is a mode of orientation through disavowal: the “other” usually has too much or too little sex. The Oriental woman may no longer be depicted as the exotic nude of the harems, but she is certainly the opposite. She covers herself, supposedly to show a lack of desire or even subdue an excess of desire. As I will show in the fourth chapter of this work “Unveiling the European Woman in 1 Corinthians 11”, the cultural problem of women’s head covering is not merely a matter of freedom or a psychoanalytic sexual slur. Rather, it has been a process of excluding the veil from the Christian practice to the point that it was always used as a “marker” of the other. In other words, while the Pauline text orders “praying and prophesying” (i.e. believing) women to cover their heads, interpreters later directed the admonition to target their sexual, racial, and

religious others. It was said that Paul was *actually* targeting the Jews, or alternatively the “mystical” Greeks, the “Orientals”, or the liberationist women, or the sexually “ambiguous”. In fact, the target changed every time that a new “other” emerged in Europe. The veil came to represent both the differing voice and what is used to subdue it. Moreover, the logic of “unveiling” has been embedded in modern notions of femininity, subjectivity, and visibility, which I will try to reassess. If one gets out of these frameworks, one can observe how Paul, who was like us influenced by his medical and intellectual milieu, used the veil as a means of integrating women to the community.

In all of these accounts, Paul does not remain what the moderns want him to be. He is exorcised only to embarrass the exorcists. One time, he seems to overlook social justice by endorsing oppressive regimes. Another time he shows that he is not indifferent about eating practices, but ironically his “indifference” leads to a forceful reproach over eating with Gentiles. Besides, he is very strict about dress codes for men and women. More interesting than the surprise that Paul can give his modern readers is the way that the interpretations of his works have gone so far as to establish a norm, or allegorize a theme. These portraits of Paul are set in the European categories, which could or could not have been the same in their original setting. Paul could always have been portrayed differently. I will suggest a few strokes of the brush. Without aiming at a full picture (which may not exist at all), I would like to show that the current pictures are more like caricatures rather than realistic high resolution pictures.

Chapter Two

Paul the Pious Citizen: Romans 13 between Subjection and Subversion

2.1. Statement of the Problem

Paul of Tarsus was a Roman citizen, or at least the Acts of the Apostles portrays him as one (22:25-29). In actual fact, Paul could have been a Roman citizen, but this could just as well have been an invention of the author of Acts. After all, Acts is at pains to show how the Apostle was a “moral” Roman subject, who, together with Roman dignitaries, was involved in a plan of beneficence for the people. Indeed, it is this co-participation with a benevolent Roman governance which distinguishes Paul in Acts from the almost “rebellious” Jews, who attacked Jesus (in Luke), Stephen, and Paul, and who thus

brought about their imperial troubles upon themselves (Acts 4:1-3; 5:24-26; 21:30-36; 25:2; 26:32).¹

Importantly, Acts' portrayal is not in fact very distant from the tone of some of Paul's own writings. In Romans 13 he admonishes the believers to be subjected to the governing authorities (ἐξουσία) "not only because of wrath, but also because of conscience" and to pay their taxes because the authorities to whom they pay (presumably) are "God's servants" (θεοῦ διάκονός) (vv. 1-7). Perhaps those readers of the passage who shared the sentiments of the author of Acts had only little trouble with the interpretation of this passage. Even if Paul was executed by imperial authorities soon after writing this letter to the Romans, as some early Christians imagined him to be, "the Jews" could be blamed for bringing it about.

Many later readers, on the other hand, were perplexed about harmonizing this passage with their ideas of social justice and of the value of first century Roman imperial functionaries. Obedience from fear may be one natural path that every subject under persecution would choose, but Paul's fulsome endorsement of imperial governance stands out almost uniquely in very early Christian literature. This awkwardly zealous compliance is especially strange given that Paul was soon executed by the notorious Nero. It is, then, no surprise that exegetes had a lot of difficulty in interpreting this passage.

¹ Richard Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 551; Jack T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, (London: SCM Press, 1987); Robert L. Brawley, *Luke-Acts and the Jews: Conflict, Apology, and Conciliation*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987); Ward Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses: Saint Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 22-25; Christina Petterson, *Acts of Empire: The Acts of the Apostles and Imperial Ideology*, (Taipei: Chung Yuan Christian University, 2012), 52-53.

One would also expect the passage to have been interpreted differently before and after the separation of church and state in modern times. Interestingly, however, as I will show below, Augustine, Chrysostom, John Calvin, and Ernst Käsemann may all be pooled together as interpreters who have not read the passage very differently from each other. Even liberation theology did not really offer an alternative to the existing current of interpretations.

In fact, to my knowledge, the only profound alternative from these baselines of a traditional interpretation of Romans 13 was brought about only in recent decades by critical theorists of culture. The fact that for almost 2000 years this kind of interpretation was overlooked may indicate the stability or force of the categories through which the traditional readings have been channeled. The alternative interpretations which operate outside those dominant frameworks, however, can orient us in relation to the generally unremarked possibilities of the original historical situation and the latter day realities of hegemonic Western categories of interpretation.

In this chapter, I will first briefly review the problems of the text and the solutions offered in the history of the interpretation of Romans 13. Then, I will show how postmodern “political theology” (with its descriptions of the “messianic” and the “secular”) can shed some light on other possible readings of the passage. I will see that self-described atheist or materialist philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben have contemplated a “political theology” which was perhaps closer to the Pauline perspective than what the theologians had ever thought.

2.2. History of Interpretation

2.2.1. Pre-modern commentaries

Any religious person has several options in her dealings with the State authorities. The options range on a spectrum from full support (even to the point of sacrifice), to neutral acceptance, and finally rebellion. The history of Christianity has experienced all of these treatments, whether or not these tend to be recorded as official doctrinal options. There were Christian martyrs who were killed *by* the State, as in Christianity's much discussed early period of martyrs. There were Christian martyrs who were killed *for* the State, as in the ubiquitous Christianities of Europe during the World Wars. There were some Christians who were killed because of their "wrong" relationship to the State, as in the case of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Some Christians have been put to one stake or another by other Christians, from early persecutions of "heretics" under Constantine to the medieval Christian Inquisition. So, in the Reformation, for example, there were those who like Martin Luther were on very good terms with the German princes, whereas others ranged from the "rebellious" Münsterites to the "pacifist" Melchiorites.

Read amidst such a spectrum of types, it is as if the historical Paul comprehended both ends of the spectrum of eventual Christian political theology. That is, Paul was among those persecuted by Roman authorities. He was even killed by the State authorities (beheaded not crucified because of his citizenship, as the tradition has it). In 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, he shows a condescending attitude toward the non-believing

institutions, urging the believers not to take their lawsuits to the courts of unbelievers, but rather to trust their own internal judgments about justice. However, in Romans 13 Paul seems to go to the other extreme to give full and determined support to the external authorities. Although many exegetes harmonized this passage with Synoptic traditions wherein Jesus declares that one should give to Caesar the things belonging to Caesar and to God the things belonging to God (Matthew 22:21), Paul's endorsement of taxation seems to go beyond Jesus' quite cagey suggestion. In fact, as we will see, even when the Christian interpreters had strong associations with secular courts, they could not see why Paul should say these things about the pagan rulers who were also involved in persecuting the Church.

There were several explanations of this problem. Origen (d. ca. 254), for instance, said that Paul "is not speaking about those authorities that instigate persecutions against the faith.... Instead he is speaking about general authorities, which are not a terror to the good work but to the evil."² Nevertheless, the Alexandrian commentator could not help but express his discomfort with Paul's commandments: "Paul troubles [me] by these words, that he calls the secular authority and the worldly judgment a minister of God; and he does this not merely one time, but he even repeats it a second and third time."³ However, Origen found a solution:

² Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Books 6-10)*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 9:27-28.

³ *Ibid.*

In these precepts [i.e. Acts 15:28-29],⁴ then, in which he says that no further burden is to be imposed upon the Gentile believers except that they should abstain from what is sacrificed to idols and from blood and from strangled things and from fornication, neither murder is prohibited nor adultery nor theft nor homosexuality nor other crimes that are punished by divine and human laws. But if that which he mentioned above alone has to be observed by Christians, it will appear that he has given them license in respect to these other crimes. But observe the ordinance of the Holy Spirit; for indeed since the other crimes are avenged by secular laws and since it was deemed superfluous now to prohibit these things by divine law, since they are adequately punished by human law, he decrees only those things concerning which no human law had spoken about but which seemed to be in agreement with the religion. From this it is clear that the worldly judge fulfills the greatest part of God's law. For all the crimes that God wants to be punished, he has willed that they be punished not through the priests and leaders of the churches, but through the worldly judge. And aware of this, Paul rightly names him a minister of God and an avenger of the one who does what is evil.⁵

With this solution, Origen showed that law rather than the person of authorities is important in Paul's discourse. A similar approach was taken by John Chrysostom (d. 407), who believed that Paul was speaking about authority as an office in general, not about a particular government – what the Greek theologian calls “the thing itself”. Paul, according to Chrysostom, said these things because he was accused of causing sedition

⁴ “For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

⁵ Origen, *Commentary*.

in the society; so he wanted to show that he promoted “order”.⁶ In other words, the task of the rulers is to establish an order which came from the anarchy of the community. Many commentators even until now have taken up this solution, as the following history will reveal.

Rather than speaking about order, Augustine interpreted the above passage based on his famous dualistic framework. His novelty in Christian theology was to create a theological vision oriented almost entirely around the separation of the heavenly and earthly cities. Accordingly, believers are a community of “pilgrims” (also known as the “City of God”) in this world. Although he praised Christian rulers like Constantine and Theodosius in his work,⁷ he held that following the earthly rulers is only a matter of exigency to be endured “for the sake of everyday social order” “until we have reached the world where every principality and power will be voided [ubi fit evacutio omnis principatus et potestatis]”.⁸ This is a rather telling echo of Paul’s claims about the hollowing out of authority in 1 Corinthians 15:24 – “Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power” (εἴτα τὸ τέλος ὅταν παραδιδῶ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναμιν). However, Augustine cautions the believers not to allow the civil authorities to administer the matters of faith.

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistle to the Romans*, (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1839-1877), 392-405.

⁷ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), V: xvi-xvii.

⁸ Augustine, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans; Unfinished commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. Paula Fredriksen Landes, (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), 72:1-6.

Augustine thus instituted the earth-heaven dualism in Christian theology. His legacy continued in medieval thought, when many ecclesiastical writers taught that civil rulers should be subjected to the divine, while the Church seeks guidance only from God. The medieval theologians held that not only, as Augustine had commanded, matters of faith stay away from the jurisdiction of political authorities; but, more than that, rulers themselves must try to be as virtuous as possible. Thomas Aquinas's breakthrough in medieval political theology was that he used his usual mix of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theological traditions to demonstrate the necessity of government to establish "order", an order which must exist for "social/political animals". Aquinas argued that because (a) governments established order, and (b) nothing without order came from God, therefore whoever resisted governmental order resisted God (Rom 13:2). If the rulers were good, Aquinas assured his audience, disobedience would be punished by God; if the rulers were evil, disobedience would be punished by the rulers themselves (Rom 13:3-4). Such subtleties enabled Aquinas to claim that every power was from God, but also that power was *obtained* from God only when it was rightly dispensed. Power could be categorized as divine, if it were put to good use.⁹

To complete our sketch of important options within the tradition, we could add that whereas Augustine and Aquinas valorized church leaders over political authorities, Luther used theology to take sides with princes against the priests. Also following

⁹ Aquinas, "Commentarium super epistolam ad Romanos," in Documenta Catholica Omnia <http://www.documenta_catholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274_Thomas_Aquinas_Biblica_Super_Epistulam_ad_Romanos_LT.pdf>, accessed on 6 January 2014.

Augustine, Luther envisaged two worlds – one temporal and the other spiritual, each with its own governments. In his influential commentary on Romans 13, Luther criticized the priests for abusing their position by making use of unlawful privileges while he praised the princes for their dutifulness, virtue, and support for the church. Luther, as it were, found himself at a point where he identified with Paul precisely through endorsing the politicians rather than the priests.

Like Origen before him, Luther subscribed to a threefold division of humans into body (σῶμα), soul (ψυχή), and spirit (πνεῦμα). Thus, both believed that, when Paul said that “every soul (πᾶσα ψυχή) should be subjected to the authorities” he was not calling the best part of human to be involved in worldly politics. Ideally we are one spirit with the Lord, Origen suggested, when we are subjected to him, “but if we are not yet that way, but there is still a common soul within us that still possesses something of this world, one that is in someone, a soul shackled by pre-occupations, the Apostle lay down precepts for it and tells it to be subjected to the authorities of the world.”¹⁰ Luther, however, used this division to criticize the church because “almost everyone with one accord says that the temporal gifts which have been given to the church are spiritual gifts. And now they regard only these as spiritual and rule by means of them, except that they still carry on their juridical actions, the lightning bolts of their decrees, and their power of the keys, but with much less concern and zeal than they use on their ‘spiritual,’ that is, their temporal duties.”¹¹ Suddenly, his tripartite theology turned to a dualistic

¹⁰ Origen, *Commentary*, 9:27-28.

¹¹ Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, trans. Walter G. Tillmann and Jacob A. O. Preus, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1972), 468-69.

one: “The spirit of the believers cannot be or become subject to anyone but is exalted with Christ in God, holding all things under its foot, The ‘soul,’ *which is the same as man’s spirit*, insofar as it lives and works and is occupied with visible and temporal matters, ought to be ‘subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institutions’ (1 Pet 2:13). For by this submission it is obedient to God and wills the same thing that He wills; and thus through this subjection it is victorious over all these things.”¹² Paul’s injunction for “every soul”, therefore, according to Luther, meant that “with the consent and willingness of the soul, and under the direction of the spirit”, the body, as the lowest part, was “subject to the power of the state”. In this formulation, the body was left to the political authorities, while piety was concerned with the spirit.¹³

Another awkward question for our interpreters was why the Apostle, who sometimes made a great show of aligning his gospel with liberty (see Romans 8:21; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Galatians 5:1), seems here to be calling for a form of servitude? According to Luther, who was particularly attracted to Pauline language of liberty, Paul was calling for the liberty of the spirit, a liberty which relegated legal observance to a matter of indifference rather than to a potential economy of good works. This is a crucial moment in Western political thought. As if the culmination of the preceding political theologies, Luther here gives over the body to be controlled by the political authorities even as the question of redemption becomes merely indifferently related to the same.

¹² Ibid., 468-69; emphasis added.

¹³ This understanding of the body seems to develop into idealist philosophy of Kant and Hegel. For Kant, the daring to think does not affect the life of the body. One may *do* certain things, while one’s mind does not agree. Thus, the mind is free of tutelage without creating disorder (see his “What is Enlightenment?”). In different works, Hegel prefers “natural” religions of the Spirit over the positive religion of ritual and body, which are surpassed by it in the progress of the Spirit through history.

Europe after Luther gradually learnt to regulate daily matters in the political realm, and to leave the spiritual to the church. The separation between bodily practice and religious faith, as well as the separation between the church and the state has strong roots in this Lutheran worldview.¹⁴

2.2.2. Into the modern

In so-called secular Europe, the interpretation of Romans 13 has been no less difficult. Interpreters have in fact often been at pains to try to underplay the relevance of this passage for modern readers. Two major conceptions of political theology, which had converged earlier in, say, Luther, persisted until the twenty-first century. One line was the interpretation that established the necessity of political governments in social order. This had started with Chrysostom, who theoretically opposed Greek (political) philosophy, and reached its zenith in Christian Aristotelianism (best exemplified in Aquinas). The second strand came from Augustine's division between the earthly and heavenly realms, which was highlighted by Lutheran theology. Ever new strategies were used only to justify the same age-old political theologies. As the following survey of the modern reception history of the text makes clear, the responses to the text ranged from "Paul did not say this" to "Paul did not mean this" or "Paul was addressing this specific group rather than others".

¹⁴ In the same vein, Luther says elsewhere that although the Jewish law is not incumbent any longer, this does not mean that civil laws are also invalid. See his *Lectures on Galatians 1535 (Chapters 1-4)*, trans. Jaroslav Pelikan, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 122-23.

First, a minority of scholars explained the passage away by raising doubts regarding its Pauline authorship. It was argued, among other things, that the passage is thematically abrupt in the middle of a smooth transition from Romans 12:21 to Romans 13:8, or that the vocabulary and rhetoric is not Pauline, or that it does not contain christological motivations.¹⁵ This thesis, which presumes a certain “Paul” who could not have said these things, has not convinced the larger group of Paul scholars due to its lack of sufficient or certain textual and historical evidence, leading others to suspect a kind of special pleading to be behind the interpretation.

Another group pointed to the specific historical situation of Romans 13. For example, it was claimed that the passage belonged to the early years of Nero when his regime had not yet become very violent or oppressive (a violence or oppression which would soon, early Christians believed, consume Paul himself!).¹⁶ A very popular interpretation directed the text against the Jewish “zealots” who rebelled or avoided tax-paying. As mentioned above, since as early as Chrysostom, this interpretation has been suggested by different readers. It was built on a general sense that Paul disagreed with many “Jewish” behaviors. Ernst Käsemann was a particularly strong proponent of this interpretation in the twentieth century. Käsemann highlighted Paul’s “fear of anarchy”

¹⁵ See Alexander Pallis, *To the Romans: A Commentary*, (Liverpool: Liverpool Booksellers’ Co. Ltd, 1920); Ernst Barnikol, “Römer 13: Der nichtpaulinische Ursprung der absoluten Obrigkeitsbejahung von Römer 13,1-7,” *Studien zum Neuen Testament und zur Patristik: Erich Klostermann zum 90. Geburtstag dargebracht*, eds. Jürgen Dummer et al, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961), 65-133; Winsome Munro, “Romans 13:1-7: Apartheid’s Last Biblical Refuge,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin. A Journal of Bible and Theology* 20 (1990): 161-68; James Kallas, “Romans xiii. 1-7: An Interpolation,” *New Testament Studies* 11 (1964-65): 316-76; Walter Schmithals, *Der Römerbrief als historisches Problem*, (Göttingen: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohr, 1975).

¹⁶ Walter Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors: Church and State in the New Testament*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 28-29.

and battle against “the peril of enthusiasm”. But, he argued, such fears and battles were related to a particular situation which cannot serve as a basis for a general theory.¹⁷ Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, and Peter Stuhlmacher also held that after a rebellion led by the Jewish Christians, the existence of the community depended on tax-paying and subjection to higher authorities. Hence Paul’s injunction.¹⁸

There have also been some clearly liberationist and anti-imperialist readings of Romans 13. For example, the *Kairos Document* (1985), issued by African anti-apartheid theologians, relies on interpretations by Ernst Käsemann and Oscar Cullman¹⁹ in order to declare that Paul’s message in this passage was not universally binding because it only referred to Paul’s own immediate historical context. The addressees of the letter were not revolutionaries but “enthusiasts”, whom Käsemann called “anarchists”. Such anarchists, the rhetoric of the document assumes, surely needed to be silenced. If liberationism and anarchy were distinguished clearly, it would be clear that the Bible only disagreed with the latter. Far from inviting the community to subjection, the liberationist theologians of the *Kairos Document* concluded, the Bible endorses non-subjection in the face of oppressive regimes.²⁰

Similarly, in Germany, Luise Schottroff related Romans 13:1-7 to Romans 12:21 (“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”). In this sense, subjection

¹⁷ Ernst Käsemann, “Römer 13, 1-7 in unserer Generation,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 56 (1959): 356-59.

¹⁸ Johannes Friedrich, Wolfgang Pöhlmann, Peter Stuhlmacher, “Zur historischen Situation und Intention von Rom 13,1-7,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 73 (1976): 134-35.

¹⁹ Oscar Cullman, *State in the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1963), 43-56.

²⁰ “The Kairos Document,” in *Challenge to the Church: A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa; the Kairos Document and Commentaries*, (World Council of Churches, 1985), 2:1.

becomes an instance of returning good for evil. She also found evidence of the apologetic use of Romans 13 by early Christian martyrs. Accordingly, she suggested, Paul might as well have been preparing the believers for martyrdom. Schottroff also underlined the relevance of the passage for a general apocalyptic mood, in the sense that the authorities of the world were expected to meet their end soon.²¹ In a less revolutionary interpretation, Troels Engberg-Pedersen read chapters 12-13 together to find Stoic themes on the relationship within the group and with the people outside. According to Engberg-Pedersen, Paul was “Stoicizing” politics, and calling for “engagement in this world *and* disengagement from it but total engagement *elsewhere*”.²²

Another important voice in anti-imperial readings of the passage belongs to John Dominic Crossan. Crossan maintained that while there was no general theology in the text, believers could see for themselves that there are times to obey and times to disobey governing authorities. But, more than that, both Paul and Jesus “*are not so much trapped in a negation of global imperialism as engaged in establishing its positive alternative here below upon this earth*”.²³ In a surprising escalation of the gesture, N. T. Wright even held that Paul’s gospel had generally been so “counter-imperial” that the

²¹ Luise Schottroff, “‘Give to Caesar What Belongs to the Caesar and to God what belongs to God’: A Theological Response of the Early Christian Church to its Social and Political Environment,” in *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*, ed. Willard M. Swartley, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 225-41.

²² Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul’s Stoicizing Politics in Romans 12-13: The Role of 13:1-10 in the Argument,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 29, no. 2 (2006): 172.

²³ John Dominic Crossan, “Paul and Rome: The Challenge of a Just World Order,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 59 (2005): 16.

Apostle actually had felt the need to warn against potential “disobedience” on the part of the believers.²⁴

In relation to these various interpretations, what could provoke our attention is not so much the answers of the interpreters as the questions that do not tend to be asked, inciting us in turn to wonder about interpretive answers to these unaddressed conundrum which cannot appear either. For instance, none of the commentators mentioned explores in depth the possibility that, at that point in his life Paul proclaimed ideas about the right of political authorities which were, to say the least, lamentable later on in light of his looming death at the hands of imperial functionaries. Theological readings (at least before the Enlightenment) did not seem capable of faulting the Apostle with such lack of insight. The Enlightenment spirit also seemed equally disinclined to see how a spiritual leader would so strongly support the government. “Once the [Enlightenment] secular-religious divide is accepted as the normative paradigm,” as Richard King reminds us, “examples of politically active and religious authority become predisposed to the image of the manipulative and opportunistic ideologue. Those who accept the secular authority of such a figure thus become represented as subject to mass religious indoctrination.”²⁵ This kind of dynamic, perhaps itself an extension of a Lutheran trajectory, is helpful in our coming to grips with the marked anxiety we noted among important modern interpreters of Paul’s confident quietism in Romans 13.

²⁴ N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 78.

²⁵ Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and “The Mystic East”*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 14.

2.2.3. Subtracting Romans 13 from the Dominant Paradigms

By subtracting the image of Paul from some of these influential types, trends, and paradigms, it is possible to hit on another possible interpretation that has been otherwise overlooked. For a start, we could prefer to maintain a sense of Romans 13 as itself a unity which does not fall into the great secular/sacred distinctions of Augustine, Luther, or modern paradigms of a “secular Europe.” After admonishing the Roman Church to be subjected to authorities and pay their taxes (vv. 1-7), Paul proceeds directly to tell them to “owe no one anything, except to love one another” (vv. 8-10). He concludes the chapter with eschatological warnings:

you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provisions for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (vv. 11-14).

Intriguingly, in the interpretive traditions we have considered the first and last parts of this chapter were seldom read together. The “near” hour was frequently seen as anything but an imminent moment of the presence of the Lord. Some took it as Jesus’ first appearance in the world, i.e. the incarnation, so that the text could, oddly enough, be addressing the believers who had been waiting for his coming since the beginning of the world (Origen and Aquinas).²⁶ Others understood it as a distant resurrection of the

²⁶ Origen, *Commentary* 9:32-34; Aquinas, “*Commentarium*.”

dead, the thought of which pushed the believers to good works (Chrysostom and Luther).²⁷ The “near end” was also sometimes spiritualized. So, for example, one of Aquinas’ hypotheses regarding the verse was that it referred to the “time of mercy”, when one stops sinning. The farthest a reader could get to find some imminent eschatology in the passage was what John Calvin did with it. Calvin ignored any link between verses 1-7 and verses 11-14; but his reading was different because his idea of the approaching end was more imminent than many others so that it could affect the daily lives of the believers. Accordingly, the present was a moment of “dawn”. The believers should, then, put aside works of darkness “because we are not so overwhelmed with thick darkness as the unbelieving are, to whom no spark of life appears”. The future event had implications for our present, as well. That is why, according to Calvin, Paul exhorted us “at one time to meditate on our future life; at another, to contemplate the present favor of God”.²⁸

Another exception to a general overlooking of the eschatological context of the statements about governance in Romans 13 is provided by Klaus Wengst, whose work has been framed by a theology of peace. He read Romans 13 together with 1 Thessalonians 5 to underscore the eschatological and other-worldly dimensions of Paul’s ideal community. The required loyalty, according to Wengst, “is the loyalty of the one who is alien to the world and a ‘citizen of heaven’, not the loyalty of the person

²⁷ Chrysostom, *Romans*, 406-15; Luther, *Romans*, 478-84.

²⁸ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, ed. and trans. John Owen, (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1849), 489.

who is assimilated but that of the one who is not”.²⁹ Although Wengst was clearly keeping up the Augustinian-Lutheran interpretations, he retained the sense of imminent end that has usually been ignored in many Lutheran interpretations.

Similarly, a most intriguing interpretation has been offered by the Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes. Taubes’ reading of Paul was very much influenced by Karl Barth. Against the German ecclesiastical support for National Socialism, Taubes’ Barth had developed a lastingly significant interest in a negative political theology. Barth had argued that by subjection, Paul meant noninvolvement, whether in cooperation or rebellion. From this perspective, redemption came only from the Lord and the Christian should only wait for his coming. In Barth’s reading, Paul had put forward two great possibilities: the Great Positive Possibility is neighborly love as the sole mode of participating in God; and the Great Negative Possibility, subjection as non-involvement. According to Barth, as Taubes’ source for a negative political theology, no human sovereign could bring in God’s Kingdom; revolutions only replaced one unjustifiable sovereignty with another unjustified version of the same sovereignty. But Paul, in their opinion, believed that sovereignty belonged only to God, and could not be granted to humans.³⁰

Taubes nevertheless differed from Barth in that he believed that Paul, despite his negative political attitudes, did not need to put aside the thought of political action.

Taubes’ Paul in fact was, above all, a new Moses figure, a figure of the establishment of

²⁹ Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden, (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1987), 84.

³⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 6th edn, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 463-91.

a political community. This founding of a community was based not on the friend-enemy distinction of Carl Schmitt, but rather on what Taubes called a “union-covenant”.³¹ In other words, for Taubes’ Paul love rather than animosity was the foundation of the political entity in question. Taubes even noticed that Paul in Romans 13 reduced yet further the famous summation of all commands into the dual commandment of God-love and neighbor-love. Paul’s further radicalization of this summation was to reduce the two obligations down to a single obligation to love one’s neighbor (Rom 13:10).³²

Remarkably, of all the interpreters considered so far, Taubes stands out in his desire to patch together what may appear as three separate passages in Romans 13. For Taubes, vv. 1-7 must be interpreted in the light of the two other parts. The second part (vv. 8-10) was the political act of establishing a community of love (not ethnicity or worldly politics). The third part (vv. 11-14) affirmed the nearness of the end – “for salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers”. What was at stake for Taubes was the idea that there was no point in a revolution which would destroy everything, no “clearing” which grounded the radical new start. Instead, the new community asserted its difference from all of the surrounding world in expecting the revolution but without needing to undertake a ground-clearing exercise for it to come to pass. Or, differently put, for Taubes the new community marked its radical difference without needing to ground itself in a friend-enemy distinction. As Taubes beautifully put

³¹ Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, Afterword to *The Political Theology of Paul* by Jacob Taubes, trans. Dana Hollander, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 130.

³² Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 50-52

it, “now here comes a subterranean society, a little bit Jewish, a little bit Gentile, nobody knows, what sort of lowlifes are these anyway – for heaven’s sake, don’t stand out!”³³

Perhaps because of his constant self-identification with (the Jewish, or “Yiddish”) Paul, Taubes has offered a unique interpretation of Romans 13 which manages to articulate a coherent and tightly knit mutual reinforcement between each of the three sections of the chapter. The plausibility of Taubes’ Paul, and of his own identification with the Apostle, emerges with the way his reading gives voice to a situation of unhappiness and urgency in the face of catastrophe, which are all the earmarks of Paul’s imminent eschatology of a crucified messiah. By the same token, it is crucial to note the way Taubes’ political theology (of neighbor love) pushes in a totally different direction from that of other interpreters who read the passage in terms of maintaining “order”. In those readings, hierarchies of governing authority are deemed a good necessary to curb an otherwise threatening chaos, a chaos which is often imagined as coming from “below”, i.e. at the level of “subterranean” communities. In contrast to those readings, Taubes saw in Romans 13 an indication of a “subterranean” sovereignty which constitutes its power by grasping a “moment” of exception (see verse 11, “You know what *time* it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep...”). The formal logic is the same as the one we get in tales from Carl Schmitt about the way that sovereignties constitute themselves by naming “exceptions” to normal routines. Exploding the formal similarities, however, Taubes’ Paulinism is nevertheless the complete antithesis of the Schmittian story. In Paul’s eschatological exceptionalism of

³³ Ibid., 54.

the *kairos*, sovereignty does not emerge “from above” at the level of state governance, to curb the chaos that arises from the plebs. Rather, Paul’s naming of an exception and the founding of a “subterranean” community makes possible a complete indifference to the state, emerging (as Taubes likes to say in an inversion of the Schmittian logic) “from below.”

In this way, Taubes attempted to construct political sovereignty on love, in contrast to Carl Schmitt, who founded it on a decision about the enemy.³⁴ Accordingly, Taubes’ messianism could not in any way legitimate political authorities, whereas Schmitt’s appropriation of the Pauline *katechon* (i.e. the restrainer; 2 Thess 2:6-7) provided “biblical” justification for ancient empire and the modern exceptionalism of the *Führer*. In fact, according to Schmitt, the empire “meant the historical power to *restrain* the appearance of the Antichrist and the end of the present eon”.³⁵ In *The Nomos of the Earth*, Schmitt claimed that this idea of the empire could be found “in utterances of Germanic monks in the Frankish and Ottoman ages, above all, in Haimo of Halberstadt’s commentary on the Second Letter to the Thessalonians and in Adso’s letter to Queen Gerberga, as well as in Otto of Freising’s utterances and in other evidence until the end of the Middle Ages,” although he did not acknowledge his sources.³⁶ In other words, the “political theology of St. Paul” had very different, even

³⁴ Hartwich, Assmann, and Assmann, “Afterword”, 142.

³⁵ Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of Jus Publicum Europaeum*, trans. G. L. Ulmen, (New York: Telos, 2006), 59.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 59-60. On the history of *katechon* in European philosophy, including Schmitt’s sources, see: Marc de Wilde, “Politics Between Times: Theologico-Political Interpretations of the Restraining Force (*katechon*) in Paul’s Second Letter to the Thessalonians,” in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 105-126.

diametrically opposed, meanings for Taubes and Schmitt. For Taubes, Paul's was a vision of radical eschatology of the community of love. For Schmitt political theology was about keeping up order in fear of an eschatological "enemy". In this sense, for Taubes the current political establishment had no "religious" legitimacy whatsoever, while Schmitt famously rooted modern politics in theology. This does not mean that for Taubes the religious person (or community) was to take up a gesture of mere indifference or non-involvement. Rather, the crucial point is that there was a political theology for Taubes to the extent that the religious individual (and the community) might articulate theological stances toward politics. Said differently, for Taubes theology did not justify governments, but oriented subjects.

It should be noted that Taubes, who was influenced by both Karl Barth and Jewish philosophy, did not depart completely from the Augustinian dualism. Like Augustine (and Luther after him) Taubes put the earthly and heavenly cities against each other. He only played with the heritage that came from Chrysostom on the one hand – Paul was against the seditionists – and Aquinas' Aristotelianism on the other – social entities need order and government. Nevertheless, founding the political entity on union-covenant is not dissimilar to Augustine's formulation of the earthly city of pilgrims who essentially belong to the heaven.

I will return to Taubes' interpretation of Romans 13 at the end of this chapter, but for the moment I want to consider a Pauline and Taubesian point: why is it that Taubes' own reading subtracts itself so powerfully from some of the dominant trends in the interpretation of Romans 13? Why is it that the Christian interpretive history waited for

a rabbi, philosopher, and holocaust-survivor to interpret this Pauline text in a way which links the apparent quietism of Romans 13 neither to an otherworldly Platonism nor to a justification of power? While the epistemological or sociological explanations of such a *kairos* may be quite expansive, here I want to pursue the question by looking at Taubes' interpretation in the context of an economy of necessary exclusion, the basic economy behind much of what now finds expression as "political theology" in continental philosophy. My hypothesis is that the Aristotelian-Schmittian focus on "order" and animosity as essential components of the metaphysics of a political entity led to a general ignorance of the relation between the political and eschatological sections of the Pauline text, as if it were difficult to conceptualize a political discussion which was *both* about love *and* about the exceptional or *kairotic* founding of a community at an eventual moment in time. Ironically, however, a post-Schmittian "political theology", especially with its focus on the "messianic", undermines these "secular" categories. To understand this, I will first explain Schmitt's "political theology", which was closely tied with his "secularization" theory.

2.3. "Political Theology"

2.3.1. Carl Schmitt

Continental philosophers in recent decades have taken up with great enthusiasm what German jurist and political philosopher Carl Schmitt consistently referred to as "political theology". "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are

secularized theological concepts,” Schmitt declared.³⁷ Much ink has been spilled on the interpretation of this grand claim. There are several points about it that I am going to discuss here. Firstly, this statement engages with the “secularization thesis”, which had been suggested by Max Weber. That is, against those who believed that modernity in its progress would put aside different elements of religion, Schmitt followed Weber to claim that it was theology itself which gave birth to politics. Secondly, “political theology” points to the irrational, arbitrary character of the State. (This need not have only a negative tone in Schmitt’s work. But his work was received negatively due to his later association with National Socialism, as well as some other versions of political theology that underscore the “theological” justifications for the “irrational” oppressions on the part of some states.)

Schmitt’s major theological category was the “sovereign” – “he who decides on the state of exception”.³⁸ As the political is defined by the distinction between friends and enemies, the state of exception is also the moment when, as a result of the threat of the enemy, the political is so intensified that the laws are suspended *exceptionally*. The “state of exception” was, thus, a “secularized” form of the theological “miracle”, while the sovereign resembled the Judeo-Christian omnipotent God. The *katechon* (mentioned above) was also the enemy whose imminent, threatening presence had kept up the medieval government.

³⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab, (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

2.3.2. The Löwith-Blumenberg Debate

On the other side of the political struggle, the Jewish-born philosopher Karl Löwith also tried to interpret modernity with the help of the “secularization thesis”. In his major work *Meaning in History* (1949), Löwith claimed that the modern idea of progress stemmed from a secularization of Hebrew and Christian eschatology. According to him, just as eschatological hope promised a movement toward perfection (even when the world is full of evil), the modern idea of progress, especially in its Hegelian version, was just expressing the same thing in immanent terms:

True, modern historical consciousness has discarded the Christian faith in a central event of absolute relevance, yet it maintains its logical antecedents and consequences, viz., the past as preparation and the future as consummation, thus reducing the history of salvation to the impersonal teleology of a progressive evolution in which every present stage is the fulfillment of past preparations. Transformed into a secular theory of progress, the scheme of history of salvation could seem to be natural and demonstrable.³⁹

Christian eschatology, accordingly, is unique in that “everything is ‘already’ what it is ‘not yet’”.⁴⁰ This unbelievable great event has already partly happened and is only in need of a supplementary event. But, this does not make sense for non-Christians. Therefore, Löwith believed, Christianity cannot impose its terms on profane history, which “is a continuous repetition of painful miscarriages and costly achievements which end in ordinary failures” and “the scene of a most intensive life, which ends time and

³⁹ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 186.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 188-89.

again in ruins”.⁴¹ Only if interpreted in terms of belief in Providence or the future appearance of the Lord can these events be seen with any sort of optimism toward perfection. Thus, the “secular” version of “progress” is devoid of any value because it does not take into sufficient account the non-perfectable realities of the profane world it seeks to explain. In other words, for Löwith the modern idea of “progress” is non-rational, just as the Hebrew and Christian faiths are so in their explanations of evil in the world.⁴²

The most important reaction to Löwith’s idea comes from Hans Blumenberg. In *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966), Blumenberg rejected any “secularization” theory of continuity between the past and present modes of thought. There is, in his opinion, no relation between the transcendent eschatology and the immanent idea of progress. For him, certain self-sufficient events – such as the scientific discoveries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and “the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns”⁴³ in the late 1600s – led to the idea of progress.

“Secularization” makes sense only when an altogether other-worldly phenomenon transforms into a worldly one. In Blumenberg’s opinion, secularization of eschatology did not happen in modernity, but in the New Testament itself. Blumenberg believes in what he calls “secularization *by* eschatology” rather than Löwith’s

⁴¹ Ibid., 190.

⁴² Robert M. Wallace, “Progress, Secularization and Modernity: The Löwith-Blumenberg Debate,” *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 65.

⁴³ In artistic productions, the “ancients” argued that ancient authority should be valued as nothing could surpass it. The “moderns,” in contrast, believed that they could progress toward a better artistic production.

“secularization of eschatology”.⁴⁴ By the New Testament’s “immediate expectation”, Blumenberg says,

the promised events of the Parousia are moved into the actual life of the individual and of his generation. Expectations that extend into the future beyond the present generation are of a different kind, not only quantitatively but qualitatively; they do not displace people into a “state of emergency”. “Immediate expectation” negates every type of durability, not only the world’s but also its own, by which it would refute itself. If it survives this self-refutation by a long-term indeterminacy, then its specific unworldliness is destroyed. In early Christian history another and a heterogeneous unworldliness of the type of “transcendence,” stood ready to reoccupy the vacant position.⁴⁵

Because they assumed that this might be the last moment, the eschatological Christians might have done certain things that were incongruent with the reality of the world. The world went on, and the end did not arrive. Consequently, to survive, eschatology had to become other-worldly and transcendental. Because it sought to establish stability, Christianity distanced itself from this immanent (and imminent) eschatology.⁴⁶ The development of transcendental eschatology was a strategy to make it less radical. Before the “secularization by eschatology”, the community lived in a “state of emergency” (the use of quotation marks betrays his reference to Schmitt). To save themselves from the state of emergency, the community could do two things: make

⁴⁴ Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 45

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

eschatology a constant way of indeterminate life, or watch its end and live the real life. Christians have obviously opted for the second option.

I agree with Blumenberg regarding the start of the “secular” in the New Testament times. A very good evidence for that, in my opinion, is the interpretations of Romans 13. Paul’s immanent eschatology changed his “worldly” mode, in a way that seems unfamiliar to the later “secular” life. As I will show, the interpretations of Romans 13 have failed because they are not embedded in that specific point in history. Only in certain gaps and ruptures of the everyday, one can get a glimpse of the Pauline situation. These moments have especially been pinpointed by continental philosophers. I will look at the features that these philosophers have seen in the “messianic” ruptures of the daily life.

2.4. The “Daily Messianic”

When the “end” becomes immanent and imminent, it can be a very “worldly” experience. This temporary existential situation is what I shall call the “daily messianic”. Quite unlike any other daily, or “secular” situation, when because of the transcendence of eschatology one is not too much concerned about the end, the “daily messianic” is what changes the mode of any action into an anxious expectation of the end. I will briefly mention five features of the “daily messianic” (in the work of different philosophers) and then I will read Romans 13 in light of that.

a) The “daily messianic” comprises the moments of intensive “care”

In fact, “care” (*Sorge*) has made two contrasting appearances in Western thought. On the one hand, Max Weber pioneered the “secularization thesis” with his descriptions of Calvinist messianic care, whereas Heidegger pointed to the existential disruption of the everyday mode in moments of messianic “care” or “anxiety”. In his investigation of the relationship between Calvinism and capitalism, Weber noticed that the Calvinist idea of predestination and providence enjoined the believers to be satisfied with their situation, without trying to transcend it (1 Cor 7:20). Paul had told the Corinthian Church to be indifferent to its present situation because the Lord would come soon. That is, the believers were told to live and act *as if* they were not living in the world. According to Calvin’s interpretation of Paul, the transitory world is directed toward the glorification of God. Therefore, the elected Christians had to fulfill, to the best of their ability, what they were assigned to do – their calling (vocation, *Beruf*, κλήσις). By labor in a calling, which served the mundane life of the community, the Christian could bring the glory of God in earth. According to Weber, in this Calvinist setting, the religious, social, and economic callings become one. Ironically, the radical separation between the heaven and the earth united the heavenly and earthly activities. The City of God, in its absolute transcendence, found a way for immanence. In this manner, Paul’s eschatological indifference turned into a Calvinist preoccupation with the world. Weber argued that the affinity between vocation and salvation strongly influenced the success of capitalism in predominantly Protestant lands, such as the United States, England, Scotland, Germany, and Scandinavia.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Time and again in the book, Weber cautions his readers that Calvinism was not the only cause for the

To generalize Weber's points a bit more, we may say that the godless disenchanted world emerged precisely because the godly would not be bothered with the world. They wanted to belong to the world without belonging to it. The glory of God triumphed only when godly subjects integrated fully into the profane world, "as though not" (ὡς μὴ) they were concerned with it. Pauline messianism (in its Calvinist guise) thus seems to have created the everyday bourgeois life. This is how Weber uncovered the messianism that was inherent in mundane activities.

Furthermore, Weber wrote in the context of the earliest reception of Marxist historical materialism. According to this philosophy, ideas stem from the matter (or the market). The capitalistic enemy had come about as a result of the bourgeois material dealings, while an active proletariat could create a socialist society. It is not clear whether an "authentic" Marxist philosophy would support the evolution of the different historical stages or would call for revolutionary action to bring about the socialist community. But, for much of the twentieth century, the possibility of social action was only seen in materialism, especially when the Enlightenment revolution of France was considered a step toward the consolidation of bourgeois capitalism. In sum, Marxists declared that change came through the matter. What Weber proposed, however, was that idealism can also cause social change. That is, ideas can influence the matter no less than the other way round. He suggested that religion can be one of the important factors in the emergence of capitalism. Religion is not there only to numb the senses and, just like "opium", calm the people in the face of the chaotic material world – as Marx had

emergence of capitalism, but only one of the different causes.

claimed. It had the potential to bring about economic success. Capitalism was, therefore, less an outcome of the bourgeois revolution in the eighteenth-century France than the consequence of the Reformation two centuries earlier, Weber argued.

What Weber had shown was an instance of the daily messianic. The Puritans, in his description, stuck to their daily exercises because of their messianic sentiments. However, another sort of “daily messianic” reflects a rupture in everyday activities in their utmost everydayness. Martin Heidegger found in this “daily messianic” an allegory of the “authentic” life that he would later explain in more detail.

In his 1921-22 lectures on the phenomenology of religious life in Marburg, Heidegger dealt with texts from the Christian tradition, Paul’s letters (Galatians and the two letters to the Thessalonians), Augustine, and Luther. His reading of the Thessalonian correspondence was oriented toward the messianic “anxiety”. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul tells the believers to be careful because the time of the *parousia* is not definite. Rather, “the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5.2), and if the believers are not awake in the darkness, “this day should surprise you like a thief” (v. 4). The believers are not to do anything, except to regulate their lives on the basis of this expectation. However, their hope is, according to Heidegger, radically different from any expectation in that it does not involve any “peace and safety” (v. 3). The Christian life is, thus, “constant insecurity” and “uncertainty”. As such, it is not based on any doctrine or dogma, but on anguish, which is constantly intensified. As an alternative to the Cartesian knowing subject who looks for dates and calculations, the anxious “caring” subject is formed by the future existential event.

In Heidegger's interpretation of 2 Thessalonians, the first readers of 1 Thessalonians were divided. The "incorrect" reading was "to set the work aside, stand around and chat, because they expect him every day. But those who have understood him must be despairing, because the anguish increases, and each stands alone before God. It is these to whom Paul now answers that the anguish is an ἔνδειγμα [proof] of the calling".⁴⁸ A true Christian is thus ready and watchful, but equally disappointed and bored. Her life is full of agitations, with no chance for rest (or perhaps work) – the Lord may come any time! Thus, the factual life of the Christian does not happen in the objective time; but it is lived in a consciousness of temporality, or the immanent messianic.⁴⁹

Whereas for Weber, the daily messianic integrated the subject in the everyday (similar to what Blumenberg called "secularization *by* eschatology"), Heidegger saw the daily messianic as a mode of difference from the worldly concerns. The existential subject continually sees the end. Thus, her words, deeds, and thought, which may be in form the same as those of a non-messianic subject, are said in a different mode.⁵⁰ Heidegger might have agreed with Blumenberg in that the subject realizes that living

⁴⁸ It is usually believed that the rather late 2 Thessalonians is taking back the imminent eschatology of the earliest extant Pauline writing, 1 Thessalonians. That is, after "the delay of the *parousia*," the author of the second letter tried to discourage the audience from too anxiously waiting, and even abrogated the first letter (2 Thess 2:2). This change of attitude had even caused the interpreters to doubt the Pauline authenticity of the second letter. Heidegger believes that this disappointment is, ironically, ample evidence of its authenticity. Surprisingly, the consistent existential "authenticity" of the Christian life in both letters confirms their textual "authenticity".

⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferenci, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 71-79.

⁵⁰ The situation is very similar to the movie *Before Sunrise* (1995). The love affair is similar to any other relationship (if not more banal). But the love that is portrayed in this movie is a more "authentic" mode of romance because the characters' everyday actions are conditioned by the end that they see approaching.

with eschatological “anxiety” is not very practical. But, his formulation was different from that of Blumenberg’s and Heidegger wanted to restore the lost ethos at least for moments in one’s modern life to make it more “authentic”. Because Heidegger’s modern audience were no longer expecting the *parousia*, he later replaced it with the fear of the future existential event of death. The meaning of life, then, lies in overcoming the fear of its inevitable singular end.

Heidegger’s “existentialist” reading of Paul showed that the Pauline experience, however authentic, is very distant from the experience of the subject after what is in biblical studies known as the “delay of the *parousia*”. I am especially interested to see how Heidegger’s insight can be extended to the interpretation of Paul’s letters. In other words, I will argue that not only the meaning of life, but also the meaning of text, can be lost outside the messianic anxiety. This is no less true for the interpretation of bodily action and spiritual perfection in Romans 13.

b) The “daily messianic” is not concerned with the separation between the body and soul (nor the separation between matter and idea).

In order to dig better into the integration of body and spirit in the messianic I will examine Gershom Scholem’s description of the Lurianic Kabbalah and Foucault’s reports on the Iranian revolution. Jacob Taubes, who constantly situated the Apostle within Judaism, also compared the Pauline movement to Sabbataism, according to

Gershom Scholem's description.⁵¹ This is the story of Sabbatai's movement, from Scholem's mouth:

Sabbatai Zvi's claims must be situated within a Jewish world, governed by the spirit of the Lurianic Kabbalah. Until before Luria in the 1500s, the appearance of the messiah meant public tribulation and suffering. But with the severe persecution and expulsion of the Jews in the end of the fifteenth century, they turned into themselves requiring a new messianic mysticism. Simply put, in the Kabbalah, the dispersion of the Jews across the lands in exile reflected the "emanation" of God's divine light in the world, like the vessels, which could not contain his light and broke into pieces. When the vessels are pieced together, and the dispersed light of the divine is restored, the redemption will happen. The restoration of divine light will be accomplished only when humans succeed in doing good works. Thus, observing the Law was not for the sake of Law itself, but for amending the universe and helping with the redemption through the purification of the world. This transition does not include travail and revolution. While in earlier Judaism, redemption was the opposite of all that came before, in the Kabbalah it was the logical consequence of a historical bodily process.⁵²

That is why after Sabbatai claimed that he was the messiah, the Jewish people took a new attitude toward the Law. According to Lurianic piety, the Law was binding until before the appearance of the messiah. Therefore, Nathan of Gaza, who approved Sabbatai's messiahship, could claim that legal observance is not necessary after the appearance of the messiah. In order to show their belief in the new age under the messiah, Sabbatians even sometimes sinned. After Sabbatai's conversion to Islam,

⁵¹ Taubes, *Paul*, 7-11.

⁵² Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, (New York: Schocken, 1971), 43-48.

which was interpreted as the descent of the Messiah into the abyss of impurity in order to gather the sparks of purity (in the language of Kabbalistic messianism), his followers took different directions. One “moderate” group, which warned against imitating Sabbatai in his apostasy, chose to follow the Law, but without its previous mystical elements. The “radical” wing in contrast imitated Sabbatai, especially because it was believed that the Law was binding only in the pre-messianic world. With the advent of the Messiah, observance was pointless and could even imply disbelief in his appearance. This “nihilistic” group took up the more “spiritual” elements of the Kabbalah, to the exclusion of its legal observances.⁵³

Taubes drew an analogy between Nathan of Gaza and Paul, especially with respect to their attitudes toward the Law after the appearance of the Messiah. Before him, W. D. Davies had noticed several parallels between Paul’s messianic mysticism (as propounded by Albert Schweitzer) and Sabbatianism. As Scholem had rejected any influence of early Christian history on Sabbatianism, Davies believed that the historical facts about the seventeenth-century messianic movement could lead to fairly plausible speculations regarding the more obscure first-century trends.⁵⁴

This analogy is problematic on several grounds. For one, recent research on Sabbatianism has revealed that Scholem’s account was not very accurate.⁵⁵ Besides, Paul’s call for conformity was not because he believed that the resurrection had already

⁵³ Scholem, *Messianic*, 78-130.

⁵⁴ W. D. Davies, “From Schweitzer to Scholem: Reflections on Sabbatai Svi,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 529-58.

⁵⁵ Howard Caygill, “The Apostate Messiah: Scholem, Taubes and the Occlusions of Sabbatai Zevi,” in *The Messianic Now: Philosophy, Religion, Culture*, eds. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 11-25.

happened and, therefore, there was no use in good works. It was not even because he thought that good works themselves would lead to salvation (Rom 13:12-14; Phil 2:12). His antinomianism was not even a Sabbataian-like joy in “redemption through sin”, as he never called for the transgression of the Law.

I believe that instead of Sabbatianism, the Lurianic Kabbalah can offer a clearer picture of the Pauline movement. Paul was certainly a radical messianic, feeling that the end could come at any moment. Paul’s was a unique situation, where he saw himself between the two events of the resurrection and the *parousia*. The messianic hope had been dulled in crucifixion. Only the resurrection and the future presence of Jesus could redeem hope. Indeed, different stories in Jewish history show that “many forms of messianism and mysticism share a certain intensification of the religious life, which separate these phenomena from the more ordinary religious attitude.” Moreover, “less articulated forms of experiences which should be labeled as mystical occur more often in ambiances permeated by messianic hopes and expectations.”⁵⁶ Thus, like the sixteenth-century mystics, Paul equated good works with preparation for redemption, if not redemption itself. When they put on the “armor of light”, Pauline believers enacted their political action in their intense piety.

The destiny of the Pauline movement was also very similar to that of the Kabbalists. As Hannah Arendt has noted, the Lurianic “Myth of Exile” served two purposes: “through its mystical interpretation of exile as action instead of suffering, it could rouse the people to hasten the coming of the Messiah and lead to ‘an explosive

⁵⁶ Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 16.

manifestation of all those forces to which it owed its rise and its success' in the Sabbatian movement. But after the decline of this movement, it served equally well the needs of the disillusioned people who, having lost the messianic hope, wanted a new, more general justification of exile, of their inactive existence and mere survival. In the latter form, Isaac Luria's theory has been adopted by assimilated Jewry."⁵⁷ Similarly, after their disillusionment with the "future" redemptive event, the post-Pauline Christians only highlighted the "spirit" of piety without getting at its political consequences. In both cases, mysticism led to distance from local practice, although it might not have been intended that way. This was in line with the separation of the body and soul in the "modern" world.

Indications abound that the modern West is so used to the separation between theology and politics that a category like "political spirituality" is hard to recognize. A crucial indication of this state of affairs appears in the specific ways in which "political spirituality" in the Iranian Revolution seemed unfamiliar to Foucault and his audiences. As Foucault wrote, "for the people who inhabit this land [i.e. Iran], what is the point of searching, even at the cost of their own lives, for this thing, whose possibility we have forgotten since the Renaissance and the great crisis of Christianity, a *political spirituality*[?] I can already hear the French laughing, but I know that they are wrong [I who know very little about Iran]."⁵⁸ Foucault was surprised to observe that religion (as a

⁵⁷ Hannah Arendt, "Jewish History, Revised," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman, (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 309.

⁵⁸ Brackets in the original. The last part is found in the Italian version. Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, eds., *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 209.

way of life) and political action were joined in Shi'ite Islam to bring about a revolution.⁵⁹

The central significance of Foucault's work indicated by his reference to "way of life" is something we should not miss. Recall that the term emerged from his researches for the third volume of the *History of Sexuality* (1984), a project which was subtitled *The Care of the Self*.⁶⁰ Here he mainly focused on the sexual politics of ancient Greece, for instance in pederasty. The boys, who were "passive" sexual objects of this liaison, with their physical maturity transformed into sexual subjects. In this process, a mere physical change was not enough. Rather, to become subjects, the individuals undertook some detailed practices, or "technologies" to fashion themselves. In the later Hellenistic periods, the concern with self-cultivation became one's preoccupation for the entire life.⁶¹ Although knowledge of the self was important, it was directed toward the care of the self. In the Greco-Roman period, with the development of strict rules on monogamy, the care of the self became more sexually austere. At the same time, Christian spiritual exercises started to regulate the sexual life of the individuals.⁶² With Christianity, self-

⁵⁹ It is not accurate to essentially associate a particular religious tradition with revolutionary spirit. Foucault failed to notice that only at one particular moment in Shi'ite history this alliance happened.

⁶⁰ Although the concept of "spiritual exercises" is usually known under Foucault's name, Pierre Hadot was the first to introduce it. See his *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase, (Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995). This notion was later taken up by others, most famously Talal Asad and Peter Sloterdijk.

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Michel Foucault: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Vol I: Ethics*, ed. Paul Rainbow, (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 231.

⁶² These exercises continued in Christianity in a different guise. *Exomologesis* is one of them. It is to recognize oneself as a sinner and do certain things in order to recover from that sin. Although it is the origin of later penitential rituals, it is different in that it is a condition (not a ritual in any sense). The other major, though less famous, practice was *exagoruesis* ("Technologies" 242-45). This comprises the verbalization of one's condition between a master and disciple. The whole life of the disciple is conditioned based on his relationship with the master. Here even the hidden thoughts are examined for the cultivation of the self. The similarity with the penance in the later Church is obvious enough (ibid. 245-

cultivation turned on its head. The ancient practices were adopted; but the care of the self was directed at self-renunciation.

Thus, what differentiates individuals, or societies, across places and times is their attitude, the way they are concerned about themselves. So far, Foucauldian ethics seems confined to subjection as conformity. But Foucault allowed for a possibility of subversion. One way, for example, is the “reverse” discourse, where the subject uses the same vocabulary (such as “Queer”) with which it is disqualified.⁶³ The other is the presentation of rivaling discourses which over time transform into new “spiritual exercises”.

The “spiritual exercises”, as manifested in the Iranian Revolution, fascinated Foucault. He especially noted how the revolutionary Iranians wanted to change both their political system and, more than that, themselves, “their way of being, [their] relationship with others, with things, with eternity, with God, etc.”. A good revolutionary was, then, a cultivated self, as it was believed that “there will only be a true revolution if this radical change in our experience takes place”.⁶⁴ According to Foucault, in this sort of self-cultivation, Islam had a particular function, since

in relation to the way of life that was theirs, religion for them was like the promise and guarantee of finding something that would radically change their subjectivity. Shi’ism is precisely a form of Islam that, with its teaching and

49). In both *exomologesis* and *exagoruesis*, “you cannot disclose without renouncing” the self (ibid. 249). Foucault’s hypothesis is that verbalization becomes more important in the West. So, from the eighteenth century to the present, self-renunciation turns into the construction of a new self through verbalization, for example in psychoanalysis (ibid. 249).

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality. Vol I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Random House, 1978), 101.

⁶⁴ Afary and Anderson, *Foucault*, 255.

esoteric content, distinguishes between what is mere external obedience to the code and what is the profound spiritual life; when I say that they were looking to Islam for a change in their subjectivity, this is quite compatible with the fact that traditional Islamic practice was already there and already gave them their identity; in this way they had of living the Islamic religion as a revolutionary force, there was something other than the desire to obey the law more faithfully, there was the desire to renew their entire existence by going back to a spiritual experience that they thought they could find within Shi'ite Islam itself.⁶⁵

There are many similar examples of attention to self-cultivation, revolution, or double meanings in other religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. Foucault mentions the Peasant Wars in Germany, Savonarola in Florence, Anabaptists in Münster, or Presbyterians at the time of Cromwell as forces of religious political action.⁶⁶ (He does not show any awareness of the then-nascent Christian liberation theologies in Africa or Latin America.) He was mainly intrigued by the fact that religious self-cultivation (together with stern sexual restrictions) provided a space for resistance in a way that liberation movements did not.⁶⁷

Foucault's focus on outer revolution together with inner change as a result of a double interpretation of the divine word appears very close to the Pauline worldview. For one, Paul's allegorical interpretation is nothing but supplying the exoteric with an esoteric content. Like Foucault's Iranians he is known for distinguishing "between mere

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 186, 201.

⁶⁷ Drucilla Cornell and Stephen D. Seely, "There's Nothing Revolutionary about a Blowjob," paper presented at Historical Materialism Conference (New York City, April 2013), <http://convivialpsychecologies.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/cornell-seely-there_s-nothing-revolutionary-about-a-blowjob-hm-version.pdf>, accessed on 14 January 2014.

external obedience to the code and what is the profound spiritual life”. Even when it comes to messianism, Iranian and Pauline movements are similar. Foucault’s “Shi’ism, in the face of the established powers, arms the faithful with an unremitting restlessness. It breathes into them an ardor wherein the political and the religious lie side by side”.⁶⁸ In fact, in both the Pauline community and revolutionary Iran, the messianic and the mystical had concurred. Messianism was in both cases related to political stances, political actions in the outer world in the case of revolutionary Iranians and non-action in the case of Pauline ethos. Paul confined the change to the inner world of the believers, in expectation of the end, which will transform everything.

What surprised Foucault about the compatibility between the spiritual and the political is that this combination could give rise to ever-new possibilities. Quite unlike the “secularization” theories, or “political theologies”, Foucault’s “political spirituality” did not attempt to explain an irrational, or arbitrary, gap within the “rational”, “secular” system of Western politics. His description, however, was similar to the former definitions insofar as political spirituality provided “political alternatives to the Western neoliberal governmentality”.⁶⁹ In this sense, according to Oksala, Foucault’s writings on Iran were more about the future of the West than Iran. For, the Iranian Revolution “could disturb mental habits and expectations by challenging some of the most fundamental, cherished, and taken-for-granted premises of our political thought”.⁷⁰ In a final observation on Iran in May 1979, when it was becoming clear that his hopes about

⁶⁸ Afary and Anderson, *Foucault*, 201.

⁶⁹ Johanna Oksala, *Foucault, Politics, Violence*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012), 151.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

the country would not be fulfilled as he had imagined, he declared that his ethics was “antistrategic”.⁷¹ That is, for him, politics was irreducible to “strategic success and pragmatic calculation”.⁷² This denotes another feature of the “daily messianic”— its departure from strategies and calculations.

c) The “daily messianic” is beyond calculation

The Western model of political rule, i.e. liberal democracy, is always entangled in a Derridean aporia of calculation. On the one hand, democracy implies a respect to the “irreducible singularity or alterity”. On the other hand, “there is no democracy ... without the calculation of majorities” by wiping out their singularity.⁷³ One can go beyond the aporia by the messianic promise of a democracy-to-come, which will potentially supplement for the shortcomings of democracy. As such, democracy will never exist, except in a messianic hope. But it opens up alternative unimaginable possibilities. It is “like the *khora* of the political”.⁷⁴ Both Derrida’s “messianic” democracy-to-come and Foucault’s “political spirituality” function as “an explanation and recognition of the ontological structure of the messianic inherent in politics: the possible interruption of all previous history that opens up an unrealized future, a world yet to come”.⁷⁵ Oksala compares Foucault’s “political spirituality” to Walter Benjamin’s messianism. Both of these concepts, in her opinion, are “negative absolutes” which open

⁷¹ Afary and Anderson, *Foucault*, 267.

⁷² Oksala, *Foucault*, 153.

⁷³ Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins, (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 22.

⁷⁴ Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 82.

⁷⁵ Oksala, *Foucault*, 153.

up a myriad of possibilities for change. Walter Benjamin considered our modern condition a “constant state of exception”, where laws are enforced without any significance. Redemption can only come about if the constant exception is suspended by a revolutionary exception. Benjamin’s messianism is built upon such a remote revolutionary hope.

Benjamin does not systematically explain his “messianism”. As a “theological” concept, messianism can help him offer his alternatives to the linear narrative of progress. Against romantic historiography, which within “homogenous and empty time” (XIII, XIV) sought for patterns in the past to predict the future of further development, Benjamin argued, historical materialism should seek the infinite possibilities of a messianic “here-and-now” (*Jetztzeit*) to reflect on the memory of the past (XIV). Historical materialism, therefore, belongs to the “unexpected” moment (VI) when with the realization of potentials, philosophy (especially in its Hegelian-Romantic version) describes a “norm” which is itself a constant state of exception. In contrast, materialism resembles theology in that it interrupts this “normative” course in order to redeem the oppressed. Humanity is redeemed (II, VI), and the conquered win over their enemy in the ruling class (VI). The time of oppression is an exception, but it has become the rule. What the materialist can do is to introduce “a real state of emergency”, where oppression is not the norm (VIII). This is the messianic time – “a present which is not a transition, but in which time takes a stand and has come to a standstill” (XVI), a

“standstill of events, or put differently, a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the suppressed past” (XVII).⁷⁶

The messianic, according to Benjamin, is redemptive because it is an exception to a rule of exceptions. It happens with the cessation of happenings, with the redemption of the oppressed through “divine violence”. Contrary to the “mythic violence”, which is bound to the norms and the law, “divine violence” suspends the cycles of law. In the case of the mythic law-preserving violence of the proletarian strike, the violence is sanctioned by the state in order to both grant the demands of the proletariat and preserve the law. “Divine violence”, in contrast, shows up in the general political strike, where the whole system is toppled down and a new historical epoch starts.⁷⁷ Divine violence is, therefore, “sovereign”,⁷⁸ and lies somewhere both outside and inside the law. “Justice,” Benjamin declares, “is the principle of all divine endmaking, power the principle of all mythic lawmaking”.⁷⁹ The “sovereign” moment of divine violence is the unexpected messianic moment, when the oppressed are redeemed.

Divine violence “purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life, the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythic violence is bloody power over *mere life for its own sake*; divine violence is pure power over *all life for the sake of the living*”.⁸⁰ Mere life belongs to the “doctrine of the sanctity of life”. In the modern world,

⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, eds. Michael Jennings and Howard Eilan, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) 4: 389-400.

⁷⁷ Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings, (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 244-46.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 252.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 250; emphasis added.

the bio-political body becomes significant for its own sake. Foucault had reminded us that, as the one sovereign is replaced by the multiple sovereignties, power measures life itself. If the Schmittian sovereign decided on the state of exception to suspend the law, modern human life goes through the decisionistic state of exception all the time. Only a Benjaminian divine messiah can redeem the bio-political body out of this by suspending the law itself.

Giorgio Agamben has investigated Benjamin's association of the "sanctity of life" and bloody violence, as well as Foucault's bio-power. The "biopolitical" sacred life is best manifested in the *homo sacer* (literally, "the sacred man", the figure who can be killed but not sacrificed), as well as the modern cases of Auschwitz and Guantanamo.⁸¹ In all of these cases, human life is reduced to bare life, where neither law nor religion, but bio-politics is at work.⁸² The political is so intensified as to suspend the law and decide on the life of the individual – the Schmittian "state of exception". Our modern bio-political situation represents the hyperpoliticization of life in a constant state of exception. Every life is "exceptional", "sacred", and "decided" upon by the multifarious omnipresent power. This rule of exceptions is interrupted only by the Benjaminian messiah. "From the juridico-political perspective", Agamben says, "messianism is therefore a theory of the state of exception – except for the fact that in messianism there

⁸¹ See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998; and Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁸² Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 114.

is no authority in force to proclaim the state of exception; instead, there is the Messiah to subvert its power.”⁸³

In sum, transcending the law can take two forms of violence: (a) biopolitical violence, or the rule of exceptions, or the everyday governmentality; (b) the suspension of the “everyday” rule of exceptions, in a messianic act of justice. In this latter sense, messianic “divine violence” becomes life-saving. Therefore, it goes beyond calculation, without being oppressive. Paul was also expecting this arbitrary event of justice beyond the law.

d) The “daily messianic” is directed toward justice

Jacques Derrida believes that justice is impossible because it involves three aporias. Firstly, in making a just judgment, one cannot be confined by the law, while a just decision is always expected to be situated within the law. Secondly, justice always involves a decision, while it also belongs to a realm outside the calculable (i.e. the “undecidable”). Thirdly, justice should be *both* immediate (without any moment of consideration) *and* be based on full knowledge of the case in point. With the impossibility of justice, Derrida proposes instead a justice-to-come: “Justice remains to come, it remains *by coming*, it *has* to come, it *is* to-come, the to-come, it deploys the very dimension of events irreducibly to come. *Perhaps* this is why justice, insofar as it is not only a juridical or political concept, opens up to the *avenir* the transformation, the recasting or refounding of law and politics.”⁸⁴

⁸³ Ibid., 57-58.

⁸⁴ Jacques Derrida, “The Force of Law: The ‘Mystical Foundation of Authority’,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 251-57.

Derrida acknowledges that this idea of a space beyond calculation can be appropriated by an oppressive regime (like Schmitt's "the state of exception"). Also, if some "calculation" is involved, we are left with "law without justice". "Messianic without messianism", however, is waiting for the event of justice as such. Insofar as it is about our world and in it, the "messianic" is against capitalism and for justice.⁸⁵ According to Derrida,

The messianic, including its revolutionary forms (and the messianic is always revolutionary, it has to be), would be urgency, imminence but, irreducible paradox, a waiting without horizon of expectation.... One may deem strange, strangely familiar and inhospitable at the same time (*unheimlich*, uncanny), this figure of absolute hospitality whose promise one would choose to entrust to an experience that is so impossible, so unsure in its indigence, to a quasi-"messianism", so anxious, fragile, and impoverished, to an always presupposed "messianism", to a quasi-transcendental "messianism" that also has such an obstinate interest in a materialism without substance: a materialism of the *khôra* for a despairing "messianism".⁸⁶

Because it is outside estimations and calculations, the Derridean "messianic" must necessarily fall out of "religious" messianism. Elsewhere he keeps open the question of the interdependence of determinate "messianism" and philosophical "messianicity".⁸⁷ However, as a negative possibility, which only promises something beyond itself, Derrida's political messianicity is not very distant from Paul's spirit. The

⁸⁵ William Large, "The Messianic Idea, the Time of Capital, and the Everyday," in *The Messianic Now: Philosophy, Religion, Culture*, eds. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher, (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 87-99.

⁸⁶ Derrida, *The Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: 1994), 211-12.

⁸⁷ Derrida, "Marx & Sons," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker, (London and New York: Verso, 1999), 254-55.

fact that he does not disrupt the daily order strengthens his affinity with the yet-to-come. He waits all the more forcefully by *not* being engaged in radical action. It even appears as if Paul knew the inevitable aporia in the structure of the messianic that Derrida later noticed: the more the revelation is expected (the increase in revealability), the less is it “eventual”.⁸⁸ For Paul the revelation had more eventuality. The event had to be far from our expectations or conceptions. You prepare by not preparing. You expect by not expecting. You think of the other world by being more involved in this world. It was as if the eventuality of the event would be lost if the believers were in any way preparing for the Lord’s coming. A proper “event” is, in this sense, outside systems and ontologies. It happens in a space of “aleatory swerve”. This is explained by another feature of the “daily messianic”.

e) The “daily messianic” is both aleatory and meontological

Heidegger’s apocalyptic Christian enacts the authentic life by refraining from acting at all, while Weber’s early modern society was also enacting its apocalypticism through action. Yet, the non-acting one (i.e. Heidegger’s Christian) seems less peaceful than the acting one (i.e. Weber’s Christian). Apocalyptic life is to anxiously undo every action. It is in this Heideggerian tradition that Giorgio Agamben reads the eschatological *hōs mē* (“as though not”, 1 Cor 7:20). Evaluating Weber’s conclusion, Agamben holds that in Paul it was not “a matter of eschatological indifference but of change, almost an internal shifting of each and every single worldly condition by virtue of being

⁸⁸ Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge,” 46.

‘called’”.⁸⁹ Everything is there as it was, but without its usual significance. “The messianic vocation,” according to Agamben, “is the revocation of every vocation”.⁹⁰

Unlike indifference, which relates a concept to its opposite, the *hōs mē* empties a concept of its significance:

The messianic tension thus does not tend toward an elsewhere, nor does it exhaust itself in the indifference between one thing and its opposite. The Apostle does not say: “weeping *as* rejoicing” nor “weeping as [=meaning] not weeping,” but “weeping *as not* weeping.”⁹¹ According to the principle of messianic *klēsis*, one determinate factual condition is set in relation to itself – the weeping is pushed toward the weeping, the rejoicing toward the rejoicing. In this manner, it revokes the factual condition and undermines it without altering its form.... In pushing each thing toward itself through the *as not*, the messianic does not simply cancel out this figure, but it makes it pass, it prepares its end. This is not another figure or another world: it is the passing of the figure of this world.⁹² In other words, it is not indifference toward the value of A or not-A. Instead, it is devoiding the A (or alternatively the not-A) of what it could signify.⁹³

⁸⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary to the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 22-23.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁹¹ “L’apostolo non dice ‘piangenti *come* ridenti’ né ‘piangenti *come* [cioè:] non piangenti,’ bensì ‘piangenti *come non* piangenti.’” See *Il tempo che resta*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000), 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 24-25. Agamben even compares this notion of messianism to the Hegelian *Aufhebung* (sublation). Everything finds its fulfillment in the sublation of the opposing signifieds in the messianic time. Deconstruction, on the other hand, is based on the deferment of the signs and thus runs counter to both *Aufhebung* and messianism. “Deconstruction is a thwarted messianism, a suspension of the messianic” (*The Time That Remains*, 103).

⁹³ The idea of the “void” or “devoiding of significance” makes better sense if read in the light of the work by (later) Althusser → Breton → Badiou, ..., which will be explained later in this chapter.

While Weber related Paul's text and its interpretation to the Protestant/Capitalist everyday life, Agamben's description makes sense only in specific situation – an Althusserian “swerve”.⁹⁴

In the later stage of his life, Louis Althusser tried to revive a long-forgotten ancient materialist tradition. This tradition, which may be called the materialism of the encounter implies that meaning and Reason (in short the logos) are contingent upon a swerve which may or may not occur in the void. Therefore, philosophy is not so much about Reason and Origin as the recognition of the contingency of form. But the major point of the philosophy of the void is that

*nothing guarantees that the reality of the accomplished fact is the guarantee of its durability. Quite the opposite is true: every accomplished fact, even an election, like all the necessity and reason we can derive from it, is only a provisional encounter, and since an encounter is provisional even if it lasts, there is no eternity in the “law” of any world or any state. History here is nothing but the permanent revocation of the accomplished fact by another undecipherable fact to be accomplished, without our knowing in advance whether, or when, or how the event that revokes it will come about. Simply, one day new hands will have to be dealt out, and the dice thrown again on to the empty table.*⁹⁵

It is true that, according to Althusser's materialist philosophy, the void precedes the logos; but more than that, the important task of a “philosophy of the void” is to create the philosophical void: “a philosophy which, rather than setting out from the

⁹⁴ Agamben does not mention Althusser. But besides Taubes, the Althusserian Stanislas Breton and Alain Badiou had highly influenced Agamben's work on Paul.

⁹⁵ Louis Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian, (London: Verso, 2006), 174.

famous ‘philosophical problems’ (why is there something rather than nothing?) begins by evacuating all philosophical problems, hence by refusing to assign itself any ‘object’ whatever (‘philosophy has no object’)⁹⁶ in order to set out from nothing, and from the infinitesimal aleatory variation of nothing constituted by the swerve of the fall”.⁹⁷

The recognition of the contingency forms the subject, but only in the “as if” mode. The subjects are formed only “as if” they are dominated by an idea (of Truth) and only “as if” they assume that they are “freely” choosing to believe in that idea. Ideology works by creating this space of imaginary subjectivity. Thus it seems that the job of the philosophers is to uncover ideology and empty the alleged “truth” by the “as if”. Stanislas Breton’s Paul seems to fulfill this task. The Pauline “as if” goes beyond the difference between the positive and the negative, reality and appearance, to a point of indifference. If Paul once tells his audience to distance from the world and another time admonishes them to be engaged, he is living out the “as if” ethos, which functions like the cross. Seen from the cross, the world is not what the subject uses, but what the subject serves. This goes so far as the theological idea of *kenosis* when Jesus even forgot his self in order to serve the world. If the self is devoiced, this (aleatory) void provides a space for newer occurrences.⁹⁸ The void disturbs any totalizing identity.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Althusser is here quoting from his own “Marx and Lenin”.

⁹⁷ Althusser, *Encounter*, 174-75.

⁹⁸ Stanislas Breton, *A Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 150-53.

⁹⁹ Ward Blanton, “Dispossessed Life: Introduction to Breton’s Paul,” in Stanislas Breton, *St. Paul*, 12.

In this manner, Breton proposes a “void theology”¹⁰⁰ which parallels the “void philosophy” that his materialist friend Althusser had suggested. Paul is radical precisely because he observes that the cross evacuates every being from what it is, thus directing the world toward a meontology.¹⁰¹ Paul’s alternative “philosophy” appears like a hidden treasure, which had to be recovered by materialist thinkers, because it questions the metaphysical character of many entities of worldly life, including its politics. In such a situation, obedience or disobedience do not fit within the metaphysical identities of political philosophy.

The “messianic” ruptures of the “everyday” includes, but is not confined to, these five features. Now, I try to see how the “daily messianic” can explain Paul’s political stance in Romans 13. It should be noted that when the “daily messianic” escapes any systematic structure, a metaphysical description of Paul’s attitude contradicts the premises of my reading. Nevertheless, I would draw attention to the alternatives that a non-metaphysical, “messianic” reading would offer.

2.5. Interpretation of Romans 13, Or Paul’s “Daily Messianic”

A major premise of this thesis is that in the interpretations of Paul he was read apologetically to mark the difference between us (i.e. the modern, or the European, or the Christian) and not-us. This should be all the more so in explicitly political contexts. But it is interesting that when according Paul’s admonitions in Romans 13, the

¹⁰⁰ Ward Blanton has aptly called it “void-talk”.

¹⁰¹ Literally, the knowledge of non-being, as opposed to ontology (the knowledge of being).

governing authorities seem to belong to the category of the same, the other is the “anarchist”, “Jewish zealots”, “rebels”, etc. Not only does this rebut all the revolutionary forces, but it also forecloses any possibility of work toward social justice. Moreover, when the secular presupposes the separation of church and state, Paul’s words give a divine character to governments. This does justice neither to the believing community, nor the government, not even to Paul who is assumed to have gone under a lot of pressure from the governing authorities.

In the debates on secularization, I agree more with those, like Blumenberg or Derrida, who see a separation between the former Christian motifs and what Europe is experiencing after the Renaissance. Although Christianity has been a strong force in the foundation of modernity, what distinguishes the West from its others is not only its religious past. A lot of other social, political, and economic realities were also involved in the formation of what we know as the “secular”, “modern” Europe.

Still, whether one goes with a “secularization thesis” or a radical break in modernity, the “daily messianic” makes sense as a moment with huge differences from our sensibilities. Hence, if it is assumed that Paul was living in the “daily messianic” – something on which, to my knowledge, the philosophers of both camps, as well as biblical scholars, agree – his parameters are different from customary practices of our world, even with the chiliasms before or after him.

I suggest that Paul’s messianic spirit goes along with the unity of the chapter. (Although chapter markings were added later to the manuscript, here the chapter can revolve around a coherent theme.) Paul strongly supports the governing authorities (vv.

1-7), then mentions the uncalculable parameter of love (vv. 8-10), and finally cautions the audience by saying that the end is near (vv. 11-14). I find this relevant to the “non-secular” world in which Paul lived.

According to the above description, the “daily messianic” is concerned with care, whether in terms of intensive engagement in one’s “calling” (Weber) or Heidegger’s anxiousness about the end of customary life (Heidegger). Paul was also showing this kind of “care”, not only in his “as if” attitude (1 Cor 7), but also in Romans 13, where he reduced the double injunction of God-love and neighbor-love to the one injunction of “love your neighbor”.¹⁰² He was also taking care of earthly authorities. Because the believers are preoccupied with the divine, they should not be bothered about the earthly matters. And that is all the more reason that the believers should support the civil governments.

In a way, in his “care” for others, he was introducing another sovereign beyond civil sovereigns. Although Paul seems to be praising the rulers, he does not value them for themselves, but because they are established by God. He tells his followers not to think of a revolution because the rulers are “God’s servants”, meaning that if God had not approved of the status quo, the believers would not have hesitated to disrupt the world. Furthermore, he cares so much about the end that he cannot be bothered about changing the political status quo sooner than the imminent end.

What he cares about, however, is the “care of the self”. Although the believers are told not to rebel, they are not to go on with their daily business. Paul implied that

¹⁰² Taubes, *Paul*, 52-54.

because it is not time to overthrow the government, one should invest in cultivating oneself, through practices of the body and the soul. In the “daily messianic”, as the examples of Scholem’s Lurianic Kabbalah and Foucault’s Iranian revolution show, the bodily practices of the faithful are politically significant. In the three cases (Pauline community, the Lurianic Kabbalists, and Iranian revolutionaries), messianism was interpreted in mystical terms. The use of allegories, which bridge the gap between the esoteric and the exoteric, in the three traditions is significant. Here the individuals’ bodily practice can bring about changes in how the world is going to end. This may be accompanied by an actual rebellion on the ground (as in the Iranian revolution) or it may be a quiet procedure.

In the latter part of the chapter (Rom 13:11-14), Paul tells the community to avoid certain “works of darkness” – “reveling, drunkenness, debauchery, licentiousness, quarreling, and jealousy”. If the model of the Lurianic Kabbalah and Foucault’s idea of Shi’ism is adopted, it can be said that these “works of darkness” could prevent the believer from feeling the full light of day, i.e. the appearance of the Lord, and hence delay the end of the ruling authorities. The believer is commanded to live “as in the day” (ὥς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ), simply because the day is near. Since Jesus is coming soon, why not imagine that he has already come? (And he had already come before the crucifixion, hadn’t he?) In this sense, self-cultivation is both “theological” and “political”. By these practices, believers show their participation in the global plan of salvation which comprehends the divine and the social.

That the relationship between the first and last parts of Romans 13 has not been recognized is symptomatic of a “secular” mode which separates the body and the soul. This started soon after Paul. The Lord did not come, and the “realities” of life could not accommodate for radical eschatology. This is what Hans Blumenberg called “secularization *by* eschatology”. The world after Paul was “secular” in the sense that it could not see how personal piety would change the political world order. The borders of the body and the soul were not created overnight in modern times. Rather they existed for a long time, although the gap changed and even became wider in the modern nation-states.

Saba Mahmood diagnosed this problem in the liberal, secular mentality, which only recognizes one way of asserting one’s agency. In her study of the Egyptian Islamic Awakening since the 1990s, she has noticed that the Egyptian women were subverting that whole Western discourse through their bodily subjection to Islamic practice. She realized that the liberal categories of freedom, equality, and autonomy fail in these situations because they are not neutral and rely on binaries like “progressive” versus “backward”, together with a strong desire to undermine the second group.¹⁰³ Instead, she sought to “analyze the *work* that discursive practices perform in making possible particular kinds of subjects.” Instead of working within a theory of agency, she suggests, one should read agency “in terms of the different modalities it takes and the grammar of concepts in which its particular affect, meaning, and form reside. Inasmuch as this kind

¹⁰³ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 198.

of analysis suggests that different modalities of agency require different kinds of bodily capacities, it forces us to ask whether acts of resistance (to systems of gender hierarchy) also devolve upon the ability of the body to behave in particular ways.”¹⁰⁴

Pauline agency in Romans 13 likewise is a bodily practice that questions the worship of the emperor, on the one hand, and prepares the believing subject for the coming of the messiah, on the other. Here public and private, soul and body, and the political and the theological are not separable, as one change in an item of the pair influences the other, as well. Obliterating the gap between the theological and the political does not characterize theocracies, not even liberation theologies. The latter two regimes depend on the modern demarcations between body and soul, private and public, and of course religion and politics. The Pauline worldview, on the contrary, was working outside these boundaries. That is why it does not read as a language of subversion in a modern liberal framework, which has only one interpretation of subversion. Paul pokes fun at this duality when he shows that “the norm has a temporality that opens it to a subversion from within and to a future that cannot be fully anticipated”.¹⁰⁵

In this regime of political truth, “subversion” in the traditional sense does not make sense. Subjects are always already subjected to the Foucauldian power, or to the Althusserian Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The ISAs are everywhere, from the police to education. They form the subject in a process of interpellation. Being called by

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 188.

¹⁰⁵ Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 21.

the ISA, the subject inevitably responds, and is thus formed.¹⁰⁶ Althusser's famous example is when a police officer calls an individual "Hey you there", who would immediately turn back. The individual is thus transformed into a subject. "Subject" retains its dual meaning:

(1) a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being, who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his [*sic*] submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandment of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection "all by himself." There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* That is why they "work all by themselves".¹⁰⁷

The Subjects are, as he would later say, *as if* dominated by certain ideas and interpellated to freely choose.¹⁰⁸ Althusser's interpellation is far from a Cartesian notion of subject, but also equally distant from a subject to the event. It is always-already there and appropriated repeatedly. The only possible subversion depends on a revocative "encounter".

Influenced by Lacan's psychoanalysis, Althusser held that the subject was formed through the recognition of its own image in the other. The subject desires the

¹⁰⁶ Althusser was here highly influenced by Lacan's description of the Symbolic and the initiation of the subject in its detachment from (and its desire for) its other at the mirror stage. The subject "misrecognizes" its autonomy in the "mirror", while in fact it is divided. But this misrecognition eventually leads to the formation of the (fragmented) subject.

¹⁰⁷ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: (Notes Towards an Investigation)," trans. Ben Brewster, in *Essays on Ideology*, London: Verso, 1984), 56.

¹⁰⁸ Althusser, *Encounter*, 174.

other because it sees itself in what the other desires. The subject desires to be desired by the other. Moreover, the subject “misrecognizes” itself as an autonomous subject, while “true” recognition reveals it to be otherwise. This misrecognition is necessary for the formation of the subject. Likewise, the Althusserian subject misrecognizes itself as a free subject, while in fact it is formed by the ISAs. In other words, the subject is constituted through the false recognition of this unreal agency.

Judith Butler has extended Althusser’s metaphor by another interpretation of “misrecognition”. Butler’s “misrecognition” may not be a very accurate reading of Althusser; but it holds a firm ground for subjective agency. Butler imagines the point where

The one who is hailed may fail to hear, misread the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way.... The name is called, and I am sure it is my name, but it isn’t. The name is called, and I am sure that a name is being called, my name, but it is in someone’s incomprehensible speech, or worse, it is someone coughing, or worse, a radiator which for a moment approximates a human voice. Or I am sure that no one has noticed my transgression, and that it is not my name that is being called but only a coughing passerby, the high pitch of the heating mechanism – but it is my name, and yet I do not recognize myself in the subject that the name, at this moment, installs.¹⁰⁹

Subversion of identity depends on the response at the moment of misrecognized hail. It is not absolute submission, as it is not a revolt which reaffirms the ideology (the hail).

The interpellated subject subverts the order by conforming to it.

¹⁰⁹ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 68-69.

In the context of Judith Butler's misrecognized interpellation, Romans 13 may be deemed a discourse of subversion through misrecognition. It is reaffirming the status of the political authorities as God's ministers, which is not how they would identify themselves. It is also reaffirming political subjection and simultaneously qualifying it with the eschatological passage. The Pauline community could subvert the power structure through misrecognition. Paul would have had more freedom than modern humans to exert his agency. After all, he was dealing with a single sovereign, while our post-sovereign world is permeated by micro-sovereigns.

However, this all-pervasive power is not altogether a negative apparatus (*dispositif*) of repression. It is positive because it is productive. By controlling hygiene, sex, security, education, and the like, power produces welfare and safety. But more than that, it produces the subject. The central point about power is its domination and subjugation, and not those who would dominate, but those who would be subjugated. Therefore, "rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjection".¹¹⁰ In other words, subjects undertake their own subjection through different techniques. Therefore, the pervasiveness of power does not

¹¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 69-70.

rule out the possibility of agency through subversion. Even when Nero ruled, Paul was perhaps subjecting himself in order to subvert through misrecognition.

The “daily messianic” goes beyond the calculations and strategies of political philosophy. All the attempts of biblical scholars to justify Paul on the basis of “order” situate him in the calculations of politics. However, his indifference to Jesus’ life can indicate that his messianic anxiety was far from the calculations of later messianisms.¹¹¹ Moreover, with his statements regarding love, as a debt which can never be satisfied (Rom 13:8-10), Paul defines the community outside the calculations of the law. In fact, as the structure of the passage shows, love determines the relationship to governments in the particular messianic mode. As the Apostle emphasizes twice, “love is the fulfillment of the law” (Rom 13:8-10). The irony of this statement is that love itself can never be fulfilled, as it is always owed (v. 8). Love can even be extended to the rulers. Here sovereignty is transferred to love, which is so uncalculable that it can even include the rulers.

The uncalculable nature of the “daily messianic” makes it relevant to justice, rather than the law. Theodore Jennings has noted how the Christian focus on justification has led to a general oversight of the role of justice. In his comparison between Paul and Derrida, Jennings argues that both of these figures have been dealing with the question of justice. Therefore, reading Derrida can help us understand Paul. Jennings highlights the fact that the Pauline “open-ended” messianism is directed

¹¹¹ Philip Goodchild, “Economies of Promise: On Caesar and Christ,” in *The Politics to Come: Power, Modernity, and the Messianic*, eds. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher, (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 151.

toward justice. This is in contrast to the institutional Christianity that is happy with the appearance of the messiah (incarnation) and is not seriously expecting his return. It is true that “the having appeared of the messiah provides the indispensable catalyst for Paul’s thinking of the disjuncture between justice and law. It is the fact of the messiah’s being condemned by the force of law that necessitates for him a thinking of justice beyond law and thus leads him to the idea that justice is founded on gift.”¹¹² But the expectation of the future also marks him from others in Christian history. That is, his messianism is the expectation of justice in the end of the empire. This messianic mode had also directed his other injunctions about the business of the world, like his discussion of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7.¹¹³ As Romans 13:8-10 shows, Pauline messianism is always associated with what Jennings calls the “messianic surprise of love”.¹¹⁴

This also resonates with what has been said above about the revolutionary character of righteousness. In other words, in such a situation justice can be fulfilled in righteousness. (To mention a few examples, the Greek word δικαστική, the Latin *justitia* and the French *justesse* include both meanings.) This kind of righteousness is related to legal observance; but it is also accompanied by another spirit. Hence, it is not based on the calculations of any legalism, or for that matter on the law. Because of its uncalculable character, the “daily messianic” points to the randomness of ontology. It

¹¹² Theodore Jennings, *Reading Derrida/Thinking Paul*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 163-68.

¹¹³ Jennings, *Outlaw Justice: The Messianic Politics of Paul*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 192.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

operates outside the customary modes of ontology and metaphysics. Civil authorities were called “God’s servants” because in common usage of the Imperial cult they were called that way, but also ironically because they are not God’s servants. That is, since the believers (re)act “*as in the day*” (ὡς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ), why not assume that the governments were good and follow them “as though” they were not evil? Being involved in this world is the most radical thing that an other-worldly person can do (if we are allowed to separate the worldly and other-worldly realms). This is also what differentiates the “daily messianic” from the messianisms of positive religions. The messianic mode can only wait for an aleatory event that revokes every entity from what it is, not the least when it comes to the governing authorities. In other words, Paul glorifies the rulers precisely because his messianic mode entails the paradox of radical subjection.

That Pauline “daily messianic” questions metaphysics is clear from his attitudes toward sexuality in 1 Corinthians 7. By revoking sexual identities, Paul shows that in the messianic, sexual liaison “is not – as most contemporary discussions of sexual identity *are* – delimitable, circumscribable, or susceptible of judgment because it is understood or known. Rather than *known*, recognizable roles become *adiaphora* [indifference], which is to say, traversed by a force that exceeds or overwhelms them, an excess and exteriority that does nothing but suspends usual judgments about these roles.”¹¹⁵ Political identities are directed by the same force that Paul notices in the

¹¹⁵ Ward Blanton, “‘Reappearance of Paul, ‘Sick’’: Foucault’s Biopolitics and the Political Significance of Pasolini’s Apostle,” *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 11 (2010): 78-79.

formation of “apocalyptic” sexuality. In other words, there is no political identity, except in terms of the end or God that institutes every power. The community had got a unique insight. When the King of the Jews dies on the cross, and the executed rebel rises out of the tomb, why should it surprise us that the believing minority pays homage to the oppressive rulers? Because it is not fixed, the messianic identity can incorporate both the body and the soul, politics and piety, etc.

2.6. Conclusion

If Paul is portrayed as a revolutionary character, how could he call the subjects to be submissive? Does not revolution entail bodily non-involvement, if not active subversion of power in material terms? To answer these questions, I have suggested, the solution lies in joining the three parts of Romans 13 and then reading it with the help of continental philosophy, especially the Schmitt-Taubes debates on political theology. According to Schmitt’s Aristotelian understanding, the State is based on its animosity toward disorder (from an enemy or the plebs). Taubes, however, held that the community of love is a political entity that could disavow the disorder that came from the authorities. For one, sovereignty lay in decision from above, while for the other it sprang from love in the below. It is interesting that both of them cited Paul: *katechon* (restrainer) in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 and *agape* (love) in Romans 13:8-10, respectively. Both of them discussed the moment that laws are broken as the purpose (if not the resting place) of the political entity. The amendment of the ensuing “disorder” is

different for them, nevertheless. Schmitt's "state of exception" leads to violence outside the law (with the familiar example of Auschwitz), whereas Taubes' "messianic" is a matter of "divine violence", to use Walter Benjamin's expression. That is, in the messianic, the daily law is ruptured so that there is an exception to the rule of exceptions that one experiences in an already lawless violent world.

Taubes', and for that matter Paul's, "political theology" can be better explained by what I call the "daily messianic". It can be characterized by five features: it is filled with "care"; it is where the body and the soul are intertwined; it is beyond calculation; it is directed toward justice (over against the law); and it deals with accidental encounters rather than metaphysical entities.

The "daily messianic" is a moment within worldly (lit. "secular") affairs. In this sense it is within the "secular" without being part of it. Indeed, the "daily messianic" is something from outside the "secular" which penetrates it. That is why I agree with Hans Blumenberg that "secularization" happened very early on, in New Testament times and not together with the transition to "modernity". The separation between Romans 13:1-7 and the rest of the chapter in late antique interpretations up to now bears witness to the transcendent eschatology that soon took over the Christian mentality.

Pauline immanent eschatology is related to both the past crucifixion of the messiah by the law, be it the Jewish Law or the political rules, and his future return. If we accept that Romans was written around 56-57 CE, Paul was writing soon after the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius (around 50 CE) and a few years before the persecution of Christians by Nero (64-68 CE) and the First Jewish Revolt (66-73

CE). Speculation regarding the political sentiments of different individuals and groups does not lead anywhere. But it can at least be said that the political surrounding of Paul (and his audience) was anything but stable. The political meaning of the messianisms in this era has been exemplified in the fate of Jesus earlier and Bar Kokhba later. But where is Paul in all of this this?

Paul is not a Hegelian to think of a “spirit” of political events. He has, however, learnt enough from the past and the future to choose a path of non-involvement and subjection. In other words, he told the Roman Church to “do as the Romans do”, but with a little difference. This is explained well in a parable that Walter Benjamin had heard from Gershom Scholem, as recorded by Ernst Bloch:

A rabbi, a real cabalist, once said that in order to establish the reign of peace it is not necessary to destroy everything nor to begin a completely new world. It is sufficient to displace this cup or this bush or this stone just a little, and thus everything. But this small displacement is so difficult to achieve and its measure is so difficult to find that, with regard to the world, humans are incapable of it and it is necessary that the messiah come.” Benjamin’s version of the story goes like this: “The *Hassidim* tell a story about the world to come that says everything there will be just as it is here. Just as our room is now, so it will be in the world to come; where our baby sleeps now, there too it will sleep in the other world. And the clothes we wear in this world, those too we will wear there. Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 53. Agamben cites this story from Bloch’s *Traces (Spuren)*. Reading Bloch’s work, I was able to find only this anecdote which resembles Agamben’s story: “Another rabbi, a true Kabbalist, once said: To bring about the kingdom of freedom, it is not necessary that everything be destroyed, and a new world begin; rather, this cup, or that brush, or that stone, and so all things must all be

This is why although it goes beyond calculation, the “daily messianic” is not violent. The messianic is everyday life, “just a little different”. For one, it is imbued with care for others (*agape* in Romans 13:8-10). That is, one comes clean from all material debt only to be indebted forever in an uncalculable love. Besides because the night is far gone and the day is near, one is to assume that one lives “*as in the day*” (Rom 13:12-13). This is reminiscent of Paul’s apocalyptic ethos in 1 Corinthians 7, when the audience is told not to care about their marital status and live in the world “as if” they are not living in it. Likewise, the eschatological section of Romans 13 brings everything under an “as if” mode of negation. This can be called the “kenosis” (emptying) of political ontology, when the terms and their opposites (both subjection and subversion) lose their metaphysical significance.

In such a situation, real agency is manifested in acts of piety. Embodied piety is what has been missing in the theories of revolution and political order. It can orient one’s life toward the other world in order to bring about change in this world. This righteousness is in line with overall justice in the world. Every believer can contribute to the establishment of justice by putting on the “armor of light”. Even when we are not living out Paul’s experience (which is pretty much true for most of us), the poststructuralist understanding of the “messianic” is still relevant to our age. Derrida’s notion of the “messianic excess” “delays firm response to an irrational age; and it leaves to others – the architects, the builders, the statesmen, and so on – the rational

shifted a little. Because this “a little” is hard to do, and its measure so hard to find, humanity cannot do it in this world; instead this is why the Messiah comes. Thereby this wise rabbi too, with his saying, spoke out not for creeping progress but completely for the leap of the lucky glimpse and the invisible hand.” Ernst Bloch, *Traces*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 158.

responsibility of shaping the world.”¹¹⁷ This is radical secularism, i.e. being involved in one’s own redemptive business without minding what is going on with governments, even to the point of almost endorsing them. Paul was also showing a similar radical attitude when he left to others the responsibility of building or ruining a political order. That is why he could equally disrupt most of the pictures that have been drawn about his political stance.

¹¹⁷ Richard Beardsworth, “The Messianic Now: A Secular Response,” in *The Politics to Come: Power, Modernity and the Messianic*, eds. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher, (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 24.

Chapter THREE

Paul's Faith: Galatians 2:12-14 and the Rise of European "Religion"

3.1. Introduction

If there is one thing that Paul is known for, it is that he freed the "new" people from older local practices, thus marking the difference between Judaism and Christianity. He replaced the bodily with the spiritual, the particular with the universal, and "religious" practice with "faith". As I mentioned in chapter one, this picture of Paul has been repeated often enough as a kind of gloss on the nature of European modernity. English, French, and German thinkers since the Enlightenment have referred to Paul in order to

provide a “Christian” foundation for their thought. Paul in these accounts often enough helped formulate a version of faith outside institutional practices. There was, as it were, this certainty that what Paul called for was a “universal”, “private” faith that does not interfere in the public sphere. In this situation, one’s conversion from Saul of Tarsus to Paul the Apostle would not affect one’s public taste, as the liberalist John Rawls claimed.¹ On the other side of the political spectrum, the materialist Alain Badiou recently armed himself with a supposedly Pauline universalism to fight what he considered to be the oppression of identity politics.

Both Rawls and Badiou inherited a European tradition that seeks to rescue “religion” from the grips of the church, in a “Pauline” fashion. In this model, everyone is required to adapt and assimilate to a universal mode. So, what Paul did was to declare the compatibility of “Christianity” and universal politics. In other words, a Christian is no less a Christian if she is also involved in the secular public sphere. This is what distinguishes her from other “religious” people, like Jews or Muslims. Because they depend on their local practices, they will have a more difficult task to assimilate to the universal spirit in order to be part of the public world.

This image of assimilation is confirmed by the account in the Acts of the Apostle, which since the nineteenth century has been known for its attempt to harmonize a very diverse early Christian community.² Consider, for example, the Jerusalem Council as a resolution of the conflict in Antioch as it is represented in Acts. Certain

¹ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 31.

² See below on the nineteenth-century interpretations of early Christianity.

people “from Judea”, on the one hand, and Paul and Barnabas, on the other, disagreed over the necessity of circumcision for salvation (Acts 15:1). The case was taken to Jerusalem, where the elders of the early church resided and from where the circumcision party had come. In this version of the narrative, even the most “Jewish” of the believers in the Jesus movement (e.g., James) confirm that the Jewish Law is not incumbent upon the Gentile believers, and that they can be saved without the Mosaic Law:

After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith, he made no distinction between them and us...” (Acts 15:7-9).

In this account, James agrees with Peter (and Paul) that the Gentile believers in Antioch (or other parts of the world) do not need to carry any “further burden than [the] essentials” (Acts 15:28). This assertion is followed by a short list of the “essentials” from which the believers should abstain – “what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication” (Acts 15:29).³ The story of Acts contradicts Paul’s chronologically earlier account in his letter to the Galatians:

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς). And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray

³ Although Paul does not provide a similar list in his letters, he seems to agree with it (1 Cor 8-10).

by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew (ἔθνικῶς καὶ οὐκ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς), how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews (ἰουδαῖζειν)?” (2:11-14).

This story, also known as the “Incident at Antioch” has existed as something like an alternative pattern of church history. While the narrative in Acts relates a story of consensus among the major church leaders (James, Peter, and Paul) over the question of the Gentile mission and its relation to the Law, Paul’s account is marked by a sense of profound disagreement. On another level, Paul disrupts our expectation of assimilation. He was so passionate about his beliefs that he rebuked Peter, who was engaged in assimilation (συνυπεκρίθησαν, ὑπόκρισις; lit. “pretense” or “outward show”; v. 13). That is, instead of showing indifference to local practices, Paul is very strict about practice (or the lack thereof).

Despite Paul’s strict attitude (and perhaps because of it), he has been known as an icon of (Christian, and for that matter European) universalism. As I will argue below, many of the debates on the boundaries between religions, as well as long-held convictions regarding the “universal” character of Christianity, can be traced back to a quasi-pathological Lutheran reading of Paul’s letters. Ironically, even the rise of the “Jewish Paul” in the last decades of the twentieth century was involved in the same discourse of Christian boundaries.

This chapter is an attempt to see how the European conception of “religion” was involved in a conversation with the reception of Paul (especially with regards to his attitude toward Judaism). As I will show, the great philosophers of modernity, from

Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud to Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, were indebted to nineteenth century biblical scholarship. The “religious” and “non-religious” philosophical readings of Paul have at least been parallel, if not more intimately intertwined. In these readings, the priority of Christianity over Judaism is transformed to the priority of universalism over “religion” more generally. In this manner the nineteenth-century distinction between Christianity and Judaism has been adopted by philosophers to draw lines between philosophy and “religion”, as if a would-be secular Europe were playing out its relation to other parts of the world as a strange repetition of a Christian origins story. I will start with a brief survey of the reception of the Incident at Antioch. Then, I will set these interpretations in a general outline of Paul’s attitude toward Judaism and “Christianity”, which shifted to a universality/particularity debate. In the end, I will return to Galatians 2:12-14, reading it through a very different understanding of Paul’s mission.

3.2. Reception History in Theology: Which Incident? What text?

The first extant interpretation of the so-called Incident at Antioch is the Acts narrative of the Jerusalem Council. In some ways, the story of awkward conflict was rewritten as a story of agreement and solidarity, a displacement and translation which matches Acts’ resituating of the Incident from Antioch to Jerusalem. Inasmuch as Acts is a book focused on the unity of a nascent Christianity, it is also a document keen to distinguish this group from “other” religions, especially Judaism. In other words, in Acts “Pauline”

and Jewish Christians are united against an “other” self-sufficient and distinct religion, Judaism. Whether they are obstructing religious or imperialist expansion, the “Jews” of Acts are presented as a stubborn obstacle. As Ward Blanton comments, “it is in fact the jealous recalcitrance and reactionary violence of the ‘Jews’ which is generally presented in Acts as the very obstruction which ends up functioning as a driving force behind the triumphalist expansion of the Way of the Christians (see 13:43, 50; 14:1ff.; 25:1, 2), but also (and this is remarkable) as the effective cause of violent outbursts against Jews by the Roman authorities (see Luke 19:11-20:19; 21:12-24; 23:28-31).”⁴ Written during decades of renowned Roman violence against Jews, Acts was thus strategically excluding the Jews from the imagined solidarity of the Christians, putting them forward in fact as a notably problematic group in relation to which the Christians are keen to draw distinctions and to emphasize distance. As I will show below, this picture of the movement persisted in subsequent Christian imagination as one of its most important touchstones.

Late ancient and medieval commentators of Galatians 2:12-14 valued Acts and the letters of Paul equally. Therefore, interpreters had to deal with several questions: With his changing behavior, did Peter demonstrate any dubiousness regarding the Law by contradicting the decision of the Jerusalem Council? If Paul was right, was Peter guilty of hypocrisy? If both Paul and Peter belonged to the same mission, why should they have a conflict? If Peter was right in assimilating to different groups, can Paul’s

⁴ Ward Blanton, *A Materialism for the Masses: Saint Paul and the Philosophy of Undying Life*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 22.

rebuke be justified? In medieval commentaries on the Incident, these questions were more important than Paul's attitude toward the Law. In post-Reformation interpretations, however, Paul's attitude toward the Law was highlighted.

As to the contradiction between the apostles, Clement of Alexandria believed that Cephas should not be identified as Peter; rather, the name referred to a member of the seventy disciples (see Luke 10:1).⁵ So, Peter, who was not guilty of anything, was not rebuked by Paul. Chrysostom noted the pedagogical as well as pragmatic dimensions of the conflict. He believed that Peter changed his behavior for two reasons:

He was acting with two objects secretly in view, both to avoid offending those Jews, and to give Paul an opportunity for animadverting. For had he, having allowed circumcision when preaching at Jerusalem, changed his course at Antioch, his conduct would have appeared to those Jews to proceed from fear of Paul, and his disciples would have condemned his excess of pliancy. And this would have created no small offense; but in Paul, who was well acquainted with all the facts, his withdrawal would have raised no such suspicion, as knowing the intention with which he acted. Wherefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over. Without this occurrence Paul's exhortation would have had little effect, but the occasion hereby afforded of delivering a severe reproof, impressed Peter's disciples with a more lively fear.⁶

⁵ Cited from the "fifth book of the Hypotyposes" in Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, (London: William Heinemann, 1926), I:xii. A few modern scholars, including Bart Ehrman, still hold this view. See Bart Ehrman, "Cephas and Peter," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 109, no. 3 (1990): 463-74.

⁶ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians and Homilies on the Epistles to the Ephesians*, (Oxford, John Henry Parker, 1840), 38.

Jerome also believed that Peter and Paul were role-playing in order to teach the community.⁷ This view was rejected by Augustine, who held that the apostles could not lie. But his interpretation was not less pedagogical than that of Jerome's. According to Augustine, Peter's humility in this real conflict taught the readers about the value of humility even for as grand a leader as Peter. In his commentary on the Incident, Augustine did not write much about the Law.⁸ But further in his commentary on Galatians as in other pertinent places, he expressed his views on the role of Mosaic Law in the community. He believed that the ceremonial laws were incumbent upon the believers only until before the coming of Christ. That was why the Maccabees rightly suffered after their resistance to any assimilation to the Gentile culture. However, dependence on the Jewish Law for salvation implied that one was still waiting for Christ. Thus, there were two groups of Jews: one group saw the spiritual (i.e. "typological") meaning of the ceremonial laws – coming of Christ—, whereas the other group only held the letter of the Law, in fear of sanctions rather than love for righteousness. The latter group was "under the Law", and hence faulty.⁹

Medieval commentaries followed closely the broad lines of patristic exegesis. However, the interpretation of Jewish-Christian relations seems to have reached a turning point in Luther's work. His opinion on the Incident, more particularly, took a

⁷ Jerome, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Andrew Cain (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 1.2.14a-14b

⁸ Augustine, *Augustine's Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Eric Plumer, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.1-17.

⁹ Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: the "Lutheran" Paul and his Critics*, (Grand Rapids and Chicago: Eerdmans, 2004), 13-15; René Kieffer, *Foi et justification à Antioche: Interprétation d'un conflit*, (Paris: Les Édition du Cerf, 1982), 100.

new direction. Who, but a dissident against the traditional authorities of the church, would identify so much with Paul in Antioch? Luther was after all the Paulinist who opposed the official office of Peter's successors, and had to affirm that authority did not rely on their "rock".

Although in the late twentieth century scholarship, Luther is rightly known as an important contributor to Christian anti-Semitism, his opinion on the Incident was directed toward sectarian conflict with the Catholic Church rather than any sort of antipathy toward the Jews. In his reading, the Incident showed, first and foremost, that no one is infallible. To be sure, like others before him, Luther believed that one may obey or disobey a certain commandment; but reliance on works for salvation is wrong. Yet, he used this opportunity to oppose the scholastic theology of virtues:

For if I being in deadly sin, can do any little work which is not only acceptable in God's sight of itself, and according to the substance, but also is able to deserve grace of congruence, and when I have received grace, I may do works according to grace, that is to say, according to charity, and get of right and duty eternal life; what need have I now of the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, of the promise, and of the death and victory of Christ?... Such monstrous and horrible blasphemies should have been set forth to the Turks and Jews, and not to the Church of Christ. And hereby it plainly appeareth, that the Pope with his bishops, doctors, monks, and all his religious rabble, had no knowledge or regard of holy matters, and that they were not careful for the health of the silly and miserable scattered flock.¹⁰

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1535 edition), (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1953), 130.

For Luther, the “Jew” was the trope for the scholastic theologians (as well as Catholic priests). The Pauline act was to purify Christianity of its “Jewish” elements, which still survived in Catholic practice.¹¹

But Luther did not confine his interpretation to polemic against church leaders. He also mentioned his attitude toward the Law. In Luther’s opinion, we are sinners anyway (“simul justus et peccator”) and only saved by faith in Jesus Christ. The “true way to Christianity”, then, is to “acknowledge [oneself] by the Law to be a sinner,” as it is not possible to fulfill the requirements of the Law (see Gal 3:10-11), and then come to righteousness through faith.¹² In Lutheran perspective, Law was there only to show the situation of slavery, which ended with the coming of Christ. This theology of “faith alone,” emphasized human guilt which could only be atoned for through faith and grace. Those who invested in salvation through good works could, then, be accused of Pelagianism or Jewish-like practice.¹³

3.3. From Lutheran Faith to Christian Universalism

The Lutheran concept of faith was subsequently used by German Idealists to promote the freedom of thought. They believed that the “reformation had cleansed faith of its

¹¹ Although Luther used Judaism as a trope to signify other things that he denounced, his interpretation of Galatians 2 does not reflect that he was the inventor of anti-Jewish sentiment in the study of Paul.

¹² Ibid., 131.

¹³ Moreover, Luther mentioned that civil Law is incumbent upon the believers. This suggestion was due to his historical circumstance, as well as the Augustinian distinction between the earthly and heavenly cities. Luther pointed out that the heavenly and the earthly should not intrude on each other; therefore, legal observance could not intrude the heavenly, while the things of the heaven had nothing to do with the earthly matters of the Land (p. 122-23).

oppressive otherworldliness, inspiring a tranquil confidence both in religion and in the secular institutions that religion nourished.”¹⁴ In this sense, Lutheran faith seemed compatible with human reason. This went so far that Hegel, for instance, identified with the Apostle of the “spirit”, when he criticized the literalism of positivist historians or biblical critics. In this way, philosophy was – as it were – a “Pauline” task.¹⁵

On the side of the theologians, the Hegelian Ferdinand Christian Baur revised early church history to show more elaborately how it might be directed toward a goal. (Read this way, Baur’s work was a response to Hegel’s criticism of Enlightenment church histories as lacking “spirit”, or historical and existential orientation.) In Baur’s methodology, it was not only the particular individual events which mattered for historiography; rather, the universal idea that governed history was also significant in understanding the particular. The “spirit”, in the Hegelian sense, must move on through different historical shapes in order to reach consciousness. It continues to move, negate its negation in the world in order to realize itself, continuing this process from there as it struggles to realize itself fully.

Following on Hegel’s philosophy of history, Baur showed that the post-Easter movement, which was founded on the belief in resurrection, was divided between the Gentile “Pauline” and Jewish “Petrine” tendencies. The Judaizing ways of the latter

¹⁴ Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 56. In fact, this idea was not unprecedented. For example, Kant is said to have been inspired by Galatians 3:23-25 in calling for Enlightenment: humanity’s emergence from “self-incurred immaturity”; see Étienne Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*, trans. Christine Jones, James Swenson, Chris Turner, (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 3, 36.

¹⁵ Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 25-49.

group led to reactions from the former. In the end, however, with their synthesis, which is reflected in the Acts of the Apostles, catholic Christianity emerged in the middle of the second century.¹⁶ Still, for centuries, certain “Jewish” elements continued within the church, requiring the Protestant Reformation to do away with these, Baur claimed.¹⁷

This Hegelian model was so valuable for Baur that he used it as a filter for the authenticity of the texts. So, he rejected the historicity of the Acts because this book had used a harmonizing rhetoric to undermine major conflicts. But it is interesting that Baur himself was also strongly influenced by Acts. Inasmuch as he distinguished between the “Pauline” and “Jewish” Christianities, he was an heir to the very legacy of Acts that he wanted to overcome. For one, Baur confirmed that there were two versions of Christianity – the spiritual one which had to be followed and the “Jewish” bodily one which had to be dispensed with. Similarly, the picture of Paul as the “founder of Christianity” rather than a Jewish partisan,¹⁸ which had started from the first record of church history in Acts, continued vigorously even in Baur’s revisionism.

The Tübingen School of Theology made a spectacular attempt to show the congruence between philosophy and the Bible. Although Baur’s findings were criticized soon, his legacy remained in the work of his students in the church and the philosophers outside. As I will demonstrate below, both groups saw two ways of life: one is the way

¹⁶ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Work, His Epistles and His Doctrine: A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. Allan Menzies, (London: Williams & Noorgate, 1875-79), 2:182-227.

¹⁷ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, trans. Allan Menzies, (London: Williams & Noorgate, 1878-79), 2:274; Susannah Heschel, “The Image of Judaism in Nineteenth-Century New Testament Scholarship in Germany,” in *Jewish-Christian Encounters over the Centuries: Symbiosis, Prejudice, Holocaust, Dialogue*, eds. Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), 223.

¹⁸ Blanton, *Materialism*, 24.

of Law, perpetual guilt, and the particular; the other is the way of the “spirit”, faith, and the universal. Inasmuch as faith is associated with Christianity, “Law” represents its “religious” others. Parallel to this, as long as Christianity contains “literal” elements, it has to be surpassed by another sort of “Pauline” Christianity. I will return to the philosophical reception of these nineteenth-century understandings of Paul and Christianity. Before that, I will discuss the Christian views on Paul’s supposed “anti-Judaism”.

3.4. Paul and Judaism

When anti-Semitic sentiments expanded across Europe, its opponents discussed its origins to raise doubts about its legitimacy. The main question was whether Christianity as a central element of European culture had begotten the anti-Jewish feelings or anti-Semitism had crept into Europe and Christianity from elsewhere. Since Christianity, in the mouth of its leaders or the behavior of individuals, had at least since the Middle Ages shown no little antipathy toward the Jews, often basing such antipathy on the Bible, most scholars believed that “Christian anti-Semitism” was foundational to the European feeling. Now the question was whether anti-Semitism was original to Christianity itself or merely a result of misinterpretations. Many scholars came to argue that it was only the misreadings of the original texts that had led to strong anti-

Semitism.¹⁹ This implied that Christians should not feel that they would lose an essential component of their faith if they left out anti-Semitism. Others, however, could not get around the literally “anti-Jewish” statements in the early texts, not the least the Bible itself. Even some like Rosemary Radford Ruether held that anti-Judaism (which in her view was distinct from anti-Semitism) has been essential to Christian self-definition. But she called for new interpretations of biblical texts and Christian self-definitions that could potentially alter this kind of identification and its disastrous consequences.²⁰

Similar issues ran in Paul studies specifically. The question was whether Paul bore an unchanging divine word on the shortcomings of the Jewish Law, whether he had misunderstood Judaism, or whether his teachings about the Law and Judaism had been misunderstood and misrepresented later (say in the Reformation). While mainstream Christian criticism before the World Wars tended to take the first view, increased awareness about Judaism and European anti-Judaism began to steer scholarship toward the adoption of the second and third views. What is perhaps the most discussed movement in recent decades of scholarship, the New Perspective on Paul, for example, is organized entirely around the promotion of new opinions on Paul’s stance toward Judaism.

Already in the first half of the twentieth century two Jewish scholars, Claude Montefiore and Hans Joachim Schoeps, challenged common assumptions about Judaism that had prevailed in the interpretations of Paul’s letters. Montefiore questioned the

¹⁹ See, for example, John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

²⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

Christian reconstruction of rabbinic Judaism on the basis of Paul's writings. He also showed how the Jews see the Law as a gift, rather than a burden. Moreover, contrary to Paul's opinion (Rom 7; Gal 5:3), Jewish legal observance did not imply perfectionism because forgiveness and repentance could make up for any shortcomings, Montefiore suggested. Paul's Judaism, according to Montefiore, was more akin to Hellenistic Judaism than rabbinic Judaism, which even in the year 50 CE "was a better, happier, and more noble religion than one might infer from the writings of the Apostle".²¹

For Hans Joachim Schoeps the picture was more complicated. In terms of influences on Paul's thought, he argued, "rabbinic" and "Hellenistic" Judaisms are not easily separable. The Apostle owed much of his material to Palestinian Judaism (even in its rabbinic character). For example, the mystical element in Paul's thought, which was a Hellenistic theme of much prevalence in Palestinian Judaism, had led him to believe that the Law was dispensable after the coming of the Messiah. But mostly Paul had misunderstood Judaism, Schoeps suggested. For instance, he had not realized that the Jews do not see a contrast between Law and faith.²²

In Christian theology what came to be known as the New Perspective on Paul started with Krister Stendhal's article, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West" (1963). Here Stendhal focused on Paul's opinion about Jewish

²¹ Claude Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul: Two Essays*, (London: Max Goschen, 1914), 87.

²² Hans Joachim Schoeps, *Paul: The Theology of the Apostle in the Light of the Jewish Religious History*, trans. Harold Knight, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), 174, 284. Schoeps had borrowed this, among other things, from Albert Schweitzer's reading of the "messianic mysticism" of Paul. Interestingly, Gershom Scholem confirms that Jewish messianism implies the validity of the Law only before the coming of the Messiah. See W.D. Davies. "From Schweitzer to Scholem: Reflections on Sabbatai Svi," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 4 (1976): 529-58.

guilt as a result of legalistic perfectionism. The self-examining conscience (in the interpretations of Romans 7)²³ is not a “Jewish” phenomenon. It had emerged only in the late medieval piety, as part of the rites of penance. In fact, Luther had used Pauline passages to negate what he saw among his contemporaries and to propose the alternative of faith over against the guilt-producing medieval penance. The “self-examining Jew” is more a Lutheran construct than an original Pauline character.²⁴ Soon, a new wave of scholarship arose that tried to uncover the historical Paul from the huge Lutheran veil that had fallen on him.

A major voice in the New Perspective belongs to E. P. Sanders, who in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) outlined the tenets of the first century Palestinian Judaism. While the difference between the Protestant Paul and Judaism was usually explained away by imagining a hypothetical Judaism, Sanders situated Paul within a unified (although diverse) “pattern of religion” called Palestinian Judaism, which could be based on independent research. Like Montefiore and Schoeps before him, Sanders argued that Paul misinterpreted Palestinian Judaism. Rather than opposing Judaism, the Apostle only radicalized its notion of salvation and righteousness through his unique

²³ One major issue with respect to this chapter is whether the speaker’s disappointment with the Law refers to a personal experience of Paul’s (biographical “I”) or it is an expression of human encounter with sin and Law (rhetorical “I”).

²⁴ Krister Stendhal, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 56, no. 3 (1963): 199-215. Georg Kümmel also emphasized the influence of the Lutheran view on the interpretation of Romans 7. According to Kümmel, Romans 7:4-25 is not autobiographical, i.e. a description about the inner conflict of a law-observing Jew, which led to his faith in Christ. Rather, Paul meant the lot of humankind which could even “delight in the law of God” (Rom 7:22). See Georg Kümmel, *Römer 7 und das Bild des Menschen im Neuen Testament: Zwei Studien*, (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1974), 36-138.

“christocentric” worldview. As Sanders famously put it, the only “wrong” that Paul found in Judaism was that “it was not Christianity”.²⁵

Since the 1970s, the Jewish Paul continues to be reclaimed by Jewish and Protestant scholars from a variety of perspectives. N. T. Wright hailed Sanders’ approach for stressing variety, but criticized its use “as a way of smuggling back an anachronistic vision of a Pelagian (or semi-Pelagian) or medieval works-righteousness.”²⁶ In this manner, Wright, who opposed any “Pelagian” or “medieval” reading, implied that a correct reading is only Augustinian or Lutheran. Wright still situated Paul’s discourse within Judaism. For instance, he proposed that Paul only changed the standards which determined membership in God’s people from covenant to grace so as to include others. Paul’s criticism of the Jewish people was their “national righteousness”, the “meta-sin” of hubris, which led to the rejection of the gospel.²⁷ To the extent that Wright’s reading is based on merely conceptual frameworks (be they covenant or grace), without any intervention from embodied piety, it is still within the Lutheran “faith-only” paradigm. Moreover, Wright pictured a “universal” Paul, who disagreed with the Jews only over their particularity.²⁸

James Dunn also demonstrated that Paul only criticized a certain particularist aspect of the Jewish people: “Paul’s critique of the Law was primarily directed against

²⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, (London: SCM Press, 1977), 552.

²⁶ N.T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 109.

²⁷ Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 261.

²⁸ Ibid, 108-28; Wright, “The Law in Romans 2,” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. James Dunn, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 131-50.

its abuse by sin, and against his fellow kinsfolk's assumption that the Law's protection continued to give them before God a distinctive and favored position over the other nations, which they were responsible to maintain as such."²⁹ In this way the traditional interpretations of legal observances was turned on its head. Christian authors eventually learnt that rather than provoking guilt, the Jewish Law brought pride. Still, this did not mean that legalistic Jews did not need Christianity. Christianity was there to heal people from any pride. Paul's function was to neutralize any particularism in favor of the transcendental value of universalism. Ironically, Pauline universalism excluded anything which contradicted it.

The New Perspective on Paul has inspired many scholars to reread Paul through a new lens, although they may reach conclusions that are very dissimilar to the theses that are propounded by the New Perspective theologians. With the rise of "Jewish Paul", the opposition between Paul and Judaism was transformed into a helpful Jewish framework for making better sense of his writings. For example, Daniel Boyarin defined Paul as a radical Jewish universalist. However, for the Jewish scholar, universalism was not necessarily positive. In Paul, he argued, were established the phallogocentric values of the European tradition of representation, which denies anything related to the whole, uncircumcised penis. It is because the "same cultural motives that produce allegoresis – logocentrism – as the primary mode of interpretation in Europe produce the Universal Subject as a Christian male. In both cases the passion for univocity seeks to suppress a

²⁹ James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 363.

difference, whether that difference be the signifier, women, or the Jews”.³⁰ Although Paul’s ideas were entirely within the framework of Palestinian Judaism, his universalist evaluation of the Jewish Law made him different from other Jews. For example, Paul and the rabbis diverged in their idea of circumcision because the latter saw in it the completion of the inscription of God’s name on the “particularistic” body of the Jewish man. The Jewish right to difference required resistance to the universal by insisting on the literal and the physical, claimed Boyarin.³¹ In another work, he showed that Judaism and Christianity were not divided until the fourth century, while before that many people lived on a “borderline” between the two.³²

Similarly, Dale Martin, Wayne Meeks, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Stanley Stowers, among others, tried to situated Pauline themes in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts, and thus underplay the “Judaism/Hellenism divide”.³³ James Crossley demonstrated that there were diverse attitudes toward the Law among the Jewish people at the time of the New Testament. In other words, one cannot say for sure that there was a singular interpretation of the Law and that Christianity could therefore take a unique stance on it.³⁴ Regarding the meals, many Jews debated over table fellowship with non-Jews. But this does not mean that eating with Gentiles was in any way revolutionary or strange. More particularly, as far as the Incident at Antioch is concerned, Crossley

³⁰ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994), 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³² Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004).

³³ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed. *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, (London and Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). Meeks, Martin, and Stowers have also contributed to this book.

³⁴ James Crossley, *The New Testament and Jewish Law: A Guide to the Perplexed*, (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

shows that although table-fellowship with the Gentiles was a matter of debate, it was not uncommon either. Whereas in Daniel 1:11-12, the believers refuse to share their dinner with the royal non-Jews, Judith eats different food, but at the Gentile table *and* she bathes after that (Judith 12). *The Letter of Aristeas* also bears witness to table-fellowship among Jews and Gentiles, when Jewish food was served to all.³⁵ This means that around the time that the New Testament was composed, Jews had different views on table-fellowship with Gentiles. The practices ranged from total abstinence to complete assimilation. On the spectrum of Jewish practice, one can find solutions, such as eating different foods at the same table or purifying oneself after eating with Gentiles. Paul and his audiences were exposed to these debates and could just as well have been involved.

My analysis of the New Perspective on Paul has demonstrated that this movement presupposes that the Apostle was not the founder of Christianity, as there was no such thing as Christianity until long after his death. Paul was thus a Jew through and through. His “experience” on the road to Damascus certainly affected his (“religious”) worldview, but it did not *change* his religion. Paul’s critique was directed from within the system, without suggesting that he wanted to uproot it. However, the New Perspective theologians were not flawless either. Although they criticized the “Lutheran” readings of Paul, they turned Paul into a Luther of Judaism.³⁶ In their

³⁵ James Crossley, *The Date of Mark: Insights from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, (New York and London: T&T Clark, 2004), 141-54.

³⁶ This is no less true in the case of other interpreters like Louis Martyn and Hans Dieter Betz. The former author presupposes a Gentile-Jewish distinction about which the Galatian Teachers had to decide, while the latter clearly sets Paul against the Jews. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation, with Introduction and Commentary*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 228-45; Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 103-112.

description, Paul was a reformer that first-century Judaism deeply needed. Again in a change of metaphors, while these theologians claimed that they situated Paul's discourse in Judaism, their own discourse can be read as new translations of the prevalent Protestant understanding of Christianity and Judaism. In this way, Paul even seems to perpetuate the myth of Christian superiority.³⁷ He was the figure who could say what distinguished the new people from their past heritage. No wonder, then, that philosophical receptions of Paul also followed the model of the superiority of Christianity (or universalism) over Judaism (or particularity).

3.5. Paul and Judaism in European Philosophy

3.5.1. Paul, according to Friedrich Nietzsche

Religion was a major part of Friedrich Nietzsche's assessment of European society. He believed that Europe depended very much on its system of morality, which had come into being when humans started to establish a link between their misfortunes and a certain guilt. The imaginary guilt was in turn related to some sort of evil deed. Instead of relying on their will to power to live a noble life and defeat their misfortunes, humans kept blaming themselves in relation to standards of morality. Christianity had a central role in this imaginary causality of guilt, Nietzsche contended.³⁸

³⁷ James Crossley, "The Multicultural Christ: Jesus the Jew and the New Perspective on Paul in an Age of Neoliberalism," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 7, no 11 (2011): 11.

³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12, 40, 144.

Nietzsche's project was to cure humanity from this wrong idea of guilt. His genealogical history of Christianity worked through themes that the church had inherited from different sources. In Christianity, he suggested, the values that the "evangel" (good tidings) had propagated changed soon after the crucifixion.³⁹ In the beginning, the "Christian" evangel was not faith (over against the Jewish practice), but a new way of life. The evangel abolished human guilt by bridging the distance between God and man. This was the "way" that Jesus introduced.

But it changed altogether with Paul, who founded what is today known as "Christianity". Paul was the "*first Christian*, the inventor of Christianness! Before him there were only a few Jewish sectarians."⁴⁰ Paul claimed that Jesus had atoned for human guilt, which is why he was more interested in the death of the redeemer than *his way of life*. For Nietzsche, Paul "falsified the history of Israel once again, to make it look like the prehistory of his own actions".⁴¹ He replaced the high values with a decadent morality. So, the guilt was still there, indeed even a more intense guilt than before. Consequently, "as soon as the gap between the Jew and Judeo-Christian appeared, the latter had no choice except to use the same methods of self-preservation dictated by the Jewish instinct *against* the Jews themselves, while the Jews had never used them against *non*-Jews. The Christian is just a Jew with less rigorous beliefs".⁴²

³⁹ Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 42.

⁴¹ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ*, 42.

⁴² *Ibid.*

Paul, according to Nietzsche, was “one of the most ambitious and importunate souls, of a mind as superstitious as it was cunning, But ... without the storms and confusions of such a mind, of such a soul, there would be no Christianity; we would hardly have heard of a little Jewish sect whose master died on the cross.”⁴³ Paul started the whole business of Christianity simply because “this one man, of a very tormented, very pitiable, very unpleasant mind who also found himself unpleasant” was preoccupied with certain questions about the Law, its purpose, and fulfillment. He was in his youth a passionate follower of the Law and even on watch for transgressors. But that made him constantly feel guilty. He wondered whether it was the inherent “carnality” of the Law that made him a transgressor or the Law itself.⁴⁴ (Here Nietzsche was reading Romans 7 literally, identifying the “I” as the autobiographical Paul.) The philosopher even compares the Apostle’s internal experience to an imaginary feeling of Luther’s in the monastery.⁴⁵ Both were as if involved in a dramatic confusion in their souls that could only be resolved through the destruction of their hereditary system. This is what happened on the road to Damascus. There Paul realized how he should destroy his “moral despair”. He joined the followers of the “Messiahdom” and abolished the Law:

The tremendous consequences of this notion, this solution of the riddle, whirl before his eyes, all at once he is the happiest of men – the destiny of the Jews – no, of all mankind – seems to him to be tied to this notion, to this second of his sudden enlightenment, he possesses the idea of ideas, the key of keys, the

⁴³ Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁵ It is interesting that Nietzsche mentioned this long before Stendhal.

light of lights; henceforth history revolves around him! For from now on he is the teacher of the *destruction of the law*! To die to evil – that means also to die to the law; to exist in the flesh – that means also to exist in the Law! To become one with Christ – that means also to become with him the destroyer of the law; to have died with him – that means also to have died to the Law! Even if it is still possible to sin, it is no longer possible to sin against the law.... God could never have resolved on the death of Christ if a fulfilment of the law had been in any way possible without this death; now not only has all guilt been taken away, guilt as such has been destroyed; now the law is dead, now the carnality in which it dwelt is dead – or at least dying constantly away, as though decaying.⁴⁶

The supposed confusion that had tormented Paul and Luther was not unfamiliar to Nietzsche. Like them he saw the transgression of morality and the feeling of guilt everywhere. And just like them, he was also involved in the redemption of humanity from guilt. While for Paul guilt lay in legalistic perfectionism, for Nietzsche it was part of Christian and modern morality. In this sense, as Jacob Taubes rightly realized, Nietzsche simultaneously imitated, rivalled, and attacked Paul.⁴⁷ If in Luther's view the Catholic Christianity had yet to be paulinized through faith in Jesus, Nietzsche felt the need to take it a step further to paulinize Christianity itself, to make it less "Jewish" and to bring it closer to the "good tiding" that it was meant to be. Nietzsche's "road to Damascus" was the point he realized that liberation from the value system of European morality led to a better life. He intended to give humanity the space it needed to fly to

⁴⁶ Ibid., 40-41.

⁴⁷ Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 79.

nobler values without any guilt or subsequent misfortune.⁴⁸ Nietzsche functioned as a bridge to transfer these essentialist views of Pauline Christianity from the nineteenth-century ecclesiastical discourse to the pathological readings of religion in psychoanalysis as well as philosophy.

3.5.2. Paul, according to Sigmund Freud

The relation between human guilt and the origins of religion resurfaced in Sigmund Freud's work. He expressed his view on religion since very early in his career. In fact, his psychoanalysis was not confined to the analysis of the individual psyche; rather, he assumed that human society, like a macrocosm, reflected the individual psyche. If one were to summarize his psychoanalysis of religion, it ran like this: just as the obsessional neurosis of the individual appears as an Oedipal defense mechanism against childhood traumas, religion is the "universal obsessional neurosis" of traumatized societies.

Influenced by James Frazer, Freud held that the primitive societies were – as it were – composed of a horde of brothers that murdered the father. Because of its traumatic character, the murder of the father was soon forgotten, and the father was replaced by a taboo animal. What remained from the forgotten trauma is a sense of guilt, which resulted in certain obsessional practices on the part of the survivors. These behaviors are manifested as "religious" rituals in human societies.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ On Nietzsche's identification with Paul, see Didier Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Philippe Farah (Evanston: North Western University Press, 2012), 60-69.

⁴⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey, (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 170-190.

Yet, Freud affirmed that religion, as a defense mechanism against helplessness, and even an “illusion” had contributed much to human civilization. Only with the evolution of human societies, he believed, “a turning-away from religion is bound to occur with the fatal inevitability of a process of growth, and [...] we find ourselves at this very juncture in the middle of that phase of development”.⁵⁰ He proposed that this illusion be replaced with science. Thus, psychoanalysis, as a modern science, could present the reality that religion had sought to hide away.

Later his monumental work *Moses and Monotheism* (1937) took further his psychoanalysis of religion. There Freud explained the origins of Judaism and Christianity. In his opinion, Mosaic monotheism is only another version of an original worship of the sun-god in Akhenaton’s Egypt. Moses the Egyptian rebelled against the rulers of his homeland and took a group of oppressed people to another land, where he (the “father”) was soon killed by his people (the brothers). This constitutes the trauma of the Hebrew nation. In order to overcome the sense of guilt from a forgotten parricide, the Jewish people created a set of strict legal practices, which resemble neurotic behaviors. However, this forgotten trauma got a new turn in Christianity. The guilt provoked Paul “a Roman Jew from Tarsus” to claim that the Son of God, who as the Messiah had replaced God the Father, had died. Those who believed in Paul’s message, were rescued from guilt and the consequent neurosis. In this sense, the major difference between the Jew and the Christian is that the latter admits the murder of the father (in

⁵⁰ Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. W. D. Robson-Scot (London: Hogarth, 1970), 14-17, 39.

the form of crucifixion), while the former is stuck in “obsessional neurosis” in attempts to repress the guilt.⁵¹

In this manner, Freud pathologized religious practice (in the form of Judaism and its “abbreviated repetition Islam)⁵². That is to say, to be directed to an “advance in intellectuality,”⁵³ one should get away from religious practice. Notwithstanding the Pauline mission of liberation from guilt, according to Freud, still certain obsessional rituals persisted within Christianity. To be healed from its malaise, the modern world required a large-scale liberation from guilt. Freud sought to cure the modern Europeans through psychoanalysis. Echoing Nietzsche, Freud described Paul in this manner: “In the most proper sense he was a man of an innate religious disposition: the dark traces of the past lurked in his mind, ready to break through into its more conscious regions.”⁵⁴ Here Freud is reading Romans 7 as a reference to Paul’s personal experience. He was also comparing the “innate religious disposition” to a disease-like feeling of guilt, from which Paul had finally rescued himself and his people. As Jacob Taubes has rightly recognized, the father of psychoanalysis identified with the Jewish Paul, who would remind the people of the source of misfortunes, the murder of the father, and their defense mechanism in the form of “religion”.⁵⁵ If the Roman Jew (in the Lutheran narrative) had told his people to replace guilt with faith, the German Jewish atheist doctor reminded Europeans to replace the illusion of religion with science.

⁵¹ Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, in *The Standard Edition of Complete Psychological Works*, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955-1974), 80-92.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 92-93.

⁵³ *Geistigkeit*, variantly translated as “spirituality”; *ibid.*, 111-15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 86-87.

⁵⁵ Taubes, *Paul*, 90-92.

Although Freud was much influenced by Nietzsche, especially in the notion of cure from guilt, their approach to Paul was different. Freud did not so much attack Paul as imitate him, while Nietzsche clearly disdained and still rivalled him. Furthermore, Freud saw the problem of humanity in its ignorance (of its trauma, guilt, and psyche), while for Nietzsche the problem lay in the denial of the body and resort to metaphysics. Inasmuch as both thinkers held that certain elements in the precedent religions (mainly Judaism) still survived in Christianity, they had inherited the legacy of the biblical scholars. Baur, for example, saw the Reformation as one step in the direction of a more “Pauline” Christianity. More than that, Nietzsche and Freud were criticizing modernity (and its religion), as they saw that it still retained traces of guilt. Both of them believed that modernity itself required a new ethics, composed of the transformation of values for one, or the admission of the repressed material for the other.

In this manner, both philosophy and theology held modernity and Christianity together and opposed them to Judaism. Even if Christianity was criticized, it was for its preservation of certain “Jewish” elements. However, this anti-Jewish spirit changed a lot, as it was blamed for many of the atrocities in the twentieth century. Now let us see to what extent continental philosophy was influenced by this new perception of Judaism.

3.5.3. Paul, among the Philosophers of the “Turn to Religion”

In the past couple of decades continental philosophers have turned to Paul to explain their respective ideas. This philosophical turn to Paul is part of a larger turn to religion

among continental philosophers. This turn – which is replete with references to religious themes and characters – is due to several major events in the twentieth century. Gil Anidjar mentions the influence of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 on the return of the religious.⁵⁶ Besides, although the rise of fundamentalisms is very different from the philosophical turn to religion, emphasis on the former has not been irrelevant to the latter. When religion (and different readings of its relevance) becomes a matter of debate in society, not least when it comes to security and identity, philosophers cannot help but refer to religious themes and characters, albeit cursorily and only for the sake of explaining their own philosophy. Finally, as many of these philosophers have turned to religion to combat liberal-capitalist ideologies, their references make better sense in the context of the post-communist Europe. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the battle between the East and the West seemed to have come to an end. The Berlin Wall functioned, as it were, like a border that separated what is Europe from what it is not. Hence, its fall implied a serious rethinking of the meaning of Europe, its politics and culture. The collapse of the Eastern bloc did not mean that the leftist “other” had been eliminated for good, but it might have been trying to integrate into the society, as the events of May ’68 had already shown. Moreover, there was also a need to define a new “other”, so that the borders of Europe are clarified. With the rise of immigration from non-European countries to Europe the questions relating to identity politics were also looming large. Therefore, some sort of universalism, which did not aim at sustaining the

⁵⁶ Gil Anidjar, “Secularism,” *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 1 (2006): 67.

one by excluding the other, was needed. Leftist thinkers noted that the political depended on the maintenance of the *polis* and its borders, the proliferation of identities, and solidarity over the development of the liberal market. In this situation, post-political theory had to both question a thriving liberal-capitalist system and recover from the failure of socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Whereas, much of Marxist-Communist literature showed strong misgivings about religion, leftist thinkers after the collapse of the USSR construed religious texts to combat liberal systems.

Here, I focus on the work of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, who used religious themes and characters, including Paul. For both thinkers “religion” is a medium for explaining universalism. Ironically this happens when “religion” has become an identity marker, which is overshadowed by a more public discourse to create a single “universal” identity. This new identity is “philosophical”, surpassing particular “religious” frameworks. In fact, Paul helps the universalist thinkers to surpass the local practices, to declare what Jacques Derrida called “religion without religion”. As I shall show below, even though Badiou and Žižek were offering a new story of Christian origins, their language can still be situated within the supersessionist framework.

3.5.3.1. Paul, according to Alain Badiou

The main question that preoccupied Badiou was whether one can go beyond the poststructuralist paradigm to leave room for agency. Poststructuralists had long declared the demise of the singular logos, or the one sovereign. Rather, in their view, our post-sovereign world is governed by a multiplicity of sovereignties. This renders any sort of

political agency absurd. If traditional humanity was governed by one King, or one Law, now different apparatuses and systems direct its life. At this point, even resistance counts as some sort of recognition of the pervasive power.⁵⁷ Furthermore, this pervasiveness of power is in line with capitalism, if not its outcome. Capitalism thus supports identity politics: “Capital demands a permanent creation of subjective and territorial identities in order for its principle of movement to homogenize its space of action; identities, moreover, that never demand anything but the right to be exposed in the same way as others to the uniform prerogatives of the market. The capitalist logic of the general equivalent and the identitarian and cultural logic of communities or minorities form an articulated whole.”⁵⁸

Influenced by Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault, Badiou tried to find the solution in a “universal singularity”. Althusser had emphasized that truth can appear in a materialist swerve which happens only in the void. Michel Foucault’s ethics had demonstrated how the ancient wisdom required one to cultivate oneself in order to be capable of seeing and declaring the truth (*parrhesia*).⁵⁹ These ideas helped Badiou to develop his philosophical system on the singular event, which established the universal truth and gave way to human subjectivity. These were fully explained in *Being and Event* (1988, English translation 2007). Badiou’s vision of universalism is like this: a singular event is experienced by the subject(s), who militantly declare(s) the event to

⁵⁷ Of course, poststructuralists themselves had realized this and provided their own spaces for agency. See especially Judith Butler’s reading of Foucauldian subjectivity in her *The Psychic Power of Life: Theories in Subjection*.

⁵⁸ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 10-11.

⁵⁹ Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 1-20.

others; the event is so significant that the different identities fade away and all become one. In the same fashion, Paul was influenced by the event of resurrection and declared it to others. Badiou acknowledged, time and again, that he did not believe in the content of Paul's message.⁶⁰ However, the Apostle's experience of subjectivity and subsequent indifference to identity politics was instructive in the framework of Badiou's philosophy. Even religious identity (like that of Paul's Israelite identity) would lose its significance before the great event, even if the event, like resurrection, has a "religious" character.

In Badiou's opinion, Pauline universality opposed both "Jewish prophecy" (the discourse of signs) and "Greek philosophy" (the discourse of totality). Badiou considered these to be mutually exclusive, but interdependent. Both of these were "discourses of the Father". But for Paul the beginning of subjectivity was only in the event, rather than cosmic or exceptional laws. He propounded the "discourse of the Son", who intervened in history, and was detachable from any particularism. Badiou maintained that Paul even did not agree with the (Hegelian) synthesis of the two discourses; rather, he presented a third discourse which cut through those discourses, as well as their synthesis. This Paul was a revolutionary, whose picture contrasted with the one presented in Acts.⁶¹

In Badiou's opinion, Paul appreciated the Jewish basis of much of his own beliefs. So, he was very different from Marcion. However, as a militant, he also

⁶⁰ Badiou, *Paul*, 1-5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 41-44.

emphasized the rupture with Judaism. Our image of the Apostle could have been more radical, had it not been for the way the fathers presented him as a “centrist” in order to combat “ultra-Paulinism”.⁶² Although he, or his historical image, had been involved in all of these conflicts, Paul seemed to Badiou to be a thinker capable of being approached as “ahistorical”. That is, for Badiou Paul did not really belong only to a particular time and place. The event on the road to Damascus had made Paul so indifferent to his material surrounding that in his prose “something solid and timeless, something that, precisely because it is a question of orienting a thought toward the universal in its suddenly emerging singularity, but independently of all anecdote, is intelligible to us without having to resort to cumbersome historical mediations”.⁶³ That is why, following Pier Paolo Pasolini, Badiou declared, Paul can even be read as our contemporary.⁶⁴

The Incident at Antioch has also been very crucial to Badiou’s thought. Already in 1982, he had written a play under this title. It was an allegorical reading of the biblical story, set in modern France. In this play, Paula and Cephas do not agree on the validity of a revolution. In contrast to Cephas, who presses on snatching the opportunity for change, Paula declares that “revolution is nothing and nonrevolution is nothing”. She is thus thinking of a third alternative.⁶⁵ In his *Saint Paul* likewise, Badiou emphasized the importance of the conflict between Peter and Paul. Until the Incident, Paul was indifferent to Law observance. But when he noticed Peter’s “disloyalty to his own

⁶² Ibid., 35-36.

⁶³ Ibid., 36.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 36-39.

⁶⁵ Badiou, *The Incident at Antioch: A Tragedy in Three Acts*, trans. Susan Spitzer, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 2:4.

principles”, he came to think that “the Law, in its previous imperative, is not, is no longer, tenable, even for those who claim to follow it.... For Paul, it is no longer possible to maintain an equal balance between the Law, which is a principle of death for the suddenly ascendant truth, and the eventual declaration, which is its principle of life”.⁶⁶

Badiou’s Paul did not think of anything except the resurrection, the event that obliterated all differences. The resurrection served as a third term that evacuates the opposing entities from their being. It promises change by faithfulness to truth. This seemed very much in line with modern European agenda of obliterating difference, even converting the “other” to the “same”. The universal included as far as it could accommodate for belief in a central “universal” tenet, such as the resurrection. Badiou’s universalism directly imitated “Christian universalism” on the one hand and French political universalism on the other. In other words, Badiou’s philosophy seems to presuppose that (Pauline) Christianity is essentially universalist, and that if it is voided of its theological content, Paulinism can be still more universalist.

This is problematic for several reasons. First, Judaism can lay equal claim on universalism as Christianity has. Many times in their interreligious apologetic works, for example, the Jews have highlighted certain universalist assumptions in their religion. Even Paul’s Jewish contemporaries, like Christians of all times, have welcomed people from any background to join their religion. Besides, whatever universalism that is found in Paul’s discourse “has nothing to do with Paul’s missionary stance, the militant stance

⁶⁶ Badiou, *Paul*, 26-27.

on which Badiou focuses. Instead, it emerges as part of Paul's in-group stance, which – as we know – is itself quite exclusivist and particularistic.”⁶⁷ Another criticism of Badiou's work has been that his notion of the subject facing the event is more related to the Cartesian subject than the historical Paul. In fact, the pre-Cartesian Paul did not have any idea of the subject-object split.⁶⁸ Furthermore, these associations between Christianity and universalism usually presume a value in universalism over against the particular. This assumption can also be questioned, most significantly from the Jewish perspective. Finally, Christian universalism excludes those who do not believe in Christianity. European universalism can also exclude those who do not care about certain national tenets. In Badiou's description, universalism is a result of fidelity to the event. It thus excludes from subjectivity anyone who does not believe in the event.

3.5.3.2. Paul, according to Slavoj Žižek

Perhaps it was in answer to these (but for similar concerns that Badiou had) that Slavoj Žižek presented a different kind of universalism. Žižek's philosophy is more centered on a comprehensive love, rather than a singular event. Furthermore, he believed that there was something in Paul and Christianity that had to be appreciated, while for Badiou the Apostle only exemplified what we had already expounded in philosophy. Still, the psychoanalytic interpretations of Judaism and religion in general changed only slightly in the course of the twentieth century. In fact, despite the changes in the European

⁶⁷ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul and Universalism,” in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 103.

⁶⁸ Stanley Stowers, “Paul as a Hero of Subjectivity,” in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 159-74.

conceptions of Judaism, Lacan's view of the Jewish Law was not very different from the Lutheran-Freudian opinion. Now it is necessary to briefly introduce Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to have a better grasp of the psychoanalytic readings of religion.

Lacan divided the human psyche into three major parts. The symbolic is the realm of the law (of the father) and language, which separates the individual from the Big Other. The imaginary is the linguistic part that is formed when one first starts to distinguish oneself as a whole separate from the maternal (the Big Other). It constitutes what one *imagines* other people or things to be. As such, it depends on the symbolic law (language, culture, etc.). In the Imaginary, one learns to replace the Big Other, which had been separated through the Symbolic, with the *objet petit a* – a smaller object which resembles the Big Other only in part. The Symbolic and the Imaginary are maintained by a non-linguistic element, i.e. the Real. Because of its non-linguistic character, the Real is not expressible. Individuals tend to avoid it by creating fantasms. (Unlike symptoms, fantasms are not very pleasurable.) The task of psychoanalysis is, according to Lacanians, to cross over the fantasms and ease the encounter with the Real.

Thus the story of the human psyche is like this: a baby boy does not feel that his mother (the Big Other) is a separate object until the mirror stage (around 18 months). At that point with the intervention of the father (language), the baby recognizes in the mirror that he is separate from his mother. This means the fragmentation of a formerly complete being. In the Imaginary, the self tries to overcome this sense of fragmentation by *imagining* itself as a Whole while, at the same time, it desires to become One with the Big Other. This unification is forbidden by the Symbolic (language, father, law,

etc.); therefore, the individual desires to become one with the small other (*objet petit a*). The Real is present in all relationships, in the sense that its absence would lead to their collapse. So, in the ideal sexual liaison between an obsessional (man) and a hysteric (woman), both of them imagine another woman in bed – the man imagines that he is having sex with another woman and the hysteric woman imagines that her male partner is having sex with another woman. The relationship is sustained by the Real – i.e. the fantasmic presence of that woman.

In fact, the Real contains what Lacan generally associates with the Freudian “Thing”. For example, in Lacan’s analysis of the Jewish Law (which belongs to the Symbolic), the surplus of the Law (“Thing” according to Lacan) induces the subject to transgress the Law. Lacan even translated Paul’s description of the Law (Rom 7:7-9) into psychoanalytic language, replacing “sin” with the Freudian “Thing”:

Is the Law the Thing? Certainly not. Yes I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law. In effect, I would not have had the idea to covet if the Law hadn’t said: “Thou shalt not covet it.” But the Thing finds a way by producing in me all kinds of covetousness thanks to the commandment, for without the Law the Thing is dead. But even without the Law, I was once alive. But when the commandment appeared, the Thing flared up, returned once again, I met my death. And for me, the commandment that was supposed to lead to life turned out to lead to death, for the Thing found a way and thanks to the commandment seduced me; through it I came to desire death.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII: Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, trans. Dennis Porter, (London and New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 83.

The Real contains the sin, which provokes the Jew to transgress the Law. The sin is the Freudian murder of the primordial father, which need not have any external “reality”. Nevertheless it is “true” because, as an excessive specter, it sustains the symbolic law. The logic of guilt and transgression is the fantasm that helps the subject to avoid an encounter with the fundamental myth. On this reading, one might even say that Judaism survived by *not* confessing to the founding traumatic event.⁷⁰ In Christianity, on the contrary and according to Žižek, one gets out of this cycle of inherent transgression in the Law. Unlike Judaism, Christianity admits the guilt and accepts the death of God at its foundation. Up to this point, as Žižek fully acknowledges, he is indebted to Freud’s claims about the difference between Judaism and Christianity. That is why his narrative is no less supersessionist, as he also mentions an interdependence between the Jewish Law and a perpetual sense of guilt, the Law being merely a coping mechanism.

However, according to Lacanian description, the task of Christianity is not only to get out of the endless circle of guilt and Law. Christianity can become more guilt-inducing than Judaism, because it does not even allow for legal loopholes to get around the Law. In Žižek’s opinion, contrary to the literalist Judaism, Christianity even considers the hidden desire for an act sinful (see Matt 5:27-28). But psychoanalysis can help the individual recover from both kinds of religion by showing how one can enjoy doing one’s duty without feeling guilty.⁷¹ Žižek qualifies a general misunderstanding about the tension between Judaism and Christianity:

⁷⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *The Absolute Fragile: or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 88-90.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 130-31.

The first paradox to note is that the vicious dialectic of Law and its transgression elaborated by Saint Paul is the invisible third term, the ‘vanishing mediator’ between the Jewish religion and Christianity – its specter haunts both of them, although neither of the two religious positions actually occupies its place: on the one hand, the Jews are *not yet* there, that is, they treat the Law as the written Real which does not engage them in the vicious superego cycle of guilt; on the other, as Saint Paul makes clear, the basic point of Christianity proper is precisely to *break out* of the vicious superego cycle of the Law and its transgression via Love.⁷²

In the Law/sin binary, love serves as some kind of “third term”. However, the ultimate point of love is when the (feminine) subject, in order to fulfill her subjectivity, sacrifices what is most precious to her.⁷³ This is what the Christian God does. In contrast to the perverse omnipotent subject who creates suffering and sin so that he can intervene and remove these miseries, the Christian God is read as the tragic hero who undergoes the same destiny as the people by sacrificing God’s most precious Son.⁷⁴ Love is universal because it unplugs the subject from its social order and cleanses the subject’s slate for a new beginning. It is to hate one’s beloved out of love (like Romeo and Juliet’s hatred of their respective families), to love the others for their mere appearances, when the other is reduced to singularized subjectivity.⁷⁵

In *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (2003), Žižek’s view of religion is less essentialist. He plays with the opposition between “Jewish” Law and “Christian” love. Still, for him

⁷² Ibid., 136.

⁷³ Ibid., 133.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 117-119.

the most important Pauline theme remains love. The Pauline way of life, we are told, is like that of a person who is passionately in love:

It is therefore crucial to distinguish between the Jewish-Pauline “state of emergency,” the suspension of the “normal” immersion in life, and the standard Bakhtinian carnivalesque “state of exception” when everyday moral norms and hierarchies are suspended, and one is encouraged to indulge in transgressions: the two are opposed – that is to say, what the Pauline emergency suspends is not so much the explicit Law regulating our daily life, but precisely, its obscene unwritten underside: when, in his series of *as if* prescriptions, Paul basically says: “obey the laws as if you are not obeying them,” this means precisely that *we should suspend the obscene libidinal investment in the Law, the investment on account of which the Law generates/solicits its own transgression*. The ultimate paradox, of course, is that this is how the Jewish Law, the main target of Paul’s critique, functions: it is already a law deprived of its superego supplement, not relying on any obscene support. In short: in its “normal” functioning, the Law generates as the “collateral damage” of its imposition its own transgression/excess (the vicious cycle of Law and sin described in an unsurpassable way in Corinthians [*sic*]), while in Judaism and Christianity, it is directly this excess itself which addresses us.⁷⁶

In this sense, love is the (Real) surplus that sustains the Law in both Judaism and Christianity. It is not necessarily “something”, but without it one is “nothing”. Without love, one is lacking; and only a lacking person is capable of love.

Law can belong to a “masculine” logic. The “Man” reaches out to the *objet petit a*, while only fantasizing about the Real, which sustains the relationship. Love, on the

⁷⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2003), 113.

other hand, is “feminine” because it expresses lack, but immediately reaches the Real. Just like the perfect sexual relationship between an obsessional (man) and a hysteric (woman), law and love go together. Christianity fulfilled the Jewish Law “not by supplementing it with the dimension of love, but by fully realizing the Law itself – from this perspective, the problem with Judaism is not that it is ‘too legal’, but that it is not ‘legal’ enough”. The Jewish Law has always served to “unplug” the Jews from the social order; otherwise, they would be, like any other individual, alienated from themselves. Christianity had to go even further and unplug the Jews from what they had already been unplugged from. More than that, in order to avoid falling into the “pagan” feeling of “cosmic oneness” with the universe, Christianity needed a negative reference to the Jewish Law in order to glorify universal “love” as that which replaced the Jewish “particular” Law.⁷⁷

What remains for Christianity to do, in Žižek’s view, is to get rid of its “perverse” core, its “institutional” character, that which imagines a God that leads the believers to the “fall” in order to redeem them. Like capitalism, this God parasitizes upon modern pleasures, which are themselves devoid of pleasure. The modern capitalist fetishist individual enjoys the *objet petit a* to the exclusion of the Big Other. It even creates arbitrary laws to regulate pleasure. For example, the regime of health takes over so that the object is empty of the main kernel which made it an object of pleasure. Diet coke is Žižek’s famous example of such self-made regulation of pleasure – or Lacanian perversion.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 117-20.

According to Žižek, if Christianity and capitalism are to recover from their “perversion” they should remind themselves of the “death of God” as the tragic hero. It is the God who shares the destiny of Man, so that all are One. The community of the spirit after the death of God can be compared to a communist world, where all differences are annihilated into the One. There the modern subject is able to fully enjoy because the “Christian” principle of unconditional love rules. Just as Christ died for Christianity to emerge, Christianity has to die to itself so that it can save its treasure, Žižek declared.⁷⁸

Again here, even when Žižek is more politically correct about the Jews and genuinely finds them remarkable in their own right, he is resorting to all the old metaphors on which Freud and Nietzsche rested. The plight of modernity is, according to Žižek, that even in a secular world it still retains the “perverse core of Christianity”. The modern capitalist world has replaced the older Christian God with another center. And only Christianity itself (bereft of its institutional garb) can save the world from its “perversion”. But it should be remembered that the “institutional organization” of Christianity and its omnipotent monotheistic God have always been reminiscent of the Jewish system. In many ways, institutional Christianity realized what Judaism had implied. Now, according to Žižek’s narrative, it was time for psychoanalysis to restore a transformed version of Christianity to the world. For Christianity to represent the “universal”, it had to get over its “Jewish” elements. The problem with modernity was that it preserved “religion” without calling itself “religious”. This is what the founders of

⁷⁸ Ibid., 171.

modernity (Luther, Nietzsche, Freud, among others) had already said about the Christian-secular Europe.

3.6. Universalism in Judaism and Christianity

As mentioned above, when the paradigm of guilt-faith faded away from the religious and philosophical rhetoric, it was replaced by the model of universality-particularity to explain the difference between religions. Because the mission to the Gentiles has always been considered the foundational phenomenon of the “parting of the ways” – i.e. the “original” story of the allegedly huge difference between Christianity and Judaism – many have found good reasons to associate Paul with universality. Therefore, biblical scholars believed that belief in universality is what marked Paul from other Jewish people, while the philosophers saw universality as a “non-Christian” element in Christianity that could be applied to different contexts. Usually in these accounts, universality was deemed the more desirable element in the binary. Besides, it was valued because it could even incorporate the particular, while the reverse was not true.

But “universality” does not have the same meaning for all of the religious or philosophical authors. Badiou takes it to be a Marxist-Hegelian synthesis of all in One, the obliteration of difference in the indifference of a new universality. Žižek, on the other hand, believes that universality can provide a space for people who, despite their differences, share a cause (like “love”). Both Badiou and Žižek conceive of a universal truth which opens the way for the inclusion of everyone. For Badiou, truth lies in the

event, while for Žižek truth resides in the Real. For these thinkers, encounter with truth makes the universal possible. Paul can thus appear as a great exemplar of universality for both these philosophers.

These views are opposed from two sides. On the one hand, for non-foundationalist postmodern thinkers, truth as such is not a valid concept on which one could build universality. “Universal truth” is merely an oxymoron in postmodern discourse. At least in theory, postmodernism advocates particular truths. On the other hand, historical critics of the Bible are not pleased with the philosophical appropriations of the Apostle. These scholars believe that the philosophers interpret the “Pauline” message in a way that the historical Paul never meant. In fact, although Paul did not develop a systematic ideology, biblical scholars are right about certain points that the philosophers have missed. For example, his vision of the final inclusion of all in the salvation program was overshadowed by his apocalypticism, which with the ever-continuing but never accomplished approach of the *parousia* proved futile. Although he was influenced by Hellenistic (e.g., Stoic) ideas on human equality, he was still more inclined toward “Jewish exclusivism”. Even his “universal” picture was that of engrafting the believing Gentiles into the tree of Israel (Romans 11:17-26), rather than salvation for all humanity.⁷⁹ Paul was indifferent to local practices only “as long as the various practices did not run counter to or diminish the exclusive value of the Christ

⁷⁹ John D. Caputo and Linda Martin Alcoff, eds., *St. Paul among the Philosophers*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009). See especially the articles by Paula Fredriksen, E. P. Sanders, and Dale Martin in the collection.

event and its meaning – and as long as they are not taken to do so.”⁸⁰ Otherwise, he was entirely exclusivist and particularist, nothing like what Badiou imagines him to be.

But even in the historicist guild, there are associations between some version of universalism and Paul. James Dunn is the most notable example of this approach. Dunn maintains that Paul’s most important criticism of contemporary Judaism was its particularity. Although Dunn does not make essentialist judgments about Judaism, like many scholars of the New Perspective, he believes that Paul amended a wrong in his ancestral religion through his new Christology. Moreover, the association between universality and Christianity on the one hand and Judaism and particularity on the other can be problematic because of its valorization of universality. Christianity has not been a message of sameness for all creation. Even if faith in Jesus Christ is considered an accessible code for salvation, this does not mean that it includes all and everyone. Its exclusivism may lie in other things than body or ethnicity; but this does not imply the inclusion of all in the salvation plan.⁸¹ Yet, even if we grant that Christianity is universalist, the association falters. For one, many have questioned the association between Judaism and particularism. In his nationalist criticism of (neo-)Marxist receptions of Paul, for instance, Shmuel Trigano emphasizes the difference between Jewish and Pauline notions of universalisms: “Pauline universalism is ideological, and that is why Jews who think otherwise are excluded from it. Conversely, Judaic universalism is legal, and that is why non-Jews are included in it; it concerns acts and

⁸⁰ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, “Paul and Universalism,” 103.

⁸¹ Ibid.

not thoughts or beliefs, without the mediation of an instance dispensing salvation.”⁸² Nevertheless, Trigano also points to the “Jewish difference” and its neglect by European readers of Paul. If the Apostle ended the difference between Jew and Greek, he brought all of them under the “single exclusive model” of Roman Empire. In this reading, universalism can even be an imperialist project. Trigano also resorts to the history of Europe to prove this point: “This manner of maintaining Israel while rejecting it so as to identify oneself, transferring sameness to the Jews and presenting oneself as their other, has proved particularly pernicious in the course of history. Israel thus became for Europe a desired object to be appropriated while exorcising the anguish of those who happen to be Jews.”⁸³ Accordingly, the philosophical agenda of people like Badiou, according to Trigano, is only in line with a certain “Pauline anti-Semitism” which has run through the history of Europe.⁸⁴ Although Trigano’s radical chauvinism has undermined his academic fairness, his work can give us insight into the pain that these European “universalist” readings can inflict on outsiders.

From a different political approach, Daniel Boyarin also takes issue with Pauline universalism. Boyarin considers Paul a “radical [universalist] Jew”. But he also links Pauline discourse to European philosophy. The problem with Europe, according to Boyarin, is that in the subsequent reception of Paul’s stance (especially regarding circumcision), any right to difference was abolished. The idealization of the whole penis

⁸² Shmuel Trigano, “The ‘Jewish Question’ in the Return to Paul,” trans. Stéphanie Nakache, in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 443.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 445.

⁸⁴ Trigano does not mention the new theological readings of Paul which are more sympathetic to Judaism.

(non-mutilated phallus), even in the poststructuralist discourse of Lacan and Derrida, represents the European fixation on “Pauline universalism”. This European construct is challenged by the woman and the Jew: “Women in their bodies and Jewish (males) in their altered ones keep reminding ‘us’ that *the* phallus is after all (only) a penis, and *the* logos is after all (only) somebody’s utterance.”⁸⁵

European universalism, as an ideal political system that has managed to unify the otherwise conflicting groups, is inevitably unjust to the many particular systems, even by branding them as particular. As I will show below the machine of “world religions”, which has been in the service of European universalism, has important bearings on our understanding of Paul as a central touchstone for the invention of European universalism.⁸⁶ To clarify this I will first investigate the relationship between “religions” within European universalism.

3.7. “Religion” in Europe

The evolutionary model of religion, which is in line with the narrative of progress, implies that modern humanity should look less and less “religious”. In the European tale that Luke, Luther, Baur, and others told, Jewish ceremonial observances had to give way to a more “Gentile” Christianity, just as Catholic rituals had to be replaced by Protestant faith. Then, Nietzschean ethics and Freudian psychoanalysis show an advance beyond the shortcomings of “religion”. If the great philosophers of modernity second “Paul” in

⁸⁵ Boyarin, *Radical*, 226.

⁸⁶ Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 179-206.

their battle against guilt, the disappearance of “religious” observance from the European public sphere can be partly attributed to the (mis)interpretations of the Apostle’s words. In fact, on many occasions the founders of modern Europe (like John Locke and Jeremy Bentham), saw Paul as an exemplar of “private religion” against public dogmatic religiosity.⁸⁷

Thus, the Incident at Antioch could potentially mark the “secular”/“religious” divide, which is a most problematic binary. The “secular” is defined through the “religious” (as external bodily behavior). Even if we accept that the “secular” is known and strictly available in its purity, it refers to the absence of “religious” expression. Here I do not deal with different theories on secularism’s dependence on religion – that it was born out of Protestantism (Charles Taylor), that it is a product of medieval philosophy (John Milbank), and so on. But whatever it is and however it was born, for definition, it depends on a shared understanding of “religion”. That might be one reason why both terms emerged quite recently.

Any attempt at defining “religion”, however widespread and serious, seems futile. While the object of definition appears to be as old as humanity itself, the concept of “religion” as such has emerged only in modern times. Wilfred Cantwell Smith shows that until before the seventeenth century, in many European languages “religion” meant piety.⁸⁸ In the seventeenth century, “religions” in the plural appears, which is more in

⁸⁷ Ward Blanton, “Paul and the Philosophers: Return to a New Archive,” in *Paul and the Philosophers*, eds. Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 16-18.

⁸⁸ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, (London: Fortress Press, 1991), 15-37.

contrast with the “Christian faith” than with the “Christian religion”.⁸⁹ Gradually “religion” came to denote a “reified” entity, which can be observed and studied as an outer reality. Recognizing that “the term ‘religion’ is confusing, unnecessary, and distorting”, Smith divides that phenomenon into “overt tangible tradition” and “vital personal faith”.⁹⁰ “Faith”, although changing and personal, is the response of different people, or groups, to the transcendent, which is constantly singular.⁹¹ Brent Nongbri also offers a history of the concept of “religion”. He concludes that the separation between “religion” and politics, economics, and society is only a recent development in European history. But usually this development has been projected to other times and places so that it is assumed that “religion” is a part of all cultures at all times. For this reason, in the past, there was no independent arena which could be designated as “religious” over against the “secular”.⁹²

In another useful work, Tomoko Masuzawa traces the genealogy of “world religions”. As the extensive title of her work shows, she argues that European universalism was preserved through a language of pluralism. In fact, it was Christian universalism which turned to a European universalism, by inventing the idea of “world religions” (rather than the older concept of “religions of the world”) to (1) offer value judgments on the degree of the universality of religions; and (2) incorporate the different

⁸⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 189.

⁹¹ Talal Asad takes issue with the “essentialism” in Smith’s description. See Talal Asad, “Reading a Modern Classic: W. C. Smith’s ‘The Meaning and End of Religion’,” in *Religion and Media*, eds. Samuel Weber and Hent de Vries, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 131-42.

⁹² Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

religions within a universal domain. One consequence of such an approach was that Christianity (together with its “universal” sister Buddhism) has been seen as an “Aryan” religion, while Islam has been taken as a particularistic “Arab”, and hence “Semitic” religion.⁹³ (Now that this “anti-Semitic” linguistic metaphor has become obsolete in academic discourse, it is replaced by the liberal-capitalist metaphor of “spirituality”).⁹⁴

Talal Asad takes issue with “universal definitions of religion” because, “by insisting on an essential singularity, they divert us from asking questions about what the definition includes and what it excludes, how, by whom, for what purpose, etc. and in what historical context a particular definition of religion makes good sense”.⁹⁵ Asad instead proposes that “religion” and “secularism” be defined as Siamese twins because they emerged together. He defined the “secular” as a (Foucauldian) “way of life”⁹⁶ – a set of “behaviors, knowledges, and sensibilities in modern life”.⁹⁷ The “secular” has usually been considered a way of life that is universal, and therefore applicable to everyone from any background. Another set of practices, which were regarded as particular, had to be relegated to the private. It was called “religion”. Thus, the universal values of the “secular” are indifferent to the plurality of “world religions”, if not supportive of it.

⁹³ Masuzawa, *Religions*, 179-206.

⁹⁴ Richard King, “Taking on the Guild: Tomoko Masuzawa and the *Invention of World Religions*,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 20 (2008): 131. Also see Jeremy Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2005).

⁹⁵ Asad, “Reading,” 145.

⁹⁶ For a full explanation of the Foucauldian “way of life”, see above in chapter 2.

⁹⁷ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 25. It should also be noted that Asad distinguished between “secularism” and the “secular”, which preceded it.

Gil Anidjar argues that the production of the discourse of “secular/religious” went hand in hand with the Orientalist agenda. As mentioned above, the “universalist” Aryan was represented by secularism and Christianity, while the Orient incorporated the Semites, the “particularist” Jews and Muslims. In this manner, Western Christendom projected its shortcomings to the outside, to “religion”, which had to be transcended. In order to “forgive and forget Christianity”, Western thought invoked “religion” to refer to the “Semites”. In the beginning “religion” referred to Judaism; but soon Islam became “religion” par excellence, Judaism being the ultimate instance of “race”.⁹⁸

Following these psychoanalytic theses, it can be said that Europe depended on the repetition of the “secular/religious”, a pair of empty signifiers, whose meaning is deferred forever. They refer back to each other in an endless cycle. Even when it comes to look at the future of progress, “secularism” proliferates narratives of “origin” which more often than not are “religious” origins. The trauma of “origin” is repeated and upheld, rather than repressed. Inasmuch as “secularism” claims that it has surpassed “religion”, it reiterates “origins of religion” in order to forget or, alternatively, enact it. It was no less so in modern philosophy. Derrida had first noted the machine-like process of reproducing “Christian origins” in an attempt to outbid it with a “purified”, “originary” Christianity:

In the doubled contest to stand in as the discipline capable of best revealing the essence of religion ..., philosophy sometimes makes efforts to distinguish between the originary, as general, generative, and open, and the original, as the closed, atavistic, finished.... The distinction or decision between the

⁹⁸ Anidjar, “Secularism,” 62-63.

originary and the original was related to the division of academic labors between philosophy and religion – the latter confined to particularities, peculiarities, localities and contingencies, as housed in the museum, or mausoleum.⁹⁹

Modernity was strongly linked to these narratives of origin and the transformation of the elements of debate in a contest of “outbidding” the origin.¹⁰⁰ The retelling of the Christian-Jewish original debate in a way transformed to the repetition of the “secular”-“religious” struggle in philosophy (of Nietzsche and Freud) or the universalist-particularist dichotomy (in Badiou and Žižek). The “turn to religion”, which rightly recognizes the plurality of religious viewpoints and practices, has largely failed to rethink the long-held assumptions about different religions. In this manner, it is embedded in a discourse of “good” versus “bad” religions, which is as arbitrary as any kind of signification. In the next section, I will show how these categorization are discoverable in the work of Jacques Derrida, who questioned many metaphysical binaries.

3.8. Derrida’s View on Christianity, as a Case in Point

“Turn to religion”, according to Hent de Vries, illuminates “the unthought, unsaid, or unseen of a philosophical logos that, not only in the guise of modern reason, but from its earliest deployment, tends to forget, repress, or sublimate the very *religio* to which these

⁹⁹ Ward Blanton and Yvonne Sherwood, “Shallow Graves: Toward a Philosophical Comedy of Tears Over the Serial Dying of Gods,” *Derrida Today* 6, no. 1 (2013): 82; Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2010), 42-47.

¹⁰⁰ See chapter one for more information.

motifs testify”.¹⁰¹ In other words, the very definition of “religion” is a point of debate even when the philosophers think they know what they mean by their “(re)turn to religion”.

A major herald of this return, Jacques Derrida, defines “religion” with respect to its two sources: (a) “the unscathed (the safe, the sacred or the saintly)”, and (b) “the fiduciary (trustworthiness, fidelity, credit, belief or faith, ‘good faith’ implied in the worst ‘bad faith’)”¹⁰² The latter source is prioritized, as Michael Naas rightly demonstrates. In this sense, faith (i.e. the second source) can be more universal, and even more compatible with science, than sacredness (i.e. the first source).¹⁰³ This definition, with its latent emphasis on faith, obscures the fact that for many traditions practice is central, although indivisible from faith and/or sacredness. (Talal Asad’s anthropology of the secular has constantly drawn attention to a general omission of religious practice in the mainstream definitions of “religion”.) Derrida’s reading may be well attuned to what John Caputo would call “religion without religion”. But, like the prevalent descriptions before and after Derrida, it is more in line with the “secularist” readings of “religion”, and even following on the Lutheran-Pauline priority of faith over practice, spirit over body (and of course, the latent presupposition that they are separable).

¹⁰¹ Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 5-6.

¹⁰² Jacques Derrida, “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone,” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2010), 98.

¹⁰³ Michael Naas, *Miracle and Machine: Jacques Derrida and the Two Sources of Religion, Science, and the Media*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 158.

Derrida's method of sorts in his various works was to focus on differences. It is no surprise, then, that his reading of Christianity was engaged in presenting its differences from other religions. In his examination of "religion", not infrequently he fell prey to some sort of religious essentialism, to the point that he undermined other religions. One instance is his use of religious tropes in a discussion of translations. Analyzing the translations of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Derrida emphasized Shylock's conversion through Portia's "mercy". he recognized that in Shakespearean tropes, "the traditional figure of the Jew is often and conventionally situated on the side of the body and the letter (from bodily circumcision or Pharisaism, from ritual compliance to literal exteriority), whereas St. Paul the Christian is on the side of the spirit or sense, of interiority, of spiritual circumcision".¹⁰⁴ Translation is thus a site of movement between the body and the sense, between the religions in an Abrahamic site. However, in the conversation between Portia and Shylock both of them go beyond their respective laws: "Both place something (the oath, forgiveness) above human language *in* human language, beyond the human order *in* the human order, beyond rights and duties *in* human law."¹⁰⁵ It is thus a (Schmittian) "sovereign" moment. Portia's "Christian mercy" suspends the Law. In forgiving Shylock and persuading him to forgive, Portia is converting him to Christianity, translating the bodily into the spiritual.¹⁰⁶ It is interesting that although he recognizes "all the evil that can be thought of the Christian ruse as a

¹⁰⁴ Jacques Derrida. "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?" trans. Lawrence Venuti, *Critical Inquiry* 27, no. 2 (2001): 184.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 189-90.

discourse of mercy”, Derrida does not accept the victimization of the Jew.¹⁰⁷ In the end, he “insist[s] on the Christian dimension” of translation.¹⁰⁸ By “Christian” he means the “spiritual”. This is Derrida’s essentializing approach to religion, when that essentialism also leads to valorizing Christianity over other religions.

When it comes to the question of the media, he claims that because Judaism and Islam have traditionally been iconoclastic and because in Christianity one can relate to the immediate person (in both images and events like the communion), the latter religion is essentially “mediatic”. This shows itself, according to Derrida, in religious TV programs. While the non-Christian programs give information (speech, pedagogy, and discussion, “but never events”), the Christian filming of the mass or miracles communicate “the coming of real presence”.¹⁰⁹ Then, he continues to argue that if “this history of television, and with it, that of mediatic or teletechnological science, can be linked, as I have done in my hypotheses, not simply with Christianity but with a Greco-Roman-Christian hegemony, then the most determined protests against this hegemony (which is political, economic, and religious at once) are going to come precisely from nationalities, from national-religious, phantasmatic complexes that are non-Christian.”¹¹⁰ Although what Derrida says about the precedence of (Christian) European in technology seems fairly true, the association he makes between the media and the essence of Christianity is far from accurate. Other traditions can broadcast equivalent

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 198.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 199.

¹⁰⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Above All, No Journalists!” in *Religion and Media*, eds. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 58.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 62.

“spiritual” experiences and even make the audience share in a similar kind of “real presence”.

In yet another late work, Derrida reveals some sort of Eurocentric prejudice, when he declares that usually Islamic and Arab nations have been resistant to democracy, while Jewish and Christian states have always produced democracy (even in the form of colonization). He concludes that “Islam, or a certain Islam, would thus be the only religious or theocratic culture that can still, in fact or in principle, inspire and declare any resistance to democracy.”¹¹¹ He follows this statement with speculations regarding the cause of this resistance to democracy in the Muslim world and then gives a few suggestions for bringing in democracy and secularization to these nations.¹¹² This generalization also suffers from a strong essentialism. There are, for example, countries in Asia or Latin America that are by no means Islamic and would not be deemed “democratic” by Derrida. It may, for instance, be argued that more than religion, the (Capitalist) market determines the power that liberal democracy is given in any particular state. Furthermore, the Judeo-Christian (and even colonial, as he acknowledges) openness to democracy is not as straightforward as he assumes. One may test the case of the State of Israel to verify to what extent a certain “Jewish” element opened it for a liberal democratic system.

While Derrida’s “turn to religion” intended to step outside the Western metaphysical determinations, ironically the very subject of “religion” exposes his

¹¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 28-29.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 29-33.

European biases on the topic. As Ward Blanton has noted, many times the European philosophers failed to see in Paul an assertion of what they were saying, because their judgment on religion was clouded by the general European metaphysics, which they would otherwise oppose.¹¹³ In this manner even the “turn to religion” shows itself as a kind of biased use of motifs, which has yet to be nuanced.

3.9. Conclusion: Or What Shall We Do With Paul?

In the above account, I have traced the history of “Paulinist” encounters with religion. The historical Paul was a Jew, who declared his indifference to the Jewish legal observances (at least for his specific time, after the resurrection and/or before the *parousia*). However, since the first century (for example in the Acts of the Apostles), he has been read as the “founder of Christianity”, who opposed the Jewish Law. Luther used this “Christian” Paul to reform the church from its excessive emphasis on the virtues of the flesh. The “Lutheran” Paul preached faith over against the “legalistic” guilt, which resulted only in an impossible perfectionism. F.C. Baur’s Hegelian and Lutheran learning resulted in the discovery of a Christianity that had arisen from the synthesis of Pauline and Petrine tendencies, and had yet to be reformed from its Judaizing elements in the Reformation. On the theological strand, the Bible continued to be paulinized in the sense that it was freed from its Jewish elements. But after the disasters of the World Wars, first-century Judaism and Paul’s attitude toward it were

¹¹³ Blanton, *Materialism*, 188-90.

reassessed. It was now clear that the Jewish Law did not imply perfectionism, guilt, transgression, or salvation by good works alone. The “Jewish Paul” was recovered from under all that the Lutheran Paul had entailed. Paul’s polemic began to be seen as part of the Jewish debates on the observance of the Law. It was shown that Paul was under a particular Jewish eschatology that made him indifferent to the Law, that he criticized the Law for its particularism, even that he had misunderstood some things about his contemporary Judaism, and so on. This helped a lot both in terms of Jewish-Christian relationships and Christian self-understanding.

The Paul that was reclaimed in philosophy was also influenced by the changes in biblical studies. In the works of Freud and Nietzsche, he was the “Lutheran” Apostle who made the Jewish people aware of their guilt. But the progress from Judaism to Christianity (even to the reformation) did not sound ultimate. The philosophers called humanity toward another progress beyond religion, which is all guilt. A new high-spirited ethics, according to Nietzsche, or a psychoanalytic admission of past trauma, according to Freud, would lead to a healthy and joyful life. Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek were not as antagonistic toward religion. The “turn to religion” could lend them a lot of motifs with which they could attack Western Capitalism. Badiou was interested in Paul because, under the influence of the resurrection event, the Apostle had merged all differences into the Oneness of Christ. Žižek was interested in the Pauline emphasis on love, as that which goes beyond the Law and ends the modern perversion. Although these philosophers almost get out of the Lutheran label of the “guilty Jew”, they are bound within a model of universal vs. particular to value Christianity.

However, the universal-particular binary is not less arbitrary, exclusivist, and perhaps dangerous than the Lutheran binary of faith-guilt. Unfortunately the recent “turn to religion” has been very ignorant of, if not unkind to, Judaism. European philosophers have – as it were – taken sides with some sort of Christianity that parasitizes on a conflict with an “other” which is more often than not Judaism. If we are to adopt Sanders’ famous statement that Paul’s only problem with Judaism was that it was not Christianity, it can be said that the European’s problem with the “other” was that it had not yet developed into “European universalism”. Even poststructuralist authors like Derrida have not been safe from certain essentialist assumptions about “religions”. What is received as “Pauline” readings of Christianity and Judaism and has time and again been reiterated in the West under different guises from Luther to Nietzsche and Freud until Badiou, Žižek, and Derrida, is a recurring ghost that has haunted the mansion of European thought. He is the physician to heal, the philosopher to teach, and the revolutionary to change. His object is to rescue people from a plight — be it guilt, “religion”, or the particular.

So what? Having criticized Christian as well as philosophical interpretations of Paul’s attitude toward Judaism, I will conclude my account with an alternative reading of the Incident at Antioch, which falls outside the Acts’ heritage of “Paul as the founder of Christianity”. Here, unlike Wright, I am not worried if Paul does not appear anti-Pelagian enough, or, unlike Dunn, I cannot think of a Paul who cared about metaphysical categories as much as we do (see chapter two). Rather, I try to read the Incident at Antioch as the argument between two Jewish leaders. In other words,

Galatians 2:12-14 can be translated into Jewish, in the language of the rabbinic arguments that began to be written down a couple of centuries later. In other words, I believe that one can dig into the European fantasies about identity only to reach at something as basic as the arrangements for a dinner. Here we are with the only Pharisaic writing that has remained for us, authored by Rabbi Saul the Pharisee:

But when [Rabbi Simon] “the Rock” came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was judged guilty; for until certain people came from [Rabbi Jacob, the Jerusalem leader], he used to eat with the nations [=non-Jews]. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of those of the circumcision. And the other Jews joined him in this pretense, so that even [“Joseph”] Barnabas was led away by their pretense. But when I saw that they were not acting according to the truth of the good news, I said to the Rock before them all, “If you, though a Jew, exist in a national manner, and not in a Jewish manner, how can you compel the nations to Judaize?”

When translated into Jewish and read as the words of a Pharisee, the text has a different meaning. It is merely an account of an argument between two rabbis, like the many arguments that the Jewish rabbis used to have.¹¹⁴ Certainly one matter of dispute was the way one should behave with non-Jews, or within a non-Jewish world. Jews, who had to deal with non-Jews, always wondered how far they could go on in assimilation to the host culture, how much they could proselytize others into their own tradition, and whether they should get the proselytes to practice the “Jewish way”. Sometimes the borders between Judaism and its neighbors were very unclear. The ancient Greco-Roman world witnessed a substantial population that were simply

¹¹⁴ On interesting approach to these disputes, see Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis*, (London and Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

interested in Judaism. On the other side, there were many “Jews” who saw themselves as part of the larger “national” (or Gentile) world. The argument between Saul (aka. Paul) and Simon (aka. Peter) in the heterogeneous City of Antioch occurs in this context.

The Antioch population may have consisted of (1) non-Jews who did not have any interest whatsoever in Judaism or Jesus, (2) non-Jews who were interested in Judaism (before or after joining the Jesus movement), also known as God-fearers, (3) non-Jews who were drawn to the Jesus movement without any interest in Judaism, (4) Jews who had joined the Jesus movement, and (5) Jews who had not yet joined the Jesus movement. The Incident concerns all of these groups, except the first and last.¹¹⁵

Simon and Saul had both come from Jerusalem, and they were practicing Jews in the Jesus movement. They were surrounded by Jews and non-Jews who might or might not have been interested in Judaism, but were all certainly interested in the messianic pretender Jesus. According to the Pharisee’s narrative, Simon had decided to eat with non-Jews and “live in a national manner”. But when a group, who like Simon and Saul observed the Law and believed in Jesus, came to Antioch, Simon changed his mind and pretended to “live like a Jew” and to avoid eating with the Gentiles. It is said that Simon “feared” (φοβούμενος) the circumcision party. This means that he might have had good reasons to fear. In other words, that might have led to ill repute regarding his laxity, at best. It might also have been a baseless fear. But it existed anyway. Now, there was a

¹¹⁵ Shaye Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, (London: University of California Press), 140-97; John Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, (Michigan: William Eerdmans, 2000); James Crossley, *The New Testament and Jewish Law: A Guide to the Perplexed*, (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

division in the Jesus movement at Antioch, and Joseph Barnabas, who always accompanied Saul, also pretended to be separate from the nations, i.e. Gentiles.

These events made Rabbi Saul angry, as he was worried that non-Jews may also feel compelled to choose a Jewish way of life. Therefore, he reprimanded his senior for enforcing what he himself did not find practical. In fact, Saul was not objecting to the Law itself, or even to Simon's pretense. His criticism was directed toward the problem of inclusion. That is, if the "truth of the good news" was only to go as far as those who observed the Law, there would be a huge demographic change within the Jesus movement. This question had not been resolved before or after the Incident. But it affected the Jesus Movement at the point. One notable case could be the God-fearers who were sometimes identified as "Gentile" members of the early church. If they were not compelled to follow the Law to the letter, their inclusion in Judaism was as ambiguous as their inclusion in the Movement of the Good News. The ambiguous identity of certain people, like the God-fearers, (between the "national" and the "religious") has been overlooked in the interpretations of the argument.

But if the story is read in the context of the larger letter, the author of the Letter to the Galatians mentioned this story only to demonstrate that the assumed hierarchies could be problematic. A great leader like Peter could fall into pretense, create divisions, and even deserve rebuke. In the first chapter of his Letter to Galatians, Paul had tried to establish his authority, which he had received from "Jesus Christ and God the Father", not "human authorities" (v. 1). The gospel he proclaimed was, accordingly, neither sent by humans, nor was it to be approved by humans (vv. 10-12). It was according to this

authority that he could even question the authority of as great a leader as Peter. In other words, the purpose of the Letter (to affirm Paul's authority) was more important than the content of the argument. When it came to the truth of the gospel, he did not see anything on his way. He was a militant, passionate partisan of the truth he had to declare, whatever his obstacles.

Paul's Jewish identity (his "Saul" part, the Pharisee in him) did not survive him long. The Jewish Temple collapsed and Judaism was born in numerous interpretative texts. Now, the Incident came to signify many other conflicts, within Christianity or between Christianity and its neighbors (most notably Judaism). It was used to generalize the "other", to reduce the "other" to stereotypes and even tropes and signs, to establish binaries with clear boundaries. But as my story of the Incident, the language of religious origins, and the argument among two Jewish men on eating the Gentiles indicates, the story of Paul eludes any kind of determinate adoption to our world. Now that the world of Antioch and its big conflict are all gone for good, there is one thing that the event indicates: identities, however ambiguous and arbitrary, are so much stabilized through reiteration that they can still function for "othering" certain groups, even in a politically correct world.

Chapter FOUR

Unveiling the European Woman in 1 Corinthians 11

4.1. Introduction

As the alleged exemplar of universality, Paul must have been disturbed at the appearance of private religious signs in public, especially when they indicate sexual or ethnic difference. The veil is such a sign – the consequence of private decision in the public sphere, the sign of degrading women, and a clear marker of difference from the egalitarian (European) host. No wonder, then, that Paul’s name has been invoked in debates around women’s authority and veiling. For example, to prove that veiling “as a symbol of gender inequality” does not undermine French universalism, Talal Asad cites Paul. In the Pauline model, Asad suggests, “it is not that abstract equality must

inevitably triumph over difference, it is that difference does not matter because in Christ Jesus men and women are one.”¹ Asad then cites Colossians 3:18-19: “Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and be not bitter against them.” (He acknowledges that there is skepticism around the Pauline authorship of this passage.² But he might not have been aware of an undisputed text of Paul’s, 1 Corinthians 11:5-16, which makes similar distinctions and is particularly relevant to discussions of the veil.) Asad is highlighting that, as Romans 8:6-10 also shows,³ it is “in the universality of the spirit, in the fact that men and women, as subjects *in* the Lord, can live in righteousness, that the inequalities of particular bodies (dead because of sin) can be equalized — that is, brought equally to life and the same life”.⁴

More recently, Paul’s words, as part of the scriptural material, have been crucial in the debate about female bishops in the Church of England. Different sides had to deal with “precisely the question of how to correlate the relevant biblical material and discern its overall dynamic and direction”.⁵ In this statement, the Anglican authorities, who were involved in those debates, only focused on the ordination of women to the episcopate (based on the letter of the scripture). The debate was finally resolved in favor

¹ Talal Asad, “Trying to Understand French Secularism,” in *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, eds. Hent de Vries and Lawrence Sullivan, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 518.

² Ibid.

³ “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

⁴ Asad, “French Secularism,” 518-19.

⁵ “Women Bishops in the Church of England? A Report of the House of Bishops’ Working Party on Women in the Episcopate,” (London: Church House Publishing, 2004), accessed at <<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/38523/gs1557.pdf>> 3.3.13.

of women's ordination. But Paul still remains an equivocal figure when it comes to his position regarding women.

Within the “authentically” Pauline corpus, there are divergent ideas on women's status. An oft-quoted verse is “there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ” (Gal 3:28). But alongside that there are other positions. In 1 Corinthians he first mentions that man (husband) is the head of woman (wife), just as Christ is the head of every man (παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ Χριστός) (v. 3). Then he gives a dress code for men and women: “Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled (ἀκατακαλύπτω τῇ κεφαλῇ) disgraces her head (καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν ἑαυτῆς)” (vv. 4-5). He bases this admonition on three arguments: (a) it is a matter of shame, just as shaving women's head is shameful: “if it is disgraceful (αἰσχρὸν) for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil” (v. 6); (b) the creation narrative implies this: “man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man” (vv. 8-9); and (c) “a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head because of the angels (ὀφείλει ἡ γυνὴ ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς διὰ τοὺς ἀγγέλους)” (v. 9). (The word “symbol”, which does not exist in the original Greek, has been added in some English translations, such as NRSV.) This part is notoriously ambiguous. The most plausible hypothesis is that it refers to the threat from the angels that results from their sexual desire for unveiled women. Paul's audience may have been acquainted with the attraction of God's sons (ἀγγέλοι τοῦ θεοῦ,

lit. “angels” or “messengers” of God, in some versions of the Septuagint) to the daughters of man (Gen 6:2), among other things.⁶ He follows this by saying that women and men are not independent from each other “in the Lord” (ἐν Κυρίῳ) (v. 11). While he mentions women’s prayer and prophecy in this passage, later on in the same letter he tells his audience that women are to be “silent in the church. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the Law also says (ὑποτάσσεσθαι, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει). If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful (αἰσχρόν) for a woman to speak in the church.” Here the argument is based on the Jewish Law and culture. These passages are in line with each other inasmuch as both seem to call for the subordination of women. But they contradict each other because they do not agree about the possibility of women’s “prayer and prophecy”.

The earliest extant interpretations of Paul’s letters struggled to clarify these issues by enlisting the name and legacy of Paul in favor of one or another option about the gendered formation of the community. The author of 1 Timothy, for example, takes the persona of Paul and commands:

Women should dress themselves modestly and decently in suitable clothing, not with their hair braided, or with gold, pearls, or expensive clothes, but with good works, as is proper for women who profess reverence for God. Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was

⁶ Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 244.

deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty” (1 Tim 2:9-115).

This interpretation tries to harmonize all that has been said in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, by omitting women’s prayer and prophecy. In a similar line of reception of the earlier Pauline writings, Tertullian rejected women’s right to teach and to baptize. Importantly, Tertullian’s opponents also based their opinions about female leadership roles on a very different reception of Paul, namely the kind of legacy we see in the apocryphal Acts of Paul. In the Acts of Paul we encounter an apostle who is in fact outdone by a female convert who, cutting her hair, walking out on her marital obligations, and dressing like a man becomes an itinerant teacher like Paul himself. Struggling against this intensification of a countercultural legacy of Paul, Tertullian tried to negate the force of these popular stories by saying that “in Asia the priest who had made up the story was convicted and confessed that he had done it out of love for Paul”.⁷ Of course, Tertullian does not declare that, in fact, 1 Timothy and the Pastoral Epistles were already part of the same cultural contest, taking up the mantle of the Apostle in order to underwrite a particular potential of the Pauline legacy over against others. And, finally, with the canonization of the one pseudepigraphic retrojection rather than the other equally imaginative alternative, the position that opposed women’s teaching in the church triumphed so that women could not hold clerical offices.⁸

⁷ S. Q. Tertullian, *Libros De Patientia, De Baptismo, De Paenitentia*, ed. J. W. Ph. Borleffs, (Hague Comitatus: sumptibus D.A. Daamen Societatis Editricis, 1948), 17.

⁸ See Karen King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and the First Woman Apostle*, (Santa Rosa: Poleridge Press, 2003); Karen Jo Torjesen, *When Women Were Priests: Women’s Leadership in the Early*

My focus in this chapter is on the way that, with changes in women's situation in modern European contexts, the interpretation of these ancient passages shifted similarly. Given this focus, I will leave out a full discussion of 1 Corinthians 14, as well as how we might explain its evident contradiction with chapter 11. Instead, I will explore how Christians reinterpreted "veiling" so that today, except for a minority, Christian women do not feel that the Pauline dress code is incumbent upon them. As I will demonstrate, this reinterpretation was parallel with certain categorizations and associations regarding the representations of the "same" and the "other". To proceed with the argument, I will first go through major commentaries on the veiling passage. Then, I will assess the commentaries in light of post-feminist theory. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with readings that do justice to Paul, without contributing to European grand narratives about the veil.

4.2. Reception of the Veil, Old and New

Generally speaking, earlier interpretations of 1 Corinthians 11:5-16, like the above example of 1 Timothy, subsumed all of the seemingly divergent directions of the Pauline trajectory under the admonition to silence so that veiling did not seem problematic. Later on, John Calvin noted that the veiling injunction was only incumbent upon female leaders. But this did not mean that there could actually be female prayer leaders. As Calvin famously said: "It may seem ... to be superfluous for Paul to forbid

Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Early Christianity, (New York: Harper Collins, 1995); Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81ff.

the woman to prophesy with her head uncovered, while elsewhere he wholly prohibits women from speaking in the Church (1 Tim 2:12)”.... Calvin’s solution was that “the Apostle, by here condemning the one, does not commend the other. For when he reproves them for prophesying with their head uncovered, he at the same time does not give them permission to prophesy in some other way, but rather delays his condemnation of that vice to another passage, namely in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36.”⁹ In the *Institutes*, Calvin mentioned the veil, in his discussion of Christian Freedom:

What? Does religion [*religio*, lit. “piety”] consist in a woman’s shawl [*in mulieris carbaso*], so that it is unlawful for her to go out with a bare head? ... For if a woman needs such haste to help a neighbor that she cannot stop to cover her head, she does not offend if she runs to her with head uncovered... Nevertheless, the established custom of the region, in short, humanity itself and the rule of modesty, dictate what is to be done or avoided in these matters. In them a man [*sic*] commits no crime if out of imprudence or forgetfulness he departs from them; but if out of contempt, this willfulness is to be disproved.¹⁰

Calvin thus did not rule out the veil obligation; but he wanted to place it within a larger context of understanding the common good. Nevertheless, the Pauline rule appeared to him as indispensable only insofar as other emergency-like situations did not come on its way.

In his posthumously published and influential commentary on 1 Corinthians, John Locke, like his predecessors, joined the two verses on Corinthian women to assert

⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. John Pringle, (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1848), 1: 356.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536 Edition)*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), 6:33 [1559 edition: 4.10.29-31].

that “if the woman prayed, as the mouth of the assembly, &c. then it was like she might think she might have the privilege to be unveiled”.¹¹ Speaking could incur the hazard of unveiling or, worse than that, it could lead women to aspire to equality with men, which was out of the question. The speaking that was prohibited was the “reasoning and purely voluntary discourse;” so, women were free to speak “where they had an immediate impulse and revelation from the Spirit of God”.¹² Locke set reason and revelation opposite each other, the latter being impulsive and uncontrollable, and (perhaps as a result) accessible to both men and women. This intriguingly gendered separation of rational and ecstatic speech anticipated a great deal of Enlightenment debates on the need to police the difference between faith and rationality, perhaps giving these debates a gendered dimension which often goes unremarked.

Others were even more explicit about associating gender distinctions to distinctions between public and private spaces or modes of discourse. For example, the public/private dichotomy of earlier commentary traditions was taken up by the German theologian Heinrich Meyer, who, in his 1869 reading, asserted that the veiling injunction was only relevant to prayer in public,

as indeed *a priori* we might assume that Paul would not have prescribed so earnestly a specific costume for the head with a view only to the family edification of a man and his wife... [These precepts] were not designed by the liberal-minded Apostle to infringe upon the freedom of a woman’s dress *at home*. How can anyone believe that he meant that when a wife desired, in the

¹¹ John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, First and Second Corinthians, Romans and Ephesians*, (Cambridge: Brown, Shattuck, and Company; Boston: Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1832), 137.

¹² 210; italics added.

retirement of her own house, to pray with her husband (and how often *in a moment* might an occasion for doing so arise!), she must on no account satisfy this religious craving without first of all putting on her περιβολαιον,¹³ and that if she failed to do so, she stamped herself as a harlot (ver. 5f)!¹⁴

In this interpretation, Meyer appealed to the “common sense” understanding of family worship. According to him, while (a) 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 banned women from speaking in “public assembly of the congregation,” and (b), as explained above, veiling was not prescribed for family worship, “prayer and prophecy” in the veiling passage referred to women’s ministry in “*smaller* meetings for devotion in the congregation, more simply circles assembled for worship, such as fall under the category of *a church in the house*”.¹⁵

Similar to a valorization of the freedom of women in private spaces was a growing desire to assert that the prohibition on forms of public speech did not affect the formidable spiritual capacities of women. A good example of this kind of reading may be found in the work of the Protestant Swiss theologian Frédéric Godet (1887), who wrote that, “since the woman does not naturally belong to public life, if it happen that in the spiritual domain she has to exercise a function which brings her into prominence, she ought to strive the more to put herself out of view by covering herself with the veil, which declares the dependence in which she remains relatively to her husband”.¹⁶ In other words, Godet, who was following Calvin’s reading, held that far from supporting

¹³ Women’s head covering as in 1 Cor 11:15.

¹⁴ Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, trans. D. D. Bannerman, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877-1879) 1:318-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:320.

¹⁶ Frédéric Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. A. Cusin, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886-87), 2:114

women's prophecy, this verse implied that the veil was a good way to restrain their power of prophecy. Accordingly, he subtly rewrote Paul's intended order: "As to women, if, under the influence of a sudden inspiration or revelation, they wish to take the word in the assembly to give utterance to a prayer or prophecy I do not object; only let them not do so without having the face veiled. But in general, let women keep silence. For it is improper on their part to speak in church".¹⁷

Significantly, it was around this time that *The Woman's Bible* (1895-98) was produced to offer interpretations that were more compatible with early emancipationist sensibilities. Elizabeth Cady Stanton interpreted the veil in this manner:

According to the custom of those days a veil on the head was a token of respect to superiors; hence for a woman to lay aside her veil was to affect authority over the man...

Though these directions appear to be very frivolous, even for those times, they are much more so for our age of civilization. Yet the same customs prevail in our day and are enforced by the Church, as of vital consequence...

It is certainly high time that educated women in a Republic should rebel against a custom based on the supposition of their heaven-ordained subjection. Jesus is always represented as having, long, curling hair, and so is the Trinity. Imagine a painting of these Gods all with clipped hair. Flowing robes and beautiful hair add greatly to the beauty and dignity of their pictures.¹⁸

Another author of *The Woman's Bible*, Lucy Stone, approached the issue differently. She tried to uncover the sources and authenticity of the passage. Thus, she suggested

¹⁷ Ibid., 2:313-14.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, (Edinburgh: Polygon Books, 1985), 157-58.

that Paul's injunction regarding veiling were not divinely inspired, but originated from "an old Jewish or Hebrew legend". Paul was merely repeating something "which he must often have heard at the feet of Gamaliel, who was at the time prince or president of the Sanhedrin, Thus the command had its origin in an absurd old myth."¹⁹

Like the authors of *The Woman's Bible*, some twentieth century interpreters believed that the veiling passage was no longer binding because it was not authentically Pauline. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, i.e. the passage on silence, has been deemed inauthentic by many scholars.) The most important advocate of this hypothesis is William O. Walker. In the preface to *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, which sums up three decades of work on the subject, he writes:

One day, as I was reading in 1 Corinthians, I was struck by what appeared to me to be the un-Pauline language, ideology and tone of 11:2-16, the passage dealing with the attire (or hairstyle) of men and women while praying and prophesying. I was aware, of course, that some scholars regarded 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (or perhaps vv. 33b-36) as non-Pauline, and I found myself wondering whether the same might also be true of 11:2-16. Particularly interesting to me was the fact that, if these two passages were removed, the seven letters generally regarded as authentically Pauline would contain not a single statement advocating a subordinate position for women in the life of the church or the family. Indeed, without these passages, a very strong case could be made for Paul's radical egalitarianism regarding the status and role of women. Thus my initial interest in interpolation question

¹⁹ Ibid., 158-59.

grew out of a more general concern regarding gender issues in the New Testament.²⁰

Walker seems to have been involved in an agenda of acquitting Paul from the charges of misogyny. He managed to find distinct features in the vocabulary and style of the passage which made it non-Pauline, even resembling post-Pauline literature. Moreover, he believed that the passage dealt with the situations and problems which possibly arose in the post-Pauline church. Therefore, he argued, the passage, which stood out from its context,²¹ could be inserted after the prompt of 1 Corinthians 10:32 (“Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the Church of God”).²² In this manner, Walker presupposed that Paul, who mentioned the female coworkers and eliminated hierarchies in Galatians 3:28, was egalitarian and could not have written something which inspired sexism. In fact, much of the authenticity discussion was revolving around similar “common sense” understandings. Yet, his findings have not won a wide support in biblical scholarship. Responding to an earlier article of Walker’s, which contained similar arguments,²³ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor rejected them altogether. Besides, Murphy-O’Connor rightly noted that even if Walker’s claim were accepted, there would not be a huge change in biblical interpretation. Although the “conclusion would rehabilitate *Paul*,” the passage remains part of the authoritative canon of the New Testament.²⁴

²⁰ William O. Walker, *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 7.

²¹ This has also been noted by Hans Conzelmann; see Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 182.

²² Walker, *Interpolations*, 113-21.

²³ William O. Walker, “1 Corinthians 11:2-16 and Paul’s Views Regarding Women,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 94, no. 1 (1975): 94-110.

²⁴ Jerome Murphy O’Connor, “The Non-Pauline Character of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95 (1976): 621. A few other scholars also considered the veiling passage inauthentic. For example, G. E. Trompf, “On Attitudes toward Women in Paul and Paulinist Literature: I Cor 11:3-16 and its Context,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 42 (1980): 196-215.

Most exegetes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, attributed this saying to Paul, and, hence tried to find ways to get around the veiling injunctions, so that it would not undermine a vision of Christian gender equality. These reinterpretations were also embedded in historical reconstructions of the early church. Historical research on Paul's motivation for the veiling injunction usually focused on its roots, and whether these roots were radical in relation to Christian experience.

Mapping onto another profoundly influential aspect of the political and social reception of Christian origins stories, scholars often disagreed whether veiling was a "Jewish" or "Greek" custom. While some believed that it was an originally "Jewish" custom for women to cover their heads, or a "Greek" (or "Roman") way of dressing for women outdoors, there were others who inferred from their evidences that both groups had some sort of dress code (e.g., Ben Witherington). Witherington held that Paul's main point was to show that it was not important for him that one custom should be imagined as better than another in all respects.²⁵ While Marcus Dods believed that the Greeks covered their heads and Romans did not,²⁶ Frédéric Godet maintained that Greeks prayed bareheaded and Romans covered their heads.²⁷ Still the interpretation of covering is very different for the two interpreters. Dods called the veil "the badge of seclusion", whereas Godet held that "Greek" uncovering was due to their sense of liberty while Roman veiling was out of reverence. The Welsh theologian Thomas Charles Edwards suggested that the Greek men and women prayed without any

²⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1995), 235-37.

²⁶ Marcus Dods, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), 247-48.

²⁷ Godet, *Corinthians*, 104-105.

covering, while Romans and Jewish men covered themselves.²⁸ James Moffatt, who was seemingly influenced by the modern public/private discourse, concluded that Roman women covered their head outdoors, while Paul's objection was rather against bareheadedness indoors, an objection against that which was "irreligious rather than indecorous".²⁹

That the dress code was labeled "Jewish" implied that it was already superseded, as usually these interpretations were produced in a supersessionist context. In this manner, getting rid of a "Christian" dress code happened in an anti-Jewish spirit. But the Greek origin of the code did not make it any more acceptable. Rather, it often meant that the veil was some "Oriental" practice which did not find a place in Western Christian practice. In this respect, we should note some of the more explicit references to the "veil" as an essentially "Oriental" phenomenon. Albert Barnes (d. 1870) referred to Jean Chardin's travel book (of the seventeenth century) to indicate how a woman's long hair could serve as a covering. In Chardin's account of the "ladies of Persia", Barnes found this exotic description:

The head-dress of the women is simple: their hair is drawn behind the head, and divided into several tresses: the beauty of this head-dress consists in the thickness and length of these tresses, which should fall even down to the heels, in default of which, they lengthen them with tresses of silk. The ends of these tresses they decorate with pearls and jewels, or ornaments of gold or silver. The head is covered *under the veil or kerchief (course chef)*, only by

²⁸ Thomas Charles Edwards, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1885), 272.

²⁹ James Moffatt, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 149-50.

the end of a small *bandeau*, shaped into a triangle; this *bandeau*, which is of various colors, is thin and light. The *bandlette* is embroidered by the needle, or covered with jewelry, according to the quality of the wearer. This is, in my opinion, the ancient *tiara*, or *diadem*, of the queens of Persia: only married women wear it; and it is the mark by which it is known that they are under subjection (*c'est là la marque à laquelle on reconnoit qu'elle sont sous POUISSANCE – power*). The girls have little *caps*, instead on this kerchief or tiara; they wear no veil at home, but let two tresses of their hair fall under their cheeks. The caps of girls of superior rank are tied with a row of pearls. Girls are not shut up in Persia till they attain the age of six or seven years; before that age they go out of the seraglio, sometimes with their father, so that they then be seen. I have seen some wonderfully pretty. They show the neck and bosom; and more beautiful cannot be seen.

This account, which contains erotic (even pedophilic) fantasies, was used to explain how in the Orient the veil was a sign of authority and honor. Barnes continued in this mode with an equally exoticized description of Hebrew, Persian, and Armenian veils which he had borrowed from Melchisédech Thevenot's seventeenth century travel book. Friedrich Kling also used Chardin's account, concluding:

This method of wearing the hair is common among all Eastern nations, and it shows how women's hair was regarded as "a covering." But the Apostle, it will be observed, makes no allusion to the *customs of nations* in the matter, nor is even the mention of them relevant. This, it will be important to observe, since many are inclined to construe his instructions as applicable only to those early times, being fashioned in accordance with customs then prevalent. So far is this, however, from being the case, that he appeals for

support, solely to the divine ordinances in nature, and therefore imparts a lesson which is applicable alike for all times.³⁰

For Kling, the reference to Oriental practice did not lead to the exclusion of the veil from Christian practice. However, the Scottish theologian William Barclay (d. 1978) had a different opinion. He first said that these verses were not to be applied eternally, but that they were useful for getting some information on the local customs of the early church. Barclay referred to the fact that in Oriental countries, the veil was always the sign of honor and respect: “To this day the Eastern women wear the *yashmak*³¹ which is a long veil leaving the forehead and the eyes open but reaching down almost to the feet. In Paul’s time the Eastern veil was even more concealing. It came right over the head with only an opening for the eyes and reached right down to the feet. A respectable Eastern woman would never have dreamed of appearing without it.”³² He then quoted the Scottish-French Orientalist Andrew Michael Ramsay (d. 1743) on the significance of the veil in the Orient: “In the East, then, the veil is all-important. It does not only mark the inferior status of a woman; it is the inviolable protection of her modesty and chastity.”³³ Based on the common assumption that Corinthians were licentious people, Barclay maintained that

Paul’s point of view was that in such a situation it was far better to err on the side of being too modest and too strict rather than to do anything which might either give the heathen a chance to criticize the Christian as being too lax, or

³⁰ Christian Friedrich Kling, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, trans. Daniel Poor, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), 227.

³¹ A Turkish kind of veil and burka.

³² William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians*, (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews, 1956), 108.

³³ *Ibid.*, 109.

which would be a cause of temptation to the Christians themselves. It would be quite wrong to make this passage of universal application; it was intensely relevant to the Church of Corinth but it has nothing to do with whether or not women should wear hats in church at the present day.³⁴

The allegedly “Greek” lack of head-covering also provided a ground for Paul’s admonition, according to some commentators. It was rather because their loose hair at the time of ecstatic prophecy did not conform to Christian spirit, a new dress code was given to them. A major exponent of such an interpretation was the feminist interpreter Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza. She believed that for “the Christian women at Corinth, such loose and unbound hair was a sign of their ecstatic endowment with Spirit-Sophia and a mark of true prophetic behavior. Paul, on the other hand, is bent on curbing the pneumatic frenzy of the Corinthians’ worship. For Paul, building up of the community and intelligible missionary proclamation, not orgiastic behavior, are the true signs of the Spirit. In this contest it is understandable why Paul insists that women should keep their hair bound up.”³⁵ Schüssler-Fiorenza took sides with Paul over against the ecstatic women. Antoinette Clark Wire, in contrast, agreed with Paul’s female audience and tried to see how the Corinthian women prompted Paul. Wire held that “Paul’s dissociation of private from public spheres suggest that the yeast Paul wants cleaned out of the church could be female. Or, to change the image, he may be trying to send back

³⁴ Ibid., 110.

³⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 228. There has also been a long tradition of seeing the “liberal” practice of Corinthian women as a radical (mis)interpretation of some earlier Christian messages, such as (the pre-Pauline baptism formula of) Galatians 3:28; see Wayne Meeks, “Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity,” *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 165-208; and Dennis Ronald MacDonnald, *There Is No Male and Female*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

home a Pandora's box of women's spiritual and physical energy that has given the church the richness and disruptiveness of a home."³⁶ It seems as if Wire believed that the public/private distinction was crucial to Paul as it is to us. Like others before her, she also associated women with some sort of disruption, which was not necessarily rational or orderly, although, unlike her predecessors, she favored this kind of behavior. Another well-known example of this reading is Walter Schmithals' study of Gnostic tendencies in Corinth, where he argues that Paul is contending against the pressure for sexual equality from the early Gnostic heresy.³⁷

Paul's veil admonition was also related to other concerns in the church. In 1890, the Scottish theologian Marcus Dods witnessed a symbolic meaning in uncovering one's head:

In the case before us the women [who] had been awakened to a sense of their own personal, individual responsibility and their equal right to the highest privileges of men began to think that in all things they should be recognized as the equals of the other sex.... This laying aside of the veil was not a mere change of fashion in the dress, of which, of course, Paul would have nothing to say; it was not a feminine device for showing themselves to better advantage among their fellow-worshippers; it was not even, though this also, falls within the range of possible supposition, the immodest boldness and forwardness which are sometimes seen to accompany in both sexes the profession of Christianity; but it was the outward expression and easily read

³⁶ Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 17.

³⁷ Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians*, trans. John E. Steely. (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), 239-43

symbol of a great movement on the part of women in assertion of their rights and independence.³⁸

This refers to the women's emancipation movement that started around the same time. In other words, Dods imagined that Paul would oppose those liberationist women.

There were other interpreters who similarly believed that the Pauline dress code signified something beyond the veil itself. Indeed, some would link anxiety about the veil with an anxiety to maintain a distinction between the sexes, a maintenance of boundaries which, they felt, protected them from their *fear of homosexuality*. For example, Jerome Murphy O'Connor maintained that Paul's "hidden agenda" was "distinction, not discrimination" of the sexes. "A fear of homosexuality would be an adequate explanation of Paul's embarrassment when dealing with something that seemed to imply a blurring of sexual distinction." Accordingly, "covered head" meant "carefully tended, well-ordered hair, and Paul's objection would be to loose, untidy hair."³⁹ Anthony Thiselton also followed Murphy-O'Connor in this view: Paul "expresses no less disquiet (probably indeed more) about men whose style is effeminate with possible hints of a quasihomosexual blurring of male gender than about women who likewise reject the use of signals of respectable and respected gender distinctiveness."⁴⁰ In sum, for these authors, Paul's veiling injunction was merely symbolic of his opposition to homosexuality.

³⁸ Dods, *Corinthians*, 246-47

³⁹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *1 Corinthians*, (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1979), 106-107.

⁴⁰ Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 805.

Finally, the “veil” was involved in another binary opposition (quite a recent one): “universal” versus “local”. Hans Conzelmann proposed that the “wording rather tends to suggest that Paul is pressing for the observance of a *universal custom* (v. 16). But the reasoning causes difficulties: How does a woman dishonor her head if she does not cover it?” Conzelmann’s solution was that Paul was only confirming an existing custom in the Corinthian community. (The translator of Conzelmann’s commentary into English claimed that wearing a veil is a “universal oriental practice”.)⁴¹

Even in the case of the famous Context Group of the Society of Biblical Literature, which seeks specifically to get rid of modern European or “Western” assumptions in order to read the New Testament according to its native cultural logics, the interpretation of 1 Corinthians has not been free from Eurocentric assumptions. Judith Gundry-Volf has worked on the findings of the Context Group concerning shame and honor to interpret the passage. She wrote that since the “eschatological community’s worship does not take place in a cultural vacuum”, the pneumatic men and women, who were equal in the Lord, also had to play the role of “Mediterranean man or woman which was either masculine or feminine and carried the connotations of traditional gender roles in a patriarchal society”.⁴² In this manner, according to Gundry-Volf, while Galatians 3:28 centered on eschatological equality, the veiling passage was about

⁴¹ Hans Conzelmann, *First Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, trans. James W. Leitch, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 184-88.

⁴² Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “Gender and Creation in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16,” in *Evangelium Schriftauslegung Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Jostein Ådna, Scott J. Hagemann, and Otfried Hofius, (Göttingen: Vandenoek & Ruprecht, 1997), 168-69.

cultural context. Therefore, the latter two passages were consistent, in her view.⁴³ Like many others before and after her, Gundry-Volf took Galatians 3:28 as a universal standard against which all other passages about gender were measured. This has been the case for feminist apologist theology, as well as those who regret the gradual decline in women's active participation in the church.⁴⁴ These views usually share the Context Group's assumption of Christian innovations amid some "distant" cultural milieu. However, the distinction between the "universal" and the "local" is usually arbitrary and fraught with biases regarding ancient and modern Mediterranean cultures.⁴⁵

Nonetheless, there are other readings that situate Paul in his milieu, without falling into the trap of stigmatization. It must be admitted that we cannot say for certain what Paul's idea of sexual difference was. But the literature at the time can give us some information about contemporary conceptualizations of sexuality. One such attempt has been made by Dale Martin, who situated the Corinthian correspondence against the backdrop of contemporary ancient medical literature. Thus, he shows, the veiling injunction was in line with the cosmological and bodily order imagined in these broader contexts, a backdrop which shapes both what was perceived to be sexual difference, but also how this difference should be managed. "Proper" outfit during prayer and prophecy, then, was as important as proper condition for the successful sexual liaison.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ibid., 170.

⁴⁴ Lone Fatum, "Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations," in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 81.

⁴⁵ On the imperialist implications of the Context Group research, see: James Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Terror: Scholarly Projects for a New American Century*, (London and Oakville: Equinox, 2008), 101-140.

⁴⁶ Martin, *Corinthian*, 241.

Veiling was “to guard [women] from invasion and penetration ... [and] to protect society from the dangers and chaos presented by her femaleness. It meant to keep her intact, but also to keep her in place”.⁴⁷ In other words, the veil helped to restrain women’s “uncontainable”, “dangerous” sexuality, which could also expose her to danger. Unlike other parts of 1 Corinthians, where Paul is concerned with undermining ideological hierarchies, Martin suggests, with male-female hierarchy the Apostle sticks to the status quo. Paul assumes that, until the resurrection, women’s bodies will continue to “be different from men’s more porous, penetrable, weak, defenseless. Even after the resurrection femininity will not be any less inferior; it will be subsumed into the superior strength and density of masculinity”.⁴⁸

While many of Martin’s findings are valuable, as Jorunn Økland notes, they presuppose that all of the ancient Mediterranean was influenced by the same medical discourse.⁴⁹ What Økland does is to study the Corinthian women in the context of sanctuary space, rather than family planning and sexual ethics. She tries to make up for the general neglect of spatial (rather than temporal) categories in the sociological discussions of Paul’s thought.⁵⁰ In Økland’s reading, veiling is a means of women’s integration within the sanctuary space. This does not approach anything like equality. But it allows for the integration of women in the sacred body, with a place and a name,

⁴⁷ Ibid., 235.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁹ Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 33.

although at the bottom of the hierarchy.⁵¹ In this interpretation, although the woman becomes invisible and inaudible, she continues to show her difference “under cover”. After all, a veiled woman is not the same as a man.⁵² Hence, instead of waiting for the resurrection to subsume women under masculinity (Martin’s opinion), they can already be part of the masculine order – Christ’s body – if they cover their femininity.⁵³

What marks Martin and Økland from other above-mentioned interpreters is that their historical reading is not based on the creation of an imaginary Corinthian who carries the burden of what Europe repudiates throughout the history. My narrative of the dominant interpretive lines of these passages indicates that the Christian interpretation of the veil has changed together with what is required of the European Man. The encounter between the European and its others has been projected to the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.⁵⁴ Paul has been cited to subdue the other. That is why the veil, as the icon of subjugation, could work well in face of any threat from the sexual, ethnic, or religious other. In other words, if the traditional veil functioned to silence women (in a manner that the veiling and silencing passages, i.e. 1 Corinthians 11:5-16, 14:34-35, were synchronized), the “modern” notion of the veil was used as a repudiation of any practice that diverged from the standard practice of the white, Christian, heterosexual, European (non-Greek, non-Jewish) Man. The veil was, thus, an

⁵¹ Ibid., 219.

⁵² Ibid., 220.

⁵³ In fact, this reading resonates with some traditional Muslim readings of the veil, which consider it a means of women’s active participation in the society when sexual difference is not in sight. See, for instance, Morteza Motahhari, *Mas’aleye Hijab*, in *Majmū’eye Āsār (Vol 7)*, (Tehran: Sadra, 1387/2008).

⁵⁴ Edward Adams and David G. Horrell, “Scholarly Quest for Paul’s Church at Corinth,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for Pauline Church*, eds. Adams and Horrell, (London and Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 32-34.

icon of European suppression of Jewish and mystical practices together with the emergence of the rational Christian Man of the Enlightenment and beyond. For, if the veil is a Jewish practice, it is taken, as if in a commonsense fashion, that it is not incumbent any longer. If it is to subdue “mystical” practices of the Greek prophetesses, again it is not in harmony with the “rationality” of modern Christian faith (and hence, belongs to the other). The veil is “Oriental”, as it can also resemble the exotic long hair of the Oriental woman. In this sense, it became an icon of the “other”. The “icon of authority” (whatever that means) that Paul had instituted for the Corinthian women became in fact a symbol of the “other” which the Christian woman *should not be*. It was not only the ethnic “other” that was symbolized by the veil. The sexual other has also been subdued by the Christian interpretations of the veil. Women’s emancipation in the end of the nineteenth century reminded some interpreters of the Corinthian women’s “unveiling”. So, they used Paul’s words to attack female activists. The veiling passage was also later used by Christian commentators to emphasize Paul’s fear of homosexuality. Now, the veil is to silence not only straight women, but all genders that disrupt (the heterosexual) “order”.

This story makes better sense if we also consider the fact that Western feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Gayle Rubin, and Judith Williamson, have made ample use of the language of apartheid, racism, and colonization to portray the exploitation of women: “Economically and socially ‘enslaved,’ sexually conquered as ‘Other,’ placed under the dominion of a despotic superphallus identified with the Orientalist sultan, their bodies ‘trafficked,’ their voices quelled by the ‘silence of the

harem,' feminist critics have qualified their subordination to a phallic regime through the language of colonialism."⁵⁵ The sexual and the racial cannot be separated. In the same vein, the veil has been a tool in the hands of the European man to determine what is "normative" by suppressing all of other voices – sexual, ethnic, and religious. That is what makes Paul a proto-European Man.

4.3. Europeans and the Veil

The veil's appearance in the West was not confined to Christian commentaries. Inasmuch as it was discarded from the West as both a sign of backwardness and what subdues non-conformity, the veil was also something beyond which the West had to go in order to assert its progress. The statement that "the veil represents the domestication of the non-European woman" is based on certain "common-sense" assumptions about (a) the veil, (b) representation and visibility, (c) domestication and liberation, (d) the non-European, and (e) gender. In this section I will reassess the modern European understanding of these five concepts in order to point to the problematic of interpretation.

4.3.1. From the harem to the veil

The exclusion of the veil, as the symbol of the "other", in Christian commentaries has been contemporaneous with Orientalist explorations of the exotic "other" in literature

⁵⁵ Emily Apter, *Continental Drift: From National Characters to Virtual Subjects*, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 99.

and arts. Since as long as Western literature can recall, sexual slur has been the best way to both romanticize and demonize the other.⁵⁶ The “other” (Western, or Oriental) usually has too much or too little sex. Based on this narrative, the Western fantasizes an oriental harem as a space of sexual liberty and plenitude.⁵⁷ But this does not mean that in the Western account, the other is enjoying it too much. Rather, sexuality is restricted through the veil. Put in psychoanalytic terms, the “veil is one of those tropes through which Western fantasies of penetration into the mysteries of the Orient and access to the interiority of the other are fantasmatically achieved”.⁵⁸ In this account, the veil seems to be reining in the extravagant sexuality that is overflowing the harems. Hence, the veil and the harem are interdependent: the recurrent picture of the veil in Western psyche is a defense mechanism against the fantasy of the plenitude of the harems, while the harems may also reflect the Western fantasies about what is behind the veil.

4.3.2. Visibility

The veil has usually been a sign, more than any other element of clothing. Some translations of Paul’s veiling commandment, like the NRSV, have read a “symbolic”

⁵⁶ See Jennifer Wright Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Didier Eribon, *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, trans. Michael Lucey, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004); Caroline Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁵⁷ See Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, (London: Penguin, 1978); Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem*, trans. Myrna Godzich and Wlad Godzich, (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

⁵⁸ Meyda Yeğenoğlu, “Veiled Fantasies: Cultural and Sexual Difference in the Discourse of Orientalism,” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 543.

significance into the original: ἐξουσία (authority) in the 1 Corinthians 11:10 is rendered as “symbol of authority”. In Orientalist literature the veil came to represent backwardness or a means of subjection. Even today it is the European icon of a most iconoclastic religion – Islam. It is curious that histories of biblical scholarship have not yet explored as a topic in its own right the relationship between European anxieties about the veiling proclivities of Paul and European understandings of various Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures. As I have already begun to suggest, the key term of these explorations may need to be the discourse of visibility, the veil as an issue of representation.

Visibility exposes diversity, which is the greatest threat to a unified political entity. It can even be claimed that political philosophy arose from a fear of diversity. Early philosophers sought to quench the chaos and disorder of the material world. Yet, at the same time, they saw a danger in excessive unity. In other words, the society had to show off both its unity and its power over multiplicity.⁵⁹ One symbol of the lack of unity was the female, as she was “a constant reminder of the diversity out of which the world was made and [...] a constant warning against the attempt to see the world as a uniform whole and, therefore, subject to simple answers and rational control. The female revealed the inability of human courage and human intelligence – often expressed through political action – to dominate the natural world through the denial of variability”.⁶⁰ Moreover, unlike many other relations such as master-slave difference,

⁵⁹ Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Fear of Diversity: The Birth of Political Science in Ancient Greek Thought*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1995), x.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

sexual difference is distinctively recognized by sight.⁶¹ The threat was before the philosopher's eyes.⁶²

The veil thus both covered the female's difference and exposed her difference. This invisibility (of the phallus) disturbs the sameness of the phallogentric discourse. Luce Irigaray reminds us that the phallogentric had no eye for the invisible, as truth and being were defined by the visibility of the phallus, in contrast to woman who had No Thing, "Nothing *like* man. That is to say, *no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality, reproducing its truth. *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being and no truth*".⁶³ Thus, the woman had to cover her "nothing," which is a fracture in the economy of visibility. (For Freud, as I will show below, the veil was used to cover the shame of the "lack" of penis.) But, worse than this, the "nothing" in the woman's body itself means that there is a reality in a "nothing to be seen"; and, this threatens the phallogentric economy of representation and "specula(riza)tion".⁶⁴ Put in Freudian terms, this difference in woman's organ is a threat of castration to the man (a visible proof that his organ does not need to accompany his body). To make her body more desirable and valuable, she deceptively uses cosmetics,

⁶¹ Ibid., 194.

⁶² The "ocularocentrism" of Western philosophy, and subsequent criticism of such views (excuse the pun) in postmodern thought, has also been discussed in Martin Jay's *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century Thought* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1994).

⁶³ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, (Ithaca: New York University Press, 1985), 48.

⁶⁴ Irigaray, *Speculum*, 50.

jewelry, and coverings. This will help her to divert attention from her organ, which is “something and nothing in consumer terms”.⁶⁵

If this model is extended, it may be observed that, on the one hand, by covering up the threat of nothingness in female’s body, the male secures himself by a creation of his own, which does not belong to her. On the other hand, the veil endows the woman with some sort of visible sex characteristic. Wearing the veil, she is reborn to the world of the phallus, visibility, and truth. Yet, everyone knows that inside the veil the void persists, if it counts as anything to persist at all. She promises, but not anything which counts in the phallographic economy. And this is the trouble of women in public, what excludes them from public, the site of asserting one’s being.

If she puts aside the veil, she still belongs to the culture of visibility that cannot tolerate the invisibility of the veil. That is, whether she is in harem or under the veil, whether she is on the street or in the seclusion of the seraglio, she is subjected to the judgment of the visibility standards. This view on the veil – excuse the pun – in some ways deemed it an integral part of the Woman (like her long hair, in Pauline terms) or an external means to hide an essential nothingness within her. This is to define the Woman in terms of a void inside her (if not a Freudian “lack”). That is, there is some sort of “argument from nature” to legitimate the original (even primitive, bodily) veiling of the Woman, which is surpassed by a progressive culture.

4.3.3. What is Woman?

⁶⁵ Irigaray, *Speculum*, 114-15.

In his “scientific” formulation of the emergence of male and female, Sigmund Freud saw the penis as a central signifier. One becomes a girl when one notices one’s bodily “lack” (also known as “penis envy”). Boys, on the other hand, realize that their penis could just as well not have been there, as their sisters do not have it. This results in their “fear of castration”, which is essential in one’s becoming a man. Because this model presupposes that human sexuality is based on the boy’s penis, many did not accept “penis envy” as an adequate explanation for a person’s “becoming woman”.⁶⁶

Jacques Lacan tried to get rid of the androcentric assumptions of Freud’s penis envy. Thus he explained “sexuation” in terms of the phallus, the symbol that should not necessarily be associated with the male organ. In Lacan’s formulation, sexes are differentiated according to *having* the phallus (man) or *being* the phallus (woman). Because she *is* the phallus (the signifier), the woman is desired by the man. Their sexual relationship relies on the strong possibility of the separation between the man and the phallus, i.e. not having the phallus, which is the Freudian “fear of castration”. That is why the man has to make sure that he *has* the phallus. But, can he?⁶⁷

Now, let us consider *being* the signifier. When the signifier (i.e. the phallus) is not ultimate, when it is floating and (in Derridean terms) being deferred forever, the subject that *is* the phallus does not exist either. Hence, Lacan’s famous statement that “there’s no such thing as Woman,” (*il n’y a pas La femme*). She does not exist precisely because she is not-whole in the phallic function: “Woman can only be written with a bar

⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, “Femininity,” *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), 150-54.

⁶⁷ Jacques Lacan, “The Signification of the Phallus,” in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 575-84.

through it. There's no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital *W* indicating the universal.⁶⁸ There's no such thing as Woman because, in her essence – I've already risked using that term, so why should I think twice about using it again? – she is not-whole.”⁶⁹

In the phallogocentric economy of representation, Lacan suggests, the woman does not count. With this thesis, Lacan tried to avoid Freud's essentialism. However, his formulation is still essentialist, as many poststructuralist feminists have pointed out.⁷⁰ After all, the phallus as the unquestionable signifier of Lacanian psychoanalysis is modeled on the penis, and hence androcentric. Moreover, Lacan's explanation is based on a sex-gender distinction, with two sexes and two equivalent genders. That is, in this model, one can only be one of the two sexed subjects, normally the one which agrees with one's biological sex. However, as Judith Butler has argued, sexual normativity is itself a cultural construct, which is stabilized through performativity. That is, one becomes a woman or a man only through performing a set of behaviors that a particular culture dictates for these assumed sexes. This is to restrict sexual behavior in the interest of heterosexuality.⁷¹ In this sense heterosexuality, and hence any concept of femininity, is a construct rather than reality. It is always built on an arbitrary foundation, which

⁶⁸ In the original French, Lacan puts the bar on *La* to emphasize the “universal” definitions of womanhood.

⁶⁹ Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge (Book XX, Encore 1972-1973)*, trans. Bruce Fink, (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 72-73.

⁷⁰ Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* (French 1974) was famously inspired by her criticism of the phallogocentric assumptions in Lacanian psychoanalysis to the point that it cost her a teaching post at the University of Vincennes.

⁷¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 59-77. On the essentialism that has persisted in poststructuralist philosophy, see: Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference*, (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

could just as well be any other foundation. Sexuality relies on difference without positive terms, and is hence deferred forever. In such a situation, there could be multiple sexualities on an endless spectrum. One function of the economy of visibility is to regulate these sexualities. It first defines Woman and then prescribes a dress code for her. She may be ordered to realize her femininity through covering or uncovering herself. In other words, while in common perception, they seem to be contradictory, both the veil and lack thereof, as gender performances, can contribute to the stabilization of the sexes.

4.3.4. Veil: Natural or Cultural?

The definition of Woman has been intricately tied to the covering of her body, in the double genitive. She is a body-covering creature, while her body is also a covering of her self. That is why the veil has been, consciously or not, taken as both natural and cultural. The Woman is not certainly born with the veil. But the fact that “progressive” (i.e. “cultured”) women do not see any need for an otherwise pervasive practice suggests that it is not merely a cultural phenomenon. It can even be claimed that the veil lies somewhere between nature and culture and highlights their blurred borders. It also shows that invisibility that the veil endows is – as it were – an integral part of the Woman’s body.

Freud, for instance, suggested that women, who were “ashamed” of their natural castration, imitated the “natural” concealment of their “lack” by the pubic hair.

“Shame,” Freud claimed, “which is considered to be a feminine characteristic *par excellence* but is far more a matter of convention than might be supposed, has as its purpose, we believe, concealment of genital deficiency”.⁷² In Freud’s formulation, their body made them achieve their “technique ... of plaiting and weaving” to conceal their shame.⁷³ It is noteworthy that, according to Freud, women’s only contribution to civilization, their only “discovery”, is about covering themselves. As Jacques Derrida beautifully summarizes Freud’s point, women “*discovered with a view to veiling*. They have unveiled the means of veiling.”⁷⁴ But again, as Derrida notes, is it really a “technique”?

Is it still an art or an artifice, is it a discovery, this so-called “technique” which invents only the means of imitating nature, and in truth of unfolding, making explicit, unveiling a natural movement of nature? And unveiling a movement which itself consists in veiling? Of decrypting a nature which, as is well-known, likes to encrypt (itself), *physis kruptesthai philei*? This “technique” is less a break with *physis* than an imitative extension of it, thus confirming, perhaps a certain animality of woman even in her artifices. (And what if a *tekhnè* never broke radically with a *physis*, if it only ever deferred it in differing from it, why reserve this animal naturality to woman?)⁷⁵

In the same essay, Derrida goes to a lengthy discussion of the veil in his response to Hélène Cixous’s recovery from myopia through surgery. In this piece, the surgery serves as an advanced technique that *uncovers* Cixous’s natural, bodily “veil” of sorts. It opens

⁷² Freud, “Femininity,” 166.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁴ Jacques Derrida, “A Silkworm of One’s Own: (Points of View Stitched on the Other Veil),” in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 334.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.

her eyes to the truth – *alētheia*, which as Heidegger reminded us, is a disclosure, an unveiling.

In the language of representation, truth has long been associated with woman and her veil. Derrida follows Nietzsche's account of women to show how uncovering the woman represents access to the truth. Only through a Woman's veil (or her bodily "veil", the hymen), "'truth' becomes truth, profound, indecent, desirable.... The feminine distance abstracts truth from itself in a *suspension* of the relation with castration. This relation is suspended much as one might tauten or stretch a canvas, or a relation, which nevertheless remains – suspended – in indecision."⁷⁶ Furthermore, woman has more access to truth because she is aware that castration is only a myth.⁷⁷ In Nietzsche's understanding, women are essentially masked⁷⁸ because, as Gayatri Spivak summarizes, "Men cannot know when they are properly in possession of them as masters (knowing them carnally in their pleasure) and when in their possession as slaves (duped by their self-citation in a fake orgasm). Woman makes appropriation – the establishment of a thing in its appropriate property – undecidable."⁷⁹

The undecidability of the veil between nature and culture can also be found in Paul's work. Like the post-Enlightenment intellectuals, Paul relates the "natural" bodily veil to the outer "cultural" veil: "For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be

⁷⁶ Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche*, (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 58.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 69-70.

⁷⁹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," *Diacritics* 14, no. 2 (1984): 22.

shaved, she should wear a veil.... Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering” (1 Cor 11:6, 14-15) In other words, if she is covered by nature, covering is her natural disposition. Therefore, let her cover herself all the more. As Derrida rightly recognizes, Paul’s logic is not dissimilar to the one that is found in the work of later intellectuals: “He goes so far as to invoke again, like so many others closer to us, both Rosenzweig and Freud, for example, Nature, Nature herself (*e physis aute, ipsa natura*), he turns us toward it at the moment he lets us judge...”⁸⁰

One other problem with the logic of visibility is that it is constituted from the viewpoint of ethnic majorities. Women outside the white, middle class, Euro-American “standard” have pointed out that Western feminism has until recently overlooked different cultural expressions of women, and their liberation. In other words, it has not been attentive to different voices of women, so that the only available voice was that of the white woman. Black Womanist and Hispanic *mujerista* movements have offered alternative possibilities in reading non-white women’s experiences. In my discussion of the veil, following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s reading of the subaltern women I highlight a general ignorance of the veiled women.⁸¹ Veiled women were not only at the mercy of emancipationist colonial logic of “liberating the brown woman from the brown man by the white man”, they even became the trope of their whole nation. One such

⁸⁰ Derrida, “Silkworm,” 346.

⁸¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Larry Grossberg, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271-313.

case is the use of “veil” in the war on terror rhetoric.⁸² In contrast to this, the veil has sometimes become precisely a tool for liberation and subjectivity. I shall look at these moments here.

4.4. Veiled Subjectivities

4.4.1. The Anti-Colonial Veil

In a world where an essential association between the veil and the Orient is made, assimilation to the West must take the form of unveiling. But to remain essentially “Oriental” (colonized), the Oriental can mimic the colonizer’s way of life. As Homi Bhabha’s notion of “mimicry” makes clear, the colonized tries (and is encouraged) to be the same as the colonizer, but not quite. For example, Indians can learn to speak fluent English, but with an accent, so as to keep the distance between the British and the Indians.⁸³ Accordingly, “mimicry” happens if the Oriental woman puts aside her veil, but is still confined to the domestic world.

However, some anti-colonial thinkers turned the notion of “mimicry” on its head by noting the use of “veil” in “national”, “anti-imperialist” contexts, especially when energies were pivoted on liberating the nation (rather than women). The Algerian Frantz Fanon (d. 1961) and the Iranian Ali Shariati (d. 1977) played with the association between the veil and the Orient in order to combat Western liberation, which was

⁸² Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783-90.

⁸³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 85-92.

concomitant with the bondage of other nations. The great intellectual of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62), Fanon wrote an essay on the significance of the veil for both colonization and resistance. In his view, “the European strives to possess the Algerian woman by taking off her veil. The woman, however, who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not give herself, does not offer herself.”⁸⁴ Fanon also attributes the changes in veiling practices (or lack thereof) as a sign of different modes of resistance to the Europeans:

There is thus a historic dynamism of the veil that is very concretely perceptible in the development of colonization in Algeria. In the beginning, the veil was a mechanism of resistance, but its value for the social group remained very strong. The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but also because the occupier *was bent on unveiling Algeria*. In a second phase, the mutation occurred in connection with the Revolution and under special circumstances. The veil was abandoned in the course of revolutionary action. What had been used to block the psychological or political offensives of the occupier became a means, an instrument. The veil helped the Algerian woman to meet the new problems created by the struggle.⁸⁵

Like the French colonizers, Fanon considered the veil a sign rather than an item of clothing. The difference, however, is that for the Algerian intellectual, it was an instrument for resistance. Its changes did not have anything to do with changes in people’s ideas about fashion, or piety. Rather, they depended on the changing ways to resist colonial powers.

⁸⁴ Frantz Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled,” in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. Haakon Chevalier, (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 44.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 63.

Fanon's anti-colonial rhetoric influenced Ali Shariati, not the least in his explanation of Muslim women's hijab. In his *Fatima Is Fatima* (1970), Shariati puts the modern bareheaded women and the traditional "veiled" women in the same category, as both groups are bound by tutelage to customs. Shariati puts forward instead the "Fatemi" woman (literally, the one who follows Fatima the daughter of the Prophet) as the ideal woman, who exerts her agency against Western hegemony:

The one who can do something, and, in saving us, play an active role, is not the traditional woman who is asleep in her quiet, tame, [old-fashioned mode], nor is it the new woman who is a modern doll that has assumed the [mode] of the enemy and in the process has become full and saturated. Rather, one who can choose the new human characteristics, who can break the [bonds] of old traditions which were presented in the name of religion, but in fact, were national and tribal traditions ruling over the spirit, thoughts and behavior of society, is a person who is not satisfied with old advice.

It is because of [this third group of women] that "Who am I? Who should I be?" is pertinent, since they neither want to remain as this, nor become that. They cannot surrender themselves to whatever was and is, without their own will and choice playing a role.

They [need] a model.

Who?

Fatima.⁸⁶

Therefore, in Shariati's perspective, the liberationist woman *chooses* to veil in order to combat the Westernization of the Iranian culture, to declare "I will rely on my

⁸⁶ Ali Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima*, trans. Laleh Bakhtiar, (Tehran: The Shariati Foundation, n. d.), 121; the translation has been slightly modified.

own personality, my own culture, my own ideology, and my own existential values.”⁸⁷

This is how Shariati distinguished between two kinds of veil: the traditional and the anti-imperialist, the former to be superseded by the latter. Shariati’s passionate anti-imperialist rhetoric led many young Iranian women in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s to observe their hijab. Although he called his audience to go deeper into the meaning of the veil by proposing the third term of “Fatemi” beyond “traditional” and “modern”, he did not go beyond the association between the Orient and the veil. While he took for granted this construct, he changed the meaning of the veil from domestication to liberation. In other words, if Europeans excluded the veil from their discourse because of its domestication of women, Shariati also accepted that the veil does not belong to the West. The veil is, in his opinion, the weapon with which one could fight Western imperialism. This anti-imperialist rhetoric of veiling was so pervasive that the Iranian leftist media rebuked women for their resistance to the veiling imposition by the government after the victory of the revolution in 1979.⁸⁸

The move that Shariati and Fanon made is not less problematic than what their Western counterparts had earlier done. Although they used the “othered” veil to express anti-colonial, anti-imperialist sentiments, they also associated the veil with the colonized subject. Moreover by highlighting women’s agency in their willing participation in a war of liberation, they transformed the veil symbolism from “patriarchal backwardness” to active revolt. In other words, the image of the veiled woman changed from the

⁸⁷ Ali Shariati, “Hijāb,” in *Majmū‘eye Āsār (Vol 21): Zan*, (Tehran: Daftar-e tahiyye va tanzīme āsār-e mo‘alleme shahīd doktor Ali Shariati, 1378 /1999), 276.

⁸⁸ Haideh Moghissi, “Sexual Politics of the Left,” in *Women and Islam (Critical Concepts in Sociology)*, ed. Haideh Moghissi, (New York and Oxford: Routledge, 2005), 3:99.

oppressed-character-to-be-rescued to the rebellious-figure-to-be-subdued. The French veil affair is, in my opinion, partly a natural consequence of the latter figuration.

4.4.2. French Veil Affair

The French veil affair also participated in the same discourse of “veil belongs to the other”. The difficulty with the veil arises when this “symbol of subjugation” is used in public institutions. In the background of this debate, there is a mentality that associates public activity with freedom to choose one’s own outfit, or better to say, be part of a “universal” practice. The problem is that the veil in public institutions challenges this association between the veil and female subjugation or lack of movement.

In fact, the Muslim women who chose to wear the veil on the French public stage had to be domesticated because they did not conform with the “universalist” liberalist notion of freedom. The veil became again the sign of domestication. In other words, it was implied that if a woman does not liberate herself from her religious dress code, let her be domesticated by all means. In the 1990s, when the debates around the veil started in France, François Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar interviewed the French women who veiled about their reasons for doing so. A first group of women, which was composed of the middle-aged rural immigrants, considered the veil a way to attach to the old values of their home and tradition.⁸⁹ The second group of women wore the veil because it enabled them to both stay true to their traditional values and, like other

⁸⁹ François Gaspard and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Le Foulard et la République*, (Paris: Edition la Découverte, 1995), 34-39.

modern women, attend the public space. In fact, for these young women the veil was a means for initiation into their own communities.⁹⁰ They would be integrated into the French society; but, with “the death of grand utopias,” Islam gave the image of a collectivity which was foreign to their otherwise “individualized French” life.⁹¹ A third group of veiled women were the young adults who reclaimed the veil. These women, who were sometimes converts, were not forced by their families to veil. But, they covered their heads in order to build a new *different* identity. Most importantly, they pursued an Islam which could have an active voice in the society.⁹² As these authors remind us, the situation of these French women was not universal. Muslim women around the world, and in France, showed a variety of covering styles. These various discourses of the veil, which differ from traditional Muslim texts, show that general assumptions about the veil in the modern West is only one among the many understandings of the veil.

This singular understanding of the veil led many to side with the prohibition of the veil in France. As early as 1989, five philosophers published an open letter to the then-Minister of National Education to voice their unhappiness with the freedom of the veil in public schools. They declared their belief that the Republic should not be proud of comprising different religious groups in its one secular school.⁹³ Rather, the authority

⁹⁰ Ibid., 37-42.

⁹¹ Ibid., 43-44.

⁹² Ibid., 45-54.

⁹³ According to the French political system of Universalism, any division based on values other than the founding values of the State would incur existential threats to national unity. This is to be opposed to American politics, where multiplicity is not considered threatening; Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), 115-23.

should be based on “reason and experience,” which are “available to all”. The headscarves symbolized lack of freedom, and even the girls’ subjection to the male members of their families. Thus, the toleration of the veil was itself considered against the values of a secular society.⁹⁴

On the other side of the debate different arguments have been put forward. Joan Wallach Scott, for instance, has noted that the problem with French universalism was that it “might include men and women, but it couldn’t accommodate more than one arrangement of the relations between them because the existing arrangement was said to be rooted not just in culture but in nature. The French gender system was represented, then, as not only superior but ‘natural’”.⁹⁵ Alain Badiou has also drawn attention to the fact that the State was punishing girls for being already punished or punishing them for “flaunt[ing] their belief”.⁹⁶ Badiou criticized the logic of the French Republicans for implying that “either it is the father and big brother, and ‘feministically’ the headscarf must be torn off, or else it’s the girl’s sticking to her own belief, and ‘secularly’ it must be torn off”.⁹⁷ In the same piece, Badiou elaborated on the logic of veil and unveiling. From the viewpoint of the communist philosopher, unveiling serves the purposes of capitalism. The capitalist subjects believe that “a girl *must* show what she has to sell”.⁹⁸ Referring to Foucault’s theories about the modern forms of control, Badiou concludes

⁹⁴ Elisabeth Badinter et al, “Profs, Ne Capitulons Pas!” *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 8 Nov. 1989

⁹⁵ Scott, *Veil*, 174.

⁹⁶ Alain Badiou, “The Law on the Islamic Headscarf,” in *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran, (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 98-110.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

that market control of women's bodies is not less oppressive than patriarchal control.⁹⁹ His solution is that secular politics, if it is committed to a certain truth, should not bother about "a particularity that is as insignificant as a few girls' headscarves".¹⁰⁰ Badiou mentions Paul's, who "had already said it: when a truth is in question, particularity doesn't matter".¹⁰¹

The phenomenon that has become known as the "veil's resurgence" (to follow Leila Ahmed's phrase in a book with the same title) has been extensively studied by many feminist authors. It has been pointed out that the return to the veil in recent generations of Muslim women, against the custom of their parents, is a sign of choice and agency.¹⁰² Although these interpretations have helped prevent the reduction of the veil to a sign of patriarchal subjection, they are problematic in several respects. For one, they beg question as to why one should choose to subject oneself to a sign of oppression. Besides, they do not account for women's ignorance of their rights which has many times led to their willing subjection to patriarchal dress code. That is, in many instances, once women become aware of the patriarchal assumptions in the background of veiling, they put aside the covering they had chosen. Finally, and more importantly, these analyses portray the veiling woman as a "defiant" woman, who just wants to be different. In the French context, that would be like rebellious participation in the

⁹⁹ Ibid., 104.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 108.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. This refers to Paul's "indifference" to circumcision.

¹⁰² See Leila Ahmed, *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011); Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 1 (1990): 41-55; Haleh Afshar, *Islam and Feminisms: An Iranian Case-Study*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998); Katherine Bullock, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical and Modern Stereotypes* (London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2002).

disturbance of the society. That is, when the veil is not associated with backwardness, it comes to be linked to a conscious, deliberate effort to change the previously established order of the community.

4.4.3. Pious Subjectivity

Western feminist ethics has usually gone with the following narrative of the veil: when a woman is liberated she will put aside the sign of subjection (i.e. veil); but if in liberal conditions she still chooses to wear the veil, it is because she is resisting the Western gender norms. This story is not entirely wrong. But it does not account for the women who have chosen the veil without aiming at resistance to any other norm. The above feminist interpretation of the veil is due to a liberal Kantian ethics, which presumes morality proper to be “a rational matter that entailed the exercise of the faculty of reason, shorn of the specific context (of social virtues, habit, character formation, and so on) in which the act unfolded”.¹⁰³ The Kantian female subject uses her reason to ponder whether she should resist patriarchy by putting aside her veil or resist Western norms by veiling. In this framework, while the body shows the decision of the mind, virtue exists outside the bodily regime. The Aristotelian ethics, which preceded it, rather emphasized that “morality was both realized through, and manifest in, outward behavioral forms.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 25.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

This version of ethics, also known as “spiritual exercises”, has been recently revived by Michel Foucault, Pierre Hadot, and Peter Sloterdijk, among others.¹⁰⁵ Unlike the virtue ethics propounded by Alisdair MacIntyre, this kind of Aristotelian ethics “is not geared toward asserting its universal validity, or recuperating its universal validity, or recuperating its various elements for solving contemporary moral problems – such as reclaiming the idea of *telos* or collective notion of good life”.¹⁰⁶ This ethics has guided the anthropologist Saba Mahmood in her analysis of the Egyptian women’s Islamic Awakening since 1970s. She observed that veiling is part of the ethical habituation that the traditional women of her study used to emerge as subjects.

The veiling women Mahmood had studied “did not regard trying to emulate authorized models of behavior as an external social imposition that constrained individual freedom. Rather, they treated socially authorized forms of performances as the potentialities – the ground if you will – through which the self is realized.”¹⁰⁷ In such a situation, the subject’s own desires and the prescribed norms are identical. Moreover, the enactment of such desires is not confined to simple mental deliberations. Bodily practice is also actively involved in the realization of the potentials. In other words, pious Muslim women choose to veil because they think that it will show their piety toward God. Thus, through repeating certain practices, they develop into pious subjects, something which is not distant from what male religious authorities had also prescribed.

¹⁰⁵ See Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-82*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Picador, 2005), Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, trans. Michael Chase, (Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995), Peter Sloterdijk, *You Must Change Your Life*, trans. Wieland Hoban, (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Mahmood, *Piety*, 27.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*, 31.

4.5. Conclusion: Pauline Veils and Visibilities

In this chapter I tried to show how the Christian interpretations of veiling have been built on contingent foundations, indeed the contingency of an article of clothing which has become a massively invested boundary imagined to distinguish essential aspects of Europe from some of its neighbors. These foundations determined the interpreters' assumptions about the East and West, representation, gender, liberation and subjection. Unlike many works which deal with the role of the "other" in interpretations, I am not calling for appreciating the other in its own terms. Rather, I would question the foundation of the interpreters' presuppositions regarding women's liberation. For, it is one thing to say that the other speaks a different language, and quite another thing to raise suspicions regarding the language of the same. Therefore, in my inquiry, I have focused less on the reasons for veiling than the reasons for unveiling. It does not mean that I take any practice as a default position, from which other options diverge. Nor does it imply that I take either of veiling or bareheadedness as a more legitimate option.

Rather, as my survey of European and Christian commentaries shows, the European "unveiling" has run parallel with a process of reinterpretation according to several major options. In this process, the veil has been gradually discarded from the living experience of Christian women because it became a marker of the "other" – i.e. Orientals, Jews, "ecstatic" mystics of the Greco-Roman "cults", liberationist women, homosexuals, particularists, etc. The otherness against which Paul (or at least his 'true

message') was always preserved shifted in keeping with what in different moments was othered by (Christian) European men. Paul was thus portrayed as a European Man, who followed the latest fashion. Moreover, it is not simply that readings of Paul followed European prejudices about clothing. Rather, we might say that the tradition is rather desperate to find in its religious archive, an icon of unveiling, and an unveiling invested with the full weight of the "spirit" of the tradition. Read this way, the perennial and massive investment of scholarly energies around the figure of Paul and his texts about the veiling of women may be read as activities of a kind of security taskforce, securing the Europeans not just from veiled women but also from the very idea that there is, in fact, nothing so remarkable about the very unveiling characteristic of their own cultural practices. This fantasy of a dramatic moment of "unveiling" had to be highlighted to literally and metaphorically denote the key cultural moments of the West, from philosophical and scientific truth (*alétheia*, lit. uncovering) to the Western erotic adventures in the Oriental harems, the jazz age, or the sexual revolution

That is why the veiling Muslim woman in the European public indicates that the discarded "past" is making its threatening presence visible again. This is when the return of "backwardness" looms in the modern, and the past continues its appearance in the present. However, if in a postmodern critique, the foundations of post-Enlightenment notions of the Orient, gender, visibility, and subjectivity are questioned, one's reading of the veil changes. That is, it becomes clear that covering and uncovering the hair both belong to the logic of visibility, or that one can show subjectivity *with* and *without* the veil (albeit in different manners).

Now the question is how these new readings contribute to our understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:5-16? As I showed in my survey of the interpretations, one can situate Paul in his historical context without getting involved in risky judgments about different constructed identities. Dale Martin and Jorunn Økland, as I explained, have given due attention to historical records, without attempting to vindicate or condemn the Apostle. These readings imply that Paul was not right in establishing a patriarchal dress code. But the fact that he was a man of his time does not exacerbate a narrative of progress that most modern commentaries had tried to replicate. In other words, Martin and Økland escape literalism, without falling prey to the games of European identity, or the egalitarian/sexist binary. In their reading, Paul's words would not strike his original audience as strange (since they were already familiar with his assumptions regarding the sexes), but his attitude, despite all of its inaccuracy, was directed toward the integration of all in the same – i.e. the masculine order. This is, by no means, it must be stressed, an apology for Paul; nor is it a condemnation of his milieu. It is, rather, recognizing different possibilities for subjectivity, some of which may no longer be acceptable.

But what if we were to take Paul to be implying not even that much? What if he were demanding the repetition of inherited customs in order to show that their very functionality is not really operable for the very purposes of sexual distinction he mentions? Specifically, what if he said “her hair was given to her for a covering” in order to conclude that “hence, her hair does not need to be covered”, a conclusion asserted no less than “therefore, she should doubly cover it”? The latter statement would not be very different from Freud's logic to the effect that women learn from pubic hair

(i.e. nature) to weave (i.e. technique) a covering in order to hide their deficiency. The former interpretation (i.e. Paul's indifference to the veil) is, however, very similar to Paul's own statement in the Corinthian correspondence that "circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but obeying the commandments of God is everything. Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called" (1 Cor 7:19-20). No wonder, then, that Badiou calls for indifference to the Muslim veil in France, by mentioning Paul's indifference to circumcision. And again, no wonder that Derrida addresses Paul with his "double-edged" view on the veil, which resembled the French philosopher's own attitude toward circumcision:

–In everything that you're [i.e. Derrida] suggesting, with little airs of elliptical reticence, it's as though you were against circumcision but also against those who are against circumcision, you ought to make your mind up. You're against everything...

–Not in a hurry. Yes, I'm against, yes, yes, I am. Against those who prescribe the veil and other such things, against those who forbid it too, and who think they can forbid it, imagining that this is good, that it is possible and that it is meaningful. Not in a hurry: the scholarly, the secular and the democratic belong through and through to cultures of the tallith and the veil, etc., people don't even realize any longer.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Derrida, "Silkworm," 346.

Chapter FIVE

Conclusion

This research set out to uncover the negotiations of identity at work between interpretations of Paul and certain tendencies within the European intellectual tradition. The study was premised upon a post-secular understanding, which presupposes a mutually reinforcing between the “secular” and the “religious”. Approached this way, the question of Europe relies on ever-changing interpretations of the biblical texts. At the same time, these readings of Paul could not have come about in any other intellectual environment than this one, bearing as they do the burden of securing important aspects of European self-understanding. Modern intellectual developments within biblical scholarship have, on the one hand, opened our eyes to shortcomings of earlier interpretive approaches and methods. On the other hand, however, resting on a

meta-narrative of rational self-sufficiency, these same narratives of advancement have blinded us to the alternative possibilities both within biblical hermeneutics and so-called “secular” philosophy. Historical-critical exegetes have sometimes been so attentive to make the figure of Paul conform with modern assumptions that they almost forgot that these assumptions were themselves born out of conversations with the scriptures. The more it peddles its secular credentials or its fantasies of universal self-grounding, the more oblivious the intellectual world remains to the contributions it has received from religious texts, even starting to be unwelcoming to the challenges that the Bible could potentially pose to its current tenets and basic self-understandings.

Therefore, my thesis attempted to propose other plausible readings that are ethically responsible and true to the historical intricacies of the ancient contexts even as they challenge many long-held Western assumptions. In recent decades and (surprisingly) often through an explicitly secular continental philosophy, Paul has returned to the intellectual scene as if to indicate that he has been there all along, or that his absence was only due to certain temporary misinterpretations, that he could have been interpreted otherwise yet still, and that ever new interpretations make him relevant to our concerns once more.

My studies here have dealt with power, religion, and gender in Paul’s letters as well as the cultural history of the interpretation of these topics. In the conversation between the interpretations of Paul and modern European thought, crucial issues regarding politics, culture, religion, body, sexuality, and subjectivity have been discussed. Throughout, I noted that the points on which these ancient and modern stories

agreed, disagreed, or remained indifferent to each other uncover – often in surprising ways– many of the underlying struggles to make sense of a relationship between the “religious” and the “secular” in modern Europe.

5.1. Findings

As a first passage, I considered Romans 13, where Paul tells the Roman Church to be subjected to the civil authorities “because they are God’s servants” and to pay their taxes (vv. 1-7). After that, Paul says that believers should not owe anything but love toward their neighbors (vv. 8-10). Finally, Paul directs them toward the imminent end, “for salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers”. He thus encourages them to “put on the armor of light” by doing good works (vv. 11-14). As I pointed out, usually these different parts of Paul’s texts have been interpreted separately, itself a significant feature of the story we are developing. At one level, this division of interpretive labor is entirely understandable, as chapter marking was a later addition to the original letter and therefore far from what the author could have intended. However, as I argued, the dissection of the chapter into independent pericopes has also led us to lose touch with the historical situation of Paul as well as what is at stake in postmodern political philosophy.

In this respect, I proposed that what Paul’s situation and postmodern political theologies share is the idea of the “daily messianic” – a rupture in the course of daily matters, which does not accord with the “rational” calculations of the political as we

tend to understand it. I have enumerated five features of the “daily messianic”. First, according to Max Weber and Martin Heidegger, the messianic rupture is constituted by (and constitutive of) the temporality of “care” – whether as extreme anxiousness about the present situation for the former or as anxiety about the imminent end which makes life authentic for the latter. Second, in the “daily messianic” the body and the soul are not separate. Reading the Lurianic Kabbalah with Gershom Scholem and the Iranian revolution with Michel Foucault, I concluded that in the “daily messianic” the perfection of the soul comes through certain bodily practices, with the effect that such “spiritual exercises” can just as well lead to a redemption of the society at large as much as the individual body and soul. Third, Jacques Derrida and Walter Benjamin give us the sense that the “daily messianic” is beyond calculations that the usual political and legal structures impose. A “violent” rupture in these structures does not lead either to anarchy or despotism – what Benjamin calls “mythic violence”. Modern governmentality is increasingly premised on some sort of constant “state of exception” in the Schmittian sense of the word. The “messianic”, however, is an exception to this rule of exceptions. That is what makes it a redemptive “mythic violence”. In Derrida’s opinion, the “messianic” indicates the immeasurable and the uncalculable elements of the political that escape the aporias of modern liberal democracies. Fourth, precisely because it falls out of legal calculations, the “daily messianic” is directed toward justice, as Derrida reminds us. Again, the rupture within the legal system does not always lead to justice. But justice cannot fit in the legal structure, if it is true to the “daily messianic”. Finally, because it does not rest on metaphysical calculations, it is meontological. That is, for it

to happen, an aleatory encounter in the void is needed. Louis Althusser and his theologian friend Stanislas Breton sought the event of truth in that swerve, which is utterly unpredictable, uncalculable, and non-metaphysical.

These features of the “daily messianic” helped me to read Romans 13 from another perspective than the ones which have dominated the history of European interpretation. With his background in Jewish studies and European philosophy, the Jewish philosopher Jacob Taubes approached the kind of interpretation I wanted to bring to light. What I also found intriguing was that the possibility that Taubes suggests has been overlooked, precisely, by Christian interpreters. Together with Taubes, I believe that Romans 13 should be read in its unity. Political subjection is in Pauline discourse a component of the “daily messianic”. So are neighborly love (Rom 13:8-10) and righteousness (Rom 13:11-14). In a situation when the Lord might come any time, when “the night is far gone and the day is near”, there is no point in revolution. But, read this way Paul even goes even further than a Barthian negative political theology. After all, the Pauline subjects do not consider the option of non-involvement. Rather, they actively carry out their duties as subjects. They take the “daily” to its extreme, but with an air of the messianic.

Jacob Taubes suggested that Paul established a political entity based on neighborly love. In this “messianic” community, as I have shown, the political cannot be discussed in metaphysical terms, much less in a language which time and again emphasizes the separation of the body and the soul, or which measures everything with yardsticks of calculation and order, therefore ignoring the many possibilities of social

justice. Read outside this framework, Pauline subjects fulfill the kingdom of God by loving each other, engaging in good works, and of course following their contemporary civil order. Pauline political theology is not equivalent to theocracies or liberation theologies, but with a mode of life that deals with sovereigns outside metaphysical orders. A general ignorance of the unity of Romans 13, therefore, is symptomatic of a “common-sense” assumption that “theological” engagement in the political only belongs to “religious” despotism or “religious” revolutions.

The concept of “religion” in European discourse has been discussed in the next chapter. In a survey of the reception history of Galatians 2:12-14 (also known as the Incident at Antioch), I have noticed that ongoing Jewish-Christian relations were a major backdrop of all the interpretations. So, I have tried to trace back the current ideas on Christian universalism to a point of convergence between biblical studies and philosophy in the nineteenth century. The Lutheran distinction between Jewish guilt and Christian faith has transformed into the binary “religion” versus (universal) philosophy in Nietzsche and Freud. Instead of the Jewish Law, there was – as it were – a certain “Jewishness” which had to be superseded by humanity in order to reach wholesomeness. This modern conception of Judaism was reassessed after the disasters of World War II. The “supersessionist” construction of (Lutheran) Paul was criticized and the Apostle was seen in a Jewish context. Despite the invaluable contributions that the New Perspective theologians have made to the reconstruction of the Jewish Paul, their conclusions are still embedded in Augustinian-Lutheran teachings, coupled with modern European notions of Christian universality. On the other side, the philosophical turn to

Paul (e.g. in the work of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek) has been fraught with presupposition regarding “religion”, Jewish-Christian relations, Paul’s attitude toward the Jewish Law, and universalism, which can prove inaccurate or inadequate in terms of a reading of the ancient historical character.

In my reading of the Incident at Antioch, therefore, I have tried to correct this and deal with a more “Jewish” Paul. That is, while many times philosophers have tried to rival (if not follow) Paul in allegedly getting rid of a certain residual “Jewishness”, I have radicalized Paul’s Jewishness. The conflict between Paul and Peter can be seen in the context of a flexible definition of Jewishness and Judaizing (Jewish “way of life”). This kind of debate was not new to Antiochenes or Galatians because they were interacting with people who lived on the “borderlines”, to use Daniel Boyarin’s term.

The argument in Antioch makes better sense when one considers the struggle between Jewish and “national” ways of life, two intertwined worlds, which could not be easily separated. Paul is able to recognize the congruence between these two ways of life and acknowledge the borderline between the two. It is not possible to live in one without the other: “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal 2:14). This was as significant as any matter-of-fact disagreement between two Jewish leaders. In the context of the letter, however, Paul tells this story to confirm his authority. In other words, he must have enough authority to be able to rebuke Cephas (the Rock).

Finally, I focused on a major conflict between “religion” and public sphere – women’s veiling. Here again Paul is present in crucial ways. He had ordered women to

cover their heads during prayer and prophecy (1 Cor 11:5-16). He had based his argument on what he considered “nature”, custom, and the creation story in the Torah. Most European Christians do not cover their heads during prayer and prophecy because (quite unlike many of their Muslim counterparts) they have been ready to reinterpret this text. Investigating the ways that this text has been reinterpreted by Christians in modern times, I have realized that this process has been concomitant with “othering” certain beliefs, practices, and identities. The veil has been discarded because it symbolized the “other”, as well as what subdued the “other”. It represented the Jews, the “mystical” Greeks, the emancipationist women, the Orientals, the homosexuals, and whatever was not tolerated by the European Man at any particular point in history. I believe that the interpretations of the Muslim veil, especially in the French veil affair, belong to a metanarrative that assumes that one can have a clear idea of gender, representation, subjectivity, Orient, and even the veil. Poststructuralism, particularly post-colonialism and post-feminism, challenge these allegedly clear understandings.

I have taken these poststructuralist theories into account to interpret what Paul might have meant. I agree with Jorunn Økland that the veiling commandment could have been a way for Paul to integrate women into the sanctuary space. This explication does not make the veiling injunction less patriarchal, as Økland also confirms. But it breaks with the logic that equals veiling with invisibility or domestication and unveiling with visibility and liberation. Veil and the lack thereof both belong to the phallogocentric culture of visibility. Read in the language of representation, veiling is nothing and

unveiling is nothing. Therefore, defending and attacking Paul for that injunction are equally problematic because they reiterate the priority of the phallus.

5.2. Implications and Significance

By suggesting alternative possibilities in interpretation, this research, first and foremost, has questioned the naturalization of the so-called historical-critical approach to biblical interpretation, as well as its assumed consequences and outcomes. I have shown how the many historical-critical interpretations are all embedded within broader frameworks of European identity. In these interpretations the theological has to be congruent with the moral (in a Kantian fashion), while modern morality is in turn grounded on “theological” assumptions.

This is significant especially when one considers the many modes in which Paul does not fit in this modern European framework. Paul is not what he is expected to be. That is, while he has been a good companion to the European intellectuals in developing the “modern” world, Paul has always had his own struggles with these same modernizers, and he has often been accommodated to a modern European way of life which was quite distinct from the contexts and modes which drove the ancient Mediterranean thinker. Indeed, there were moments when Paul seemed always to keep obstructing the norms and normativities of the modern European way of life he was meant to ground, found, or underwrite.

When it comes to political power, for example, in the minds of interpreters the Apostle apparently needed to choose between subjection and subversion. Paul's attitude, however, is much more understandable if he is read outside this binary opposition. If situated outside the modern categories, Paul can subvert the system even while he is subjected to authorities. When faced with the question of legal observance, Paul can be read as a Jewish person who sees all the loopholes and possibilities which are both "Jewish" and "national" (i.e. Gentile), but which are mostly in agreement with the principles of the more eclectic Way. In the case of genders, Paul does not necessarily think of subduing women through the veil, but much less about the very binary liberation/suppression which has preoccupied both those who defend and attack him because of his attitude toward gender. In other words, I am calling historical critics to be more attentive to the alternative possibilities that poststructuralist theory—and perhaps a more cosmopolitan reading— can offer. Even when one aims at understanding of the historical Paul, or "what *really* happened", or what Paul *really* meant, one can gain a lot from the alternatives that theory offers.

But, this research has been less concerned with what Paul really meant than how people expressed themselves through Paul. That is, while it is important to see how Paul directs his readers (and of course how he challenged them), the reception of his work reflects the way that European mentality has responded to the challenges of encountering not only the ancient but the non-European world. That is, the fact that certain parts of the New Testament have been problematized rather than others reflects what is considered "normative" in Europe. The disruption of the European normative by

Paul is usually covered up by the panoply of “normative” reinterpretations. According to these European constructed binaries, at important moments one is either subjected to authorities or is undertaking a rebellion, one is either “religious” or “universal”, one is either “liberated” and hence bareheaded or “domesticated” and veiled. However, as I have shown with concepts such as the “daily messianic”, the “borderline”, and subjective subjection, these norms are inadequate in describing Paul, or for that matter the human condition.

In this manner, the questions that I (together with Paul) ask the European will expose the European, and its Eurocentrism. If the European brags of the (liberal democratic) nation-state, Paul sees its end; but if the “religious” European is expected to separate between earthly and heavenly cities, Paul calls the political authorities “God’s servants”. If European universalism is set in opposition to “religious” particularism, Paul is part of an allegedly “particularist” tradition which allows for different sets of behaviors. If European liberation expects liberated women to put aside their veils, Paul uses veil as an instrument of women’s integration into prayer and prophecy.

My reading of these intimate moments in the constitution of European self-understanding thus highlights tests and questions which are crucial to the construction of Europe as well as its deconstruction. European identity asserts itself through negating the other, but then comes to itself to see the other in the same. As Derrida says,

What is exported by way of imperialism, by way of colonialism, by way of every other mode of discussion of Western thought, is not, generally speaking, only norms, advancements, and positions. It is also crises and

destabilizing interrogations, in the course of which the “subject” finds himself [*sic*] only by finding himself put to the test. Today, we are witnessing *simultaneously, on the one hand*, the consolidation of everything that binds right, law, and the politics of citizenship to the sovereignty of the subject, and, *on the other hand*, a possibility for the “subject” to deconstruct himself, to be deconstructed. The two movements are indissociable. Hence the paradox: globalization is Europeanization. And yet, Europe is withdrawing; it is being fissured and transformed. What is exported, in a European language, immediately sees itself called into question again in the name of what was potentially at work in this European legacy itself, in the name of a possible auto-hetero-deconstruction.¹

Besides the opposition between the European and its other, this research has helped bring to light the negotiations between the “religious” and the “secular”. While the secularist meta-narrative rests on the idea of complete separation between the worldly and the other-worldly through a process of rational “subtraction”,² the post-secular acknowledges the mutual contributions between the two. In a post-secular account, political subjection is understandable as a rupture in the daily, i.e. secular, however counter-intuitive this may seem. Moreover, it became clear that even if it is proved that the “secular” is universal, much is at stake in Europe’s claims to universalism. Finally, the trouble with the veil arose due to, among other things, the

¹ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow, ...: A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 178.

² “Subtraction theory” is Charles Taylor’s term for the “stories of the modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having lost, or sloughed off, or liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge. What emerges from this process – modernity or secularity – is to be understood in terms of underlying features of human nature which were all along, but had been impeded by what is now set aside.” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 22.

inadequacy of the “secular” to explain many things that fall outside the public-private divide.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

Issues of political power, religious practice in the public sphere, and women’s role according to religious teachings are usually too broad and controversial to fit in one thesis. That is why I had to be selective regarding the passages in question, although the above sections of Paul’s letters are very crucial in understanding his subversion of the European “normative”.

There are thus other passages that need to be studied, for example, 1 Corinthians 6, which deals with the juridico-political order, Romans 7 which is about subjectivity in the face of Law, or Romans 2, 1 Corinthians 5, 7, and 14, which are concerned with sexual politics. Whereas my study was more focused on the “authentically” Pauline passages, other studies can deal with relevant material in the canonical epistles of Paul. For example, one can compare the “Paul” that has been constructed in the Pastoral Epistles with the one created by Acts.

Although politics, religion, and gender are important themes in current debates, there are other equally important (and perhaps less obvious) topics that are yet to be investigated. One example is the body-mind problem, which resurfaces in the interpretations of Paul’s letters, whether he is talking about one’s daily life, faith, or resurrection. Another important theme is Pauline masculinities, which can be related to

his idea of himself, God, Moses, Jesus, as well as men's dress code or their sexual activities. All of these can be taken up to uncover the constitution of European "normativities".

Finally, a separate research can deal with different strategies of "modernization" and reinterpretation. This has been in the backdrop of my research, but I did not intend to present a systematic picture. One example of such work might consider the fact that the Pauline authorship of certain "problematic" passages (like 1 Cor 14:34-35) within the "authentic" corpus is put into question in the interest of "modernization". The text floats in this "inauthentic" but "canonical" state, valid but not relevant.

5.4. Back to Paul's Personae

Paul has different portraits and masks. Like Woody Allen's Leonard Zelig, Paul appears in different scenes and can become like the people by whom he is surrounded. But then, he draws a red line over any conceptual picture of himself. Paul fails to be Paul, the European Christian who knows what to do with civil authorities, how to avoid the traps of "tradition", and how to respect women. But he is not that yet. There has never been a mask that could resemble him in all of his details. His readers have always been doomed to open-ended biographies about a man who "proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance" (Acts 28:31).

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