Faith, Movements, and Ideology Critique

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Introduction

Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, and Simon Critchley have all turned to the Apostle Paul as a means of imagining revolutionary ethical subjects and communities. None of these thinkers are interested in Paul's theology per se; rather, they explore how Paul can operate as an example of how a subject recalibrates the contours of society's ideological matrix. The Pauline turn in leftist theory claims that faith need not be in reference to some transcendent God or master figure. In fact, the question of God's existence is for the most part irrelevant for these theorists. Instead, this faith is in response to a call to be ethical and responsible for all people. This is not a "personal responsibility" of the libertarian stipe, but a responsibility to every person, even a responsibility demanded *of* every person.[1]

For our purposes, it little matters whether one views this call to be an agent in the service of everyone as an "infinite demand" (following Critchley) or as faithfulness to a "Truth-Event" (following Badiou). Each of these theorists see the Apostle Paul as a model for how to take up such a call. It is in this sense that Paul's faith was a response, not the result of intellectual conversion. Rather than contemplating the intellectual history of Judaism and discovering that Jesus was the Messiah because of a series of prophecies, say, Paul experiences Jesus as the "risen Christ" and suddenly everything in the world is different. According to Paul's letters, this aspect change is the result of either an apparition of Jesus,[2] or in chapter nine of the Acts of the Apostles) a voice asking: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" The question Critchley and Badiou seem to be asking, then, is what is the relevance of faith, as commonly understood?

In an interview with stirtoaction.com, Critchley comments on the irrelevancy of faith in a transcendent God for political action, writing that

> if we have a strange situation where there are people, like myself for example, who are faithless but have an experience of faith in relationship to an infinite demand, say, the prohibition of murder or the furthering of equality. Then there are people where that faith is underwritten by some theistic reality in their worldview. My view is that it makes no difference at the subjective level: the belief in God is neither here nor there.

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[1] Following the great Hebrew prophetic tradition, each person may not be at fault for society's ills, but each person is responsible for correcting them. See also Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso, 2007).

[2] 1 Corinthians 15:1-11: Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe. (NRSV translation).

It is a useless distraction. It does not matter what you believe but rather how you act.[3]

Žižek radicalizes Badiou and Critchley's claim of the irrelevancy of God's existence by proposing that one of Paul's great contributions to the critique of ideology was the proclamation of the gospel of "the death of God." But, for Žižek, this nonexistent God is still *Real*.[4] This God, despite being always-already dead, still persists and insists on us individuals. This persistence manifests itself in an insistence, that is, in the call for egalitarian justice which haunts the world with "infinite demands." For Žižek, Badiou, and Critchley, then, the Apostle Paul was an "activist" focused on setting up intentional "collectives of believers" in a manner that challenged the hegemonic ideas and practices of the Roman Empire. They consider this "spirit" of collective believers to be an example of how the Left should critique contemporary ideologies and how to set up alternative autonomous and egalitarian communities. Consider how Žižek describes the modern relevancy of such a "spirit community":

> The ideal is that of neither blind liberal individuals collaborating with one another nor the old organic conservative community. It is a community along the lines of the original Christian community: a community of outcasts. We need this today, this idea of an egalitarian community of believers that is neither the traditional heretical community nor the liberal multiplicity. This is why I and many other leftist philosophers, such as Alain Badiou and others, are so interested in rereading, rehabilitating, and reappropriating the legacy of Paul … I claim that if we lose this key moment—the moment of realizing the Holy Spirit as a community of believers—we will live in a very sad society, where the only choice will be between vulgar egoist liberalism or the fundamentalism that counterattacks it.[5]

While it is doubtful that this was actually the mission of the historical Apostle Paul, we believe that the idea of building autonomous, intentional communities in the interstices of a hegemonic social, political, and cultural order is both compelling and possible.

However, we wish to challenge the appropriateness of theorists using the historical Paul as the reference point for imagining these communities. We propose that a better source of inspiration would be found in the "Reign of God movements" of the first century Galilee, movements that became associated with the historical Jesus of Nazareth. They are a much better example of the political subject's revolutionary behavior—both in form and in content. The Pauline turn, by contrast, uses Paul as a formal model for the ethical and political subject, but never provides a program for such subjects to follow or enact. The "Reign of God" movements in Galilee actually exhibit a program for action that remains anti-hegemonic, ideologically critical, and open to radical democratic forms of affinity. Their ideas and practices both reflect the democratic and socialist dream of egalitarianism and resonate with autonomist and anarchist tendencies in today's radical politics.

This paper will begin by reviewing Badiou, Žižek, and Critchley's appropriation of the Apostle Paul and offer a critique of this approach. We will then outline an alternative approach

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[3]Simon Critchley, interview by Jonny Gordon-Farleigh, 2012, STIR, http://stirtoaction.com/simon-critchley-interview/

[4] "Real" in the Lacanian sense of something that *is-not*, yet is still relevant. In other words, God has all positive attributes. (omnipotence, transcendence, etc.) except one: existence. Such an entity in Lacanian theory is not merely symbolic or imaginary, it is *Real*.

[5] Slavoj Žižek, "A Meditation on Michelangelo's Christ on the Cross," in *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, and Creston Davis (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010), 180-181.

that builds on the ideas and experiences of the "Reign of God" movements (also known as the "Jesus movement") that were active in early first-century Galilee. Interestingly, the nature of these movements has significant resonances with autonomist and anarchist tendencies. We will trace these similarities and then draw important lessons for ideology critique and political practice—whether for people of faith and for those whom Critchley calls "the faithless."

<center>Appropriations of Paul</center>

Alain Badiou's Paul

Badiou interprets Paul not as a philosopher or theologian, but as a subject who is responsive or faithful to an event, particularly the sort of "event" that he describes in *Being and Event*.[6] Badiou's Paul is an "anti-philosopher" who rejects proof, deduction, and philosophical systemization. Paul *acts*; he does not *deliberate*. He is also a "militant" operating against the Roman imperial system, in the manner in which Badiou hopes that militants will operate against the global capitalist system. Badiou's Paul does not blindly deny the existence and persistence of Law; rather, he simply acts as if the Law is irrelevant. The Law is present, but it only controls us if we let it. One does not deny societal Law, one simply moves on as if it was irrelevant. By acting in this way, we lose a belief in the efficacy of the Law, which allows it to crumble. This opens the door to a new society, a new form of collective, and a new revolution.

Badiou claims that Paul's commitment to the absolute one-ness of God challenges Law's division of society. Because the Law creates difference, Paul rejects it. God is one, and it is the one God that is God—so, all must be committed to this One Truth.[7] "The general apparatus of a truth contains the One (divine transcendence, monotheism, according to Pauline fable), the universal (the whole of humanity, both circumcised and uncircumcised), and the singular (the Christ-event). The particular, which pertains to opinion, custom, law, cannot be inscribed in it."[8] What Badiou ignores, however, is that Paul's "one God" is the national God of Israel. While Paul believed this was the God of the whole world, this God was still "national"—a predicate made evident in God's directed genocide of the Canaanites in the Book of Joshua, for example.

Badiou appreciates Paul's commitment to universal truth so intensely that he is able to assume that belief in God's existence as a metaphysical entity was irrelevant for Paul. For Badiou's Paul, the declaration that there is but a single God must be understood not as an ontological claim concerning substance or a supreme being, but as a claim concerning a structure of address, "The One is that which inscribes no difference in the subjects to which it addresses itself. The One is only insofar as it is for all: such is the maxim of universality when it has its root in the event."[9] However, it is very unlikely that Paul did not think that God existed as a metaphysical entity. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine Paul undertaking his mission without some form of guarantee in the form of an actually existing God. We find no evidence from which to assume that Paul did not believe in God, but merely thought of God as the "basis of a structure of address." A structure of address deals only with form, and leaves content aside. In other words, "what" the One is that is addressed is unimportant for Badiou; but the fact that we all address the same One is important. God in this sense is not universal in content (the existence of a particular God), but in the fact that this God (as an empty signifier) is being addressed by a series of

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[6] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).
[7] *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 76.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

subjects.

For Badiou, Paul's Gospel "demonstrates in detail how a universal thought, proceeding on the basis of the worldly proliferation of alterities (the Jew, the Greek, women, men, slaves, free men, and so on) *produces* a Sameness and an Equality (there is no longer either Jew, or Greek, and so on)."[10] This is what makes Paul an antiphilosopher of the universal: universal in that his thought is *for all* (rather than for a particular group), and anti-philosophical in that the event is not the result of deductive or conceptual thinking. For Badiou, Paul's engagement with the resurrection of Christ opened a new era in humanity's relationship to Law. Whereas Law requires obedience and contractual agreement, grace operates freely without anything being owed.[11] It has been given to those who participate in the life of Christ, and grace, because it is unearned and free, it is both universal and "communist."[12] Rather than a Law imposed from outside, we have an invitation to join a self-adopted Rule or way of life, which Badiou's Paul calls the "law of spirit."[13] This law of spirit is one that binds initiates together in love, without coercion and by their own initiative.

Badiou thus considers Paul as providing us with an example of what it is like to be a subject of truth, to be faithful to an event, "Paul says to us: it is always possible for a nonconformist thought to think in the century. That is what a subject is. It is he who maintains the universal, not conformity."[14] But what sort of program does Paul support? Does not Badiou merely valorize something that may not happen again? Paul's action may be a model for a response to event, but the event to which he responds, by Badiou's own standard, is but a semblance of an event, not an authentic truth-event. An authentic event is truly universal (in that it derives from those who are presented in a situation but not re-presented, such as slaves in the American South), whereas a semblance of an event appears universal, but actually is not (e.g., German National Socialism). Paul's event is one that treats first century mythology as something that must be believed and declared by everyone. Badiou calls this event a fiction, but he likely does not mean that it is false or a lie. Rather, he means that it offers the possibility of a "final belief in generic truths."[15]

Slavoj Žižek's Paul

Žižek's writing on Paul stems from two primary interests. First, he aims to expose the virtual nature of the symbolic domain (with its contingent and arbitrary laws, rules, regulations, and social impositions), as well as in showing the subject a way to act through and beyond the symbolic. The Lacanian psychoanalytic term for this symbolic domain is the "Big Other," which for Žižek is akin to the term "God." Second, Žižek wants to move beyond the trappings of the law of desire. In Lacanian tradition, the Law is what teaches us how to desire and what to desire. In Freudo-Lacanian myth, we as children think that it is our self which is the object of desire (the phallus) or that we possessed this object of desire, but both imaginary theories are wrong. We *are* not the phallus, nor do we have "it;" *we cannot have it*, because (so the metaphor goes) Father has it. We are told rather to go find our own (the little object of desire, *objet petit a*) or to have someone bring "It" (the symbolic authority of the phallus) to us. Like the *Real* of God, this phallus has every positive attribute except that of existence.

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[10] Ibid., 109.
[11] Ibid., 76-77.
[12] Ibid., 77.
[13] Ibid., 87.
[14] Ibid., 110-111.
[15] *Philosophy for Militants*, trans. Bruno Bosteels (London: Verso, 2012), 108.

The "drive" in Lacanian theory pursues not a particular object (*objet petit a*) but desires, rather, the state of being-in-desire, which has no object except the "the Thing" which is Real, and thereby does not exist. In other words, the drive is interested not in what is gained but in the pursuit of what might be gained—what Lacan called "the beyond-of-the-signified."[16] The promise of fulfillment is more desirable than what is desired. An enjoyment-in-meaning or pain (what Lacan called *jouissance*) is too traumatic, so Law (which is the same thing as what is to be desired) is imposed in order for the subject to know what to do with her or his life. Because desire and Law never provide what they promise (the "It," the phallus), they leave one forever unfulfilled. What Law and desire fail to provide resurrects itself in the form of an obscene injunction to desire beyond the law, to transgress their prohibitions regarding the "Thing" that the drive pursues. For example, the socio-symbolic law which demands that men and women refrain from adultery also encourages them to transgress it. *Because there is a law, we are curious about what is prohibited*. We are curious about the pleasure, the jouissance of the prohibited object, but the only reason we are interested in the prohibited object *is because it is prohibited*.

Žižek connects this dynamic to Paul's argument in Romans:

> For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.[17]

While the Law was intended as a guide for Israel (much like the Law of the Father was to show the child how to desire in an appropriate manner), it fails *because it also teaches one about that which is excessive and not-good*. This is why Paul notes that he would not know what sin was without the Law. So, in this sense, it is the Law against sin that shows us how to sin. From this observation, Žižek confronts the quandary directly:

> St. Paul's problem is thus not the standard morbid moralistic one (how to crush transgressive impulses, how finally to purify myself of sinful urges), but its exact opposite: how can I break out of his vicious cycle of the Law and desire, of the Prohibition and its transgression, within which I can assert my living passions only in the guise of their opposite, as a morbid death drive?[18]

Paul's answer, according to Žižek, comes in the form of an anachronistic "death of God" theology. Indeed, Žižek offers a rather strange interpretation of Judaism's relationship to the Law, the Torah, for which we find little if any evidence in the history of Judaism. In the Book of Job, we find a bet between "the *satan*" (tempter) figure and God. The bet concerns the motivation for humanity's obedience to God. Žižek interprets Job's experience to be characteristic of the Jewish experience of God. The Jew recognizes that God is utterly impotent, present but powerless. Jews follow the Law, the Torah, not out of necessity, but by choice. They

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[16] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar. Book VII. The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992).

[17] Romans 7:14-20 (New Revised Standard Version).

[18] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), 149.

know that the Law does not have any justification beyond its own declaration. God is only real for the Jew through the Law; God's action is enacted through a life lived according to Torah. In other words, the Jew knows that God does not exist, but Jews allow God to continue to *insist* and persist by following Torah. What is ironic here is that Žižek interprets Paul as the decisive break between Judaism and Christianity, and this happens precisely in the notion of the dissolution of Law. If Jews already had this unplugged experience of the Law, however, why would not Paul just teach that? The answer, it seems, is that it is not enough for someone to know that God does not exist; God herself has to learn that she does not exist.

For Žižek, Christ is sort of a reincarnation of the figure of Job. Whereas Job silently acknowledges the impotence of God, Christ *is God himself acknowledging his own impotence* in silent death. While Jews operated for centuries with the knowledge that the Law is impotent, Christ and Paul, as his messenger, now make this understanding of the Law universal—it is now open to everyone. This is the Truth-Event for Žižek, whereas Badiou finds it in the "fable" of the resurrection. For Žižek, the resurrection exists as the collective of "believers" themselves. They are bound together in communist love for one another, obligated to each other. The revelation of the Christ-Event, then, is that God was always-already dead. Now that the collective understands that there is no guarantee to the community, that there is no "big Other" watching over the community, its members are free at last. However, this interpretation contrasts with Žižek's claim that people need to at least believe there is some sort of power working through them:

> Many of my atheist friends say to me: 'Yes, so this is atheism: there's no god up there, we create god in our image, and so on.' But it is not that: I don't think one can translate theology into secular humanism. Not because of any secret, obscure reason but because there must be a moment of thinking that it is not we who are acting, but a higher force that is acting through us. This element has to be maintained.[19]

Do we not still have a God or semi-sentient "big Other" here? What is the nature of Žižek's higher force? He first likens it to the slime in films like *Terminator II* which always recombines after the heroes thought they had destroyed it. Yet, Žižek reverses this, likening the slime or liquid metal to the spirit of Jesus that the Romans tried to execute. Such a spirit organizes the community of believers through the mechanism of the "higher force." Questions remain, however. How does this process occur? Moreover, *what did Jesus actually teach? What was this spirit of his concerned with?* Žižek's gloss on the theology should not be assumed to accurately represent or to be the same as Paul's "Gospel." We know of no Christians or Jews that believe or practice their traditions in the way that Žižek assumes. Does his account have any actual viability if virtually no one believes in this manner?

Simon Critchley's Paul

Critchley's Paul is the ultimate revolutionary. Paul never experienced a conversion, in Critchley's view, rather Paul merely responded to a call. This call is akin to Badiou's Truth-Event, and it is the response to this event that creates the subject (of Truth). The call of Christ thus becomes a model for what Critchley calls an "infinite demand," a demand that will always exceed the subject's political or ethical action. Such a demand is infinite in the sense that it is always-already deferred, it is always- almost. It resists an actual presence, but nevertheless resides in the promise.

Sympathetic to anarchism, Critchley interprets Paul as claiming that "Christ was crucified in weakness to become powerful through the resurrection. Likewise, in becoming slaves of the

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[19] "A Meditation on Michelangelo's Christ on the Cross," 179-180.

Messiah, we are asked to abandon our secular, Roman life of freedom, and to assert our weakness. The power of being in Christ is a powerless power … It gives subjects a potentiality for action through rendering them impotent."[20] For Critchley, "Jesus Messiah is beyond existence, or rather he is not proven through the fact of the historical Jesus. As Paul makes clear in Galatians, when Jesus Christ was revealed to Paul in order that he might preach amongst the Gentiles, 'I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me' (Gal. 1:16-17)."[21] This is a rather poor interpretation of Paul, for whom the historical Jesus could not have been irrelevant. Indeed, he thought he was fully in line with the kingdom announced by the historical Jesus—though this is probably historically inaccurate.[22] Isn't this why Paul eventually *did* go up to Jerusalem to consult with Peter and James to confirm that his interpretation of the Gospel was correct?[23]

Critchley prefers instead to search for a faith for the faithless. He wants "to tie the idea of the gospel and evangelical good tidings (*to euaggelion*) to the verbal sense of 'to proclaim' or 'to announce' (*euaggelixomai*). Faith is an announcement that enacts, a proclamation that brings the subject of faith into being."[24] But, more importantly, this faith is not in reference to some "transcendent, metaphysical guarantee" it is, rather, "a powerless power, a strength in weakness."[25] According to Critchley, Paul offers a faith without a transcendent master signified or signifier, "Faith is a word, a word whose force consists in the event of its proclamation. The proclamation finds no support within being, whether conceived as existence or essence."[26] The problem, though, is that the historical Paul is a monotheist who holds that God *is* a transcendent master and who fully expects his vicegerent, the Lord Christ, to reign over the world.

The Failings of the Pauline Turn

Badiou, Žižek, and Critchley each embrace the promise of a collective of believers who are joined in a non-coercive bond of mutual reliance. For them, Paul provides the example *par excellence* of an ancient communist activist, a political activist who *really* believes in something—whether it be a "faith of the faithless" or a "fiction" that offers the possibility of final belief. Also searching for a "higher power" that could motivate political action, Žižek further focuses on a form of political association which he sees as operating in Paul's thought—which he labels "the collective of the spirit." We think it fair to conclude that these thinkers share the view that Paul may indeed provide one model for political activity in response to an infinite demand.

What event did Paul actually respond to? Should it be considered to be an authentic event? Recall that the event, in Badiou's ontology, is *the singular* truth of a particular situation. Considering that all three theorists consider the resurrection to be either a fable (Badiou, Critchley) or an immanent- ization of God in the form of an animating collective spirit (Žižek), we have to consider it to be hardly an actual event. Of course Badiou, Critchley, and Žižek do not actually suggest that if we were in the first century Roman world, we should be faithful to *the* truth event of the resurrection. So, why does the resurrection serve as a model? If anything, it

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[20] Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2014), 160.

[21] Ibid., 164.

[22] In Galatians, Paul describes his disputes with Peter and James, who actually knew the historical Jesus. This indicates that his interpretation may in fact be more of a departure. Moreover, Paul does not quote Jesus but two or three times, whereas the Letter of James quotes Jesus' teachings often.

[23] Galatians 2:1-2 (NRSV).

[24] Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 161.

[25] Ibid., 163.

[26] Ibid., 164.

would be merely a semblance of an actual event. This exposes a problem in Badiou's outline of the event, or at least his use of Paul as a model. It would seem that the historical Jesus who actually spoke on behalf of the groups that were *present* in the Roman imperial order, but not *re-presented* in it—e.g., the poor, the hungry, the persecuted, the slaves, and the tenant farmers—would be a more appropriate model.

Paul proclaims a universal Lord that will require every person, no matter their social location, to submit themselves before him. Whereas Paul's "kingdom" proclamation does not exclude people because of their socio-economic position, the historical Jesus takes a stand: it is the poor who are blessed, *the wealthy are not*. This is much more in line with the "un-included" in the Roman imperial "situation" (what Badiou would term the "void-of-the-situation") *acting* in fidelity to an event (of the "reign or realm of God"). And, because these "outcasts" are those that by nature are "repressed" by the system, then *they are the truth of the Roman imperial system*. Where Paul proclaims a coming Lord that will replace Caesar's empire with God's empire (where the system is inverted), Jesus simply proclaims the "reign of God" without a master—it is a "reign of God" that arrives only by doing, not believing. In the earliest layers of two of our earliest sources for the Jesus Movement (the *Q Gospel* and the *Gospel of Thomas*), we find no proclamation of Jesus as Lord, Messiah, or master. Yet, in Paul, we find the proclamation of a master. As a result, Paul's approach seems to be more akin to an imposition of authoritarian rule than to an authentic event that challenges and overturns the established order.

Let us challenge the tenor and direction of the Pauline turn with this question: What if the resurrection was not the event, but that the event instead was an infinite demand posed by the egalitarian rule of (a non-metaphysical) God? After all, two thousand years is a long time to wait for the second coming of Christ, especially considering that Paul thought it would happen in his lifetime or shortly thereafter. Perhaps Paul was not being faithful to the resurrection as *the* event, but rather to the resurrection as a semblance of the event or an undoing of the event (the reign of God)? Žižek, for example, highlights three ways in which a truth-event can be betrayed:

> [1] simple disavowal, the attempt to follow old patterns as if nothing had happened, just a minor disturbance (the reaction of "utilitarian" liberal democracy); [2] false imitation of the Event of truth (the Fascist staging of the conservative revolution as a pseudo-Event); and [3] a direct "ontologization" of the Event of truth, its reduction to a new positive order of Being (Stalinism).[27]

Paul transformed the event from the proclamation of an egalitarian reign of God and the teacher that died for this infinitely demanding "cause" into a story where this teacher (as Son of God) died on account of "our" societal sins. In Paul's mind, this occurred so that Gentiles might be incorporated into the one universal family of the God of Israel. Can this not be interpreted as an undoing of the event? Here Paul offers a "master figure" that will lead the "revolution." This matches Žižek's second example of the undoing of an event, for here we have a "director" in the mold of Caesar working for justice. The generation that follows Paul (which is exhibited in the Deutero-Pauline letters of Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus) represents Žižek's first example of an undoing of an event because it marks a turn toward Roman conservative values (women are to be silent, slaves and wives are to obey their masters, honor is to be paid to those in authority, etc.) and acts as if nothing has really changed. Finally, Žižek's third example is exhibited in the reign of the Church on earth as a "new positive order of Being."

Of course, Paul did not mean to do this, but it did happen for a reason—the betrayal of the

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[27] Žižek, "A Meditation on Michelangelo's Christ on the Cross," 77.

event of the infinitely demanding reign of God. Paul moves away from focusing on the reign of God that the historical Jesus taught to talking about the *very person of Jesus as the king of the kingdom*. While Paul is an incredible thinker and a gift to Western religious praxis, there are better models for leftist social theorists to highlight. Paul can be rehabilitated, but first one needs to be more honest about what he actually believed.

<center>The "Reign of God" Movements</center>

Žižek, Badiou, and Critchley each ignore the teachings of the historical Jesus. We assume that they have done so for two primary reasons: (1) they believe the teachings of the historical Jesus are lost to history, and (2) the Christ-myth is so influential that the teachings of Jesus recede into the background. However, scholarship on the canonical and non-canonical gospels has uncovered what appears to be material that can be confidently attributed to the historical Jesus. Before analyzing some of these early speeches for their potential use in ideology critique, we will briefly explain how these "earliest" teachings of Jesus and his followers were discovered.

Q

There has been a near consensus among scholars for roughly seventy years that the Gospel of Mark was independently used as a source by the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. However, there are a series of instances in Matthew and Luke where there is significant overlap in themes, illustrations, Greek vocabulary, word order, and sentence structure. There would not be much fuss about the coincidence in pericopes in Matthew and Luke if it happened once or twice, but when it happens throughout both gospels there, is a very good chance that we have another source operating here. Because German scholars discovered it first they called it "Quelle," German for "source," but for English-speaking scholars it is simply referred to as "Q."

Within this reconstructed Q source, Ronald Piper uncovered a series of collections or chains of aphorisms that he called "speeches."[28] These speeches were identifiable because each followed a pattern related to the Hellenistic practice of elaborating aphorisms that were attributed to specific individuals, which the Greeks called *chreia*.[29] The Hellenistic speech pattern found in the text suggests that it is most likely the work of scribes who (re)-contextualized the sayings of Jesus, while simultaneously adding their own ideas.

John S. Kloppenborg also identified the major redactional theme of "judgement on this generation" operating in major sections of the reconstructed Q text.[30] The sapiential material (the six speeches, the prayer, the beatitudes, and the mission speech) was considered formative as opposed to redactional because the judgment material appeared to be commenting on the sapiential material, which suggested that the sapiential material compositionally preceded the judgment stratum. It is part of our thesis to suggest that the material in the formative, sapiential layer of Q served as a resource for the critique of ideology in western Galilean towns.

Gospel of Thomas

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[28] Ronald Piper, *Wisdom in the Q-Tradition: The Aphoristic Teaching of Jesus* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[29] A chreia is to be distinguished from a proverb which is general wisdom that is not attributed to a specific person.

[30] John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Wisdom*, Reprint ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987).

In 1945 a group of Arab Egyptians stumbled upon an ancient jar in the Upper Egyptian town of Nag Hammadi. After much intrigue and drama, the texts were eventually recovered by a number of Coptic scholars. Twelve codices were found in the jar with famous texts such as the *Gospel of Mary*, the *Gospel of Philip*, *The Thunder: Perfect Mind*, and, most significantly, the *Gospel of Thomas*. It was then determined that three Greek gospel fragments discovered in 1897 and 1903 at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt were actually earlier copies of the *Gospel of Thomas* from between 130 and 250 C.E.

While many scholars initially relegated the *Gospel of Thomas* to the heretical dustbin of so- called "Gnosticism," Giles Quispel challenged this determination by postulating a series of stratified layers and sources within the text. While Quispel's claims about the text have been challenged, and for the most part rejected, they opened the door to redaction criticism of the text by a number of scholars. Among them, William Arnal noticed that:

> The Gospel of Thomas shows a considerable degree of formal and thematic inconsistency, which is one of the difficulties that prompted the redaction-critical studies of Q. Taken alone, this inconsistency suggests that the Gospel of Thomas is a composite, in that the traditions comprised in the document derive from various provenances. This does not, however, suggest anything about the processes whereby these traditions were collected, which is the critical literary question undergirding a comparison with Q.[31]

April DeConick offered a detailed redactional analysis of the *Gospel of Thomas* and identified a major theme running throughout it.[32] This theme, unlike the judgment motif in Q, was that of "beginnings speculation." Whereas Q looked to a future judgment and accounting, the major redaction in *Thomas* looked to the beginning. Justin Lasser's work proposes a new redactional analysis of the *Gospel of Thomas*.[33] While Arnal and Lasser disagree with DeConick's understanding of the formative stratum of *Thomas*, it is a good sign that all three agree on the general picture of the major redaction of *Thomas*. Just as Kloppenborg peeled the judgment/deuteronomistic redaction from Q to reveal an earlier layer, we may well have stumbled upon an earlier (formative?) stratum of the *Gospel of Thomas*.

Lasser and DeConick, following Piper's work with Q, have also discovered a series of "speeches" or "arguments" following the Hellenistic pattern of the *progymnasmata*. Given that many of the arguments in *Thomas* and Q share sayings that appear in different contexts in their respective traditions, it seems right to assume that *when Thomas and Q have parallel sayings, we have identified a yet earlier common tradition behind both texts*. From this common material— perhaps we can call it the "Ur- Gospel"—we can examine the way the various common sayings were elaborated into their respective rhetorical locations or communities. So, by tracing the elaboration of the "Ur-Gospel" material into Q and *Thomas*, we can touch upon an early (if not the earliest) form of the "Reign-of-God Movement"— something scholars often refer to as "the Jesus Movement." Before analyzing these early speeches in Q and *Thomas*, we have to consider the situation and ideology that the movement challenged.

The First Century Galilean Context

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[31] William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q*, Kindle ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), loc. 1988-1992.

[32] April DeConick, *Recovering the Original Gospel of Thomas: A History of the Gospel and its Growth* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2006).

[33] Justin M. Lasser, "A Path to the Beginning The Major Redaction of the Gospel of Thomas and Syrian Christian Beginnings" (Union Theological Seminary, 2011).

In his work, *The Historical Jesus*, John Dominic Crossan asks why the "Jesus Movement" happened in the early 20s and 30s of the first century, and why it happened in Roman Palestine. [34] Let us look at local political, social, and economic matters in lower Galilee in the 20s of the first century. [35] What we find first is a building program by one of Herod the Great's sons, Herod Antipas—the Herod that the historical Jesus would have known. While we often imagine the Romans ruling the world with the sword, their most effective control mechanism was economic integration and participation. This was demonstrated in the coins celebrating the victory of the Romans and the divinity of their emperors. (Coins were not just a feature of the economy, they embodied imperial theology.) The Romans set out to commercialize the hinterlands of the empire in order to bring them into the orbit of major cities that were more Hellenized and therefore Romanized. John Crossan and Jonathan Reed compare this effort to the Herodian program of colonization and marketization of the Galilee:

> Look down this hierarchy from top to bottom: from the Roman Empire of Caesar Augustus, through the Jewish kingdom of Herod the Great, to the Galilean-Perean tetrarchy of Herod Antipas. In reverse, from bottom to top: Antipas to Herod to Augustus. The Herodians are not greater than the Romans in anything, but they are miniatures of them in everything. Romanization meant urbanization, which meant commercialization. Watch, then, how, first, Herod the Great built a Roman full-kingdom and, after him but imitative of him, his son Antipas built a Roman bit-kingdom on Jewish soil.[36]

Herod the Great was an Idumean Jewish convert and initially worked within the then-ruling Jewish dynasty of the Hasmoneans of the 50s and 40s of the first century B.C.E. Being politically astute, he correctly anticipated the eventual triumph of the Romans over their Parthian-backed supporters. In 40 B.C.E., Herod asked the Roman Senate to grant him the lands of Idumea, Galilee, Judea, and Samaria. He was given the title of "King of the Jews" and was sent back to Palestine to pacify the region and rule as a client king of the Roman Empire. After much bloody struggle, Herod reigned supreme and began a major building program that also sent an important message to the Romans—"You can trust me, I am a servant of Rome." His founding of the city of Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast sent a similar message and further sought to integrate Herod's kingdom into the Roman commercial empire. Herod also instituted a major refurbishing and building project in Jerusalem with the intention of making Jerusalem a city that would rival other major cities of the Roman Empire such as Alexandria, Ephesus, and Antioch. Crossan and Reed note how these two building projects reflected Herod's two identities: Roman client king and the "King of the Jews." Caesarea Maritima was a Roman city that reflected Roman

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[34] John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, Reprint ed. (New York: HarperOne, 1993).

[35] The historical Jesus is often portrayed as providing a non-violent program that *deliberately* opposed the Jewish Zealots who rebelled violently against Rome and as predicting the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. If Jesus was primarily active in the 20s and early 30s of the first century, though, why would he be resisting a movement that had not yet consolidated? Why would he be predicting the destruction of the Temple some forty years in advance? It seems more likely that the later gospel writers, *who were writing after these events had already taken place*, engaged in their own attempts at interpreting these traumatic events by linking them to a local folk hero who lived forty years earlier. Clearly, the gospel writers rarely give us the historical Jesus, but instead give us a Jesus that answers the questions of their respective eras of the 70s C.E. (Mark), the 80s (Matthew), and the 90's (Luke). Still, while the synoptic gospel authors wrote after the First Revolt (66-70 C.E.), they were all using sources from an earlier era.

[36] John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2003). Kindle edition. loc. 1924-1928.

social hierarchy and commercial ethos, whereas the rebuilding of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem exhibited his status as the pious "King of the Jews." While Herod rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem to the *one and only God of the Jews, Yahweh*, he simultaneously built a temple to the goddess Roma and the divine son of god Augustus in Caesarea.

Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.E., and his will divided his kingdom between his three sons. As but one of the heirs, though, Herod Antipas was refused the title of "King of the Jews" and granted the title of Tetrarch, the "ruler of one quarter" of the kingdom of the Jews. When Augustus Caesar died in 14 C.E., he was succeeded by emperor Tiberias. Having learned from his father's political move with Caesarea, Antipas set out to build a city in the name of the new emperor. While Herod the Great had dotted Judea, Samaria, and Idumea with building projects, little had been done in the Galilee. Seeing the potential for filling his coffers with the surplus of the rich agricultural region of the Galilee, Antipas set the foundations for his city on the southern Galilean coast. Antipas intended his city of Tiberias to exhibit his fidelity to the new Caesar. The commercialization that the city of Tiberias inaugurated would have been felt by the local towns along the western rim of the Sea of Galilee. Antipas also renovated the city of Sepphoris, a city just two miles from Nazareth, which had been sacked by the Syrian Roman legion after a small uprising a few years before. These two cities, Sepphoris and Tiberias, represented a building project that had been intended to win Antipas the affection of Tiberias, and thus the title of "King of the Jews" (something which never happened). Crossan and Reed note that the

> first coins Herod Antipas struck at Sepphoris and Tiberias show the tightrope he walked between trying to build a Jewish kingdom in the Roman world: they avoided his image and, instead, bore representations such as reeds, palm branches, and palm trees, symbols that were appropriately Jewish, but not necessarily foreign to the wider Greco-Roman world.[37]

For Antipas, balancing Jewish theological commitments (his were suspect[38]) and fidelity to Rome was not easy.

Beyond Antipas' interest in making a name for himself and attracting the eye of Tiberias Caesar, he intended to extract the agricultural surplus from the Galilean countryside. Whereas Caesarea Maritima connected the coastal regions to the Mediterranean market, the hinterlands of Galilee lacked any clear center of trade. Integrating the Galilee into his kingdom, and thereby Rome's, was a chief concern for Antipas. By building Tiberias on the southwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee, Antipas altered the economy of the Galilean region with the intent of siphoning off its surplus. This shift is evinced in the minting of coins, although the fact that such local coins "are relatively sparse even in Galilee itself indicates that the economy was not already monetized and that it was not easily or quickly monetized by Antipas."[39] According to William Arnal, "These foundations had a decisive effect on Galilean economic production and organization (as was precisely their intention). This effect in turn was socially disruptive on a day-to-day basis, and, among other things, changed the character of rural social organization and hierarchy. It is against such a context that Q reacts."[40] We would add that these economic disruptions also represented a focus for both the first layer of the *Gospel of Thomas* and perhaps even the

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[37] Ibid., loc. 2083-2086.

[38] This is why he divorced his non-Jewish wife and married his half-brother's Hasmonean (i.e., Jewish) wife. John the Baptist is remembered for criticizing this move, which appears to have been the primary reason he lost his head.

[39] William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q*, Kindle ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), loc. 1988-1992.

[40] Ibid., loc. 1484-1491.

historical Jesus.

The following table highlights the contrasting social and economic situations in Galilee both prior to and after the founding of Tiberias.[41]

The Galilee before the founding of Tiberias	Antipas' program for integrating the Galilee
People lived in small collective villages	Growth of larger estates controlled by elite absentee landlords in the city
"Maintenance-oriented" small farms	Profit-oriented plantations
Families owned enough land to feed their families with little surplus	Farms were bought and former owners were hired as tenants increasing the "labor-to-product ratio"
Villages were "self-regulating"	Lands were owned by absentee landlords
Little division of labor	Division of labor among laborers and tenants
Villagers banded together to help one another harvest	Laborers were given defined tasks
Shared use of village agricultural technologies (e.g., winepresses, olive presses, tools, threshing equipment, etc.)	Farming equipment was owned by the landlords
Little evidence of money hoarding	With monetization one finds an increase in monetary hoarding in the cities
Exchange of goods was primarily performed with a barter system	Exchange of goods were to be done with coin—this would make the surplus in the Galilee easier to move to cities like Sepphoris and then on to Caesarea or Tyre on the coast
A belief that Yahweh owned the land, and that it was granted to families	An effort to urbanize through monetization
Farming primarily for subsistence and some leisure products (such as wine)—this was for the benefit of the peasantry and their villages	Encouragement of cash-cropping and specialization—this benefitted the elite classes in the city

The table above underscores Arnal's claim that Q represents a village reaction to the monetization and commercialization of the lower Galilee by Antipas. The purveyors of the earlier layers in the *Gospel of Thomas* most likely participated in this critique and resistance as well.

The formative strata of Q and *Thomas*, following the work of Kloppenborg, Arnal, and Lasser, can be placed in the context of the lower-Galilean response to the socio-economic and ideological changes that the foundation of Tiberias (and rebuilding of Sepphoris, twelve miles or so away) inaugurated c. 18-23 C.E. The critique of ideology performed in the Q material harkens back to an egalitarian way of life which probably never existed, but persisted as an ideal in the prophetic texts of the Hebrew Bible and in parts of the Torah. This critique contrasted the commercializing empire of Rome and Antipas with an empire ruled by the Jewish God, Yahweh—what Jesus called "*malkuta dismayya*," (in Greek, the "*basileia tou theou*").

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[41] This information is derived from ibid.; John S. Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

The "Reign of God" Movements

For over a generation, historical Jesus scholarship interpreted the early Q material to be evidence of a wandering itinerant movement. Arnal and Kloppenborg have challenged this depiction by concentrating on the fact that Q was clearly a *text* and represented the interests of settled communities. Arnal proposed that the "mission" speech in Q—often interpreted as the earliest evidence of the "Jesus Movement"—represented a program. Let's take a look at this "speech" with the earlier *Thomas* version next to it:

Gospel of Thomas	Q Gospel
Speech III Challenge: 6.1 His followers asked him: "Do you want us to fast? In what way should we fast? Should we give alms? What foods should we not eat?" Proposition/Chreia: 14.1 Jesus said to them: "If you fast you will produce sin for yourselves. And if you pray, you will be condemned. And if you give alms you will do harm to your spirits."	Q 9:57-61 And someone said to him: I will follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said to him: Foxes have holes, and birds of the sky have nests; but the son of humanity does not have anywhere he can lay his head. But another said to him: Master, permit me first to go and bury my father. But he said to him: Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead. Another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."
	Q 10:2-16 He said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. So ask the Lord of the harvest to dispatch workers into his harvest. Be on your way! Look, I send you like sheep in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no knapsack, nor sandals, nor stick, and greet no one on the road.
Example: 14.2 *And* in whatever land you enter and in which you walk, if they receive you eat whatever is put before you, and heal the sick among them. Rationale: 14.3 *For,* what goes into your mouth will not pollute you; rather, that which comes from your mouth will pollute you."	Into whatever house you enter, first say: Peace to this house! And if a son of peace be there, let your peace come upon him; but if not, let, your peace return upon you. And at that house remain «eating and drinking whatever they provide», for the worker is worthy of one's reward. Do not move around from house to house. And whatever town you enter and they take you in, «eat what is set before you». And cure the sick there, and say to them: The kingdom of God has reached unto you. But into whatever town you enter and they do not take you in, on going out ·from that town, shake off the dust from your feet. Whoever takes you in takes me in, and, whoever takes me in takes in the one who sent me.

Given that wandering itinerant sages do not normally write texts such as Q, the context outlined

in the sections above suggests that these were instructions for "messengers" for local towns on the southwestern rim of the Sea of Galilee. These "missionaries" or "messengers" were trying to encourage the local towns to join this "reign of God" movement in opposition to the ideological program represented by the foundation of Tiberias. The messengers were sent to local towns with a particular (lack of) garb on purpose. They "carry no purse, no knapsack" in order to demonstrate their dependence on both God and their neighbors.

They clearly expected to be welcomed as sages. They were not merely searching for wisdom, they were bringing a program, and that program was referred to as the "reign of God." They wore no sandals to demonstrate their poverty and commitment, and carried no "stick" so as to come defenseless—in other words, they were not a threat. They hoped that people would join this "reign of God" movement as a means of resisting commodification and commercialization. They believed that if each village "signed on" to the movement, they would be successful in recovering the ideal form of being Israel (as depicted in the great social prophets like Amos and Micah).

The "program" proclaimed by these messengers was concerned with showing what the Galilee would be like if "God" were in charge. We should not miss the significance of the Greek word for this; *basileia* is also the way one would refer to the Roman empire. In other words, to talk about the "empire of God" was to challenge the "empire of Rome." The Romans clearly got the joke of comparing the "empire of God" with the "empire of Rome," but they were not laughing. When we find the early "reign of God" movement blessing the poor and hungry, they are not merely declaring their "spiritual" innocence. This was a political and religious program: *if the towns followed the teachings of the "reign of God" movement, then the poor would be blessed and the hungry fed*. Consider this speech from the first layer of Q:

> Proposition/Chreia: Love your enemies and pray for those persecuting you, so that you may become sons of your Father,
> Rationale: *for* he raises his sun on bad and ·good and rains on the just and unjust.
> Example: The one who slaps you on the cheek offer him the other as well; and to the person wanting to take you to court and get your shirt, turn over to him, the coat as well.
> Example: «And the one who conscripts you for one mile, go with him a second.»
> Example: To the one who asks of you, give; and ·from the one who borrows, do not ·ask, back
> ·«what is», yours.
> Judgment: And the way you want people to treat you, that is how you treat them. Rhetorical Questions: If you love those loving you, what reward do you have?
> Do not even tax collectors do the same?
> And if you lend «to those» from whom you hope to receive, what <reward do> you < have>? Do not even the Gentiles, do the same?
> Conclusion: Be full of pity, just as your Father is full of pity.[42]

If God were in charge, then people would love their enemies, forgive debts, provide for the needs of each other, share burdens, and operate with compassion.

Based on the Q and *Thomas* texts,[43] then, we can reconstruct a social history of the

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[42] Q 6: 27-36 (International Q Project translation).

[43] While there are other early Christian texts (e.g., the synoptic Gospels and the writings of Paul), these two sayings-gospel texts (in their earliest layers) represent the earliest material from which to view the early "reign of God" movement. We lose reference to this

communities that produced and shared them, to wit: Following the sage-like pattern of the historical Jesus, a small number of followers started to talk about Jesus' teachings. The followers or messengers spread the teachings throughout various meal/symposia settings, and the ideas grew in popularity. As a result, Jesus of Nazareth became a sort of folk hero in the region of the Galilee. Eventually a small group, perhaps in Capernaum on the northwestern cost of the Sea of Galilee, started to imagine Jesus' teachings as part of a program that might help them resist the commodification and commercialization brought by Herod Antipas.

Village scribes in the Galilee started to elaborate the sayings of Jesus and even began to invent new ones in line with his teachings according to the chreia-elaborative schemes that they learned in the Hellenistic *gymnasia*. Many of these elaborations were written down in the form of small speeches of the sort that we find in both *Thomas* and Q. After these speeches were composed, various volunteers would follow in the footsteps of Jesus and set off as itinerant sages to bring the "good news" (gospel) of the "reign of God" movement to different towns along the northwestern rim of the Sea of Galilee. Their message was often presented to the local elders in the meal setting, following the Q and *Thomas* "mission" speeches by *exchanging a teaching and care for the sick for a meal and fellowship*.[44] Such an exchange was customary for a sage, but in this context, its primary purpose was to encourage participation in the "reign of God" movement.

The program of these itinerant sages (like the historical Jesus) and sedentary village scribes (those responsible for writing Q) drew on their particular interpretations of the teachings of Jesus. For example, they believed that the "reign of God" of which Jesus spoke was to be realized through a de- emphasis on material goods (money, commodities) conjoined with a renewed emphasis on local co- dependence. In such an idealized economy, participants were to care for others more than themselves. The poor were to be cared for and the hungry were to be fed. Indeed, if *anyone* was hungry or poor it was incumbent upon the community to take a shared responsibility in the collective. There was no coercion here; the village was invited to participate. In this idealized community, members had the "right" to *use* what was needed, but they did not have a "right" to *withhold* necessities.

In understanding the program of the "reign of God" movements, it helps to recall that ideologies or belief systems serve a variety of functions for individuals, groups, and systems. As a form of theory, ideologies begin with a diagnosis and a critical evaluation of contemporary society. As action-oriented theory, ideologies seek to advance a particular vision of a better society by making recommendations for directing social and political change. Any ideological framework, then, is comprised of three essential elements: (1) *diagnosis*: an ontology of the political world, a description and explanation of how political life works, a statement what is wrong with the world; (2) *evaluation*: a utopian vision or a set of values and goals that, if realized, would realize the desired values and make the world a better place; and (3) *action orientation*: a theory of social and political change, a plan of action for getting from here (where we are) to there (where we want to be).[45] In short, the views of the "reign of God" movements,

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early movement in the second layers of Q and Thomas, as it morphs into something scholars refer to as the "Jesus movement." In the latter case, we find Jesus as a retroactive "founder" of the community. Their faithfulness to the ideals of the movement are replaced by their fidelity to Jesus as an authority and founder. One was in the movement not by acting as if one were in the reign of God, but rather by following Jesus' teachings. This subtle shift (from "reign of God" movement to "Jesus movement") takes on a more mythological form in the Gospel of Mark. This narrative (which made sense of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple) was far more compelling after the Jewish War than the hopeful and confident proclamation of the "reign of God." Now, the "kingdom of God" referred to a kind of apocalyptic expectation. Paul, who rarely, if ever, mentions any of the teachings of Jesus appears to not know the teachings of the "reign of God" movement. He rather elevates the crucified Jesus to the status of God's vicegerent that will come again (parousia) to reign on behalf of God, thus encouraging communities to prepare for Christ's return.

[44] For a detailed analysis of this "open commensality" between sages, healings, and the sharing of meals, see Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*.

[45] Kenneth Dolbeare and Linda Metcalf, *American Ideologies Today: Shaping the New Politics of the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York:

like those of any other group, serve to provide people with an understanding of the world, some sense of both personal identity and solidarity with others, and finally, a spur and guide for political action.

As noted above, the "reign of God" movements in the Galilee certainly opposed many features of the social, economic, and political order of the day. They disliked such social conventions as codes of honor or shame; they criticized a family structure built along notions of kinship through bloodlines. The movements attacked the advent of a commodified and monetized economy; they opposed reigning practices of land ownership and predatory lending; and they bristled at lost financial stability. Naturally, they were also highly critical of Roman imperial domination. All in all, we can characterize their understanding of the "reign of God" as a utopian vision of a self-regulating community rooted in such values as mutual dependence, collective social and economic responsibility, a notion of "family" as a set of relations defined by commitment, a barter economy, and a culture of sharing.

Contemporary Perspectives

The ideas and practices of the "reign of God" movement are significant enough for providing an alternative understanding of the foundations of Christianity. They also show that religious teachings can indeed embody criticisms of existing social, economic, and political relations. In a word, religion can be a source of ideology critique. As we have shown, this is certainly true at the level of the text and the suggestive evidence that ancient texts can provide. The question remaining unanswered by the analysis so far is whether or not the critique goes further than recovered words and reconstructed social histories. Ideology critique, like the broader social change of which it is a part, cannot be just about the saying. It must also be about the *doing*.

The focus on doing, on action, is an important part of the contemporary world of radical theory and practice. In the last few decades, a number of post-Marxist theorists, along with Marxists in the autonomist tradition, have come to acknowledge that familiar certitudes about social and political change no longer hold sway. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, for example, observed that in the hegemonic contests that characterize capitalist society, the working-class identity of the revolutionary subject could no longer be taken for granted.[46] Similarly, Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and John Holloway, have all argued that traditional socialist verities need to be jettisoned in the context of new social forms.[47] Ideas that revolutions are brought about by structural inevitabilities and foreordained subjects simply do not match the experiences that people have in economies that are information-based and globalized or in societies that function through biopower and spectacle. Instead of relying on the maxims of historical materialism, the focus has shifted to the centrality of struggle.

Even more noteworthy than this shift in Marxist thought has been the rejuvenation of anarchism. As Saul Newman notes, "Given the decline of Marxism as both a political and theoretical project—and given the desire for a politics that avoids statism, authoritarianism, class essentialism and economism—perhaps it is time to invoke the anarchist tradition, or at least reflect more seriously upon it as a radical political alternative."[48] Since the early 1990s, self-identified anarchists have been at the center of movements of resistance to globalized capitalism,

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McGraw-Hill, 1993).

[46] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).

[47] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, New ed. (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

[48] Saul Newman, "Anarchism, Poststructuralism and the Future of Radical Politics," *SubStance: A Review of Theory & Literary Criticism* 36, no. 2 (2007): 12.

environmental destruction, war, dispossession, and exclusion.[49] Its emphasis on direct action, horizontal organizations, and cultural experimentation have played a significant role in shaping Occupy Wall Street and subsequent protests against the global financial crisis and austerity measures. These actions and a growing academic literature have combined to frame anarchism "as a set of tactics for challenging authority and as a working vision of a better world that is always in the offing."[50]

In what follows, our aim will be to show that the ideas and practices of the "reign of God" movements in the first century resonate with those of today's autonomist and anarchist tendencies. In doing so, the task is not merely to identify unexpected similarities between disparate peoples across the millennia. Rather, the project is to show that that ideology critique—conceived as simultaneously a *discursive* and a *political* practice—may indeed operate in similar ways no matter which particular society may be under scrutiny.

Discursive practice

Inspired by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe demonstrated that ideology critique and ideological change occur in the context of hegemonic struggle. Neither the participants nor the outcomes of that struggle, though, are predetermined; both are constituted by and in the course of the struggle itself. Their work inaugurated an approach to studying ideology rooted in discourse analysis, a subject which Laclau further developed in later work.[51] One merit of the approach is that it focuses on hegemonic contests, typically seen as a clash between two great contending ideologies—one upholding the status quo, one challenging it. Not all ideological contests are binary, but this is the paradigm case.

Movements and the ideologies they promote thus develop through two mechanisms—logics of difference (using signifiers to establish the boundary between inside and outside, between us and them) and logics of equivalence (using signifiers to bring challengers to the status quo together under an umbrella idea). Following Laclau, we can explore the discursive operations by which these logics operate within ideologies and show how ideological variants manage their boundaries in the course of competing for prominence or adherents. From what we know, the "reign of God" movement found itself in just such a hegemonic contest.[52] It sought to delegitimize Roman imperial rule and its economic consequences in the Galilee. In this effort, as we noted, the movement's sages ironically used the term "empire" as a way of contrasting Roman rule with that of the coming "reign of God." Only empires can exercise rule over us, they seem to have said, but some empires are better than others. The imperial power of Rome and its counterparts in Jerusalem equally stood in the way of both the autonomy of village communities and, more importantly, the renewal of the covenant. In Galilee, as Richard Horsley has noted, "the popular prophetic movements and the popular messianic movements were following distinctively Israelite 'scripts' based on memories of God's original acts of deliverance led by the great prophets Moses and Joshua or by the young David as the people's 'messiah.' Memories of these founding events were still alive in villager communities, ready to inform the people's collective

[49] Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci Is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005); Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive! Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); Leonard Williams, "Anarchism Revived," *New Political Science* 29, no. 3 (2007).

[50] Randall Amster, *Anarchism Today* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), xiv.

[51] Ernesto Laclau, ed. *The Making of Political Identities* (London: Verso, 1994); *Emancipation(s)* (London: Verso, 1996); *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society* (London: Verso, 2014).

[52] Of course, there is some debate about social relations and economic conditions in first-century Galilee. For an overview, see Mark Rapinchuk, "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research," *Currents in Biblical Research* 2, no. 2 (2004).

action in circumstances of social crisis."[53] However, there are other scholars, such as Burton Mack, Gerald Downing, and Leif Vaage,[54] who argue that the concept of the "reign of God" as reflected in the earliest layer of Q is the product of a cynic milieu, rather than a specific romanticization of a lost imperial Davidic-Solomonic dynasty. In this sense, a cynic- like notion of the "reign of God" would be a self-adopted "way" of life, rather than an imposed order. [55][54]

The ideological boundary thus established, it remained for messengers to travel the land, speak with people, and win allies. In hegemonic struggles, building a coalition of opponents to the established order involves the use of "empty signifiers," which make unity in opposition possible by giving people a common language or symbol—especially one that folks can interpret in various ways.[56] Certainly, the "reign of God" is just such a signifier. Devoid of determinate content, no one quite knows what such a reign might be or what it might be like. Believers, adherents, and possible converts would be free to fill in the details as their own imaginations saw fit. Further, the movement's recruiters also employed signifiers that simultaneously framed their identity and encouraged others to accept them. By carrying no stick and wearing no sandals, for instance, the sages showed to all the world that they were neither threatening to anyone nor much different from anyone else in Galilee. With recruiters having the right talk and the right look, then, the possibility of expanding the opposition remained a real one.

Ideological and political struggles such as those in Galilee are usually conceived in the manner set forth by Marx and Engels in the *Manifesto*.[57] The history of class struggle in any epoch, they observed, generally reduced to a story of two great contending classes—master and slave, lord and serf, bourgeois and proletarian. To be sure, the historical analyses that Marx and Engels produced were more nuanced, but the binary trope has long remained attractive. For many radical activists and thinkers, the industrial working class continues to be the prototypical revolutionary subject—no others need apply. That privileged position has been challenged in recent decades not only by post-structuralist opposition to so-called "master narratives," but also by Marxist theorists who have recognized that capitalism no longer provides the luxury of knowing who the saviors are. In this context, the work of Hardt and Negri offers another important take on the antagonisms and struggles of the day.[58]

For Hardt and Negri, forces such as globalization, "immaterial labor," and biopower have altered the traditional dynamics of capitalist society. As a result, our conceptions of society, economics, and politics all need to be rethought in order to capture this more fluid, dynamic, and networked order. Hardt and Negri christened this new order "Empire," contrasted it with imperial and sovereign powers of the past, and analyzed its ability to control production, politics, and social life in a myriad of ways. Lest advocates of social change begin to despair, though, Hardt

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[53] Richard Horsley, "Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," in *Christian Origins: A People's History of Christianity*, ed. Richard Horsley (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 16.

[54] Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins*, Reprint ed. (New York: HarperOne, 2013); Francis Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000); Leif E. Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus' First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994).

[55] The historical Jesus refrained from talking about "God" and preferred to talk about the realm or reign of God. This is much more in line with Critchley's notion of faith being action as opposed to belief. Who God was was not discussed by Jesus, nor did he present himself as *the*, or even, *a* messiah. His lifestyle was much like that of Epictetus, the Cynic: "without a city, without a house, without possessions, without a slave; I sleep on the ground; I have no wife, no children, no praetorium, but only the earth and heavens, and one poor cloak …" (Epictetus, Discourses 3.22:45-49, Oldfather 2.146-147). Note, though, that scholars such as Crossan and Mack do not claim that Jesus was a cynic philosopher, rather the cynics provide the closest analogy to his views.

[56] Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 36-46.

[57] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, (Marxists Internet Archive, 2010 [1848]), https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf.

[58] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

and Negri (following Michel Foucault) quickly acknowledge that power and sovereignty cannot exist without also engendering and constructing forms of resistance. Resistance to Empire emerges from the multitude, conceived as a hybridized collection of people around the globe who "are driven at base not only by the struggle against misery and poverty but also by a profound desire for democracy—a real democracy of the rule of all by all based on relationships of equality and freedom."[59] Similar to the "movement of movements" that characterized protests against globalization, the multitude provides Hardt and Negri with the sort of distributed network that can challenge a pervasive and invasive imperial power.

Although Galilee in the first century clearly did not share the systematic features of our globalized order, the "reign of God" movement described above did show some qualities that are resonant with the concept of the multitude. For one, the "reign of God" movement appears to have operated like a distributed network. There seems to have been no central headquarters issuing orders, no single acknowledged leader making authoritative speeches. Although the texts we have provide something like instructions for the movement's roving messengers, the instructions may not have been any more stringent than a dress code, say. Messengers likely had freedom to portray the "reign of God" as they saw fit, based no doubt upon their own communicative style and upon whatever questions and concerns village elders expressed.

For another, the social standing of movement participants was clearly not a high one. Without an industrial proletariat or a tradition of labor activism, there could have been no sense of a privileged revolutionary subjectivity among the Q community peoples. Like the multitude in Hardt and Negri's account, people in the "reign of God" movement probably lived outside the center of Galilean social, economic, and political life. Indeed, the "frequent attention to debts and their cancellation" in their rhetoric points to their intended target—"an audience still on the land but unable to make ends meet, given the demands for taxes and tribute."[60] If their social and economic situation made them peripheral to begin with, they already had the credibility to criticize people in power and to make common cause with similarly situated others. As Horsley notes:

> Some of the principal leaders of the Jesus movements were apparently 'downwardly mobile' people with direct experience of indebtedness to the very power holders who were oppressing the people with heavy taxation and interest on loans prohibited by Israelite covenantal law. These leaders would have had an unusually poignant sense of how the Israelite ideal of a life of cooperation and justice in semi-independent, self-sustaining communities was disintegrating.[61]

Given their status, they could construct a discourse that highlighted the concerns of those left behind by the social and economic changes that were transforming Galilee. Arnal adds that Q exhibits the features of a "rhetoric of uprootedness." He claims that this "downwardly mobile" group must have included the village scribes—hence the assumption that Q was a text, and not just an oral tradition.[62]

Perhaps a better sense of what the Galileans may have been up to can be gained from

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[59] *Multitude*, 67.
[60] Horsley, "Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," 27.
[61] Ibid., 29-30.
[62] Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes*, chapter 5.

John Holloway's compelling statement: "In the beginning is the scream."[63] For Holloway, all of the trappings of revolutionary theory and practice come down to one thing—the scream. The scream is an articulation of frustration, anger, and dissatisfaction at the unjust society that we inhabit. The scream is the voice of our spirit, the spring of our actions, and the source of our rebellion, "Our scream is a scream to break windows, a refusal to be contained, an overflowing, a going beyond the pale, beyond the bounds of polite society."[64]

The autonomist strain within Marxism stresses the importance of struggle, and Holloway's work reminds us that, while it may sometimes appear futile, resistance is ever present. Indeed, in the first century, Galilee saw a series of peasant revolts and resistance movements. "Almost all of these revolts, protests, and movements were directed both against the foreign imperial rule of the Romans and against the Herodian and high priestly rulers in Jerusalem."[65] As we would expect, these movements did not operate unhindered, nor were they ultimately able to throw off the yoke. They faced strong counter-insurgency efforts from the forces of Rome and Jerusalem alike. Indeed, passages in Mark and Q show that "the movements had come to the attention of the rulers of Galilee and other territories, who periodically took repressive action to check the growth of the movement."[66] Military force, general brutality, and targeted executions, all worked effectively in achieving that aim.

What the long history of revolts and insurrections—whether by peasants, workers, or students—reveals is that power is enormously resilient. The established order has all the resources it needs, and it has a strong interest in protecting its social, economic, and political position. Popular forces either trying to defend and preserve a way of life or, more ambitiously, seeking to alter the very foundations of social order always seem to be lacking. In an age of distributed imperial power, storming a Bastille is less of an option when the sites themselves are hidden. In an age of pervasive biopower, the very subjectivities we rely on for revolution have been constructed and shaped by power itself. In an age of spectacle, the possibilities for gaining a foothold for ideology critique seem greatly limited by the amusements and distractions produced by the culture industry.

Political practice

It is true that we scream, and we talk, but our vocalizations mean little unless we also act. The imperative to act is rooted in a demand that calls us to an "ethics of commitment and politics of resistance."[67] Recognition of this demand has helped make anarchism, with its thoroughgoing critique of authority, appealing to poststructuralist thinkers and anti-authoritarian activists alike. Anarchism today rests on "an ethical duty to question and resist domination in all its forms."[68] In accepting that duty and meeting its demands, anarchists challenge the state and question authority—whenever and wherever they seek to totalize social relations or dominate political practices. What anarchism brings to politics, in other words, is a pervasive and compelling spirit

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[63] Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, 1.

[64] Ibid., 6.

[65] Horsley, "Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," 15.

[66] Ibid., 36.

[67] Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 3.

[68] Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 166.

of revolt—a "spectacular, creative and imaginative disturbance of the state."[69]

The question, then, is not *whether* to act, but *how* to act—toward what ends, following what principles, and with what spirit? Marxism, framed as a theory focused on the seizure of state power, generally has postponed answering such questions to a distant, ever-receding time (after the revolution), when it has not ignored them altogether. By contrast, the anarchist tradition brings such questions front and center. As Todd May has noted, anarchism operates as a tactical theory—a theory of social and political practice—not a strategic one, focused on obtaining an ultimate goal.[70] As a tactical theory, anarchism should be seen as a practical doctrine, as a creed formed in the context of activism, as a form of thinking through doing. In both past and present, then, "the bulk of ongoing anarchist praxis and discourse takes place on the micro level of face-to-face collectives and affinity groups, and the meso level of the local milieu or (mini-)network of anarchists in a particular locale, such as a town or city."[71]

Doing what one can, wherever one can, however one can, provides the only prospect of making headway in the battle against the machine. One cannot focus on seizing state power because doing so would simply reinstitute a key source of oppression. As Holloway reminds us, "You cannot build a society of non-power relations by conquering power. Once the logic of power is adopted, the struggle against power is already lost."[72] Rather, the point of political activity is to act as if one were already free. Anarchist practice is built upon a preference for self-directed action, for cooperation without hierarchy or domination, for a prefigurative politics. This standpoint has been labeled the "anarchist squint" by James Scott, whose studies of popular movements and everyday politics have led him to embrace "the anarchist tolerance for confusion and improvisation that accompanies social learning, and confidence in spontaneous cooperation and reciprocity."[73] Anarchist practice is focused on building the new society in the shell of the old, as an old Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) slogan put it. It aims to create a set of institutions, resources, skills, and experiences that delegitimize authority and induce a change in perspective, all the while insisting that there *is* an alternative to the present order.[74] Anarchism "is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties or corporations; networks based on principles of decentralized, non-hierarchical consensus democracy."[75]

In this context, naturally, we are not saying that the "reign of God" movement was anarchist in nature or that its approach was proto-anarchist. Rather, we note that a number of themes within the anarchist tradition have some resonance with what took place in first-century Galilee. Two themes readily emerge as useful in this inquiry—*affinity* and *insurrection*. Regarding the former, most theorists would argue that anarchists "believe that human freedom and happiness would be best guaranteed by a society based on principles of self-organization, voluntary association, and mutual aid, and because we reject all forms of social relations based on systemic violence, such as the state or capitalism."[76] In contrast with top-down approaches to

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[69] Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 123.

[70] Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

[71] Uri Gordon, "Anarchism Reloaded," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 1 (2007): 33.

[72] Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, 17.

[73] James C. Scott, *Two Cheers for Anarchism: Six Easy Pieces on Autonomy, Dignity, and Meaningful Work and Play* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), xii.

[74] Howard J. Ehrlich, "How to Get from Here to There: Building Revolutionary Transfer Culture," in *Reinventing Anarchy, Again*, ed. Howard J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1996).

[75] David Graeber, "The New Anarchists," *New Left Review*, no. 13 (2002): 70.

[76] Andrej Grubacic, "Towards An Another Anarchism," http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/11028.

political activism, approaches focused on taking power, today's anarchists have "an *affinity for affinity*, that is, for non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based and [sic] mutual aid and shared ethical commitments."[77] Given the analyses of power alluded to above, it is clear that political action cannot proceed in the manner of familiar narratives of cataclysmic revolution. Instead, radicals have to operate through a micropolitics that recognizes the local and contingent nature of political life. Hence, poststructuralist anarchists like Todd May call "for social, personal, and political experimentation, the expansion of situated freedom, the release of subjected discourses and genres, and the limitation and reorientation of the role of the intellectual."[78]

While the first-century Galilee should not be seen as a progenitor of Sixties-era hippie communes, it is probably "best understood as a traditional agrarian society with peasants living in relatively autonomous villages."[79] Most peasants were small landowners or tenant farmers, while others obviously made a living from fishing. Regardless, their economic status was certainly precarious, a form of subsistence living.[80] The messengers involved in the "reign of God" or Jesus movements came from close-knit communities, and they traveled to similar ones as they sought allies or converts. Messengers had to have been people who had been set loose from the land, from their homes, in order to have had the ability to go from village to village. The evidence from texts like Q suggests that the messengers found affinity with each other, but more importantly, sought out like-minded people in each village that they entered. Their primary focus was to persuade the elders who held sway in village assemblies, "As the religious-political form of local cooperation and self-governance of the semi-independent village communities, the assemblies dealt with common concerns such as the water supply and held community prayers and discussions."[81] Not only were the messengers engaged in spreading a religious message, then, they were essentially doing community organizing.[82]

Still, we should not expect to find a text from some first-century Saul Alinsky. The kind of organizing done was more subtle, perhaps even secretive, than one might think at first. Although the communities in the Galilee were relatively autonomous, if only because Roman rule was indirect, they were not necessarily egalitarian. Scholars like Sean Freyne, for instance, "allow for the possibility that the Galilee did have some 'native princes' and a type of 'indigenous aristocracy' did develop" in the first century.[83] While the village assemblies were the ultimate authority, the elders carried great weight in their deliberations. Hence, the key to gaining converts to the movement was to convince the elders—an effort done largely through private conversations over communal meals. In other words, the messengers of the "reign of God" movement seemed to have opted for a first-century version of what many of today's radicals have adopted—"a decentralised and temporary form of nomadic micro-politics based on alternative electronic networking, immediacy, and the regeneration of everyday life."[84] Existing in the interstices of the established order, the Galilean effort of building a movement in close quarters, one meal at a time, reminds us of the iconic form of affinity-based organizing, the Temporary Autonomous Zone

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[77] Day, *Gramsci Is Dead*, 9, original emphasis.

[78] May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 112.

[79] Rapinchuk, "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research," 202.

[80] Ibid., 203.

[81] Horsley, "Jesus Movements and the Renewal of Israel," 28.

[82] If we focus on the village scribes, who were more sedentary, the picture is somewhat different. Arnal uses the phrase "the rhetoric of uprootedness" to underscore the notion that it was not that the scribes had no homes, but that they had been demoted in status.

[83] Rapinchuk, "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research," 208.

[84] John Armitage, "Ontological Anarchy, the Temporary Autonomous Zone, and the Politics of Cyberculture: A Critique of Hakim Bey," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 4, no. 2 (1999): 119.

(TAZ).

First theorized by Hakim Bey (the pseudonym of Peter Lamborn Wilson), the TAZ is an "uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it."[85] As Bey conceived it, the TAZ offers a potent mix of peak experience, revolutionary fervor, and ludic carnival. In combining festival, play, and the realization of desire, one acts to create zones of freedom (however fleeting) amid the mundane contexts of a life marked by hierarchy, domination, and ugliness. When activists rely on the TAZ, they command a space for momentary acts of rebellion and autonomy in those aspects of social life where the State does not yet reach. In other words, the TAZ constitutes a tactic of protest and prefiguration; it represents "an island of achieved social change, a place where the revolution *has actually happened*, if only for a few, if only for a short time."[86]

The TAZ, built on a foundation of affinity and community, emphasizes radical freedom and spontaneous action. Another concept of Bey's, Immediatism, further underscores the idea of affinity that has become synonymous with anarchist organizing. The goal of Immediatism is to cut through the Spectacle, to go beyond mediation and alienation, in order to get in touch with the here and now. Bey observes, for example, that an "obvious matrix for Immediatism is the party"—and he did not mean a vanguard one.[87] Parties, games, shared meals, live music and dance, and even quilting bees all exhibit the right spirit. Regardless of form, Immediatism begins (like a dinner party) "with a group of friends trying not just to overcome isolation but also enhance each other's lives."[88] People thus learn the principles of affinity group formation that will shape their other social interactions and eventually will establish the basis for a new society and new forms of relationships. As Bey says: "We're not kidding or indulging in hyperbole when we insist that *meeting-face-to-face is already 'the revolution'*."[89]

More so than most ideologies, anarchism emphasizes practice over theory. It encourages people to take matters into their own hands, to engage in direct action, to advance the cause through "propaganda of the deed." In recent years, as anarchist politics experienced a revival, debates over the direction of the movement reappeared. In the course of those debates, the trope of insurrection has taken root and the meme of insurrectionary anarchism become widespread— often linked to the appearance of *The Coming Insurrection*.[90] Foreshadowing street violence that occurred in Greece and France in 2009, and later tied to occupations in both Europe and South America, the book presented a brief for "new forms of activism, forms that discard older logics of protest, visibility and organization and embrace instead spontaneity and invisibility."[91]

The common link among today's forms of activism has been this spirit of taking charge, of acting as if one were already free, of rebellion and insurrection. As a practice, insurrectionary anarchism is focused on letting loose or going on the attack. "Attack is the refusal of mediation, pacification, sacrifice, accommodation, and compromise in struggle. It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection, although analysis and

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[85] Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, second ed. (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2003), 99, original emphasis.

[86] Day, *Gramsci Is Dead*, 163, original emphasis.

[87] Hakim Bey, *Immediatism* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1994), 11.

[88] Ibid., 17.

[89] Ibid., 21, original emphasis.

[90] The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009). For an overview of insurrectionary anarchism today, see Leonard Williams and Brad Thomson, "The Allure of Insurrection," *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, no. 1 (2011).

[91] Sam Cooper, "The Coming Insurrection: Nothing Will Change Without a Revolution," *Adbusters*, no. 87 (2009), https://www.adbusters.org/magazine/87/coming_insurrection.html.

discussion have a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act."[92] Amid the spectacle that governs modern life, insurrectionist activities initially occur because of their effect on the practitioners. Their ultimate worth, though, is determined by their effect on broader audiences, including the non-anarchist public.[93] It is in this sense that "the force of an insurrection is social, not military."[94] The insurrectionary activist focuses on the imperatives created by the idea and exercise of freedom—which necessarily implies a break with present society. For many anarchists, insurrection throws off the ideological masks of the old society and lays the groundwork for the new one.

Although we need to be careful about putting first-century Galilee into a Procrustean bed shaped by radical theory and practice, peasant revolts were not unknown in that time and place. Indeed, the Galilee broke out in an armed insurrection after the death of Herod. This rebellion was most likely economically motivated and not based on abstract ideals such as religious or nationalist goals. Horsley has described the Galilean peasants of the time as "insurrectionist in two ways, neither of which was organized or actively revolutionary. First, whenever military presence was absent, the population was apt to engage in what might be termed 'peasant anarchy'. Second, they were resistant to 're- conquest'."[95] Freyne, however, focused less on the rebellious nature of the Galilean peasants and more on the effects of their efforts. In his view, their insurrections could not have been an unalloyed good.

Rising up was costly: "the potential loss of crops and produce far outweighed the potential gains one might hope to realize through rebellion."[96] Once again, we do not mean to suggest that the insurrectionists in the first-century Galilee are equivalent to today's insurrectionary anarchists. The point is that the Galilean peasants, like peasants elsewhere, were often in rebellion, and that their rebellious spirit parallels a similar spirit in anarchism, which has been "described first and foremost as a visceral revolt."[97]

Whether our political practice emphasizes affinity or insurrection, building social infrastructure or engaging in confrontation, the core problem of radical change remains: "if there is no uncontaminated point of departure from which power can be criticized or condemned, if there is no essential limit to the power one is resisting, then surely there can be no resistance against it."[98] The challenge is to find a point of leverage that can overthrow structures of domination, without also reviving those same structures—or worse, creating new and more insidious ones. Restoring dignity and ending domination requires that we erase the alienation and fetishism that pervades our lives. It requires erasing the separation of economics and politics, of mental and manual labor, of subject and object, of powerful and powerless, of doing and done. As Gustav Landauer reminded us: "The State is a social relationship; a certain way of people relating to one another. It can be destroyed only by creating new social relationships; i.e., by people relating to one another differently."[99]

Yet emancipation does not come easy, nor does a new social order emerge all at once. As

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[92] "Insurrectionary Anarchy: Organising for Attack!," *Do or Die*, no. 10 (2003), http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no10/anarchy.htm.

[93] Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, "Conceptualizing Resistance," *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004); AK Thompson, *Black Bloc, White Riot: Anti-Globalization and the Geneaology of Dissent* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010).

[94] "Insurrectionary Anarchy: Organising for Attack!".

[95] Rapinchuk, "The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research," 209.

[96] Ibid., 210.

[97] Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 13. See also Cindy Milstein, *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2010).

[98] Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan*, 5.

[99] Gustav Landauer, *Revolution and Other Writings: A Political Reader*, ed. Gabriel Kuhn (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 214.

Holloway has observed: "It is only when grounded in the ubiquity of resistance that revolution becomes a possibility."[100] Even then, possibility is all that remains. The emancipated life is always on the horizon.

Conclusion

In the last decade or so, when they thought about religion at all, Badiou, Žižek, and other leftist social theorists turned their attention to Paul. Paul's letters were an appropriate target for analysis, but what was the source of their attraction? Paul stressed a universalism—neither Jew nor Gentile, neither male nor female—that reminded them of the universal elements of Marxism and communism. He emphasized the centrality of faith, of spirit, rather than the rigidities of law and tradition. Challenging the established order, at least in the domain of religion, Paul could be seen by these theorists as a sort of revolutionary—one who challenged his comrades everywhere to live more purely, to be better people of the faith. Paul was seen as an exemplar of the political ontology they had developed, one centered on the Event that produces a radical discontinuity with the old order. His fervent belief in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus became a prototype for the authentic revolutionaries who must act in fidelity to the Event.

Yet the Pauline turn is a wrong turn. Paul's letters did as much to establish orthodoxy as they did to challenge it. His approach was that of the authoritarian leader who knows what is best for everyone else. In an age where individualism and freedom are the watchwords, it makes little sense for people seeking radical change to put their faith in any particular or designated leader, i.e., to exchange one big Other for another. Equally problematic is the ontology of the Event. Rooted in conceptions of the cataclysmic Revolution—one in which the proletariat (or the Party) rises up and seizes state power—the concept of the Event misleads us about the nature of social and political change. Radical disjunctions or dislocations worthy of the name *Event* are rare; that is why we can refer to them by proper nouns—the French Revolution, the October Revolution, Occupy Wall Street. What this ontology misses are the thousand acts of resistance that happen more frequently, that are often anonymous, that essentially lay the groundwork for an Event—should one ever occur.

Rather than focus on cataclysm or rupture, we should be attending to punctuated equilibrium instead. Micropolitics, not macro; the spirit of revolt, not the Revolution. In this light, our rejection of the Pauline turn and the ontology of the Event has required us to look elsewhere for a perspective on the relationship between religion, ideology critique, and radical politics. As we have suggested, the autonomist and anarchist traditions provide just that perspective. With an emphasis on struggle and community, the focus of radicalism is not upon achieving a particular outcome, but upon carrying forward a process. It is not about the thinking or the saying of the Revolution; it is about the doing of rebellion every day. *La lutte continue* … the struggle continues.

In the end, our stance is similar to the conclusion reached by Stuart White: "the practical role of the anarchist is not to build this unattainable dream, but to push the messy complexity of society in a more anarchist direction."[101] In our view, the "reign of God" or Jesus movements of Galilee performed a similar role. Given the limitations of their social and economic standing, as well as the superior power of Rome and Jerusalem, the movements could not have been expected

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[100] Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, 175.

[101] Stuart White, "Making Anarchism Respectable? The Social Philosophy of Colin Ward," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 1 (2007): 24.

to fundamentally transform their society. The best they could hope for was to resist, slow the degradation of their traditional way of life, and stake a claim for the idea that another world was possible. That same faith in the value of small acts of resistance in the here and now is what sustains many of us today—whether we hold to religious belief or not.

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