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# Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism in a conspiratorial folly of Hope: Toward a hermeneutic of theopolitical subversion

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**Thesis submitted to College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Flinders University**

**in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Theology**

**30 April 2019**

**Adelaide, South Australia**
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Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

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THESIS ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that a “conspiratorial folly” of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism contributes to the building of “Hope” for marginalised people. Firstly, the research proceeds by analysing key elements of Hope, Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism. The research then investigates the interplay of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism and the manner in which this interplay contributes to the development of “Hope”.

The thesis proposes - using insights from Žižek, Benjamin, Badiou and adopting a neo-Marxist lens - that the practice of faith toward hope is subversive of what is conventionally taken to be reality. This proposition will be exemplified by analysing the claim that the pursuit of the kingdom of God is a revolt against the very notion of kingdom and the powers that are associated with kingdoms.

This thesis argues that, to paraphrase Thesis VI of Walter Benjamin’s *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, “despite these days being shrunken and small of stature, theology will nevertheless play a covert and decisive role in the struggle for liberation”. Through an adversarial and Liberationist reading of Scripture and theology, this thesis offers three research outcomes:

1. It argues that a hermeneutic of theopolitical subversion finds expression when comments are repudiated, such as those made by the Australian Minister for Immigration in early 2016: “Churches provide a lot of assistance to refugees and they feel very strongly about these issues, I understand that. In the end people have to abide by Australian law, no matter who you are”.

2. It subjects to examination the soteriology of the state and the reigning myth of the state as savior through the sanctioned practice of democratic violence and argues that salvation from such a source is “folly”.

3. It concludes by proposing how the church might move from its assigned apolitical space as a provider of values, or a compassionate interested organization and into the modern democratic state, to find a heretical place with the poor and marginalized via an adversarial position vis-à-vis the democratic market-state

These outcomes present a challenge for the Church as it considers its role in contemporary Western society. Although this study arises out of a pastoral situation it is not a study in pastoral theology. Rather it takes up the perspective of Liberation Theology in that theology is written out of the intersection of faith communities and their lived context. Thus the thesis seeks to confront the Church with Žižek’s comment on the first page of his “The Puppet and the Dwarf” (2003). There he asserts that the church today has two possible roles; one, as helping people to cope in the existing order; the other to provide space for the articulation and practice of discontent. The thesis suggests that the Church, notwithstanding traditional perspectives, is involved in a battle that acts on behalf and along with the casualties of the market state visible around us. Once again as it was at its beginning in early Jewish society of the first century of the Christian era and Imperial Roman hegemony prior to the declaration of Constantine, it is proposed that the Church is to be understood as a heresy in the now established Western society.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my thanks to Dr Nicola Creegan and Dr Mark Worthing who provided insight and direction for this thesis. Dr Tanya Wittwer, thank you for your guidance and support in some difficult moments. To Professor Mark Mackay, I thank you for friendship, support and innumerable cups of coffee whilst you listened to me and made suggestions.

My heartfelt thanks to the late Professor Steve Redhead who was able to give me support, especially with the writings of Slavoj Žižek. How can I acknowledge the vibrancy and generosity of Professor Tara Brabazon but to say what an amazing person and academic you are. When I was struggling you gave me direction and confidence and assisted me to the thesis conclusion. I shall be forever grateful. Although late in the process my thanks to Distinguished Professor Lee Parker and Rev Dr Steven Ogden for their support and guidance.

This thesis is dedicated to my late wife Gaynor. During innumerable sessions of chemotherapy over many months, with me hanging around hospital corridors, she told me to go and do some reading and study outside of my comfort zone. With the generosity of staff of Western Hospital in Adelaide I was provided with a corner and free Wi Fi. From that unlikely site our joint concern for the marginalised grew into this thesis.

Introduction

Having been called out of retirement to assist for a short time during a restructure of a large parish, I found myself meeting with my ministerial colleagues on a Monday morning to share thoughts on the lectionary readings for the coming Sunday's preaching. We were part of a large multi-congregation parish spread over many square kilometres. The congregations for which I was given responsibility were two small ones that meet for worship on alternate fortnights. They are located near opposite ends of a suburb that has a significant concentration of people occupying public housing. As a corollary there is a high incidence of unemployment and many residents, both old and young, are welfare dependent including one large extended indigenous family and three refugee families huddled in a corner of the area. These two congregations are almost totally reliant on the larger, financially better-endowed congregations of the parish for their survival. A significant part of my pastoral time, and that of some members of the congregation as well, was spent in responding to needs comprising food vouchers, second hand clothing, pharmacy support and accompanying residents to Department of Social Services appointments concerning pension support.

On one particular Monday meeting, the lectionary Epistle reading was the well-known 1 Corinthians 13, the so-named chapter concerning 'Love'. We spent most of our time together focusing on the last verse of that chapter, verse 13: "And now faith, hope and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." In the discussion that ensued one of the questions raised was – 'What is the love and hope being displayed and enacted by the parish and its congregations in which we minister?' Perhaps more important, 'In what way is the church involved in building

hope in our communities through our faith and love?' As a quick response one of the ministers present suggested we undertake a study of the *"Jesus Manifesto"* (Sweet and Viola, 2010), as he believed that was pertinent to the question raised. As I moved through the book, my reading became more cursory. The chapter entitled *"A Collision of Two Empires"* which purports to deal with socio-political matters indicates that the poor are not a political problem (2010, p.109). The deepest hungers and needs for all of us "are for reconciliation with God" and "to experience the love of Jesus". So, as the authors of the book understand, when we "reach out to the poor" we are not doing it because of some principle of justice, rather "we are reaching out to Jesus himself". If "Justice" becomes a goal in itself then, according to Sweet and Viola, we are involved in seeking a replacement for a loving Father (2010, p.112). As they understand it, "Crucified beauty, crucified goodness, crucified truth are God's notions of justice" (2010, p.116). "Jesus' revolution was not about politics but putting people back in touch with a loving God" (2010, p.119). As well the chapter's note 11: "It seems strange to us that those most into "social justice" are those least into justice theories of the atonement, where God's justice demanded a sacrifice" (2010, p.195). Atonement not justice is the axis of the Easter event. That is our hope according to Sweet and Viola.

Part of my personal reflecting occasioned by our brief 'study' of the 'Jesus Manifesto', which spilled over into an animated discussion with my colleagues, was not only about the 'Jesus Manifesto' of Sweet and Viola, but centred around what I felt was a serious question for theology and exegesis. That question raised issues concerning the nature of our mission, particularly in the area where I ministered. I suggested that our mission is not simply to be part of a revelatory

presence of God in the midst of the 'poor' and preach that God loves them and their lives will only be complete if they love Jesus. For as Brazilian liberation theologian Jung Mo Sung indicates, such a view of mission causes a paradigmatic crisis for theology because of the "distance between expectations generated by 'messianic' narratives and the reality experienced in concrete life" (2007, Different Answers to the Crisis of Utopia section, para 6). In that sense I did not see myself as part of a church that sought to offer hope by reaffirming partisan metaphysical truths in the context of the community where I ministered. As Hessert (1993, p.232) comments in his "Epilogue": "Exhorting people to hope, therefore, is not admonishing them to strengthen their will." Or to build on Hessert as Slovenian neo-Marxist philosopher Slavoj Žižek states:

> There can be no waiting around for the sublime God, the absolute Other, to appear. Christians must work together in order to "live up to", to determine the meaning of, God's act – dying on the cross of Christ; through which he revealed himself to be one of us (2001, p.127-8).

We live in a world which frames a reality that 'There Is No Alternative'. This phrase shortened as **TINA,** was a slogan often used by the Conservative British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The phrase signified her echo of the claim that the liberal market economy is the only workable system, and that there is no further debate to be actioned. The harsh demands of the liberal-Western marketplace have drained so many of all hope and belief. As this thesis will analyse, that living in what appears to be an endless 'Eternal Now', we no longer seem able, as Merrifield (2011) discusses, to imagine a future that might be different from the present. This thesis offers an analysis of the growing hopelessness in which we seem to be mired and the pervasive cynicism of the hegemony of the market state. However in doing that it nevertheless seeks to suggest a potential antidote by way

of an adversarial praxis for the church at a time when Christian beliefs incur mass incredulity and the church is seen as anachronistic.

Methodological Process

This thesis is linked to a theopolitical endeavour given form and shape by early 20th Century cultural theorist Walter Benjamin's first Theses on the Philosophy of History regarding the dwarf and theology, derived from his writings on messianic liberation and hope. To paraphrase that first thesis: "despite these days being shrunken and small of stature theology will nevertheless play a covert and decisive role in the struggle for liberation" (Redmond 2005). Such a comment receives an interesting consideration by Y. Amit:

> With the aid of a principle such as that of dual causality, every political act can be understood as the political consequence of the divine will; that is, as being theopolitical in nature. In other words, in the biblical literature even the non-mention of God does not divest political events of their theopolitical significance. It can therefore be stated that in biblical literature politics and theopolitics are in most cases one and the same (1994, p.28).

The principle of dual causality with respect to politics within the democratic market state vis à vis the theopolitical stance of the church will be central to the conclusions of this thesis. Dictionaries consulted offer spellings of the term as 'theo-political' and 'theopolitical'. For this thesis I have adopted the spelling utilized by Amit (1994), Cavanaugh (2002), various texts by Žižek and other authors, namely "theopolitical". This will be within the boundaries of the western democratic market state and its guiding story of western Christian civilization where the place and role of the church is understood as a major unifying thread in that narrative. The adversarial stance being proposed within this thesis will seek to place the church as heretical to that dominant understanding and assigned place. To return

to Benjamin and his Thesis VI; that being infused with theology's messianic perspective (the Christian) will be alert to disruptive but potentially lliberational moments in the material reality of the society in which s/he is located.

The life and socio-economic context of the dependent congregations mentioned has led to, building upon Žižek, Benjamin and Sung's 'paradigmatic crisis', an engagement with theology in the public realm, but in a more nuanced way as will be discussed in later chapters. In addition, and taking up neo-Marxist cultural theorist Andy Merrifield's (2011) wide ranging use of 'imagination' alongside the "theopolitical imagination" of theologian William Cavanaugh (2002), a concomitant commitment to a hermeneutic of theopolitics, albeit with a subversive intent that does not eschew the reality of a confronting praxis. This is congruent with Walter Brueggemann's (2007, p.63-64) discussion with respect to his understanding of the dominant culture. As he discusses, through focused exegesis, there is a pressing need for the church to undertake a subversive reading and praxis in the community. This thesis suggests that a liberationist, neo-Marxist lens assists in this reading and praxis. As will be analysed in the concluding chapter, this has led to re-engaging with the challenge of "learning to speak Christian" (Hauerwas 2011) as a step toward an adversarial praxis of the faith linked to that new grammar.

In a thesis such as this, arising out of a local church situation, autobiographical facets are unavoidable. Such reflections have contributed, following comments by Žižek, to a questioning of, firstly, one of the church's major community practices within the neo-liberal market state, indeed a major mission focus of the two congregations mentioned, that is a weddedness to the practice of charitable works as a core focus of the church in Western society, as well as that being a dominant

expression of Christian hope brought to a needy community. Secondly, it appears that the limits of moral and political protest that have been self-imposed by the church need to be challenged as a call to move from the more than merely symbolic to resistance or even civil disobedience becomes a real faith option in giving material form to hope, as Benjamin suggests (1996, p. 277-301). For example the church in Australia continues to engage in protests with majority concerns. Who actually is against removing poverty? We almost suggest that caring individuals can end poverty without the need for any systemic reorganization of the capitalist market state.

Following on from brief analyses of Hope, Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism, and some discussion of the interplay of each of the latter two with Hope, the thesis will seek to uncover aspects of what a "conspiratorial folly" of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism might contribute to the building of "Hope" through a hermeneutic of subversive theopolitics. This is in terms of what Davis suggests (Žižek and Milbank, 2009, p.4) as "the theological and the material unite to fund resistance to capitalist nihilism". However the aim of this thesis is a different mode of resistance. The phrase that suggests this united resistance or "conspiratorial folly of hope" is based upon the last part of the title of the text *"Theology and Marxism in Eagleton and Žižek: A Conspiracy of Hope*" by Ola Sigurdson (2012). On page 197 the author gives reasons for the choice of the phrase, namely: "It is a "conspiracy", since, as OED suggests, it entails a "combination of persons for an evil or unlawful purpose" – "unlawful" in the psychoanalytic sense of going beyond the law and "evil" in the sense of breaking free of the current symbolic order." Žižek's book (2003) *"The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity"* is instructive for this thesis in the

suggestion that there is a “perverse core of Christianity”. His understanding is in the sense that Christianity is subversive of what is conventionally taken to be reality within the market state. This thesis will argue that the kingdom of God is to be understood as a revolt against the very notion of kingdom and the powers that are associated with kingdoms. In its analysis the thesis will seek to not only uncover pointers as to how, proleptically, this subversive theopolitics might assist in inaugurating an expression of liberation, which according to Benjamin is the fulfilment of hope, but also to reveal how the church enacts hope in being called to be a problem for society in its adversarial stance. The focus of the task of building hope arises out of the context of marginalized people, with a particular reference to the kinds of areas in which I have shared in part-time ministry.

The “Theopolitical Subversion” finds expression in the presenting of a political vision of a society which requires significant elements of discontinuity, in the sense of breaking free from the dominant neo-liberal market hegemony of the capitalist society that we currently inhabit. Although there is recent discussion concerning another “post” perspective, this thesis will reference the current Australian context as a ‘neo-liberal market society’. In this thesis, efforts with respect to the practice of discontinuity within that society will involve an engagement with the person of Jesus and, in particular, his oft-repeated phrase in St. Matthew 5:21ff which becomes part of his seditious approach, namely, “You have heard it said … But I say to you”. However, this expression of alterity will, as Sigurdson (2012) remarks, require aspects of continuity, particularly with respect to the witness of Scripture, otherwise how would we know what this other society would look like and, more, if it would it be worth striving for? Nevertheless, Žižek suggests that both Christianity and Marxism suffer from too much continuity in both history and practice and thus

do not acknowledge the traumatic break necessary for true liberation. He proposes that the break with this over reliance on ‘continuity’ should be to “go through the Christian experience” (Žižek 2003, Introduction). Such a shattering rupture will find expression within a brief consideration of St. Paul and the Damascus road experience as Žižek suggests. This will be found in echoes of the Christian notion of being “born again”, or for Žižek an experience of conversion. For Žižek this is a decisive break with the full expression of one’s social context and can be likened, as he considers Lenin and the formation of the ‘Party’ in early Soviet times, such as mentioned by Jesus in the Gospel of Luke 14:26 in shocking terms, namely “the hating of one’s siblings and parents and the following of him”.

As mentioned particular reference to the writings of Slavoj Žižek, along with a recourse to other neo-Marxists such as Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida and Alain Badiou who similarly have found aspects of Christianity integral to their political philosophies in confronting neo-liberal market capitalism, will provide a fulcrum for the development of the analysis of this thesis in the manner in which Boer concludes: “Žižek holds Christianity and Marxism at the end of each arm as part of his ‘conversion’ from one to the other and back again until he holds both equally” (2007, p.335). With respect to this ‘conversion’ it will, as Žižek writes, provide hope in “a truly alternative collective not founded on the reigning symbolic system” or “an egalitarian social order of solidarity” (2010, p.117). The break with the ‘reigning symbolic system’ will be, as analysed in the final chapter of this thesis, a different manner of taking up one’s cross and following Jesus. For the process of this thesis there will be an effort to find congruency with the concluding sentence of Sigurdson:

> a hermeneutics of hope that … takes discontinuity with as much seriousness as one could expect, but still able to explain in what sense a coming future is actually worth hoping for, still recognizably the object of our hope" (2016, p.102).

This is the thrust of Swift's caveat as he states: "It is far easier to find agreement on what one is against than on what one is for"(2014, Section 10, Para.9). Hence to suggest a break with the practice of the market society one must be able to present a politics that not only addresses the issues and problems of the marginalised, but is seen to have a hope of coming to fruition in that it is a realistic proposal. To do any less would provide the market state with options to further belittle social protest and consign it to the margins. If, following Sigurdson, we are to take discontinuity seriously then we need to propose options that do give people hope that their lives can indeed be better and a more just society can come into being. A further caveat is that this is not handed down by some kind of political saviour but comes through "conscientization". This term was coined by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). That is, reflection leading to praxis on the part of the marginalised themselves. This thesis suggests that the church can be integral here in a theological methodology along the lines of the hermeneutic spiral of Juan Luis Segundo leading to a theologico-political praxis.

Chapter 1: The notion of “Hope”

An introduction

Comments and definitions concerning “Hope” are legion. With respect to the promise of hope, which is central to this thesis, it is interesting to make a brief digression to ponder the following three side examples as they relate to the life of the local church. Firstly, the congregation of a large mainline denomination located adjacent to the shopping centre that I frequent has a very prominent ‘wayside pulpit’ advertising the days and times of its worship services, programmes and community aid and a pithy comment. Recently that comment has been the question, “Is your hope in man, $ or God?” Thousands of people and vehicles pass by each day. Do they ponder where their hope is? Those casting their eyes on the community aid notice might draw a correspondence between the three options. Perhaps most would affirm the second option, that of “$”. Secondly, not long ago a group of Christians has been seeking to establish a congregation in our area. They have heavily letter-boxed the area introducing themselves in a pamphlet with the inside featuring the words “… a new and thriving community of faith, hope and life will be established to express the love of God seven days a week, right here in the heart of …”. The word “Hope” was in a very large, bold, colourful font, zigzagging across the page. The point of this illustration is that the members of this proposed congregation see cultivating hope as a core focus of expressing the love of God. However nowhere in its printed advertising material is there any description, or even a hint, as to what might be the content of the “Hope” expressed through the love of God. Thirdly in the weeks before Christmas a van belonging to a world-wide religious denomination noted for its charitable works

was making deliveries in our area. On the side it had affixed a nativity scene and underneath in colourful writing the phrase “Providing hampers of Hope”. The hampers contained Christmas foodstuffs and toys for young children. What is one to make of these expressions of “Hope” highlighted in the major Christian festivals and church signage?

One might commence with the simple path of a dictionary meaning such as that from the *Chambers 21st. Century Diction*ary (1996, p.647) namely “to wish that something may happen, especially with some reason to believe it will”. Or as Braune comments with respect to the way hope is often spoken of in ordinary discourse “a desire or wish for something combined with an expectation of obtaining it” (2014, p.115). This is part of a particular link that she makes from psychoanalyst Eric Fromm, which will provide a focus to the discussion in the conclusions of this thesis, namely: “[Hope] is closely linked with another element of the structure of life: faith. Faith is not a weak form of belief or knowledge; … faith is the conviction about the not yet proven, the knowledge of the real possibility” (2014, p.117). Hessert lists a number of understandings of ‘hope’ as part of the conclusion to his text, amongst which “Hope belongs to the time of possibility” (1993, p.226-227) figures prominently. Philosopher Jacques Derrida’s notion of things “to come” (à venir) is also pertinent to the discussion. The sense will be that as people of faith there are those things that we can and should strive for, work towards, but always in the knowledge, as theologian John Caputo (2016) remarks often in borrowing from Derrida, that they are never fully achievable but not therefore to be discarded or rendered hopeless. And from page 65 of *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hope (2005 ed. Jacklin)*

> Augustine: “Hope … deals only with things that are good and which lie in the future”
>
> Aquinas identified hope as a virtue
>
> The philosopher Hume defined hope as fear’s opposite
>
> And when asked what may I hope Kant once replied, “Your just desserts from God”
>
> Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Spe Salvi ("Saved by Hope") refers to Faith as being the substance of Hope and Eternal Life as the ultimate Hope.
>
> In a very effusive statement Gabriel Marcel states “Hope consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all inventories and calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me.” (Marcel, G. 1995 p. 28.)

Sigurdson (as part of her wider discussion) states that one usually makes:

> a distinction between optimism and hope: optimism is something (presumably) calculable, a future that is a vector of coordinates already in place in the present, whereas hope is associated with a certain newness of circumstances, a future that is not more of the same but qualitatively different. (2012, p.192)

This research will seek to eschew both chronos (χρόνος), chronological time and the Christian usage of kairos (καιρός) when God steps in to rule the powers and principalities. Thus it will be more in keeping with Derrida’s positing of *avenir* over and against *futur.* The latter is a predictable outcome from the present; the former unpredictable in terms of the Lord’s Prayer, “may Thy kingdom come” which harbours a deep but uncertain yearning. Nevertheless Sigurdson does present a caveat a few lines further on in saying: “hope is compatible with pessimism: even if our present circumstances look bleak with no or little sign of improvement, hope may still abound.” Yet a truth is, as Terry Eagleton discusses in *Hope without Optimism* (2016), it is indeed hard to pronounce the word “hope” without evoking

the prospect of it being dashed. He states that adjectives linked to the word hope such as “forlorn” or “faint” spring often and easily to mind. Or even such a much-used phrase as “I hope to see you tomorrow”. As he avers, “There seems something incorrigibly naïve about the very notion. Hope suggests a tremulous, half-fearful expectation, the mere ghost of a robust assurance” (2016, p.39). Eagleton then moves to an interesting conclusion, against what he believes is a wide-spread illusion, that hope is somehow precious in itself. That “we may recognize that what we hope for is worthless or pernicious while continuing to hope for it” (2016, p.60). This conclusion is placed within a consideration of the neo-liberal market economy and its foundation of consumerism. Stepping on from that premise, and in referring to St. Paul’s Chapter 13 of First Corinthians, Eagleton makes reference to the notion of Christian hope by affirming: “it follows from his (St. Paul’s) words that Christians can never define exactly what it is they are hoping for” (2016, p.65). In a sense then hope is essentially delicate in that it is subject to life shattering disappointment, but - and there is a but for Eagleton - it is also a resource for endurance in a world that threatens life so often. Such an uncertainty finds contemporary expression when we are confronted by mangled grammar such as: “What we’ve had is an austerity of hope,” he said, “They’re not quite sure where hope lies” (Liberal strategist Mark Textor, ‘Guardian online’ 10/03/2016 http://gu.com/p/4he9f/sbl). This was a headline newspaper statement of a political party consultant commenting upon what he understands as the nature of recent years of political leadership in Australia. It is interesting to juxtapose that comment with the front page of the newspaper “The Advertiser” (May 9, 2017) following the Federal Treasurer’s 2017 Budget, “Treasurer sells Hope in big-taxing budget”. The “Hope” was “Guaranteed to make Australia Great again”.

From another perspective Braune (2014), in discussing the revolutionary hope of Eric Fromm, writes that Fromm's discussion of hope rests primarily on a negative definition. Fromm, she says, affirms that it is easier to answer what hope is not rather than the more difficult question of what hope is, as Eagleton (2016) also affirms. She states:

> Fromm describes three kinds of non-hope, which tend to give the false appearance of hope. According to Fromm, hope is not (1) mere desiring or wishing, (2) passive or inactive waiting (for future salvation, fulfilment, revolution, etc.), nor (3) "forcing … what cannot be forced" or "forcing the Messiah" (2014, p.116).

Braune then asks the question: "What is the foundation of hope for the individual who hopes? That is, what does the individual experience as the source of her hope?" (2014, p.141). In the sentences that follow Braune suggests an answer to her question, namely: "Rather than choosing to hope, the subject experiences hope as something that happens to her or in which she is caught up." That "being caught up", the change in the self, will be part of the subversive praxis of the theopolitics of hope in the unfolding of this analysis.

Robyn Horner (No date, p.4) highlights such a notion of faith and hope when she states:

> My own understanding of faith is that there is faith whenever one gives up not only certainty but also determined hope. If one says that resurrection is the horizon of one's hope then one knows what one names when one says resurrection' – faith is not pure faith. It is already knowledge.

This is the thrust of the argument of Caputo (2016, Section *"Let Your Kingdom Come"*, first paragraph) where he speaks of the coming of the kingdom as not being linked to clock time or being able to be written upon a calendar such that one knows "when". This gives a new meaning to messianic time as Horner (p.5) adds: "As soon as the object of hope becomes known, in other words, it is reduced

to the dimensions of human aspiration." This allows her, (a few lines later), to quote from Derrida, "if one could count on what is coming, hope would be but the calculation of a program" (Derrida,1994, p. 169). Matuštík also uses Derrida and expresses hope thus:

> Hope is intimated as beauty that manifests itself in the midst of the tragic. Hope arrives out of the dimension of time … [that] is neither marked by our melancholy past nor by nostalgia and longing for an anticipated future. If hope were something determined by the phenomenological field of experience, then it would not signify a radically new beginning. Any such novelty would be the passage of time, it would lie in my agency, it would not be a dimension that affects my relation to time (2008, p.189-190).

Or as Caputo (2016) juxtaposes the concept of hope in his notion of "haunto-theology", also borrowing from Derrida:

> we live lives of hope – in the hint of a promise of what is to come, of what is being called for – including the promise of the past, the promise of what has been handed down to us by the past. We live lives of faith – in the unforeseeable, in the coming of what we cannot see coming (Chapter 3 Proto-Religion, para 2).

Hope in that sense is a kind of wager that in its ambivalence carries the possibility of both peril and promise. Christianity is predicated upon divine promises but the fulfilment of those promises remains, still, incomplete.

"Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hope": A Theological Example

An interesting collection of articles covering 'Hope' from the perspectives of Philosophy, Politics, Psychology, Nursing, Medicine, and Theology is to be found in the text *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Hope*. Article headings include *"Psychological and Physiological benefits of Hope", "Hope and Associated Neuropsychiatric Dimensions", "The Place of Hope in Clinical Medicine", "Hope, the Nurse and the Patient".* The opening chapter is by the editor, Jaklin Eliott and is entitled "*What have we done with Hope? A Brief History".* In that chapter Eliott,

moving towards the conclusion of her article, highlights and discusses the writing of Gabriel Marcel and what she sees as his three focii for hope, and concurs with his conclusions, namely:

> Hope implies that the future can be affected by the activity of some free agent/s.
>
> Hope is always primarily oriented toward some other person/s.
>
> To hope is to trust that in and through the interaction of all parties richer lives are possible. (2005, p.19)

It is intellectually useful to place Eliott's three focii from Marcel alongside the comment by Renna Fay Jeune *(Hope: The Simplicity and Complexity)* in Eliott's collection, as Jeune focuses on her role as a practitioner of psychology: "In terms of practice I approach hope simply as a small voice in the heart of each of us as that yearns to say 'yes' to life" (2005, p.267). Her comment echoes the writings of Caputo (2013) in his Preface, namely, "a surprising gap, sometimes almost imperceptible, that opens up, a promise that leads to the very structure of a 'yes' to life."

Amongst Eliott's selection of articles on 'Hope' is one by the President of The Uniting Church in Australia, (Dutney, A. *Hoping for the Best: Christian Theology of Hope in a Meaner Australia*). Interestingly it is the only article listed in the section entitled "Theology", whilst all the other sections have a number of articles in them. The choice of referring to a leading theologian in The Uniting Church in Australia is that in its short history The Uniting Church has revealed itself as being at the forefront of issues related to social justice in many of its public announcements and actions in Australian society. The title of Andrew Dutney's article does dovetail into the focus of this thesis in its stated concern for the poor and marginalized, and

the question of hope raised by that particular concern. Very early in his article Dutney comments with particular reference to the twin concerns of welfare and asylum seekers/refugees. These two concerns are very much at the forefront of current Australian debate both within the federal parliament and the wider community, and it appears that Dutney wishes to present a particularly Australian focus from a denomination that sees itself as uniquely Australian. Having identified these areas of human concern one might have anticipated Dutney discussing practical applications of hope within a Christian framework with respect to those two groups mentioned in the current climate of his identified Australian meanness. However, and somewhat unexpectedly, he states that "This fascinating and important discussion is not for me to enter into here" (2005, p.50). He then segues, a few lines further on, into a discussion of the Christian affirmation concerning the "fundamental nature of reality and finding wholeness in God even when the evidence seems to point in another direction".

This becomes the introduction to his eschatological statement concerning the ultimate destiny of humankind and what he sees 'Hope' in the Christian religion to be, namely: "the way in which all people and the whole creation live together and find wholeness in communion with God" (2005, p.51). However, Dutney's views are not as bleak as those stated so baldly by Peter Geach: "If hope is not grounded in the Christian gospel, there is no hope at all" (1977, p.48). Dutney's discussion with respect to what he understands as 'hope' has something, he hints, of the echo of the words of Isaiah 11:6, (NRSV):

> The wolf shall live with the lamb,
> the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
> the calf and the lion and the fatling together,

> and a little child shall lead them.

From that position he then proceeds to draw this discussion toward a preliminary conclusion with another eschatological perspective:

> In the Christian tradition, theological reflection on the subject of hope begins with confidence in the memory of what God has already achieved in Jesus Christ and then looks forward to the fulfilment of God's will for the creation (2005, p.53).

However this thesis would wish to challenge such a preliminary conclusion from Dutney by positing three sentences from Žižek which provide some understanding of the trajectory that is being proposed in this analysis. Firstly, in the interview "I am a Fighting Atheist" (Henwood (2002) he states: "Against the pagan notion of destiny, Christianity offered the possibility of a radical opening, that we can find a zero point and clear the table". In "On Belief" he presents an interesting juxtaposition of Lenin and St. Paul with respect to that "radical opening": "unequivocal radical position from which it is possible to intervene in such a way that our intervention changes the coordinates of the situation" (2001, p.3). From that quotation to: "An act does not occur within the given horizon of what appears to be 'possible' – it redefines the very contours of what is possible" (Žižek, Butler, Laclau, 2000b, p.121). It is the consequences of the praxis involved in grasping that opening, and thus our intervention and challenge of the status quo, which this thesis will seek to demonstrate.

Dutney then commences in a new direction by offering a brief presentation of the "Basis of Union" of The Uniting Church. In particular, he discusses how this particular group of Christians both understands and expresses its faith and place in the life of Australia. Part of this discussion by Dutney concerns a comment on the theological notion of "Divine Fatherhood" as a basis for hope. Again, Dutney

appears to have decided not to enter into an analysis of a further question for theology, namely, concerning what might be understood by the notion of a 'Divine Fatherhood' in the context of hope as a core feature of liberation. That is to say, a "fatherhood", a caring parental visage of government which, it often appears, does not take into account the concrete situation of persons, such as the suffering of the father's children. From there he cites the concluding phrase in the 'Basis of Union' of The Uniting Church concerning God's ultimate promise, namely, "reconciliation and renewal … for the whole creation".

Following that comment Dutney then undertakes a digression to make a passing reference to the 'theology of hope'. He mentions theologians who write in this theological genre, and he lists Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg and Karl Rahner. A brief comment follows with respect to writers involved with liberation theology, contextual theology and feminist theology. Dutney moves to sum up this brief digression with the comment that all these authors were not concerned with an orientation toward comforting the afflicted but, rather, recruiting folk to the cause for social and political change "that would express God's love for the world and their love for their neighbours" (2005, p.54). However the statement stands alone. As Žižek comments, "How will this emancipatory event be translated into a new social order?" (2015, p.114). Snider (2012) asks, and he draws from Augustine, "What do we love when we say we love our God?" (Section '*What do I Love when I Love my God,* para. 3). Similarly what do we love when we speak of loving our neighbours? With Liberation Theology in mind what is some content for "God's love" and "love of neighbours"? Does Dutney mean it is social and political change that we love? Is a 'new social order' in his mind? Would he take a step as far as Caputo (2016) suggests and

understand that Justice might be another “name” for God? One might further ask, what is it that we pray for, long for, weep for, yes and even hope for? Examples are not forthcoming and Dutney concludes his digression with:

> One of the things that connected the diverse strands of Christian intellectual endeavour in this period was their shared assumption that historically-engaged activism should be a characteristic expression of authentic Christian hope (2005, p.52).

This is stirring stuff and goes to the heart of what Dutney indicated at the outset of his article, concerning the meanness present in Australia and the treatment of asylum seekers and the poor and marginalized. However, he appears to be unwilling to commit to any suggestion of practical expressions or outcomes. It appears that Dutney is satisfied with seeing the divine will manifest in history, as being fully realized beyond history. His hope for a qualitative change in the life and treatment of the poor is, again, notwithstanding the occasional phrase, beyond history and looking forward to a fulfilment of hopes in “heaven”. The problem, that Dutney appears to side-step, is that history doesn’t happen according to the promises written in Scripture, nor to stirring theological statements. Sung (2007), commenting upon hope says that: “answers about the possibilities of the future which should be guaranteed by the promises of God revealed in the Bible are not enough faced by the ‘suffering’ of so many” (*Different answers to the crisis of utopia,* para1).

Toward the end of his article, by way of a conclusion concerning hope in the Christian tradition, Dutney presents an interesting quotation from Dennis Glover: “the best hope for an Australian egalitarianism is to be found “in the memories and living rooms of ordinary Australians”, and (particularly) in “getting to know others” (2003, p.6, 7). Glover (2015) echoes these sentiments in a later book. There, after

a challenging introduction concerning what he sees as a dark vision of thirty years of creative destruction in Australia and the forming of the 'non-working class', he commences his Chapter One speaking of his early years growing up in a Melbourne suburb and the friendships of his childhood and early adult years. That leads to a series of chapters/discussions concerning a recovery of community amongst ordinary people. His sentiments concerning a hope for an egalitarian society and an integrated local community take a similar trajectory to those of Hugh Mackay (2007). In his Chapter 14 entitled *"A dream of 'the community'"* Mackay laments that we don't know who our neighbours are. Part of Mackay's suggested remedy is for people, as was the case in times past, to get to know each other, and in particular those living next door, and thus help build community. The suggestions of Glover and Mackay are worthy of consideration and enactment, both for society in general and for the church. However, Dutney's quoting of Glover's prescription, - "getting to know others" - is, I feel, an unhelpful bridge to the conclusion that he wishes to make. Especially that of linking "getting to know others" as the direction that the Christian theology of hope is moving:

> By the end of the 20th century the Christian theology of hope was moving in a similar direction. This "getting to know others" is where hope comes from and, indeed, it is where hope takes us. Setting aside the unhelpful dichotomy between activist and quietest hope, we draw near to those of whom we despair knowing, by faith, the ultimate end to which all things tend: God's promised justice and peace, shalom. We draw near not to correct, fix, or cure them, but to know and be known by them. We draw near to discover that there is more to them than what, from a distance, defines them. And so, we draw near in hope (2005, p.59).

This linking of some vague understanding of egalitarianism and 'getting to know others' and thereby glimpsing both the origins and the final outcome of hope is an effort at building an expression of a Christian eschatology in which history will reveal its ultimate meaning 'in getting to be friends' with someone. One could argue that the 'Messianic Age' is more than a general gathering of people now

friends. A more nuanced interpretation of eschatology would have shunned any expression of “feelgoodism” in favour of a development of his stated ‘historically engaged activism’ through some form of socio-political involvement. It would appear that Dutney has misunderstood the ideological construct of a just and egalitarian society. Certainly, getting to know others is an ingredient, but not the most important in a vastly unequal society. In her discussion of “popular treatments” (2017, p.15-23) and “academic treatments” (2017, p.23-25) Theoharis demonstrates that “Church Theology” emphasises personal, individual and spiritual interpretations, but gives much lesser attention to political and economic issues. Yes there is a soupçon of idealism by Dutney here but, I contend, without an adequate analysis of the objective conditions of society and large sections of the marginalized within it.

It is relevant to briefly juxtapose Dutney’s comments from a localised Australian context with those of two other Christian writers who focus on hope from the perspectives of religious dialogue and theological autobiography. Firstly, Walter Brueggemann in his *Mandate to Difference* (2007) has a chapter entitled *Can We Hope? Can Hope Be Divided*? It is based upon a paper presented to a Jewish-Christian consultation. He provides the grounds for hope in drawing the conclusion that: “From creation and revelation comes our faith that God has not and will not abandon us or our world, that the promised redemption is surely yet to come. That is our hope” (2007, p.111). This conclusion is arrived at after an exegesis of several Old Testament texts which lead to, says Brueggemann, four necessary components required for the practice of hope that are shared by Jews and Christians, namely:

> Hope requires a Source and Agent of newness … not imprisoned in old habits or present-tense commitments … a theological statement about the character of God that Jews and Christians commonly confess.
>
> *A community of faith and action* … as hope is a communal activity …
>
> *A text* that mediates between *holy generativity* and *communal obedience* …
>
> *… a community of interpretation …* (2007, p.96-98)

Brueggemann then builds on these component statements with a plethora of texts and their exegesis that draws to a matrix of hope. That matrix is that which "empowers emancipatory courage against the kingdom of death" (2007, p.105). Brueggemann's aim is to provide an answer to the question of hope, especially "in a despairing culture of death" (2007, p.99) wherein, he says, we reside today. For him it is God's rule beyond the threat of death that is the ground of our hope. It is that particular hope that leads Brueggemann to the practice of a faith which is:

> the maintenance of a distinct faith identity in the midst of a culture that is inhospitable to all distinct identities in its impatient reduction of all human life to the requirements of the market (2014, p.x).

However one always has the feeling that Brueggemann is also wedded to an emancipatory future that God will bring about, "surely yet to come", in keeping with a Judeo-Christian milieu. Eagleton comments: "The truth is that Christians (and Jews) have hope not because the future is obscure but because it is some inscrutable sense well founded. The source of their hope lies in Yahweh who will not fail his people" (2016, p.82). Or as Braune adds, referring to Marcel: "one does not hope *because* one decides that empirical evidence to the contrary is irrelevant; rather such evidence is irrelevant *because* one hopes" (2014, p.142). And that hope is in the proleptic experience of the "messianic age". Caputo (2016) states that: "uttering the name of God we expose the horizons of our lives to the impossible, to thinking what we cannot think, to imagining the unimaginable, to speaking what cannot be said, with a hope against hope" (*The Folly of the Call*

section 10, para 2).

This leads into the second text for brief consideration: the autobiographical reflections of John Caputo entitled *Hoping Against Hope.* Caputo provides an interesting *Sacada*[1] with respect to the grammar and theology of Brueggemann's conclusion. His comment regarding a hope in God beyond death, following philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, is in confronting what he understands as post-modern nihilism, which to him is the end of hope. That nihilism is a duality of humanity's fear of cosmic oblivion and the reality of the inhuman (2015, p.9). Having stated that we are confronted with fear and horror Caputo then performs an abrupt *Salida*[2] and begins a new section entitled "*Does Religion Offer Any Hope?"* He indicates that faced with the "incredulity" of human life it has been the "business of religion to offer us hope in such circumstances" (2015, p.11). That incredulity is the totality of the "horrors" that embrace the breadth of human existence. But, autobiographically, Caputo's main concern is that his faith in the Church is "coming apart at the seams". With that unravelling a related unravelling of hope is experienced for humanity (2015, p.14). For him a large part of the unravelling in the church, which leads to an unravelling of hope in society, is to be laid at the feet of the hateful life and faith of conservative churches with respect to their expressions of politics, racism, sexism or free-market euphoria. These are the forces that oppress says Caputo, and he quotes St. Matthew 25:40, in the form of his translation, namely, that these hateful conservative churches are responsible for crushing the hope in religion of "one of the least of the members of

[1] A Tango step describing a move in which one partner deliberately invades the other's floor space, stepping close to or into the place their partner is currently occupying, thus displacing them.
[2] In the Tango a figure often danced as an opening to the dance, or to mark the beginning of a new phase.

my family". However, good Catholic that he was/is he turns to the phrase, in an interesting juxtaposition, the *nihilism of grace*. For Caputo that is a fresh appropriation and enfleshing of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "Religionless Christianity". This leads to, as he suggests in *The Weakness of God* (2006), and with a level of congruence with Brueggemann, the total alteration of what we mean when we speak the word "God". With that alteration in the speaking of the word 'God' comes a radical change in the way we engage politically. That understanding of 'God', the 'Event' (also for Badiou and Žižek) for Caputo is what leads us in a new direction of hoping against hope. However, as will be considered later, Caputo seems to have an associated belief that some ameliorative reformist action by, as is understood in the United States of America, 'liberals', will be sufficient to shift the political context into acting in a better way.

As will be more fully probed in this thesis, the concluding remarks by Dutney, and the conclusions drawn from the brief comments with respect to Brueggemman and Caputo raise thoughtful questions for the Church, particularly in Australia in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Extrapolating from Dutney's comments, Christianity is not the building of some kind of Establishment/Church where people 'get to know each other' and thus build a comfortable, affable community but, rather, to seek out those excluded by the egalitarian establishments and nice communities that already are and thereby challenge the ruling ideology of the nice community. As well the hope of Christianity is not a project of ensuring equal rights for all. For, in an interesting twist, Christians give up their rights in order to stand with those who have none. This is Christianity's great challenge to the ruling ideology of the liberal market-state. As St. Paul indicates in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and

female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (ESV). Thus as Adiñach and Botta comment:

> The unplugging from the legal system (do not take one another to court, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8), the disruption of the patronage system of relationships (as in the common meals in Corinth, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34), the intentional erosion of the ethos of competitiveness in favour of solidarity, and so on all point toward the emergence of an alternative sociality (2009, p.150).

It is admitted that these may not be congruent with final expressions of a fully-fledged alternative social order, a messianic age, noting that there were comprises with the existing social order such as with respect to women in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:34). Nevertheless, is not St. Paul implying that in the giving up of our current identities we identify directly with Christ and thus enter into a wholly new social reality? Does this not mean that for Christians there is no special Christian identity that can be placed alongside other identities? There is no 'us' proper. Therefore, there is no 'other' created by us because we have laid down all identities that would otherwise define us. Are we not thus led to conclude that, in understanding egalitarianism, for another to be an 'other' there must first have been an 'us' who created 'them'? Christians are not simply those seeking out the excluded, abject other in order to indicate to them that we stand with them in some vague and kindly bourgeois way. Rather as the text from Galatians suggests, Christians are themselves included in the excluded.

Similarly hope is not the promise of the granting of equal rights and opportunities to others. For in a sense every equal right is an application of a uniform standard to different people who are not identical. To speak, therefore, of the 'humanity of Christ', implies that no account of the people of God, the Church, is possible that does not require material expression that is fittingly understood as a politic. Tony Abbott, a previous Prime Minister of Australia, commented on more than one

occasion that people are free in Australia to realize their hopes. But the poor, marginalized, welfare dependent are already not equal to others. In order for them to enjoy these equal rights, and thus be free to realize their hopes, those who already occupy the favoured positions must forgo some of their class, economic and political 'rights'. True love emerges in the act of acting out of indifference to the other's 'otherness'. This is a political posture, an act of justice and a hopeful yearning.

Expressions of Hope in Liberation Theology

As part of his concluding remarks under the heading "The Serious Reason for Hope" Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez speaks of a "hermeneutic of hope":

> Liberation Theology tries to offer a hermeneutic of hope. Theology is one reflection, trying to find in different moments in history, the reasons to hope. When I speak of hope, I am not speaking about easy optimism or illusion, but serious reasons to hope … Hope does not exist in a moment; we must create hope. Hope is a gift, a grace, and when we receive a gift, it is not for us; it is for our neighbor. To welcome the grace of hope is to create resources in history. (2012, p.9)

These words follow on from phrases, comments and affirmations that have been part of the Gutiérrez oeuvre, and that of many other liberation theologians, for over forty years. For example, "our hands have made poverty"; "How do we fight the causes of poverty"; "the complexity of poverty"; "How can I say to the poor person, 'God loves you.'"; "Theology is a reflection of life"; "social, personal and spiritual liberation"; "to read human history from the perspective of the poor". As well one of his most quoted statements, "Theology follows; it is the second step." By this Gutiérrez also affirms that a commitment to, and a participation in, the struggles of the marginalized people and communities comes first, as the first step toward the building of hope.

These phrases are part of an introductory restatement of the words of Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation.* They are a further blossoming of the early statements concerning the practice of hope: "accepted in the negation of injustice, in the protest against trampled human rights, and in the struggle for peace and brotherhood. Thus, hope fulfils a mobilizing and liberating function in history" (1973, p.218). A decade on from his *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez was to restate his position concerning the God of Israel whom, he says, is committed to the liberation of the poor and in whom the people have grounded their hope

> No es suficiente decir que Dios se revela en la historia y que por consiguiente la fe de Israel tiene una osatura histórica. Es necesario tener present que el Dios de la Biblia no es solo un Dios que gobierna la historia, sino que la orienta en el sentido del establecimiento de la justicia y el derecho. Es más que un Dios providente, es un Dios que toma partido por el pobre y que lo libera de la esclavitud y de la opresión (1982, p.17). [3]

Early in *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez opens his discussion on Hope within the context of a consideration of Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope.* Moltmann's comments, and the earlier ones of Ernst Bloch (*The Principle of Hope*), form part of Gutiérrez's foundational perspectives regarding liberation: "The present in the praxis of liberation, in its deepest dimension hope must be an inherent part of our present commitment in history" (1973, p.14). However, accepting the foundational contribution of Moltmann, there is a moving from that early connection to Moltmann. According to Gutiérrez, the hermeneutic of Hope nevertheless finds its deepest expression in 'Liberation Theology' where, as Leonardo Boff stated in referring to the continual burning of the flame of hope: "Experiencia de resistencia de los grupos dominados pero no vencidos,

[3] "It is not sufficient to say that God is revealed in history and therefore the faith of Israel has an historical 'tiger'. It is necessary to acknowledge that the God of the Bible not only is a God who governs history but rather orients it in the sense of establishing justice and right. God is more than the one who provides, 'he' is a God who takes the part of the poor and who liberates them from slavery and oppression."

trabajando bajo régimen de cautiverio, y sin dejar que se apague la llama de la esperanza" (1978, p.16).[4] In his opening remarks in the section entitled *Teología de la liberación y del cautiverio* of his earlier work *Teología desde El Cautiverio.*[5] Boff writes: Esta opción por los omprimidos y contra la forma de la sociedad imperante les dieron otra manera de ser cristianos, les abrieron nueva dimensiones de la fe y una óptica diferente de leer a Escritura (1975, p.15).[6] Responding to the basic question with regard to what is the hope of Liberation Theology, Boff and Boff express a congruency with Sung "Underlying liberation theology is a prophetic and comradely commitment to the life cause, and struggle of these millions of debased and marginalized human beings, a commitment to ending this historical-social iniquity" (1987, p.3). They underscore that statement with the now famous affirmation "Liberation theology was born when faith confronted the injustice done to the poor" (1987, p.4). Thus constitutive of this analysis in the understanding of hope in Liberation Theology is what I affirm to be its central tenet, namely, the epistemological privilege of the poor.

Another seminal text is that by Ruben Alves entitled *A Theology of Human Hope.* Alves submitted the book as a dissertation and then for publication as "Toward a Theology of Liberation". His publisher, in 1968 three years before Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation,* suggested that the title should be changed as 'liberation' was not a suitable term in theological circles at that time. The publisher advised that "hope" was a much more acceptable term for the current moment and, as

[4] The experience of the resistance of groups dominated but not overcome, working beneath a regime of captivity, but without allowing that the flame of hope be extinguished.
[5] Theology of liberation and captivity.
[6] This option for the oppressed and against the ruling form of society gave to them another way of being Christians, opened to them new dimensions of the Faith and a different perspective of reading the Scriptures.

well, Alves had widely engaged with Jürgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* [7] in his writing. In his *Foreword* Alves says of hope and liberation: "Hope grows out of historical experience, especially the experience of liberation that occurs where there was no evidence that it could" (1975, p. x).

In a significant section of some nearly twenty pages debating with and closely analysing Moltmann's book and theology, Alves indicates the crucial aspects of what he, Alves, understands of Moltmann's hope:

> But what is the ground for this life in hope? Moltmann answers that "the Christian hope for the future comes from observing a specific event – that of the resurrection and appearing of Jesus Christ."
>
> … Moltmann does not identify the event of the resurrection with our future. It is the ground of hope, but the future is not finished in it.
>
> Christ is the mirror of our future.
>
> Man … is not the creator of the new future. He is rather the one who acts "in the light of the promised future that is to come."
>
> The basic conflict between the language of political humanism[8] and the language of hope suggested by Moltmann is that the former understand negation, hope, and the creation of the new future as starting basically from the condition of man in his insertion into history. The latter, on the contrary, sees … the only possibility (becoming) real when man is confronted with a non-historical and transcendent reality … (1975, p.57-58, 66, 68).

This leads Alves to a mid-text conclusion:

> For the sake of hope and human liberation it is therefore of the utmost importance to unmask the pseudo-hopes … that are not derived from the reading of the objective movement of the politics of freedom in history. Visions of the future not extracted from history … cannot be called hope: they are forms of alienation, illusions …
>
> it offers to man a hope not derived from history, a hope that hovers above and beyond history (1969, p.102).

Moving to a conclusion, and concerned with the language of the community of faith, and how that grammar is enunciated in the agora of the world, Alves

[7] 1965 edition cited in Alves' bibliography.
[8] Equated to "liberation" in a number of places by Alves.

acknowledges the risk that this language entails. However he is firmly of the belief that hope is only possible when the people of faith and their language and praxis "remains faithful to the earth", that is takes seriously a materialist stance.

Liberation Theology and Jürgen Moltmann: 'Theology of Hope'

Moltmann's writings on hope were taken up, in particular, by liberation theologians like Gutiérrez and Alves and became a focus in the development of a fuller meaning of liberation. It is interesting to note that in his referencing of Moltmann Gutiérrez (1973, p.216) also discusses the writings of Ernest Bloch and Bloch's contribution to the enfleshing of a theology of liberation. Similarly Moltmann draws upon Bloch's neo-Marxism as a vehicle for commenting upon social and economic issues. As Eagleton states with respect to Bloch: "*The Principle of Hope* is in search of a form of Marxism that would rival the depth and scope of religion while serving as a critique of it" (2016, p.92). He sees Bloch writing as though hope is built into the structure of the world itself. It is that perspective that draws Moltmann to Bloch for as Eagleton concludes: "It is not just that one must have material grounds for hope, but that hope for Bloch is in some sense an objective dynamic in the world – not only in human history, indeed, but in the cosmos itself" (2016, p.95). However Moltmann's use of Bloch is done without succumbing to some form of 'Christianised Marxism' as some detractors have criticized liberation theology.

The quotations from the Boff brothers, singly and together, given previously, offer some indication as to why Liberation Theology is not entirely congruent with Moltmann's discourse in his *Theology of Hope*. Notwithstanding the position that Moltmann occupies in the writings of many theologians of liberation, Gutiérrez

highlights a basic difference by a reference to the writings of Ruben Alves. It is Alves who in referring to Moltmann says he perceives 'docetism' in Moltmann's writings concerning hope because he sees Moltmann: "pulling history to its future, but without being involved in history" (1969, p.59). Alves concludes, along with Gutiérrez, that Moltmann has difficulty in finding a vocabulary that is sufficiently grounded in the present context of oppression and exploitation when speaking of hope. Liberation theologian Enrique Dussel also agrees with the comments of Alves and Gutiérrez when he writes:

> Aunque Moltmann comprende el future como Alteridad, sin embargo tiene dificultad para proponer *más allá* del proyecto vigente del sistema y *más acá* del proyecto escatológico, *un proyecto histórico* de liberación política, económica, cultural … La esperanza alcanza hasta una 'modificación histórica de la vida' … (1978, p.38).[9]

However Gutiérrez is in agreement with Moltmann in the sense that he sees: "The Gospel does not get its political dimension from one or other particular option, but from the very nucleus of its message" (1973, p.213). This is the point that Hauerwas (2015) wishes to make:

> Of course, Christians "believe in God", but far more important for determining the character of Christian existence is that it is constituted by a politics that cannot avoid challenging what is normally identified as "the political" (Section Two Modes of Domestication, para 12).

From that he draws the conclusion in the same paragraph:

> Christians no longer believe that the church is an alternative politics to the politics of the world, which means that they have lost any way to account for why Christians in the past thought they had a faith worth dying for.

Hart highlights this in the Introduction to his translation of the New Testament:

> When one ventures into the world of the first Christians, one enters a company of

[9] Literal translation: Although Moltmann understands the future as Otherness, however he has trouble in proposing beyond the current system project and this side of the eschatological project, that is a historical project of political, economic, cultural liberation ... A hope to reach an " historic change of life ' …

> "radicals" … an association of men and women guided by faith in a world-altering revelation, and hence in values almost absolutely inverse to the recognized social, political, economic truths not only of their own age, but of almost every age of human culture. (2017, p. xxiv).

It is this over-determinative hermeneutic of trust toward the Bible, as a kind of transparent or innocent, container of messages, as Theoharis (2017, p.73-74) argues, that causes both a lack of awareness and appropriation of the presence of oppression and exploitation in the biblical texts. As Brueggemann (2007, p.64) states, the church is called to be a church capable of challenging the imperial pretensions of the capitalist empire. Gutiérrez is able to find congruence with the Gospels as they are for him and other liberation theologians mostly preoccupied with poverty, marginalization, imprisonment, and economic redistribution. These he indicates are the very terms in which Jesus announces his ministry (St. Luke 4:16-21), particularly verses 18 and 19:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to give new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed and announce the Lord's year of mercy (Christian Community Bible for the Third World (1988) Manila, Claretian Publications).

With the previous statement from Boff and Boff (1987, p.4) concerning the genesis of liberation theology, it is interesting to juxtapose it with the following quotation from Walter Capps concerning the theology of hope: "The school of hope is not a religio-philosophical derivative of a previous epistemological or metaphysical orientation. It is an aggregate. Its basis is mood" (1969, p.10). This mood for Benjamin, in his political writings regarding messianic hope, has the notion of future built into it. The theology of hope, as Gutiérrez's difference indicates, finds a further focus in Moltmann, namely in the sub-title of his work, "eschatology". So, the question is raised, is the theology of hope finding Christianity's answer, to re-

state Dutney, in looking forward to God's will for creation in an end time? At first glance both liberation theology and a theology of hope seem to share a common eschatological perspective with regard to the τέλος (telos, end time) for humanity. However even though there are but a few years between the publication of Moltmann's, Boff's and Gutiérrez's texts, it is not the case that the genesis of liberation theology is to be located solely within the theology of hope. As Gutiérrez further comments: "The hope which overcomes death must be rooted in the heart of historical praxis; if this hope does not take shape in the present and lead it forward, it will be only a evasion, a futuristic illusion" (1973, p.218).

In his *Theology of Hope* Moltmann makes reference to Dante with respect to the power of hope (Dante: Inferno Canto III - La Divina Commedia)

> That is why it can be said that living without hope is like no longer living. Hell is hopelessness, and it is not for nothing that at the entrance to Dante's hell there stand the words: "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here" (1996, p.32).

However, his hope: "stands or falls with the reality of the raising of Jesus from the dead by God" (1996, p.166). As well he states unequivocally that he: "does not want to make political questions the central theme of theology or to give political systems and movements religious support" (*Theology Today* 28; 1971:8). This is where there is a divergence between the theology of Liberation and the theology of Hope according to Moltmann. Nevertheless, I believe it fair to state that Moltmann's hope, grounded in God's raising of Jesus from the dead, is not some kind of heavenly hope that eschews any call to fully enter into life on earth as the following excerpts reveal (1993, pp.15-36):

> Hope finds in Christ not only a consolation in suffering, but also the protest of the divine promise against suffering.
>
> Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it.

> This hope makes the Christian church a constant disturbance in human society, seeking as the latter does to stabilize itself into a “continuing city”.
>
> This church is committed to “answer for the hope” that is in it (1 Peter 3:15).

This very brief juxtaposing of hypotheses concerning ‘Hope’ from Moltmann and Gutiérrez reveal that the latter, and other theologians of liberation, have utilised understandings of hope from the former in building an understanding of theology as a theology of liberation. Nevertheless, it takes a different trajectory from that of Moltmann for the realizing of its hope. What can be concluded is that Moltmann sees hope as being based upon the resurrection of Christ and oriented toward, as Dutney said, a future fulfilment of God’s will for creation. Gutiérrez, along with Alves in the excerpts presented, seeks the realization of God’s will in the raising of Jesus in a political now. In the words of Benjamin, the messianic age has always been “already but not yet”. Thus, as Eagleton reminds us in summing up the joint works of Moltmann and Bloch concerning hope, namely, “hope keeps us unreconciled to the present, thus figuring as a constant source of historical disruption” (2016, p.69).

Comments by Westhelle (2009, p. 1) highlight the approach that this thesis wishes to undertake, namely, that Liberation Theology, in his opinion, adopts a “latitudinal” approach to eschatology, and this is the trajectory of hope being presented in the above discussion. Whereas, he adds, on the other hand, “hegemonic canons of Western theology” adopt a “transcendental” and longitudinal” approach. As will be analysed in the section “Who are the Poor?”, in the light of Gutiérrez’s comments (1983, p.212) given the social, spatial and other dislocations of the poor, eschatology will need to be envisioned differently. Westhelle proceeds to the conclusion, and this is crucial in the light of previous comments cited from Dutney and Moltmann, and, indeed, integral to the process of this thesis in its

understanding of Liberation Theology given Gutiérrez's critical suggestion:

> The combination of a particular ecclesiology with the eschatological message of the incoming reign of God created the frame for latitudinal eschatology, which shifts the emphasis from the univocal transcendental or longitudinal understanding of eschatology to a multilayered topological or latitudinal perspective. This eschatological approach has the impending urgency of apocalyptic tidings because of what is to be expected lies already here, nearby or adjacently, instead of being perennially deferred to an impending future … (2009, p.8)

However, and this thesis is very aware that a preference for a materialist or latitudinal perspective, as is being adopted here, does not mean that other perspectives are to be simply jettisoned. Rather, as the Boffs remind us, the partiality toward and for the poor leads to a greater emphasis on a latitudinal approach which favours a here and now commitment.

Autonomous Marxism and Hope

Social theologian Luke Bretherton utilising ethnographic methods in research concerning community structures, finds hope in the ways that broad-based community organising develops the "capacity to relate to and act with others in diverse settings and ways" (2015, p.5). In utilising the term "Consociationalism" he develops it via autonomous Marxist expressions with hope as part of that development whilst also giving an essential focus to the political practices of faith. That is to say, the concept of 'hope' is raised, but apart from a generic usage in analysing the situation of the proletariat and an envisaged future for that class, it does not experience its own specific analysis such as that expressed in, for example, the "Theology of Hope". With that in mind it is most interesting to note the conclusion drawn by the neo-Marxist Martin in the penultimate page of the 'Conclusion' of his book, namely:

> This epistemology of hope, inseparable from the messianic face (albeit "weak") that Benjamin and Bloch thematized and Derrida developed in "Specters of Marx", is more known to us historically from a religious perspective than a scientific one. Certainly we can say that the epistemology of hope ought to be characterized as a

> "broadly" religious perspective. Marx thought that he could get rid of any need for such a perspective because the utopian hopes of humankind could be given a scientific foundation (2008, p.409).

Caputo (2016. Section 10 *Does the Kingdom of God need God*) discusses hope within a matrix of hope expressing itself through a theopraxis of weak power. Eschewing the utilisation of power as the world understands power, and as an early expression of revolutionary (Marxist?) power as expressed in the October revolution of 1917 in Russia, in his third paragraph he speaks of the "unconditional without power as the world knows power". These comments are based upon a quite radical exegesis of Chapter 25 of the Gospel of St. Matthew, whose focus is the telling of the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats by Jesus. Caputo's analysis, which finds further explication in his Section 11, is that the Church has made Jesus, via the image of 'the Son of Man', who as judge of nations entering into battle with the powers and principalities of the world utilizing the same powers as those of the secular principalities. The hope of the marginalised is in the victory of the Son of Man. However the poor are able to be protagonists not simply recipients of the largesse of those who have power. The poor also help build the 'kingdom' when they express some, albeit small, act of mercy without any inkling of a promised reward for their innocence in mercy is not yet tainted by a perverse hope in reward. Merrifield (2011) sees this as a core facet of autonomous Marxism.

Chapter 2. Theopolitical Hermeneutics of the Theology of Liberation and Marxism

A Materialist Hermeneutic Spiral

The trajectory of hope to be analysed in this thesis is within a hermeneutics, a theopolitical hermeneutics, as Vattimo and Zavbala argue, that seeks to step away from a metaphysics based upon some kind of Christian end time, heavenly conclusion to human history and adopt a more materialist position. What is proposed is a moving away from a religious conception of hope that understands such a hope as that which is to come at some far distant time as the fulfilment of a plan that God has for humankind. As Zabala said in a 2014 interview "Hermeneutics is that part of philosophy through which we exercise a neglected faculty we all have: the faculty of hope. For to interpret is to hope that we may become different, together" (Zabala 2014). Similarly, to eschew a belief that that which is coming is something safe, secure and rewarding. Sölle comments on this move from metaphysics to materialism because, as she says:

> The material hopes of the Bible for an earth on which justice and therefore peace is possible were replaced by a "Platonism for the people", which locates all hopes in the framework of here versus there, now versus someday, earth versus heaven (1984, p.90).

Sympathetically Vattimo and Zabala (2014) conclude: "If philosophers until now have failed to change the world, it isn't because their political approach was wrong but rather because it was framed within the metaphysical tradition (*Intro.* para 2).

From a perspective of the Christian faith the materialist hermeneutics to be utilised here finds a helpful expression in Juan Luis Segundo's methodology of the "hermeneutic circle". Among liberation theologians who argue for the "hermeneutic

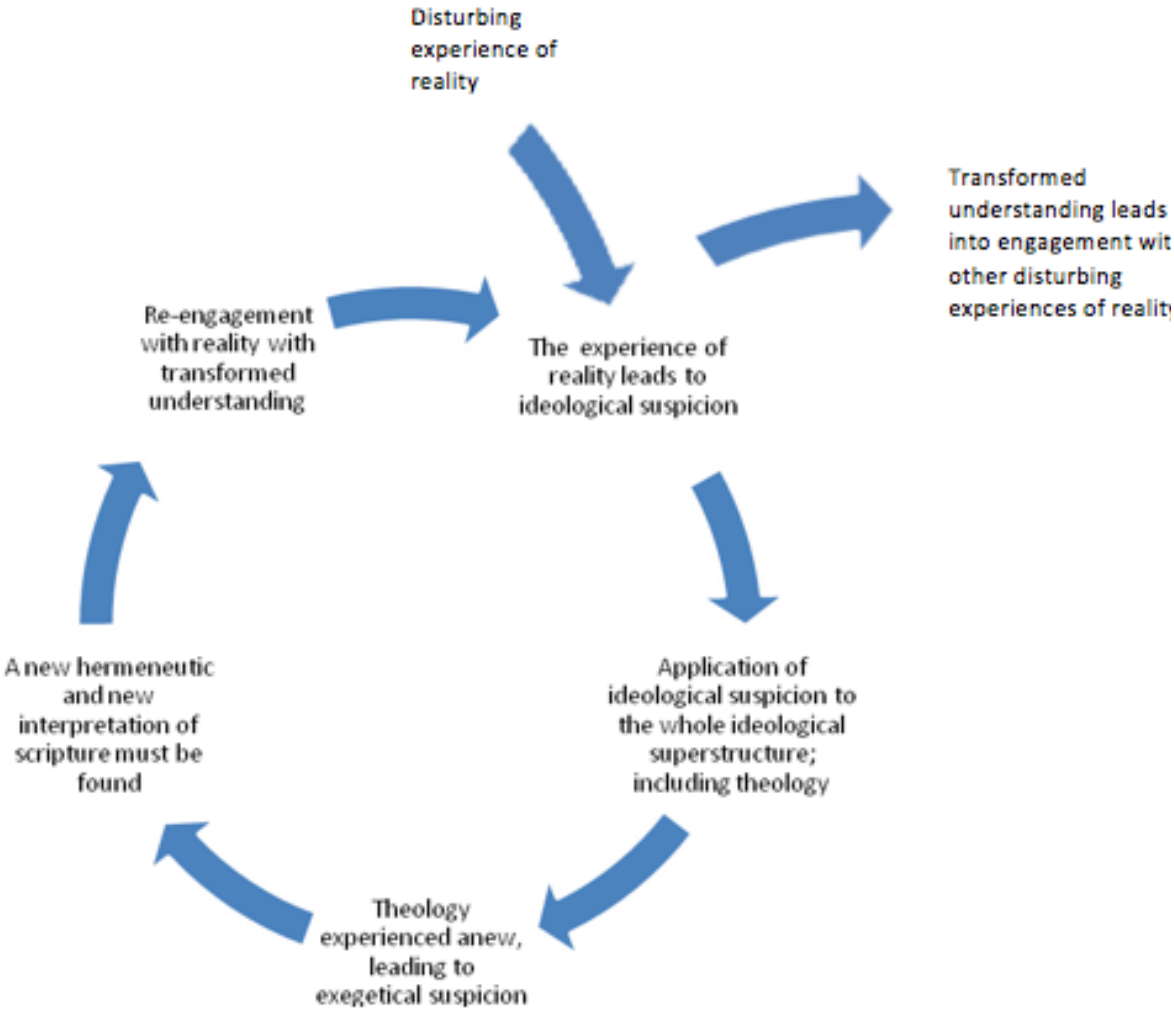
circle" as the central methodological tool, Segundo is the first to seriously apply it within a liberation perspective (1977, p.7-39). He acknowledges that the term “hermeneutic circle” was firstly used by Rudolf Bultmann in his exegetical approach to designate his method for interpreting Scripture, particularly the New Testament.

Segundo’s first step is that of challenging the prevailing theological methodology: “[I]t may be time to get down to analysing not so much the content of Latin American theology but rather its methodological approach and connection with liberation” (1977, p.5). His argument is that we must work with a hermeneutics of suspicion in which the Bible itself – intrinsically and inherently – is a site of contending voices, and hence, struggle. Segundo rejects “the naïve belief that the word of God is applied to human realities inside some antiseptic laboratory that is totally immune to the ideological tendencies and struggle of the present day” (1977, p.7). He then defines the hermeneutic circle as “the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present day reality, both individual and societal” (1977, p.8). The circular nature of this interpretation originates in “The fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly, and then to go back and interpret the word of God again, and so on” (1977, p.8). Žižek echoes this saying “the future is causally produced by our acts in the past, while the way we act is determined by our anticipation of the future and our reaction to this” (2009b, p.150-151). Segundo suggests that there are two preconditions required if it is to be successful:

> The first precondition is that questions rising out of the present be rich enough, general enough and basic enough to force us to change our customary conceptions of life, death, knowledge, society, politics and the

> world in general.
>
> … it is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by the continuing changes in our present-day reality, both individual and societal. (1977, p.8)

This can find a clarification in the following diagram. The commencement is the experience of some reality, for example the situation of the government's view of the poor. This leads to an analysis of the whole welfare system with particular focus on the way in which the marginalized are treated within that system. The lens of faith and Scripture is utilized in this analysis. This results in a re-engagement with the life of the community from a renewed faith standpoint.



The diagram conforms to Segundo's view of theology in the life of the church, but creates a break, stepping into another unknown facet of life. For Segundo theology is a critical, reflective discipline which arises as a second stage process. Theology, therefore, in Segundo's understanding, is the second step in the methodology of Jesus, commitment being the first step. The commencement of the spiral assumes a partiality that is essential for its proper use. That is, the hermeneutical spiral, presumes a commitment to change reality that is encountered and, thus, a consequent commitment to change the practice of theology. Segundo sees theology in its critical reflection upon the perception of reality as affected by Marxism as Marx 'has forever changed the way we conceive of and pose problems of society'. Peter Burns in his article *'The Problem of Socialism in Liberation Theology'* says as part of his conclusion:

> This is a dilemma for liberation theology because its original challenge was precisely to raise the question of what theology really is, and how one should pursue it. It answered this question by claiming that experience, social analysis, and engagement for justice in the secular political arena were indispensable moments in the theological enterprise (1992, p. 513).

As Segundo (1977, p.9) explains it, the spiral begins with an event that occurs in society that breaks into the Christian's inherited world-view and causes the person to see society and culture from a different perspective. This is that hermeneutics is the imperative to interpret all that is before us. In Segundo's example that event is consistently an issue of justice, an act of the powerful against the powerless. The second step is the realisation that our acceptance of the socio-political world that surrounds us has led us to distort our reading of Scripture, and thus we neglect the centrality of the practice of hermeneutics. A new reading of Scripture, viewed in the light of the violence of the powerful against the powerless, reveals that Scripture and the tradition of the Church both confirm the 'disturbing experience of

reality' as foundational to our sinful world. This leads, thirdly, to the recognition of the need for a changed reading of Scripture and thus a seeing of society with different eyes. That changed reading, fourthly, results in a practical engagement with society on behalf of the poor and marginalised. A partiality is consciously accepted, not on the basis of theological criteria, but on the basis of human, materialist criteria (1977, p.13). Marx himself expressed in *'The German Ideology'* that an *a priori step* is to state that all consciousness is produced by the material conditions in which people live. That is to say, our entrance into the world is into an already functioning consciousness built on the existing material conditions of the time and place into which we entered and, importantly, shaped by the powerful. As Segundo indicates, methods of historical understanding, as well as Biblical understanding and scholarship, are determined by the context of material conditions. Again, that is why a new hermeneutics is essential, and why Segundo proposes his hermeneutical spiral.

Part of the analysis of this thesis is to seek to respond to the question as to how the political power that is used to dominate the poor and marginalized might be challenged. Through demonstrating as to how personal and social identity is a product of social construction this research offers a bridge, a reflection upon the subjunctive mood of the messianic age. In the thinking of Segundo the oft-thought private and interior life of religion is to be understood from the beginning as public and political. Therefore, liberation is understood as emerging as a thorough going materialism. The implication of such an affirmation implies, as Clévenot explains materialist approaches to the Bible in his Introduction:

> It (materialist) means that all consciousness is produced materially or by material conditions in which people live, particularly by the kind of work they do and the social class to which they belong. In other words, a

> materialist approach does not allow for interpretations of life and experience from the standpoint of eternal truths or the will of God or abstract ideas working themselves out in daily life … results essentially from a Marxist analysis of society (1985, p. ix).

Thus social class, and particularly the form of their employment or status, for example 'working class', 'unemployed', 'aged', 'disabled' is a part of the data for the forming of this consciousness as Marxism asserts. Füssel brings it into sharper focus by suggesting that a materialist reading of the Bible has three goals:

> 1. It aims at showing that the Bible does not simply contain scattered expressions of the lives of the oppressed, but has the poor for its real subject.
> 2. To rescue the Bible from wrongful appropriation.
> 3. Reading the bible in such a way that … political praxis will receive a new clarification … (finding) in the Old and New Testaments … undiscovered paradigms of a subversive praxis (1984, p.18).

Taking up Füssel's third point within the discourse of biblical liberation hermeneutics I believe it "fair" to enquire, as does Froslin (1988, p.6) - with whom are the biblical scholars reading when they read the Bible? This thesis wishes to contend that the choice of interlocutors is an epistemological commitment. It requires an interpretive starting point, as the Boffs indicate, within the social experience of the marginalised themselves. If our faith does not push us into a radical encounter with the world in the sense of leading us to an experience of responsibility, love and commitment to transformation then, whatever we may wish to call it, we will have nothing but emptiness. Benjamin (2003) shifts this into a neo-Marxist reflection in that fact of our interior life being public and political in his fragment *"The Concept of History".* In that fragment he suggests that we occupy the 'messianic position'. By that he means that we act as the ones the dead were waiting for to redeem their unjust suffering. Liberation theology and hope know that we cannot alter the violent or unjust death of the dead. However, via such as the hermeneutic spiral we find ourselves summoned to both promote and enact a

more just future. Benjamin links this to the “dangerous memories of suffering”, of the unjust death of Jesus, of unjust suffering everywhere. Deleuze (2004) refers to this as us “making God happen in the world”, (religion), and thus making ourselves worthy of what happens to us. Caputo echoes Deleuze when discussing the ‘insistence’ and ‘existence’ of God when he sees Christians, as part of their identity, “assuming responsibility to convert what is being called for in the name of God into a deed” (2013a, p.14).

Liberation: a next step?

On the 18 December 2013 the then Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott in the light of the vehicle manufacturer General Motors Holden announcing that it would cease to build cars in Australia, said that this announcement would mean that many of the workers would be “liberated” by the loss of their jobs at the Holden factory. Various media, bloggers, twitterati on the day of the announcement devoted significant commentary to the use of the word “liberated”. All agreed that the meaning of the word was mangled by the Prime Minister. Most stated that its use was quite callow in its suggestion that now workers can be free from the confinement of a well-paid job of assembling cars and in their unemployed status they can get on with that new life that they have been hoping for and longing to pursue.

During my first Christmas in Montevideo Uruguay I was taken to visit a theological bookshop and printers located in the main thoroughfare. From that visit I was given as a gift a locally printed book by the Brazilian theologian Hugo Assmann entitled *Opresión – Liberación: Desafío a los Cristianos* (Oppression- Liberation: Challenge to Christians). Assman states his intentions from the outset, namely:

"Las páginas de este libro quisieran ser más que acción de palabra, palabra de acción. Por eso hablan de nuestra situación de pueblos dominados (1971, p.11).[10] Later in the text "el tema teológico-política de la "Liberación" inaugural un Nuevo context y una nueva metodología Cristiana sobre la fe como praxis histórica situada (1971, p.42).[11] Assmann's analysis centres around the Christian faith as a foundational praxis of the liberation in history of the human subject.[12] From its beginnings theology, but in the wider sense of Liberation Theology, affirms that God has a preference for the liberation of humanity, particularly the poor and oppressed.[13] Sung helpfully exegetes that statement:

> Liberation theology is a particular synthesis of pre-modern and modern world view. … The basis, the project and certainty of change in history, does not come from rational argument and is not immanent in history, but is the divine will revealed in biblical tradition, a fundamental characteristic of premodern thought … But the agent of change is no longer God but the human subject; and the "place" of the new things is not after the end of time and beyond history but the future within history (2007, p.13).

In its basic premises Liberation Theology concludes that the Church is called to participate in creating a reign of life in which all people live with justice and in love. As a hermeneutics of history it insists that there is no other place for theologians to "theologise" than in the midst of the materialist reality that is human history. It continues as an important expression of theology because it dares to offer a response to the realities faced by the poor and marginalized of the world. Miranda (1974) expresses this in the '*Prologue'* to his book in speaking of "the philosophy of oppression" and the overwhelming biblical testimony to the divine claim of

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[10] "The pages of this book would wish to be more than the action of a word, rather a word of action. Therefore they speak of our situation as dominated peoples …

[11] The theological-political theme of "Liberation " opens up a new context and a new methodology for the Christian faith as an historically located praxis.

[12] Assmann deploys the generic term "man".

[13] Assmann does not deal with the theme of 'Hope' per se. Interestingly though his mention of Moltmann is on the second page of his book, and this is in listing him as one of the principal authors of European Political Theology.

justice against structures of exploitation and marginalization. Much earlier Bonhoeffer in his writings also expressed a belief that theology must be done from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed:

> We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled – in short, from the perspective of those who suffer (1972, p.17).

The particular growth of neo-liberal global capitalism in the final decades of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first century has led some proponents of liberation theology into an analysis of the 'welfare poor' in capitalist countries and of the power relations that constitute the class system in those nations. Dussel (2013, p.xx) sees the new task for liberation theology as an ethics from the perspective and interests of the immense majority of humanity excluded by globalization and rendered victims of market capitalism in all its expressions. His book is a call to action by those being crushed by a 'neo-liberal model'. As an example, his wide-ranging concern is that the advantages of technology that we in the West enjoy is at the cost of an invisible exploitation of the 'non-class'. This perspective, and a particular reference to Western welfare-poor is not a 'peripeteia', a reversal of circumstances, but is rather something of an 'arrepentida', a Tango change of direction**.** This is noted with respect to the early concerns expressed by Gutiérrez that were focused on Third World perversions, particularly concerning 'development'. When 'the age of development' was begun its stated grand aim was to enable Third World countries to embrace progress and bind them into an alliance with the West. However, it soon became obvious that tackling root causes of poverty was an inherently political process. In the early days the idea of development was encapsulated by a widely repeated proverb: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, and you

feed him for life." But the knowledge transfer needed was not how to fish, but how to organize, bargain collectively, and see the profits of fishing go to the people not to corrupt officials and multinationals. Thus, the conclusion drawn by Gutiérrez was in terms of "The old wealth-poverty antinomy no longer expresses all the problems and contemporary aspirations of mankind" (1973, p.22).

Who are the poor?

A specific focus on behalf of the poor and marginalised does need some justification as to why Christians, and indeed all people, are called to act on behalf of this 'class', as Liberation Theology attests. Firstly from St. Paul in Galatians 2:10 (NRSV): "They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do." Secondly, from the heart of the Christian faith John Chrysostom (c. 347–407 CE), wrote: "This is the rule of most perfect Christianity, its most exact definition, its highest point, namely, the seeking of the common good for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbors." From the Clementine Homilies (c. 380 CE)

> Therefore it behooves you to give honour to the image of God, which is man–in this wise: food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, care to the sick, shelter to the stranger, and visiting him who is in prison, to help him as you can. And not to speak at length, whatever good things any one wishes for himself, so let him afford to another in need, and then a good reward can be reckoned to him as being pious towards the image of God. And by like reason, if he will not undertake to do these things, he shall be punished as neglecting the image.[14]

Thirdly, to clarify the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Matthew 26:6-11) - 'you will always have the poor with you'. As Theoharis writes:

> Matthew 26:11 both refers to people's failure to follow God's law and

[14] Roberts, Rev. A., Donaldson, Sir J., A C. Coxe (2007) The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Vol. VIII) Fathers of the Third and Fourth Century. New York, cosimo. Inc. p. 285

> commandments (that is, the forgiveness of debts, the release of slaves, provision for those in need without further benefiting only the wealthy) and instructs us how to establish a reign of prosperity and dignity for all … In God's Kingdom there will be no poor because poverty (and perhaps wealth?) will not exist. This is what Jesus is saying when he proclaims, "the poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me." (2017, ps. 73-74)

Jesus' words to the rich young man in Mark's Gospel (10:17-21) 'whatever you have' (10:21), that is whatever it is that the poor lack and you have, give to them, and Jesus' response to his disciples reveals in what the measure of eternal life consists. In the discussion between Jesus, the rich young man and the reference to the poor, the poor are not another class of people amongst many classes in ancient Israel. Jesus does not say support the Temple, or give to the poor priests or to the Pharisees. Indeed the poor of Israel are not a class at all in Israel, nor do they exist outside 'the set' of all classes to be included at some future point. Jesus makes it clear that the 'poor' are those eternally excluded (Hart, 2017 *Section, Community of the New Testament*, para 7).

Fourthly, making the leap to our context today, the question as to who are the poor in our Western neo-capitalist countries raises an interesting conundrum. During 2016 and 2017 discussions across all media with respect to "inequality" and the concept of "the poor" spiked. Many commentators blamed inequality as the root cause of the disintegration of not only global and national economics but also the collapse of Western political status quo. In the magazine '*Australian Quarterly"* and its special edition focus on inequality (2017) one of the interesting questions raised was whether inequality is an illness or simply a symptom? In the online Guardian

(guardian.com.au) of August 7, 2017 as part of a series on homelessness the vignettes presented point to a community and political leaders' perspective that poverty and homelessness are the fault of the person themselves. However, for the sake of the analysis to follow it is fair to say that the notion of inequality has mutated in recent times. In the discussion here the theopolitical focus is that people, including those in western democratic states, occupy different existences, hence the need for a change to ontology. Certainly, the popular definition of inequality is very much linked to materialistic differences. Nevertheless, as will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis, we need to consider that our discussion requires a shift from a discussion re jobs and economics, as our political leaders suggest, to that of a shift, again, in the ontology of political imagination. It is difficult in Australia to explain inequality within the nation. However, as the Guardian article reveals those who are poor and homeless need to encounter a story that they can tell to themselves that is not simply recounting that they are poor or homeless but is an encounter with a narrative that gives their lives meaning, and thus hope. This is within the praxis of a theopolitical subversion.

Theologically, New Testament theologian Dominic Crossan suggests it is imperative that we consider three usages from the New Testament (using NRSV) in our consideration as to the 'class' that constitutes the poor, namely:

> Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven (St. Luke 6:20)
>
> Blessed are the poor in spirit, for yours is the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:3)
>
> Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith (James 2:5) (1994, p.62 ff)

Crossan wants us to consider the differences in the context of the use of the word

for “poor” in the texts listed. The word in the Greek New Testament is φτωχός. This word, says Crossan, refers to those reduced to destitution. Interestingly the Australian Minister for Human Services, Michael Keenan, in an article in “The Guardian” online newspaper (guardian.com.au) of 22 July, 2017 seems to echo Crossan when he proposes a new definition of those eligible for welfare support – “absolute deprivation”. However, that status he comments is as a result of the “dysfunction” of families and individuals, not of the functioning of the neo-liberal market state. So, the status of the welfare poor has been neatly defined away, and tax cuts for the wealthy can go ahead. Juxtapose that with Parkinson’s (2011) very interesting subtitle to her book, “*His Blueprint for the Best Possible World”.* In mid-2016 responding to the question at a local church workshop “Did Jesus expect a perfect world?” she replied that Jesus’ main teaching was how we can be the best we can, and although we may not make a perfect world there is a greater chance for improving it by being the best we can. In her discussion she set about “redefining” (her lexical choice) some words from the Beatitudes. In response to a suggestion for a socio-political understanding of the term “poor” in the Beatitudes (as she was redefining “meek”, “merciful”, pure in heart,” etc.) she said that the term referred to those who were “humble in mind”. In a brief exchange of thoughts, she affirmed that following the teaching of Jesus implied helping others, but she eschewed a socio-political framework. So, to extrapolate from that, in the context of the Beatitudes is one to suggest to Crossan that Jesus is not declaring those who are destitute as blessed?

However, there is an interesting juxtaposition to be made with respect to 1 Corinthians 4:13 in the use of the term περικαθάρματα. It is rendered in the King James Version of the Bible by the term “filth”; the New International Version by

'scum' and the New Revised Standard Version by 'rubbish' in the Scriptural phrase "we have become like the rubbish of the world". Liberation Theology asserts that it is this 'rubbish' - the collective of the abject destitute - that has become blessed in terms of the grammar of the Beatitudes. It has become blessed for it is the site in the world of the blessing of the Messiah. Longenecker (2010) gives examples of charitable initiatives toward the poor in the ancient Greco-Roman world, but he says that Jesus breaks new ground in pronouncing blessings to the poor. St. Luke 6:20-22 makes it quite clear that the poor are those who are hungry, miserable, excluded and abused whilst their opponents are well regarded, happy, fed and rich. Meggitt writes:

> Even if scholars do manage to entertain the possibility that the economy was radically different from the model with which their discipline generally works, it will still be hard for many to accept the full implications of this: that in real terms there were few economic differences between those that found themselves outside the rarefied circles of the elite (1998, p.7).

We may conclude that the social world of early Christianity was one of acute inequality and a severe class divide. This is the thrust of Elliott's (2012, p.7) agreement with the positions of Crossan and Herzog in his arguing against Malina (Malina, B. 2001) as he cites the latter: "we simply cannot get any idea what New Testament authors might have meant when they referred without qualification to "the poor".

These destitute or rubbish of the world are the foundation of theology. This is what makes the Theology of Liberation the ground of all theology as the Boffs assert. For Segundo the commitment to the poor is living out the 'Parable of the Last Judgment' (St. Matthew 25: 31-46) as the manner of encountering Jesus. It is in the commitment to the changing of the life situation of the poor that we respond to, and are committed to, Christ, and in the thinking of Caputo, we become human.

Identity or Contextual Liberation Theologies- The Challenge of a 'Shift'

During Christmas 1979 I received as a gift a copy of the documents *"Puebla: La Evangelización en el Presente y el Futuro de América Latina*" from the meeting of Roman Catholic bishops of Latin America held in in Puebla Mexico during that year, from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Soriano domiciled in the town of Mercedes in Uruguay where I was living and working. The Bishop indicated to me that Liberation Theology with its theological interpretation of Marxism, dependency and the state of the poor was under siege. Indeed, he said, a number of theologians of liberation were prevented from attending the sessions of the Puebla conference. Obispo Andrés Rubio of Mercedes indicated to me that 'La Teología de la Liberación' would be suppressed and would cease to exert a significant influence in South America. Puebla saw the conservatives in the Roman Catholic Church, with the support of Pope John Paul 2, suppress priests who had been advocating for a decade with respect to an "opción por los pobres" (an option for the poor) expressed, as said by detractors, as a Marxist flavoured theology of liberation.

Around the same time, I was given an English language copy of *The Rebel Church in Latin America* (Gheerbrant 1974) by a Mennonite pastor in the nearby area of Colonia Valdense. That book is part narrative and analysis, and part documentary evidence as stated on the back cover. What was of particular interest to me was a chapter entitled "Montevideo" (the capital of Uruguay). Included in that chapter were speeches given by Fr. Juan Carlos Zaffaroni, a Jesuit and former Professor of Philosophy at the University in Montevideo a decade before Puebla. Utilising thoughts of the Colombian guerrilla priest Camillo Torres Zaffaroni concludes each

of the included speeches with a call to revolution, not eschewing violence, against both the oppressive state and rich landowners as well as a church sympathetic to the thoughts and practices of the oppressors. What Obispo Rubio remarked has in a sense come to pass. Early writing re Liberation theology in the style of Zaffaroni, and in particular a text such as Miranda's *Marx and the Bible,* has given way to texts like those edited by Ellis & Maduro (1989) and Rowland (2007). These later compilations seem to eschew a focus on political economy and the poor in favour of other contexts, for example such as identity politics and liberation, with those contexts being currently in the ascendancy.

There is no question that all theologies arise out of, and speak to, a variety of historical, political and social contexts. This was particularly in evidence in the latter part of the twentieth century when theology, it was said, became self-reflexively partial and focused more on cultural identity. There are those that draw specific conclusions from this stated self-conscious partiality as it relates to liberation theology. Angie Pears, discussing the breadth of contextual theologies, writes that "Liberation theologies as contextual theologies are characterized by the fundamental conviction that all theologies, regardless of theological perspective or motivation, are contextual" (2009, p.167). However there is some clarification required by such a wide-sweeping statement as the following discussion will seek to indicate.

In a chapter entitled "*Paul against Empire: Then and Now",* (Adiñach & Botta, 2009) the author of the chapter, Theodore W. Jennings, states:

> There are those who have maintained that with the collapse of the Soviet Union the liberative hermeneutical project has been dealt a decisive blow, precisely because of its dependence upon the plausibility of a certain Marxist interpretation of global economic reality. Indeed, it is true that many

> of the heirs to a liberation theology perspective have adopted alternative or additional hermeneutical strategies such as postcolonial, culturally contextual, as well as adaptations of feministic hermeneutics (2009, p.147).

Gutiérrez himself is quoted as saying:

> People today often talk about contextual theologies but, in point of fact, theology has always been contextual. Some theologies, it is true, may be more conscious of and explicit about their contextuality, but all theological investigation is necessarily carried out within a specific historical context. When Augustine wrote *The City of God,* he was reflecting on what it meant for him and for his contemporaries to live the Gospel within a specific context of serious historical transformations (2003, p. 1-2).

Gonzalez (2014) moves through a series of topics to one simply listed as "The Poor" and there utilizes the writings of "queer" liberation theologian Marcella Althaus-Reid. Althaus-Reid states that liberation theology has focused too narrowly upon the economic realities of the poor and so has ignored the complexity of the poor, particularly as she says, with regard to gender and sexuality. What Althaus-Reid proposes is a more comprehensive understanding of the faith of the poor and the exercise of their everyday religion. A diluting of the presence of Marxism and a greater focus on the global reality of popular and lived religion will provide a more nuanced focus for Liberation Theology in her thinking (2014, p.46). Elliott, in the article previously mentioned, asks the question as he comments on the text by Petrella (2008), and in so doing offers a challenge to the writing of Althaus-Reid: "Petrella asks whether the profusion of "contextual" liberation theologies and the focus on identity and hybridity serves to obscure the fundamentally determinative fact of economic deprivation" (2010, p.10). Elliott further highlights Petrella's criticism of contextualized theologies by his response a few lines further on:

> They're powerless because the upsurge of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as organizing axes for liberation theology has blurred the fact that material deprivation, that is, the deprivation that comes from one's class standing in society, remains the most important form of oppression.

Which is to say that economic marginalization recedes whilst other areas of exclusion come to the forefront. Or to be somewhat blunt, a starving other is not in the position to discuss the nature of gendered pronouns! (Idea from Helen Razer (2017) *Total Propaganda* Sydney, Allen and Unwin, page 188). That is not to say that such a conversation is not worth having, it is, but it is not the most pressing one.

Whilst acknowledging various forms of contextual theologies, such as feminist, queer, transgender and black the perspective of this thesis is that if the theology of liberation is seen as another "local" theology then it is pushed into the bundle of theologies in conversation with other strands of theology. As Peter Burns concludes regarding Liberation Theology:

> Yet if it decides to forsake the radical critique of capitalist society for "theology," will it not appear that the most distinctive characteristic of liberation thought and practice has been lost, and will it not become just another academic theological school? (p. 515).

The Boffs comment: "There is one, and only one theology of liberation. There is only one point of departure – a reality of social misery – and one goal – the liberation of the oppressed" (1984, p.24). Part of the Boffs discussion leads to the consideration that to label liberation theology as contextual is to reduce it. It is to form it as, in a sense, just another theological category. As such it then becomes one of a host of "theologies" for one to study. The intention of the analysis to be undertaken in this thesis is both different and specific. In terms of the discussion with Autonomous Marxism as one of the focii of this thesis the question faced is, with respect to the contribution of theology, what makes theology liberative to the poor, marginalized and, with respect to our neo-liberal market society, the welfare dependent. This is to be juxtaposed with the traditional Marxist imagery of workers

taking control of the means of production as a powerful prefigurative projection of a society that is more than a narrow workers paradise. This lifts the comment on the wayside pulpit mentioned earlier to a higher level.

Such rhetorical questions segue into a consideration of what is known in some circles as ‘Christian Anarchism’ as the form of liberation theology as this is seen by many to be a subversive practice within the context of the Church. The question that rightly ought to be posed is that of ‘is this another contextual theology?’ In the latter part of the twentieth century and into the beginnings of the twenty first ‘Christian Anarchism’ does appear to have strong links with Liberation Theology. Christoyannopoulos in his recent analysis *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel* begins his discussion by indicating “the realization that the premise of anarchism is inherent in Christianity and the message of the Gospels” (2001.Intro. para.1). He then makes the assertion that, “Jesus’ teaching implies a critique of the state”. This is followed by comments that the pursuing of radical political implications of Christianity leads to the kinds of political engagement realised by proponents of theologies of liberation. Christoyannopoulos thus concludes: “Nonetheless, because in its politicization of Christianity and denunciation of oppression, Christian anarchism appears so similar to other theologies of liberation” (Section ‘In political theology, para.3). These three assertions by Christoyannopoulos are very wide sweeping and deserving of a more careful analysis. Unfortunately they are taken as givens by him and Christoyannopoulos’ discussion proceeds from there. However his opening discussion and early conclusions do follow a similar trajectory to that of Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) and Gorz (1982) by suggesting that the Christian anarchist vision is that of subverting market capitalism, and this is an important

hinge, the subversion is by forming alternative communities. These communities, local ἐκκλησία (ekklésia/churches) are similar to the 'base communities' (comunidades de base) of América Latina I encountered in the mid 1970's and early 1980's in Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil. Even though Christoyannopoulos' sees the Christian anarchist vision as that of subverting market capitalism, he appears to favour, as just mentioned, the building of the ekklésia alternatives. He sees the very existence of these communities as a political statement in itself. In the end what Christoyannopoulos proposes is a standard theological perspective. The time when justice will finally be done, wrongs righted and the poor and oppressed will receive their heavenly reward at the time of the ἔσχατον (eschaton) – the end time. However, in contrast, the secular post-anarchism of recent times has become part of the bundle of actions of autonomous Marxism, not necessarily pacifist and therefore not necessarily eschewing the use of violence for a manifestation of justice now. Whilst accepting links with the likes of the Christian anarchism of Christoyannopoulos it does differ dramatically from his belief that God will justify and vindicate all at the end time.

A Place for Marxist Grammar

In an early effort at summarizing, and in seeking to present meaning in the use of the term *liberation,* wishing to differentiate it from development, which was part of a post-colonialist, post-imperialist global perspective, Gutiérrez states:

> *Liberation* expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of economic, social and political processes which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes. At a deeper level, *liberation* can be applied to an understanding of history. Man is seen as assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny.
>
> The word *liberation* allows for another approach leading to the Biblical

> sources which inspire the presence and action of man in history (1973, p.36).

It was conclusions such as these which led to an understanding of a merging of Liberation Theology and Marxism.[15] It is this convergence which underpins not only much of Gutiérrez's liberationist theology, but the theology of many other authors writing within a liberation theology matrix, and for making that context visibly political with what is believed to be Marxist grammar in terms such as "oppressed peoples" and "oppressive classes". However this has caused a cleavage between, in this context, Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* and Liberation Theology over notions of promise and hope but eschewing a subversive and seditious socio-political application for the achieving of that hope.

Although the liberation theology of Gutiérrez and others evolved within the context of what became known as the 'oppressed classes' of "América Latina", as he says at the outset in discussing the concept of development, it is first and foremost in response to the dependency and exploitation by capitalist countries. Galeano (1997) also draws upon the Marxist critique of religion to highlight the nexus of the relationship between religion and capitalism. Benjamin goes further and writes of 'Capitalism as Religion'. He sees capitalism not only as religious in nature, but a religion in its own right, as Petrella also (2008) argues. Benjamin and Petrella go beyond Weber's argument that capitalism stemmed from Protestantism suggesting, rather, that capitalism has developed parasitically by attaching itself to Christianity. Hence, in their opinion, the fact that western Christian nations are capitalist nations ought not to be a surprise. This relationship perpetuates the

[15] It was given added impetus by such texts as *Openings for Marxist-Christian Dialogue* (1968) ed. Thomas W. Ogletree, Nashville, Abingdon Press which contains an interesting article by Jürgen Moltmann "The Revolution of Freedom: The Christian and Marxist Struggle" focussing on the overcoming of divisions between the two and perspectives they have in common with respect to revolutionary freedom (pages 68ff.)

oppression of the masses of the poor as is evidenced in such as the third verse of the well-known nineteenth century hymn "All things bright and beautiful"[16].

> The rich man in his castle,
>
> The poor man at his gate,
>
> God made them high and lowly,
>
> And ordered their estate.

The Church tells the poor that it is God's will that they be poor. Then by focusing their hope upon the eschatological blessings of heaven at the end time the role of the Church becomes one of helping them in their endurance of earthly suffering.

The use of Marxism by Liberation Theology can perhaps be summed up by Marx's 11th thesis against Feuerbach – "*Hitherto philosophers have explained the world; our task is to change it."* As Miranda daringly states in his 'Introduction':

> There is no doubt that the encyclicals take their diagnosis of society from Marx, as society divided into classes, in which some are the owners of the means of production and others, the proletariat, are able to contribute only their own labor and are forced to submit to the decision-making power of the capitalists (1974, p. xiii).

The task, as Miranda (1974, p. 250ff) later presents it involves exposing how bourgeois Christianity supports the oppression of the poor by capitalism. This exposing is a function of a hermeneutics of liberation. Miranda also uses the grammar of Marx's concept of "class struggle" as another of the methods by which change is effected. Jeff Sparrow (Sparrow, J. *How did class become the forbidden 'c' word in Australian politics?* The Guardian online Friday 19 June 2015) suggests that class has become unmentionable in Australian society. So his conclusion is in stepping away from traditional Marxism, because such grammar has become to us "fundamentally nostalgic", as it refers to an age that has passed. For Sparrow

[16] The hymn was first published in 1848 in Mrs. Cecil Alexander's *Hymns for Little Children*.

there is an urgency in finding a new vocabulary to deal with the issues of inequality and power within Australian society. However as will be discussed in subsequent sections that grammar is still dependent upon Marxist terminology. I agree that within the society that I inhabit, and similar Western societies, traditional Marxist notions of class struggle have been sidelined, but not completely removed. As Žižek states, “class struggle is the restructuring principle that allows us to account for the very “inconsistent” plurality of ways in which other antagonisms can be articulated into “chains of equivalences” (2012, p.33).

In recent decades, taking the Arab and Greece Springs as examples, an Autonomist Marxist position in favour of other forms of grouping and acting together has evolved as the platform for a struggle, (for example Žižek 2017, p.45) on behalf of those economically and politically disposed. As Haiven and Khasnabish refer to this new collective in the beginning of their text: “We create, with those around us, multiple, overlapping landscapes, horizons of common possibility” (2014, p.4). Gorz provides some ‘definition’ as to the emergence and composition of what as he designates the non-class as the collective that:

> encompasses all those who have been expelled from production by the abolition of work, or whose capacities are under-employed as a result of industrialization … It includes all the supernumeraries of present day social production, who are potentially or actually unemployed whether permanently of temporarily, partially or completely. It results from the decomposition of the old society based upon the dignity, value, social utility and desirability of work (1982, p.67).

Although not necessarily conscious of the fact this non-class is, but not always, motivated against a ruling class that subtly abuses them and makes them both experience and feel alienated. The language of Haiven and Khasnabish and Gorz, not overtly identified as such by them, is one of liberation. As part of their suggestion for the creating of common possibilities the former suggest the fact of

living differently. That way of life will be, using a term from the title of their text, a more radical vision than seeking a mainstream political imagery. In their discussions of 'political' and 'liberative' interpretations 'from below' they do so without explicitly identifying their work as "Marxist", but it fits within autonomous Marxism. To live differently will require breaking with the forms of the old society, including an outdated Marxist proletarian perspective as Gorz comments. By that is meant the Marxist view of the workers taking over the means of production. This was carried to the extreme by Soviet scientific communism as proposed by Stalin. This version of Marxism is a belief that history is governed by iron laws leading to only one outcome, a classless society.[17] However, as Merrifield (2011) comments, if one takes over the means of production and still makes the same alienating consumerist and warfare products this will not be a different society. So the notion of a 'non class' opens up, for the likes of Autonomist Marxists, a more inclusive political terrain with a different agenda, politically and economically from the one that is (to be) overcome. Nevertheless Haiven and Knasnabish do advocate for the poor viewing themselves as the driving force in history and the instruments through which change can be implemented. As Žižek somewhat erratically highlights toward the end of the chapter entitled "Occupy Wall Street", that "it was the small crowd in Zucotti square which really stood for the 99 per cent and was justified in its distrust of institutionalized democracy" (2012, p.89).

As Miranda (1974, p. 272-3) also underscores, the poor are not to sit and wait for God to, in some miraculous way, intervene on their behalf and thus solve the problem of their suffering and oppression. He refers to Marx to indicate that it is the poor who become the active means whereby their liberation is effected by

[17] Žižek claims that Marxism, particularly in its Soviet guise, inherited its notion of historical determinism from Christianity.

responding as a non-class that feels alienated and abused by the market state. The issue as to whether revolution/violence is one of the means whereby liberation is effected by this 'non-class' is a theme that will require comment. Marx definitely understood violence as being one of the tools of the revolution to be used by the proletariat. However, as an aside to this question, in his book *Violence* Žižek raises the existence of, and distinguishes between, subjective and objective violence (2008, p.2). The former consists in acts of brutality such a murder, rape, genocide, etc. daily experienced via our various media. The latter is the 'normal' marginalized state of life experienced in the capitalist market state, especially by those who are poor and welfare dependent. It is the state sanctioned violence being done to the proletariat Marx suggests, and taken up more fully by Lenin, which becomes a justification for them to use violence against their oppressors. A serious question raised by these twin poles of violence is that of whether Liberation theology advocates that the abject ones contemplate taking the step of one time Colombian Catholic priest Camilo Torres with respect to their predicament as those subjected to the normality of objective violence by the market state. In the final chapter of this thesis the question of subversion and adversarial stance will pose the dilemma of what is the practice to be adopted in following Jesus and opposing the violence of the market state.

Marxian Perspectives, the Church and Capitalism

In Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical *Spe Salvi* ("Saved by Hope") there is a discussion concerning the false hope of marxism and communism and the true basis of the Faith. Whilst not actually promoting capitalism, it nevertheless leans toward a symbiosis between the Christian faith and the neo-liberal Western market

economy. This is a relationship that continues notwithstanding comments from the current Pope, Francis[18][19]. It is also interesting to juxtapose Pope Benedict XVI's writing with the comments of Benjamin, with whom Pope Francis seems more aligned. Commenting on the nature of religion Benjamin sees capitalism as a religion. He says it reduces all of existence to its own standards of value. Benjamin's views regarding religion have been taken a further step by Žižek as he suggests that religion has two possible roles in a capitalist society: therapeutic and critical. Briefly, with the former perspective it helps individuals to function better in the existing capitalist order. That, he says, is the hope of many of its proponents. With the latter it undertakes the task of speaking to the oppression of specific communities within the capitalist society and thus opens up a different perspective on hope in society.

The suggested therapeutic role has received significant analysis through an article by Bruce Rogers-Vaughn in his reflections on a "post-capitalist pastoral theology", submitted but not yet published by the Journal of Pastoral Theology. In a context of growing anxiety and hopelessness Rogers-Vaughn concludes on page 4 of his article:

> Those of us involved primarily in clinical work have regarded the sufferings of individuals as originating within themselves, arising from their personal choices, feelings, individual biology, private relationships, families of origin,

[18] It is interesting to place this alongside recent comments by Pope Francis as the Guardian ('theguardian.com' Friday, 10 July, 2015) comments. "Pope Francis has urged the downtrodden to change the world economic order, denouncing a "new colonialism" by agencies that impose austerity programs and calling for the poor to have the "sacred rights" of labor, lodging and land." It is worth pondering whether the writer of the article utilized the phrase "urged the downtrodden to change the world economic order", or whether he is quoting Pope Francis. Briefly, do the down trodden change the economic order by a new/different involvement in the post-capitalist market state with the support of a benevolent capitalism, or is it an invitation for them to use their own "violence" to change it?
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151127_kenya-kangemi.html

[19] The use of the term "violence" in the above footnote will receive consideration in the next chapter.

> and their unconscious lives. We have not, as a rule, explored the social, cultural, or political environment as potentially the greater determinant of their distresses.

He sees pastoral theologians in some kind of retreat in that: “When we do acknowledge the sufferings imposed by capitalism, we typically do so in passing, without a thorough analysis and critique” (p.5). Miller’s (2009, p.66) discussion points to neo-capitalism absorbing all other cultures and beliefs as content to be commodified, distributed, consumed with an end toward fostering a feeling of well-being and thus fulfilling false hopes. For that reason religious beliefs and practices, whilst continuing to be revered and celebrated, are increasingly deprived of their ability to shape individual, interpersonal and communal lives. Miller concludes that the breadth of the practice of Christian faith, and by implication pastoral theology, undertakes the role of, “functioning as comforting delusions” (2009, p.179). That is to say that in the practice of the Christian faith by Christians if we, for example, simply act to help another person, particularly a person in need, to feel good by being a recipient of our help, and thus by implication to make ourselves feel good because we have done good, then we all participate in ‘comforting delusions’, not in the realization of hope. We need to interrogate the system and uncover what it is in the system that causes the distresses of the other and creates the need for acts of charity as gifts of hope.

Discussing the need for a renewed pastoral theology, and where resources might be found, Rogers-Vaughn suggests in the concluding paragraph of his article previously cited (Powers and Principalities page 28): “in the literature of liberation theology and some of the eschatological political theologies.” He admits to borrowing neo-Marxist thinking in his discussion and critique, alongside a perspective on hope from the same source. Miller (2009, p.171-2) similarly admits

to an equivalent borrowing in his analysis. Rogers-Vaughn is in agreement with the early writing of Juan Luis Segundo on pastoral action in terms of placing hope back into the forefront of pastoral care.

> It is not sufficient to instill hope within isolated individuals. This is a false hope … that only serves to assuage discontent and thus sustain the prevailing hegemony. Authentic hope depends on a collective vision that intensifies the longing of the soul and motivates to action (1978, p.27).

Segundo finds congruency with respect to Benjamin's second comment, and utilising similar grammar, regarding the role of religion. That is, it tries to be a form of critical agency articulating what is wrong with society as well as creating a space for the voices of discontent so that a truer form of hope might be born. The significant point being made has found current, popular expression, in what Owen Jones affirmed in his 'FutureFest' talk given on April 9, 2015 (Jones, 2015) namely, that our neo-capitalist/free market economy flourishes on anxiety and creates a condition of hopelessness. This hopelessness is particularly the condition of the poor, unemployed and welfare dependent.

Neo-Marxists such as Žižek (2012, p.79-80) have written extensively about people in consumer capitalism living in a state of permanent alienation and hopelessness. That is a state, Žižek adds in a jocular throwaway, in which hope is found in coffee shops where people dream about unearned fame and lottery wins. This 'false consciousness' is something Autonomous Marxists urge folk in the consumer capitalist state to strenuously resist. It is also part of the understanding and practice of "weak thought" by Vattimo (2007) and Caputo (2016).

These comments lead seamlessly to the classic piece from Marx himself:

> Hence, our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but by analysing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself,

> whether it manifests itself in a religious or a political form. It will then become evident that the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to be conscious in order to possess it in reality. It will become evident that it is not a question of drawing a great mental dividing line between past and future, but of realising the thoughts of the past. Lastly, it will become evident that mankind is not beginning a new work, but is consciously carrying into effect its old work.
> (Marx to Ruge. 1843)

The implication here is that the dreams (hope) of a better world are a constant, indeed transcendental drive behind the activities of 'mankind' (sic). The transcending of prevailing conditions, which is the condition of the life of the proletariat, is an active process leading to the possessing of that which has long been dreamed of. This accords, again, with the thinking of Benjamin as Friedlander says: "The present transformed, what Benjamin calls the Now, rather than any dreams of the future, is the focal point of the messianic passion" (2012, p.193). This quest, even in its current historical materialist form always contains within it a quasi-theological message of hope.

Such comments fit with the concerns of Marx regarding religion and hope. The most oft quoted phrase from Marx, even today, is, "Die Religion ist das Opium des Volkes." (Religion is the Opium of the People). It comes from a larger piece:

> Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo. (Marx, 1844)

Marx believed that our social institutions, including religion, are the result of economic realities. However when Marx writes of 'religion being the opium of the people' the statement needs to be placed alongside the opening line of the piece just cited, namely, "the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism."

Marx was drawing from Feuerbach, who had, in that reflection, limited himself to a critique of Christian theology. Today, as a number of neo-Marxists have shown, there is a twist to that statement. Žižek agrees that the critique of religion is still the premise of all criticism, but that criticism is now directed toward the uncovering of the idolatrous "theologies" or "religions" in neo-capitalism that are destructive of hope. Caputo (2016) says that the criticism of Marx ought to be seen in a more Janus-like way.

> Tillich and Derrida turn the tables on Marx and say that it is not the critique of religion but religion's critique of idols that comes first. The religious critique of everything conditional in the light of the unconditional is the paradigm of every supposedly secular critique, to which Derrida adds that this … coming straight from the Bible is what lies behind Marx's own critical impulse (Section Protestant Principle and Jewish Principle, para 4).

This leads Miller (2009) to speak of the religious forms of neo-capitalism such as consumerism and the false hope contained in acquisition. For Miller 'Hope' is not to replace an abstract capitalism for an equally abstract egalitarianism birthed by some form of neo-Marxism. Rather hope, and Caputo (2016) relates it to "what we are dreaming of, what we are praying for, what we desire with a desire beyond desire" (Section *the Undeconstructible,* para 4) is to expose the mechanisms behind the current social order, and then to find ways whereby we can maintain ourselves in varying states of openness to what might enable us to facilitate and democratize access to economic and political opportunity by creating environments that lean more toward the less fortunate.

It is true that from an atheistic position Marx believed that our social institutions are the result of economic realities. Similarly, as Braune (2014, p.136) comments, Fromm as a Marxist and a psychoanalyst, acknowledged that people are strongly influenced by socio-economic structures and that has a profound effect on their

hope. That is to say, as Žižek also concurs, and extrapolating from that he adds that the economically well-off now oppress the very poor through a privatization of hope, in which the church is complicit. But how is it that religion is experienced as the 'opium of the people' and thus the creator of a false hope? Marx's criticism relates to a Christian view, still held by many, of accepting one's current social and economic status, along with social injustice and economic disparities with the hope of heaven as the end of that difficult acceptance. In a way "the opium of the people" is part of God's plan, without reasoning, that created us poor, but one day we know we will be rich like our betters.

However there is some clarification required with what might be viewed as a simplistic understanding of Marx's statement. Firstly, Marx sees religion as an opiate for the masses in the form of, let us say, accepting this opiate as one's personal lord and saviour with the promise of some kind of heavenly reward. However, simply thinking of opiate as a drug that leads us in that way by its tranquilizing power would be to enter into a misunderstanding. Opiates in mid nineteenth century Victorian England, Marx's time, were a legitimate prescription that doctors used to treat patients. They were never seen as something that would cure the disease. Rather they were seen as a drug to mitigate a symptom. So, to rephrase Marx, religion is not a disease but, rather, it is a symptom of a disease; and to refer to the earlier comment concerning whether inequality in Australia is an illness or a symptom, we can step into considering inequality as a symptom of the disease of the functioning of the western democratic market state. Mary Daly goes further suggesting (in the context of a discussion of patriarchal religion and the need for emancipation) that in that disease we are confronted by demonic possession. In part citing from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* she

states:

> As contradictory, divided beings, the oppressed do not fully grasp the paralyzing fact that the oppressor, having invaded the victims' psyches, now exists within themselves. They are caught in a web of self-defeating behavior (1973, p.48).

Because of this demonic possession the well-being of the oppressed is replaced by a diseased state, of lacking true human health, of being in thrall to the oppressor, in part through the oppressor's manipulation of religion, and thus become devoid of hope.

Marx's main concern about religion is that it can become in a capitalist society a tool for oppression. Theology in its materialist sense is a way of talking about the experience of well-being. To confine theology to the esoteric and metaphysical, to resist what theology is trying to say about the concrete and material reality is, as Žižek indicates, to engage in the idolatrous. I concede that Marx thinks that society is better off without religion. I am unable to say if he actually believed that that was possible. From my faith position in the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century if Marx did affirm so I would have to disagree.

With respect to religion Marx also said: "To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusion." Taking up Benjamin's comments in "Capitalism as Religion" there are two main illusions emerging from considering religion as 'ideology', namely:

1. Marx's main critique of religion is that it placates a weak proletariat, and by implication those related to and dependent upon the members of the proletariat, to accept their condition and focus, in some neo-Kantian way, their hope on heaven.

2. The illusion that our beliefs can be neutral, with no negative affect

> of serving the interests of some at the expense of others.

As will be discussed later in this thesis, and again using texts from Žižek (1989), there is the question of what is meant within a Marxist genus by the term ‘ideology’, given that the notion of ideology seems to be as elusive as ever. As we are experiencing in a number of western countries, and evidenced in Australia, there is an effort by all sides of politics to leave behind old ideological struggles. This was particularly evidenced by the Australian Opposition leader Kevin Rudd when in 2006 he was reported in “The Age” newspaper (Rudd, 2006) as saying

> New Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd has decisively moved to modernise the Labor Party's view of itself, rejecting socialism as an "arcane, 19th-century" doctrine and defining Labor's values as equality, solidarity and sustainability.

Are these new values a revised ideology? Is Hope to be understood as part of an ideological construct? Marx points to the logic of capitalist production as a kind of sovereign ideology. However in the writings of Benjamin the word ideology comes to mean something like a meta-belief, which also encompasses a kind of meta-hope. As a meta-belief it is a cultic religion of ritual symbols in, for example, the over-arching statement on US American banknotes “In God We Trust”. This topsy-turvy meta-belief functions as strange religion because in being used by those in power to oppress others, it further consolidates their power. It offers not transformation but the destruction of existence and hope. Žižek (2015) draws Marx’s thoughts to a higher conclusion in commenting on the ideology of capitalism:

> (Capitalism) sustains a worldless ideological constellation, depriving the large majority of people of any meaningful cognitive mapping. Capitalism is the first socio-economic order which *de-totalizes meaning*: it is not global at the level of meaning. There is, after all, no ‘capitalist civilization’ proper: … capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to …, from East to West. Capitalism’s global dimension can only be formulated at

> the level of truth-without-meaning (Section Introduction Divided we stand, para. 16).

Žižek is suggesting that capitalist ideology has led us into a time when there is no need for hope because the end has already arrived. That end is capitalism's presentation of the future being complete and only reiteration and re-permutation remain. Having encompassed all with a ubiquitous TINA the weak messianic hope of which Benjamin and Caputo speak has lapsed into a conviction that no alternative can ever happen.

Autonomism/Autonomous Marxism

It was this 'de-totalizing' and destruction that Autonomous Marxists saw before few others, namely, the reality of deindustrialization (an escalating phenomenon in Australia), structural unemployment, out-sourcing and the spread of precarious employment as capital restructured itself as Standing (2014) discusses. As will be developed in this thesis the paradox for traditional Marxists, that Autonomous Marxists will need to carefully explain if they are to address the 'poor' of society, is that to build a strategy of exit from our neo-capitalist society and ideological superstructure, to create an environment for hope, will involve the creating of conditions that threaten to destroy much of the current means of production. By that is meant that it will not be enough to simply take over the existing means of production and institutions. In the traditional Marxist model, exemplified in the Stalinist era in Russia, workers would take control of the means of production. This was a powerful image that served as the springboard for a different society, a socialist society, a communist society and provided a practical process in both Russia and China for the building of a workers', peoples', society. To live differently will mean breaking with this form of old society in an imaginative

building of hope. This will not be the replacing of one master by another as Žižek citing Lacan, placed before autonomous activists in his words to those at 'Occupy Wall Street', "Revolutionary aspirations have only one possibility: always to end up in the discourse of the master" (2012, p.79).

Autonomism and Autonomous Marxism whilst sharing a number of perspectives are different. The latter as it differs from traditional Marxism in that is has a specific focus on social movements and the reclaiming of public space (Kinsman 2004, Robinson, A. & Karatzogianni, 2009, Marks 2012, Cox & Nilsen, 2014). Autonomism is probed by, Cunninghame(2010), Burgmann (2004), Bonefeld (no date) and also Marks (2012). Cunninghame (2010:451) lists a number of well-known figures in the autonomist movement such as Antonio Negri, Mario Tronti, Michael Hardt. These writers, and others, have articulated a new expression of self-management theory which draws on activist groups such as Zapatistas, Piqueteros, unemployed youth, students (Occupy Movement), urban squatters, Podemos to mention just a few of the very many scattered across the globe. Of course there is the caveat, and speaking from personal experience, many of those involved in such movements do not see themselves as autonomous, much less identify themselves as Marxist. Marks presents two statements. One as to what he understands the autonomist movement to be, and the other as a sort of definition of autonomous Marxism. The similarities, and differences, between the two are easily recognizable:

> For autonomists, the driving-force of historical change is not capital or the state, but rather, the self-activity (or 'autovalorisation' – creation of one's own values) of the working-class, defined broadly to include all of the people who are exploited directly or indirectly by capitalism (such as housewives, who perform 'reproductive labour', refugees and migrants, whose subordination is part of the creation of low-wage economies, and unemployed people, who despite not being in a 'job' as such, are still active

> in ‘social production’ or the creation of social relations. Autonomist Marxism is a political tendency premised on the autonomy of the proletariat. Working class autonomy is manifested in the self-activity of the working class independent of formal organizations and representations, the multiplicity of forms that struggles take, and the role of class composition in shaping the overall balance of power in capitalist societies, not least in the relationship of class struggles to the character of capitalist crises (2012, p.468).

It would seem that ‘Autonomist Marxism’ has replaced the older Marxist commitment to the masses and enabled modest horizontal forms of relations to replace older expressions of the vertical. Thus Autonomist Marxists are oriented to living differently in their efforts at making changes in the world. They do not see themselves as assuming a leadership role of a particular class, even that of the non-class. Nilsen (2015) writes of autonomism as becoming almost interchangeable with anarchism, as an early expression emerged as a splinter from the Italian Communist party. Cunninghame (2010) says that that was not long lasting, even though autonomist language still utilizes the grammar of class struggle, which places it within a Marxist orbit. From the mid-1980’s autonomist authors moved away from antagonistic politics of confrontation into strands of what has been called “post-autonomism”. This is where a variation on the tango of a close dance between a re-formulated Autonomous Marxism and a more ‘classical’ Liberation Theology occurs. Drawing on Nilsen’s (2015) analysis, post-autonomism has now sought to include Autonomist Marxism in a new approach which views the neo-liberalist market economy as paradoxically creating conditions for the working class for liberation as autonomous entities. A response is not to engage in a fierce debate concerning the historical mission of Marxism. Marxism is a theory and practice of how to live beyond the capitalist market-state. The origins of Autonomous Marxism, as classical Marxism, have as their bed rock how to undermine capitalism. Autonomous Marxism is about how social solidarity

can be forged right across the human spectrum, irrespective of whether or not people belong to the proletariat. Particularly this new class, which in effect is no class, encompasses all those who have been made redundant, are under-employed as a result of increasing automation and computerization, and are without employment due to sickness or disability or age. That is to say, the majority of us are an assorted and fragmented spread of disparate peoples who are neither conscious nor motivated by the notion of class. Yet what motivates our solidarity is a desire to act against a system that causes us to both feel and experience alienation and abuse from the ruling class.

It is from here that a consideration of a possible convergence or libertango between liberation theology and autonomous Marxism arises. Haiven & Khasnabish (2014) in the introduction to their book refer to the building of coexistent imaginary landscapes through the shared participation of individuals from all walks of life. Taking liberation theology's foundational use of Marxist theory as the ground of its sociological analysis, might it not be that that conscious and unconscious utilization of autonomous Marxism is already one of the main building blocks of alternative models to existing society within Christianity? Žižek, also Merrifield, indicate that the paradox for Marxism to succeed in the long term, (as indeed it is for the future of Christianity as Caputo suggests (2006, p.43), is that it must create the conditions that destroy the means by which it first succeeds in the short term. This is part of what Caputo refers to as the "strategic reversal" (2007, p.83). His view is that faith is no longer tied to the idea of some kind of heaven, that we will one day reach, but, rather, describes our loving embrace of the world that we currently inhabit. This does not abolish hope but rather helps us to recognize that the building of hope is both risky, and as this thesis seeks to

present, also, as our neo-liberal society views it, subversive. This is what was mentioned earlier in speaking of Benjamin's notion of a "weak" messianism responding to the cry for justice. However Autonomous Marxists today realize that a weak messianic hope, a hope that there must be something new before us has lapsed into a pessimistic conviction by the marginalised that nothing new can ever happen as they both view and experience the actions of the market state.

There is, therefore, a nuanced hope from Autonomous Marxism. In this it differs from traditional Marxism in that it recognizes that the twenty-first century context that we in the West inhabit cannot heed a call to revolution in the old understanding of the term. The forces of politics of all descriptions are too powerful. Boundaries between private, political and economic life have all but dissolved thus making the task of fashioning a language, then an act, fit for a revolutionary engagement most difficult. A residual question is that even if we were able to form some kind of mass organization, with whom would we engage? Debord (1967) writes that any practical mobilization is invariably inspired by a dream. This dream is for something different, something beyond the mainstream, outside the repressive domain of capitalist consumerism. Not to take over the state but to subordinate the state to the general will. As Brewin reminds us in his text *Mutiny* a re-embrace of the commons*,* a public space that is not reducible to a simple aggregation of individuals and their interests. A new authentic universality that requires in sharing in it we create common bonds of solidarity and friendship for its enactment. However the 'Invisible Committee' of "The Coming Insurrection" (2008) reminds us that as consumers, and thus consumers of illusions, what Capitalism desires is that we experience friendship as a neutral idea. They suggest that it is affection and concurrence but without a real commitment to

consequences that the market state creates.

Merrifield (2011) referring to the task for Autonomous Marxism draws upon Bloch and his writing on Hope as an antidote:

> [Bloch] describes the “naked striving and wishing” that surges within us, that expresses itself first as a “craving”, as “an expectant counter emotion” which reaches outwards, urges us on, keeps us hoping. Soon the counter-emotion burns away inside us, becomes a “hunger, a source of rebellious consciousness in the making, “the No to the bad situation which exists and the Yes to the better life that hovers ahead” (Section World Music in the Woods, para. 2).

Merrifield connects this to a dare to make the Exodus. Drawing upon the Biblical story and the protest of the Hebrew people he refers to the complaint falling on the deaf ears of the Egyptian overlords. For us, our complaint, our revolutionary discontent has no agora in which to be heard because the market state has privatized it or subcontracted it to some corporation for public entertainment of some delusional happy consciousness, and the pacifying of dissent in a renewed experience of ‘manufactured consent’ (Anonymous, 2008. The Coming Insurrection).

This thesis wishes to recognize the generalized anxiety in our society that, as Haiven & Khasnabish (2014) suggest, constitutes a barrier to warmth and communication between people. This anxiety is what produces hopelessness and thus a fear of dissent and an acceptance of what is as the only expression of living today. What this thesis seeks to offer are some suggestions as to how people may come to share, express and enact their hopes for different landscapes of life. In this coming together and drawing upon theory and practice of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism they may find themselves empowered to take that conspiratorial action on behalf of themselves in opposition to that which seeks to

extinguish hope.

Chapter 3: An Age of Anxiety and Violence

Introduction

Deaton (2013) says in his Preface: “This book is about the endless dance between progress and inequality, about how progress creates inequality, and how inequality can sometimes be helpful – showing others the way, or providing incentives for catching up” (Preface. Para.9). As the then Prime Minister of Australia, Tony Abbott, said "in the end, we have to be a productive and competitive society and greater inequality might be inevitable" (Quoted in The Australian, June 14, 2014). In contrast as reported in the Australian Independent Media Network of June 14, 2014:

> A society with "greater inequality" isn't a society. It's a market. And a market isn't driven by values of burden sharing or a fair go. It is driven by power and wealth; it is a place where the strong prosper and the weak are blamed for not being strong enough. Why would any national leader just shrug and say "greater inequality might be inevitable"?

Following on from Deaton’s suggestion of “dance”, and to use a South American ‘liberation dance’, it is this old tango, not a libertango that is one of the root causes, as has already been intimated, of the age of anxiety in which so many are said to be living today. Therefore in enabling a libertango of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism to be both a creative dance and a subversive expression of building hope, there is a need to undertake a brief interrogation of the socio-political context of Australia.

It is significant to note the example of what is essentially a libertango of socio-political and Christian commitment in the approach of “Ekklesia” in the United Kingdom. As part of responding to who and what it is on its Internet homepage (ekklesia.com.uk) after its banner heading “Transforming Politics and Belief” it

states:

> We advocate transformative ideas and solutions to societal challenges rooted in a strong commitment to social justice, nonviolence, environmental responsibility, nonconformist styles of Christianity, and a creative exchange among those of different convictions (religious and otherwise).
>
> Ekklesia is committed to promoting -- alongside others -- new models of mutual economy, conflict transformation, social power, restorative justice, community engagement and political participation.

Contributors to the site are at the forefront of a social and political approach, particularly with respect to the poor and marginalized in the United Kingdom context. However, as it indicates, it locates much of its grammar and practice within a Christian socio-political framework. For example, a recent article discusses comments and actions by British Conservative Party leaders regarding welfare cuts to the poorest in society and that is placed alongside comments from the Scriptures as to care for the poor.

It is interesting to juxtapose this with recent comments in Australia. On June 9th. 2015 in response to a claim that people occupying the societal position of lower-middle class cannot afford to buy housing in Sydney the then Treasurer of Australia, Joe Hockey, offered the advice to those workers to go out and "get a good job that pays good money". There was nothing in his comments to suggest how lower-middle class workers might obtain the necessary skills that would enable them to leave their current employment and gain a better job, and thus a home in lieu of renting. His comment was followed by a tidal wave of criticism on social media that variously labelled the Treasurer as privileged (owning more than two homes), out-of-touch and arrogant. "What's his next observation? Poor people choose to be poor?" wrote one person on Twitter. In a sense the Treasurer had already hinted at that in his much-maligned musing on 28th. October 2014

regarding a fuel tax in stating that the poorest people "either don't have cars or actually don't drive very far". Almost a year later a new Treasurer, Scott Morrison, commented, in response to a question concerning future financial hopes by citizens, that the best way to ensure a good financial future was, in another three word slogan, "work, save, invest". Barely a week later he announced that he wanted to reduce tax on top earners as a reward for those who 'work hard'.[20]

Hauerwas and Brueggemann suggest our Western politics is mostly vacant in the sense of being empty of both moral and spiritual content. In Australia, UK and the USA it is agreed in many quarters that politics often fails to engage with the questions that most concern the poor and is therefore a contributor to their anxiety. What is revealed is that a never endless appeal to "the market" empties our life as a society of moral argument. Yet what we don't seem to realize is that one of the reasons why there is a firm appeal to the workings of the market is that markets do not pass judgments on what they undertake. Markets don't ask whether, for example, responding to the needs of the poor is a more worthy aim than seeking to reduce the tax rate of high-income individuals or bail out big banks. We hear our political leaders promoting the need to cut the rate of income tax so that people can enjoy more of what they earn. Rarely, if ever, is there is a public announcement expressing the joy of the government in raising the level of benefits for the single parent, unemployed youth, people with disabilities or the homeless.[21] Mostly it is about the need to apply harsher conditions or cuts to the support that

[20] For those hard workers at the bottom of the wealth pyramid if it were true that the 'harder you work the richer you get' and the less tax you pay then sweatshop workers would be millionaires!

[21] At the end of January 2016 the Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull, announced a free app for the homeless. With this app, he said, they could search out nearby places to obtain a meal or a bed for the night. It was discovered that many homeless did have 'pay-as-you-go' mobile phones. However many did not have the latest operating system to allow the app to be downloaded. As well many did not have credit on their phones to allow an extensive search to be undertaken for food or a bed ("The Age" 31 January 2016).

these people receive[22] in order to assist in reducing budget deficit. It is only in the last decades of the twentieth century and the decade and a half of this century that we have accepted the role of markets in allocating for-profit health, education, prisons, police, even private military contractors and for Australia the companies managing asylum seeker detention centres. We live in a time when almost everything can be bought and sold, sometimes obscenely so. In a society where everything is for sale being unemployed, physically or mentally challenged or a person of modest means (a pensioner) does matter. We have moved from having a market economy to being a market society. The commodification of everything has heightened the reality of an intrinsic inequality for the poor through their lack of financial and community resources and thus added to the state of anxiety. Hence, as earlier stated, the need for a new ontology of political imagination.

The negation of community and 'social inclusion'

The paper by McMillan and George (1986) is research into ways to both develop and strengthen a sense of community that is inclusive of the many groupings to be found in society. At the end of their article they conclude with the lines, and the use of "Somehow" is a pointer: "(Somehow) we must find a way to build communities that are based on faith, hope, and tolerance, rather than on fear, hatred and rigidity." It is interesting to note that the authors do not make an effort in their paper to give some meaning, or more than meaning, to the terms "faith" and "hope". As well toward the end of their paper they write that a shared emotional connection:

[22] A recent report showed that one in four people on the dole were forced to beg on the streets for more than a year, while 6 in 10 were required to approach a charity for help. Escaping this poverty-trap has become almost impossible for unemployed Australians – according to official government figures there are 11 job seekers competing for each vacancy ("New Matilda" 5 March, 2016).

> seems to be the definitive element for true community, (and) strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share … opportunities to honor members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members (1986, p.16).

As if the terms are, in a sense, self-explanatory or there is an overwhelming consensus as to their context. Thus at the end of the article ‘things’ are very much left dangling with the “somehow”. Almost as if there is not envisaged, even a tiny step, to begin the process of ending the continuing sense of hopelessness enclosed in the “somehow”.

It is interesting to juxtapose that conclusion with the conclusion of another group of researchers also concerned with “sense of community”. Pendola and Gen state, although mainly addressing urban planning: “Creating “community” has long been a goal. Although such rhetoric abounds what it means is unclear” (2008, first para). They conclude their article by making reference to the research of McMillan and George, and then evoke similarities with conclusions drawn, as was indicated above, from the likes of Dutney, Glover and Mackay namely, “increasing interaction among neighbours”. Petty, Bishop, Fisher and Sonn (2006) write from another continent, Australia, and some twenty years later. Having indicated that their research into ‘sense of community’ has uncovered rich possibilities for a breadth of community resources, they do present two interesting caveats which dovetail into the thrust of this thesis. They highlight that ‘sense of community’ can lead to the exclusion of others by fostering a cohesion which marginalizes, even opposes, though they draw the conclusion that a cohesive society is more likely to be one that is economically just. Another of their conclusions is that ‘sense of community’ has no boundaries, socially or economically. They offer the qualification that: “(a) sense of community is derived from images of the past that

are projected as idealized forms of living (2006, p. 4). One might wish to rhetorically ask in the light of the notion of ‘no boundaries’, is it only the economically poorest neighbourhoods that should be aiming at cohesion? As well even whilst acknowledging the notion of ‘sense of community’ as being “warm and fuzzy” (their phrase) they do raise strong negative aspects such as: “there are those who view it perhaps as an advertising slogan, or at worst as a manipulation by politicians to build antagonisms between groups (2006, p.7). Yet one might add the comment, for example, with respect to the Grenfell Towers tragedy in England in June 2017 that there was a truly rich expression of community evidenced. However an “us” and “them” existed in that area between the rich at one end of the suburb and the poor in the tower at the other.

Community and social inclusion has become a conundrum for Western democracies today, including Australia. Simply, as was evidenced in The United States of America at the end of January and the beginning of February 2017 following a decision by the new President, Donald Trump, to exclude persons from named countries (Muslim/Islamic), including those who are residents, from entering or returning to The United States had as its stated object social cohesion. As has been remarked upon previously with respect to Australia and refugees, and now to a, perhaps, polarizing extent in The United States, democracies need strong cohesion in order to express a thorough going and recognised political identity. The two nations mentioned have founding statements about inclusion, echoing what has become an integral feature of liberal Western democracy. That feature, unlike states of yesteryear, is that all peoples regardless of race, religion, gender, social status are welcomed. Such inclusive politics mark a high point with respect to the history of peoples within nation states over the last century or so.

Yet what we are evidencing is a form of exclusion, which is the *government* of all the people rather than, in generally acknowledged parlance, government of *all* the people. With respect to the marginalized, they are included without really belonging.

This last comment is encountered in the previous examples given concerning Australian Government Treasurers, who speak of some Australians (thereby admitting that they are citizens) in pejorative terms such as “lifters and leaners”, and “dole-bludgers”. It is here that Brewin’s (2010, p.168ff)) comments about engaging the other fit so well. If the members of society are not inclined to listen or to understand one another; if they cannot understand one another because of the way in which they perceive and speak of each other, how can there be a true movement toward social inclusion? If the marginalized feel that they, by the way they are spoken of, are very much an outer subgroup within society, then how can commitment and confidence be formed? Brewin concludes that a politics and culture of inclusion toward the other is usually articulated with the best intentions in mind but often expresses itself as a kind of ‘inner exclusion’. Mendieta (2001) is driven to ask, how it is that we discover the other in the mundane difference of every fellow human being in a crowded city of strangers. As part response to that he presents the notion of the *‘routinization of otherness’* as one of the reasons, as has already been intimated, for suggesting that perhaps our agenda of community is, in the end, one that leans more toward exclusion. Merrifield (2011) powerfully suggests that our actions should be on dismantling the system that in the first place occasioned the exclusions from which many have benefited and continue to do so. The two articles by McMillan and George and Petty, Bishop, Fisher and Sonn together arrive at a more or less common conclusion, namely that the sense

of community offers an organizing principle for research and practice. However even though both offer some kind of panoramic view of 'sense of community' in the end one is drawn to conclude that a certain 'neutrality' makes them in particular targets for Marx's famous dictum about moving from describing the world to changing it.

Hopelessness and Anxiety

As Standing (2014) discusses, perhaps the major challenge for organizing by those on the margins of life is the hopelessness which often accompanies marginality. This is also the conclusion drawn by Roberts-Vaughan when he states that what we have before us is a rise in hopelessness and thus a growth of anxiety. He concludes that what we are seeing as a result of our efforts are negative not positive outcomes.

Standing speaks of the "Precariat" as the new "class" of those who have no dignifying occupational identity. In turn this can be expanded to include those who by dint of disability, age, ethnicity also find living precarious because of the financial reality of that marginalization. Having indicated the groups that compose the "Precariat", Standing then goes on to list what he says are the four "A's" that mark the Precariat.[23] Briefly they are, firstly, *anxiety* because of uncertainty regarding the future, and thus finding oneself without hope. Thesis 4 of "PlanC/ reads *"In contemporary capitalism, the dominant reactive affect is anxiety"*. As has been already mentioned anxiety is personalized in often blaming the poor for their state. The current ruling ontology denies any possibility of a social causation for

[23] Standing bases these upon the "PlanC/the Institute of Precarious Consciousness" (I was not able to find the Institute's web page, however I did find http://cloudfront.crimethinc.com/pdfs/We-Are-All-Very-Anxious.pdf. Aspects are also commented upon in the free download of The Invisible Committee's 'The Coming Insurrection'.

the welfare dependent's state. Thus as Roberts-Vaughn has discussed, the function of contemporary therapies has been that of treating anxiety as a kind of dysfunctional thinking style which prevents one from fitting in with mainstream society and acting appropriately, a depoliticization of the effects of welfare dependency. He adds that these are indicative of the tendency to privatise problems, both those relating to work, and those relating to psychology. This generates fear, especially fear of being inadequate and a drifting into a belief in a 'determined fate'. With the Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull, in April 2016 addressing the Australian people and speaking about "living beyond our means", and the forthcoming budget needing to address profligate spending, alongside people's sense of anxiety from their precarity, this appeal, which has now become a regular slogan, to further austerity makes for more vulnerability along with, particularly amongst the poor, a psychopathology of alienation. Again, this psychopathology is, as Roberts-Vaughn comments, a rebranding of personal failing, rather than something which is generated by a neo-capitalist democratic system. It adds to a sense of hopelessness.

The second "A" is *Alienation,* actioned through the threat of exclusion and the denial of a meaningful existence through precarity. Many members of the 'Precariat' with whom I have worked have a sense of believing that they are not capable of doing what is necessary to begin to deal with their situation. Thus they conclude that because of their "lack" no-one really cares about them, further exacerbating their alienation. Thirdly there is a sense of *anguish* leading to despair with respect to escaping from one's insecurities; again a sense of hopelessness with respect to whatever future there may be. Finally, as might be expected, these three symptoms of a broken life are leading to a rising sense of *anger.* An anger

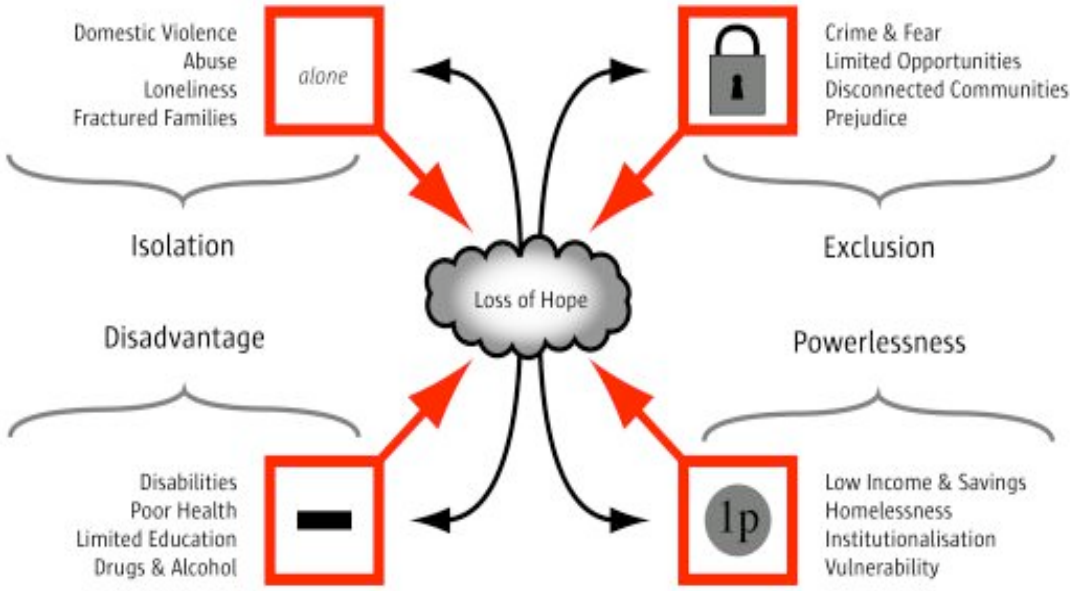
which may manifest itself in a hatred of oneself which in turn can lead to self-abuse including alcohol and drug addiction. It can also lead to random acts of violence and domestic violence. In some cases this anger is directed from the poor (or the 99%) toward the rich as the events of “Occupy” and also the recent exposé of *The Panama Papers* reveal. As well anger is often directed at other groups on the margin of life. These are particularly immigrants/refugees and indigenous peoples whom the poor unemployed often believe are obtaining easy welfare support because they are indigenous or recent arrivals. Standing concludes his comments by stating that he is optimistic in believing that such anger will translate into an agenda of hope for those who are marginalized. Echoing the discussion of Haiven & Khasnabish, (2014) he sees the ground for that hope whenever the precariat and non-class are able to come together in the forming of community-based movements of solidarity.

A corollary of what Standing discusses regarding the Precariat is presented in recent research by Davies, Montgomerie and Wallin who highlight hopelessness and anxiety with particular reference to the welfare dependent:

> ‘Financial melancholia’ is never a simply medical, psychological or behavioural problem, but a state of being and feeling trapped by financial obligations which can destroy the very capacity for happiness and family cohesion that politicians are currently so keen to promote (2015, p.16).

Their research is related to people with financial/debt problems being caught-up in the goal of trying to create a ‘less-bad life’, but finding themselves in thrall to acute distress and anxiety that leads them into “the downward spiral of health and more debt” and thus becoming even more incapable of responding to their situation. Furthermore they say the endlessness and misery of daily existence can create a sense of despair which leads one into losing track of time as days roll into one

another. People can thus lose a sense of a distinct future which may be different from the present. Many reflect the statement by Fisher “Action is pointless; only senseless hope makes sense” (2009, p.93). This loss of hope has received representation by the following diagram from the Poverty and Social Exclusion in the United Kingdom Research Project.



Although the term “anxiety” does not appear in the diagram it requires no effort to conclude that it is part of the general movement linked to “Loss of Hope”. We feel under constant anxiety about falling into any of the categories that would drive us into a loss of hope. As intimated the source of anxiety is frequently hidden from us. What is levelled at us is personal failing rather than something which is generated by the dominant ideology of our society. As such the hidden violence of capitalism strikes at us as we seek dis-alienated spaces to give us both refuge and resources to combat our chronic anxiety.

Rogers-Vaughn (1) in drawing a conclusion states that in the organising of the contemporary capitalist society that we inhabit there is a necessary disregard for human welfare which leads to experiences of hopelessness and anxiety. In seeking to challenge that disregard he indicates that he is surprised that pastoral care theologians are somewhat laissez faire, even dismissive in some instances, concerning the effects of capitalism on their clients. That has been also been exhibited by a theologian such as John Caputo who, notwithstanding his recent theological writings, appears in this instance to be, might one conclude, quite easy going concerning capitalism. Certainly Caputo wishes for there to be changes in USAmerican society in the building of a more just and humane society and the building of hope within the community. However, and surprisingly given the breadth of comments he makes in a text such as *"The Folly of God",* the fact that capitalism might remain integral after the "humanization" of US/American society is not a bother for him. He assumes, albeit in an early book, that the system can be reformed with capitalism (with a "human face") intact. As he writes:

> I would be perfectly happy if the far left politicians in the United States were able to reform the system by providing universal health care, effectively redistributing wealth more equitably with a revised IRS code, effectively restricting campaign financing, enfranchising all voters, treating migrant workers humanely, and effecting a multilateral foreign policy that would integrate American power within the international community, etc., i.e., intervene upon capitalism by means of serious and far-reaching reforms.... If after doing all that Badiou and Žižek complained that some Monster called Capital still stalks us, I would be inclined to greet that Monster with a yawn (2007, p.124-5).

Caputo's liberal acceptance of market capitalism as a tolerable context for Western Christianity has drawn a trenchant critique from Slavoj Žižek:

> The problem here is not Caputo's conclusion that if one can achieve all that within capitalism, why not remain within the system? The problem lies with the "utopian" premise that it is *possible* to achieve all that within the coordinates of global capitalism. What if the particular malfunctionings of capitalism enumerated by Caputo are not merely accidental disturbances but are rather structurally necessary? What if Caputo's dream is a dream of

> universality (of the universal capitalist order) without its symptoms, without any critical points in which its “repressed truth” articulates itself? (2009, p.78).

Here Žižek challenges Caputo’s position on the creation of a more benevolent form of socialized capitalism. Global capitalism for Žižek is not something that one can redeem and thus renew hope. To re-consider the earlier discussion concerning Marx and his phrase ‘religion as the opium of the people’, we can think analogously of a disease with endless harmful and painful symptoms. To say we can get rid of symptoms such as the welfare concerns of unemployment, disability, sickness, age and so on while leaving the underlying disease of capitalism untouched will not work says Žižek. For Liberation theologians and Autonomous Marxists the subordination of people directly and indirectly by capitalism is the disease that will continue to plague the person with symptoms. To try and mitigate capitalism’s violence through a form of capitalism with a human face is only allowing the various oppressions, and hopelessness and anxiety, of the current economic system to continue, albeit with a supposedly benevolent visage.

Faces of Violence

Ricardo Gutierrez (2014) examines the ‘Invisible Violence of Capitalism’ in Žižek as this relates to the notion of Ethics. Part of the latter section of his essay relates to Žižek’s (2008, p.1-2, 9-11) notion of the existence of both subjective and objective violence within society. Briefly, as Zizek discusses it, *subjective violence* is the violence we see each day on television. Such violence includes a pub brawl, someone being beaten, suicide bombings and their victims, planes bombing cities, and so on. Zizek highlights that what our media, for example television stations, do, and this is supportive of capitalism and the governments that function according to the market economy, is take our focus away from what he calls the

day to day exercise of *objective violence,* violence inherent in the normal state of things. This particular expression of violence is the way in which capitalism, and systems such as market economy governments and their subsidiaries, oppress people. It also encompasses “the more subtle forms of coercion that sustains relations of domination and exploitation” (Žižek 2008, p.7). As Niebuhr comments:

> They do not recognize that when collective power, whether in the form of imperialism or class domination, exploits weakness, it can never be dislodged unless power is raised against it. If conscience and reason can be insinuated into the resulting struggle they can only qualify but not abolish it.
>
> … once we have made the fateful concession of ethics to politics, and accepted coercion as a necessary instrument of social cohesion, we can make no absolute distinction between non-violent and violent types of coercion …(1932 *Moral Man and Immoral Society* New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons pp. xi-xiii).

What Niebuhr is asserting is that if you accept class domination then you must recognize that violence will, quite possibly, be both inevitable and necessary.

Objective violence also finds expression in what Žižek labels *symbolic violence,* which is “violence embodied in language and its forms, the social domination reproduced in our habitual speech” (2008, p.2). The fourth form of violence listed by Žižek is that of *“systemic violence”*, being the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems.

Following the analysis of Žižek violence is thus an integral part of maintaining the status quo, and even so-called democratic societies depend upon it in order to function. That violence is often contained in statements by leaders, and is evidenced in the following newspaper article:

> In his recent speech to the Sydney Institute, Treasurer Joe Hockey summarised the government’s philosophical position on equality as "for equality of opportunity rather than equality of outcome" (*The Age* June 13, 2014). He takes it as self-evident that it is "not the job of government to

> manufacture the outcome from public policy in such a way as to ensure that every person is an equal beneficiary ..." In saying this he is not only drawing on one of the most persistent criticisms of equality as a political ideal - that it is impossible to implement in practice - he is going much further: he is explicitly repudiating equality as a political ideal.(Garner, 2014)

In this, Hockey echoes the critique of Michaels (2011) and Debord (1967) of how the stories, and comments, we tell become not one of the lenses on reality, but reality itself and thus one of the underpinnings of how we understand ourselves. This capitalist realism is subordinating oneself to a reality that is infinitely capable of being reconfigured at any moment by the language of the hegemonic market state and its spokespersons.

For Žižek language performs an “inscription of difference” as the bearer of discourse and ideology. Thus grammatical choice or language becomes an act of violence. This category is that of symbolic violence, finding expression in terms such as “leaners”, “welfare cheats” or the time-honoured term “dole-bludgers”. In 2001 the then Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard (2001), expressed a sentiment that has become the epitome of the solidarity of the “Us” and the deprecation of those who are not us, the “Them” when he said; “We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come”. Through the symbolic violence of “other-ing” (Brewin 2010, p.168) acts of subjective violence can become accepted, as evidenced in Australia’s treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and their detention. Kristeva (1982) analyses this in her essay in a discussion of the notion of “abjection”. Brewin also offers a reflection on abjection in his discussion on engagement with the other, the “leaner”, “dole-bludger”, asylum seeker, as being a source of fear for us. That fear is the ‘built’ fear that embracing the “abject” as “Us” would lead to the degradation of the real “Us” (2010, p.170ff). Brewin states, in comments similar to those of Žižek, that if

society, the perceived “Us”, is to be inclusive of a “Them” then the boundaries of the self will be challenged. That challenge will see the “self” finding itself becoming one with the abject (Them) with the consequence that the status of the abject as ‘other’ is expelled. He also notes that there is an attendant risk for society which exists on the premise of the ‘feared other’, for example the terrorist/Jihadist hiding in our midst in order to maintain societal equilibrium, and the need on the part of governments and rulers for expressions of objective violence, sometimes even subjective violence if the ‘feared other’ is to be exorcized.

The Minister for Immigration in Australia, Peter Dutton, revealed the need for a “feared other” to maintain social equilibrium and a sense of community cohesion through the use of symbolic violence. With respect to Afghan refugees he said:

> These people would be taking Australian jobs, there’s no question about that. For many of them that would be unemployed they would languish in unemployment queues and on Medicare and on the rest of it. So there would be a huge cost. There’s no sense in sugar coating it, that’s the scenario. (Bourke, L. (2016)

So, the refugees will take jobs, and take welfare, even though having a job takes you off welfare! Brewin draws his comments to the conclusion that to lovingly engage the ‘Other’ in society would be to disrupt the symbolic tension between the societal self (the ‘lifter, ‘hard working’, ‘taxpayer’ that one imagines oneself to be) and its ‘other’ (‘leaner, ‘dole bludger’) that society requires in order for the existence of an “Us” and a “Them”. If, then, the ‘Other’, and the life of the ‘Other’ is part formed by the language of symbolic violence, then if that is exposed the grammar of society would thus lose definition, and by implication the necessary scapegoat for society’s ills.

Rollins (2015, p.40ff) presents an interesting commentary on the “Scapegoat

Mechanism" and the passel of those included within that category in our society. Rollins' example is based upon the place of the Jewish community under Nazism and the manner in which Goebbels manipulated various scapegoats for the sake of the Reich. Extrapolating from that instance Rollins wishes to assert that, to utilize the comment just made, it is the 'leaner'/'dole bludger', 'welfare cheat', single mother, hijab wearing women in our midst who prevent us (society) from enjoying peace and harmony and the economic well-being that is rightfully ours. Thus the objective and symbolic violence that we employ as individuals and as a society toward such persons. Rollins' point, though, is that the existence of such persons allows society to maintain a minimal level of, again, peace and harmony. The continued existence of the other/poor, and society's treatment of them, is crucial to maintaining equilibrium, for only a visible 'other' can prevent schism and infighting amongst 'us'. However to assuage our guilt it is important that we do good/charitable things, especially in relation to the abject other, in order to maintain the myth of democratic inclusion.

The fourth expression of violence is caught up in the notion of "equal rights". The question of "rights" is basically about power. In essence, who are the "winners"? For those who have no rights it is because those who proclaim their rights have taken them in formulating rights. To briefly comment with respect to the United Nations "Declaration of Human Rights" and juxtaposing Articles 25 and 17. 25 states "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care". Article 17 states "1. Everybody has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property." For Marxists the contradictions are obvious. The right to property, and

knowing much of the history of the acquisition of property through violent means such as enclosures, aspects of colonialism, thus deprives the poor, and the poor of the city of our discussion, who are forced to rent or go homeless. With respect to the mention of “adequate housing” (Article 25), owners of property have the right to deny access to adequate housing because they cannot be deprived of their property.

The fifth expression of violence is the most controversial for those who belong to the Christian Church. Lupton (2011) posits the interesting thesis that doing good within the capitalist market society may also fall within the ambit of doing violence to the poor. His conclusions are drawn from Christian missionary support overseas and working with the poor in the city of Atlanta in The United States of America. Žižek (2009) also presents, as part of a commentary on the Church, a talk that has been famously digitized (RSA ANIMATE 2009) concerning charity and the violence associated with the charitable act. At the beginning of that animated presentation Žižek quotes some lines from the beginning of Oscar Wilde’s *“The Soul of Modern Man under Socialism.”* (Wilde, O. 1891)

> People find themselves surrounded by hideous poverty, by hideous ugliness, by hideous starvation. It is inevitable that they should be strongly moved by all this. Accordingly, with admirable, though misdirected intentions, they very seriously and very sentimentally set themselves to the task of remedying the evils that they see. But their remedies do not cure the disease, they merely prolong it. Indeed, the remedies are part of the disease. They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive. …But this is not a solution, it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible … Charity degrades and demoralizes. It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property.

To juxtapose that with a report regarding the Prime Minister of Australia on Christmas Eve 2016 and a television show aired the next day. The PM attended a

church service at the Wayside Chapel in Sydney, a place renowned for its support of the poor and marginalized. The local media reported thus:

> PRIME Minister Malcolm Turnbull has urged Australians to reach out and "give a hug" to those less fortunate this Christmas.
>
> Mr Turnbull said he would be spending Sunday with his family, including his three grandchildren, and continuing his annual Christmas tradition of visiting Sydney's Wayside Chapel.
>
> "It's also a very important time to reach out and give a hug to those who aren't having as happy a Christmas as you might be," he told 2GB radio on Saturday.
>
> "You know for whatever reason - they're lonely, sick, estranged from their families. This is a season of love, and you should share it." (AAP, 2016).

The obscenity is a multi-millionaire Prime Minister suggesting that "giving a hug" to the poor and marginalized who have gathered at the Wayside Chapel in the hope of being able to receive a Christmas lunch is a caring response to those in desperate need. That a hug is the charitable thing to do at Christmas time is a perversion of the usual tenets of Christmas as not only an obscenity but also an expression of objective violence toward the needy.

Churches are amongst the largest providers of charity in Australian society. As some form of care is provided to another through a charitable act, (such as providing a food hamper or a food voucher, acts in which I have been, and still am involved) Žižek says that this assists the unjust system to flourish. That each such act gives support to the system that gave need to help another charitably. These compassionate acts are violent, according to Žižek, not as subjective violence, but being part of objective violence. They are violent acts in that they humiliate the recipient and do not challenge the status quo. We may be performing a laudable act, but we are deceiving ourselves. Both we the giver and they the recipient feel

better in the giving of something and the receiving of a needed something. Ruehl (2011, para 21ff) also underscores this form of violence. Just recently the denomination to which I belong posted on Facebook a picture, and brief comment, of some members collecting toys and gifts from under a Christmas tree located in a major department store. The caption read that once again such and such business and such and such church had collected a large number of donated toys to distribute to needy children. The department store has used this exercise to laud its civic generosity working with a religious denomination to bring some joy to underprivileged children at Christmas. The church has also made mileage out of the relationship with a photo showing gifts being distributed to needy children with its corporate logo being featured. However we will be called upon, giver and receiver, to engage in this transaction over and over again because the system that gave rise to the need for this charitable transaction is not challenged in a manner that will either change it or bring it down. Even the old Methodist slogan "Make all you can, give all you can." still does not confront the functioning of the economic system in that it really is an exhortation to be charitable, nothing more. As R.C. Smith (2012) says in a response to the Žižek YouTube presentation:

> The act of charity, which might be considered more generally as a concrete act of humanity, is indeed exemplary of the deep sensitivity and emotional responsiveness of human beings. To help another in need is, in the context of social inequality and needless suffering, a beautiful act by an individual or community of people. It is an act that radiates a speck of light in an often dark social circumstance. But there is also a dark-side to the more or less mainstream belief in charitable donation. It is a sinister reality that, tragically, affirms an altogether ailing society: the increasing practice of consumerist redemption. What this amounts to, as Žižek reflects, is the recent trend of branding a product as though it has an inherently redeeming dimension to it, which, in turn, is tantamount to the self-deceiving alleviation of guilt in capitalist society.

Žižek is aware of Badiou's provocative suggestion in the latter's "*15 Theses on*

Contemporary Art" (2004): “It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering invisible that which Empire already recognizes as existent.” Citing it in *Violence* (2008, p. 216), he does not finally subscribe to doing nothing, even if that may appear to be the most “appropriate” thing to do in challenging the cycle of oppression within the charitable act. In the end he comes down in favour of a solidarity that strengthens the struggle against injustice. In terms of his “communist theology” the truly violent act is the one that will help to stop the violence of global capitalism. However this is where writers such as Lupton seems to eschew such a conclusion for a kind Christian capitalism. On page 106 Lupton writes of evaluating “charity” as asking questions of the church’s ‘benevolence portfolio’ in the same trajectory as billionaires, asking for example, “Is it yielding good returns?”; “Is it invested on the cutting edge?” In 2006 Žižek wrote an article entitled *“The Liberal Communists of Porto Davos”* and further discussed the issue in Violence 2008, p. 15-24. After listing some of the extremely wealthy who gather in Davos Žižek sees these billionaires as having been fortunate enough to amass great wealth, and as a consequence they can employ private initiative and portions of that wealth to respond to some of the problems in the world. He goes on to state in the article, “Charity today is the humanitarian mask that hides the underlying economic exploitation.” Whilst these “liberal communists” are making large amounts of money available to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalized, they are the very agents that through their capitalist subjective violence have created the very conditions they wish to help ameliorate. As Žižek further adds: “While they fight subjective violence, liberal communists are the very agents of structural violence that creates the conditions for such explosions of subjective violence.” How many charitable foundations of

these rich and famous, with endless enticing catch phrases and extravagant advertising slogans, delude us into believing that they, and our support of them, will create meaningful change. Yet all the time the very social structure that originally gave rise to the needs of the poor and marginalized goes unchallenged.

Rowan Williams writes: “because he is powerless, because he does not compete for the same space that his judges and captors are defending, he is a deeper rival than any direct rival” (2003, p.69). This refusal by Jesus to compete with his opponents is, as is shown in the responses to the Sanhedrin (St. Matthew 26:57-68), is a much more violent gesture. It is to refuse the space that has determined the conditions of the fight. The violence of the Elders and Chief Priests is an expression of objectified impotence. Žižek (2008) suggests that a violent act inflicted upon another is an attempt to control externally what cannot be controlled from within. Or, to subdue what cannot be subdued – which is the frustration of the Sanhedrin.

The great stumbling block of Australian politics toward the marginalized is not some kind of the right-wing Coalition government plot. Rather it is that it is more devoted to market order than to justice. It prefers a negative well-being, which is the favouring of law, to a positive civic society (Rorty 1998) which is the presence of justice. Early in 2017 the then Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, remarked that there is a contract between the welfare dependent and taxpayers and that it is incumbent upon, his focused example, unemployed people to “get off your backside” to get a job. He further stated that taxpayers are not slaves for the unemployed and those on welfare. The Hegelian ‘negation of negation’ can properly be applied to the Deputy PM. There is a decisive shift from the distortion

of a notion to a distortion constitutive of this notion. Being welfare dependent and unemployed is the distortion in that such, we and they are told, a person is stealing from the hard earned income of law-abiding and tax paying citizens. The implication is that the welfare dependent are exploiting and abusing hard working Australians and the income they receive for their proper employment by just lazing around and treating their fellow citizens as slaves in order to live lives of ease. The negation of the negation is the fact that the market state has forced some people into unemployment and welfare dependency. As citizens of a civic society it proceeds to hurt them with the vulgar obscenities of language along with punitive measures for being unemployed thus undermining civility and respect for the other. The welfare dependent are no longer free subjects for their freedom is distorted by the relations of the violent domination of language and the accompanying violent physical acts that give substance to that grammar.

However as will be shown in the concluding chapter, from the outset in the consideration of the comment by Australian Immigration Minister, Peter Dutton, and the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, it is not the position being presented here to suggest that conflict is to be avoided altogether. There is a need, in a theopolitical subversion, to differentiate between a calculated violent position I suggest is the position of the powerful in the capitalist market state, and the extreme violence of refusing to comply with that direction. I agree with the government in its goal of trying for a more equitable budget, but I cannot agree with the methods which penalize the poor with the violence of austerity in the name of a false soteriology that such austerity imposed on part of one ‘class’ is part of the cost of leading to better times for all.

Chapter 4: Subversive Politics - St. Paul and Jesus

Introduction

In the newspaper *"The* Weekend *Australian'* of February 4, 2016 there was an article by reporter Jared Owens entitled "Peter Dutton warns churches over sanctuary[24] to asylum seekers". Quoting the Immigration Minister Owens provides the following comment:

> "Churches provide a lot of assistance to refugees and they feel very strongly about these issues, I understand that. In the end people have to abide by Australian law, no matter who you are," Mr Dutton told Sydney's 2GB radio.

Later in his article Owens quotes the National Party's deputy leader Barnaby Joyce, who he says is a practicing Catholic, that Mr Joyce understood church leaders were "following their hearts" but "they've also got to follow the laws of the land". The article concludes with reference and discussion concerning a number of churches considering providing sanctuary to asylum seekers. The final sentence is a quoted opinion from Bill Shorten the leader of the federal opposition Labor Party who when asked about the churches' proposed civil disobedience campaign replied with the inane comment, "What the churches do is a matter for them".

This has been the ongoing conundrum throughout this thesis, and to highlight it from a question posed by an acquaintance in an online Facebook group to which I loosely belong (more as a 'lurker'):

> If you believe in some 'force' – call it what you will – that transcends your existence, that exists 'outside' of you/us, then it seems to me that you have

[24] The word 'sanctuary' has its origins in ideas of holiness and sacred place. In the thinking of the Immigration Minister and the government he represents it is an experience of confusion, alienation and hopelessness for those who wish to offer it to "the least of these".

> no choice: the existence of that force must have an implication for me, whether or not I believe in that force. So my question is this: what are the consequences for me of your beliefs?

The upshot of such a question is, to return to the earlier analysis of Dutney, if we wish to hold on to a belief in a transcendent God, with all that we in the church say and affirm Sunday by Sunday about that God as loving Father, then it cannot simply be some kind of local-relative belief that does not carry over into the socio-political reality of the rest of the week. Surely the cosmic, powerful, eternal God to whom we plead for healing, an end to war, justice for the poor and marginalized and much, much more Sunday by Sunday in our Prayers of the People must have implications for those who don't share our belief, yet amongst whom we live our daily lives? Similarly we don't participate in the liturgy and Eucharist each Sunday without that having some consequence for those outside the gathered faith community? It would seem that many Christians suffer from 'cognitive dissonance'. The great aporia is the holding of the opposing thoughts of Sunday and other days at the same time in our mind. The state of discomfort thus created surely causes significant anguish in believers during the week. What is the consequence, however broad one might wish to make it with respect to our beliefs, for Immigration Minister Dutton, the Government and the citizens of a democratic Australia of our commitment to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The challenge to "public theology"

One of the questions for churches and individual Christians in this "post-truth", second decade of the 21st. century, as has been remarked upon in this thesis, is not simply how does the church/Christian "fit" into contemporary Western society but, also, what is the grammar, and thus the praxis, of its faith address to that society? Rorty (1998) seeks to provide a response to such a question from a

secular perspective. He utilizes perspectives from Walt Whitman and John Dewey stating, in loose Biblical imagery, that they were secular “prophets” committed to a hope of “mobilizing Americans as political agents”, but with a more nuanced understanding of the term (1998, p.15). Their concern was to emphasize “the difference between talking mostly about love and talking mostly about citizenship” (1998, p.25), and to be clear that love is the ground of true citizenship, and thus the formation of a “civil society”. The meaning and practice of “love” is what challenges us today as we try to differentiate between the simplistic dichotomies of whether we are “Christian Australians” or “Australian Christians”. If, as this thesis has hinted, we are obliged to see ourselves as Australians first and Christians second then this has significant repercussions for the exercise of our Christian faith in that, for example, we would accept Immigration Minister Dutton’s directive to members of the church and eschew any mutinous act that would place love foremost and have us acting unlawfully

However as we enter into a consideration of “Politics” and, more importantly, an understanding of the role of “Political Theology”, some clarification is required in order to more fully address the call of a theopolitical subversion. In their website *‘Foreword’ to “Introducing The Manchester Centre for Public Theology”* (2014) Elaine Graham comments: “religious bodies still constitute a major part of the voluntary sector and continue to play an active role as agents of service provision and community cohesion.” Goh (2011, p. 50-68) also makes this point. However the term “community cohesion” (sometimes referred to as “social cohesion”) suggests some kind of undifferentiated mass of people relationships that have no real purpose other than to cooperate with the market state. Chris Baker in the same ‘Foreword’ comments: “Our key focus on ‘Public Theology’ relates to an

awareness of renewed interest of the role of faith-based organisations in contributing to the well-being of what is often termed ‘civil society”. Yet, as has been commented upon previously, the ‘well-being’ may manifest itself in a symbiotic relationship with the state to access resources for the provision of charity. The ‘civil society’ then could be the expression of a society entrained to the rhythms of the capitalist state. The practice of ‘Public Theology’ in that manner would see it adopt the role of ‘fellow traveller’ with the market state. Hunsberger sums up this thinking in his comment:

> the notion of “public theologizing” may appear to reach its limits if it only means conversation and discourse in the public arena. Of course, even speech is sometimes more than mere conversation and is a dangerous act of resistance or defiance. … This is particularly true when it comes into solidarity with the poor or marginalized or crushed. Solidarity is a tangible, lived experience of walking alongside, not just saying so. Solidarity cannot avoid the touch of deeds (2006, p.26).

This is the challenge of living out James 2:8-9 (NRSV): “You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”

Challenge to The Empire: Undertaking reading in Romans through a Marxist lens

In commenting upon the growing neo-Marxist interpretation of St. Paul Caputo states: “I refer to the surprising comeback St Paul has made among a group of neo-Marxist philosophers They are interested in St. Paul as an exemplary case of the transformative power of the event of truth” (2013b, p.97,98).

In his notes at this point Caputo mentions but two of those philosophers, namely Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. At the end of the twentieth and into the twenty first century it is Badiou who has been at the forefront of political readings of St. Paul. For example Badiou writes:

> No, we will not allow the rights of true thought to have as their only instance monetarist free exchange and its mediocre political appendage, capitalist parliamentarianism, whose squalor is ever more poorly dissimulated behind the find word “democracy”. That is why Paul, himself the contemporary of a monumental figure of destruction of all politics (the beginnings of that military despotism known as the “Roman Empire”), interests us in the highest degree (2003, p.7).

To that duo writings by Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida could also be added. Indeed, all four have engaged with St. Paul in order to reformulate their political concerns and writing. Although Derrida is less explicit in his dealing with the Pauline corpus, with reference to the early writings of Benjamin he acknowledges that “left” concerns must take seriously Marx’s discussions regarding religious belief and ideology. Slavoj Žižek writes (2000, p.2), “There is no Christ outside Saint Paul”, and adding in the opening to the *Fragile Absolute,* that we are to consider Paul as every bit Jesus’ equal as a social and political revolutionary. At the very beginning of the text just cited Badiou adds to Žižek’s comment by stating:

> There is currently a widespread search for a new militant figure … called upon to succeed the one installed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks at the beginning of this century, which can be said to have been that of the party militant (2003, p.2).

There is congruence with respect to Badiou as Žižek writes:

> Paul goes on to his true Leninist business, that of organizing the new party called the Christian community. Paul as a Leninist: was not Paul, like Lenin, the great ‘institutionalizer,’ and, as such, reviled by the partisans of ‘original’ Marxism-Christianity? Does not the Pauline temporality ‘already, but not yet’ also designate Lenin’s situation in between two revolutions, between February and October 1917? Revolution is already behind us, the old regime is out, freedom is here – but the hard work still lies ahead (2003, p.9).

Jennings mentioning Derrida’s renewed interest in St. Paul offers this summary:

> many other thinkers to whom we have been referring, see(s) that what Paul is up to is a radical rethink of the political. What I am suggesting is that such non-Christian readings may have more in common with Paul’s point of view than readings that make him the founder of a religious institution or of that Institution’s doctrines (2013, p.54).

Elliott (2012) takes a step further in wishing to emphasize in his conclusion what he considers to be the efficacy of a Marxist reading of St. Paul (page 12) in response to “the poor”: “Marxist criticism offers the analytical tools that allow us to take seriously our exploration of Paul and the early Christian movement.” For this brief consideration it is Derrida’s Marxist writings on Paul’s political insights with respect to “justice” and “law” that call for specific attention, because for Derrida a focus on “justice” is crucial for all political considerations.

Significantly, editions of the Bible printed for Latin America from the 1970’s onwards, and thus coinciding with the public advent of Liberation Theology, have an interesting shift in translation with respect to the word αδικία. In English translations the NRSV translates the Greek in Romans 6:13,14 as “wickedness”, the KJV as “unrighteousness”, The Good News by the generic “evil”. Its opposite, “δικαιοσύνη” is variously translated as “righteousness” or “uprightness”. The Latin American editions, *Nueva Biblia Española* and *La Biblia Latinoamericana* translate αδικία by “injusticia” – that is injustice, and δικαιοσύνη by its opposite, that is - justice. Or as Jennings, seeking to address St. Paul and a political life under the Roman Empire states:

> That Paul is concerned with the question of justice is something often hidden from the Anglophone reader of Paul by the way the translators actually erase this theme from the text of Romans, substituting “righteousness” for “justice” or “wickedness” or “unrighteousness” for “injustice” (2009, p.64).

In Jennings’ exegesis we are presented with a shift from a narrow personal morality to a socio-political context whose boundaries are us as a society, believer and non-believer, Rome and Israel. As Jennings, Walsh and Keesmat (2004, p.182) comment the shift from the oft-used and preferred “righteousness” to “justice” is to enter into a counter-imperial reading of St. Paul. For example, in

considering the execution of Jesus, and thus taking the step to suggest defining Jesus as “outlaw”, Jennings adds:

> If he was just, then the justice involved is somehow outside the law. And perhaps it is precisely his loyalty to justice, or to God as justice, that places him outside the law and so fundamentally ruptures the connection between law and justice. (2013, p.65)

The conclusion that is drawn from this, and is pivotal to the thrust of this thesis in its conclusions, is that there is presented by Jennings an argument for seeing a conflict between ‘law’ and ‘justice’. In Derrida’s thinking law only exists in reference to justice and it becomes unjust (re the Dutton quote) when it is seen as complete and closed to a demand for justice. This then becomes a direct challenge to the democratic understanding of ‘inner exclusion’, which is the exclusion of certain groups within the society. As was seen in the United States of America in early 2017, and efforts by political leaders in Australia, there is the desire to create a common identity around particular views of belonging and citizenship by excluding certain groups. As this thesis discusses this has also been applied in the subordination of certain groups already within the broad accepted identity (Brewin 2010, p.168). Following on from Niebuhr (*Moral Man and Immoral Society*) “good conscience” in the formal process of practicing ‘inner exclusion’ as Derrida considers it becomes, as Dutton tried to juggle and rationalise it, the alibi for distinguishing between law and justice. In Romans 3:27 Jennings (2013, p.67ff) has St. Paul respond to those who would claim that by adhering to the law you are a just person. This “boasting”, as St. Paul considers it, and thus ignoring the truth of justice, leaves one open, as was discussed in the thesis’ section on “Violence”, to accepting the systemic violence of the democratic market state as a lawful expression. On that understanding, and this will be addressed at the end of this thesis, crucifixion, specifically that of Jesus, can thus be viewed as an expression

of lawful violence by the state. As Hessert comments: “The sign of such a death was taken as divine corroboration of the administration of human justice.” In other words, God was seen as acting in this sign-event to give the victim “what was coming to him” (1993, p.20). However, the practice of the injustice of so-called lawful violence by the imperial state, in the form of the usage of the cross, becomes the ground for the undoing of that state as St. Paul concludes (1 Corinthians 2:8) “None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

What is therefore proposed, against what is experienced as systemic injustice or violence, is (vide Benjamin) a ‘messianic justice’ practiced, or rather lived, by the community of faith. Again as Hessert comments: “Preaching “Christ crucified” is not merely saying that bad things happen to good people but that God’s approach to us belies our expectations” (1993, p. 21). “Christ crucified” then breaks open those democratic ideological systems that demand of us a lawful adherence so as to provide stability within the status quo rather than the gift and generosity of love. Vatimo and Zabala (2011) offer that in a perspective as moving from a communist vision to the practice of communism. Or as Badiou offers a definition of communism:

> Egalitarian passion, the Idea of justice, the will to break with the compromises of the service of goods, the deposing of egotism, the intolerance of oppression, the vow of the end of the State … provides the ontological concept of democracy, or of communism, it’s the same thing (2004, p.130).

That communism, that justice for Derrida is unpredictable because it, as Caputo asserts reinforcing the words of Jesus, calls for: “the most divine madness of all: love your enemies” (2007, 84), (St. Luke 6:27-38). Žižek in his dealing with “love” as Paul presents it, (2003, p.112ff) also views it as opposed to “law”, and thus as

truly subversive. His discussion is centred on the piece from 1 Corinthians 7:20, 29-31:

> Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called … I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

In what will have a direct impact on the conclusions to this thesis Žižek appeals to Agamben's notion of the "state of emergency" in drawing the inference that what Paul is basically saying is "obey the laws as though you were not obeying them" (2003, p.113). This is the fundamental aporia with respect to 'Law' and 'Love' which will enable the move to 'Justice', which is the full expression of love toward the other, the stranger, the enemy and a stepping away from an 'us' and a 'them' which is a core aspect of Law. This is what will give foundation to a Christian opposition to the Immigration Minister's comment about Christians obeying the social law.

Such a step becomes an imaginative act because as Merrifield (2011) suggests, in discussing a section from Benjamin, (Benjamin, 1978, p.141, 144) it becomes the basis for a "magical Marxism". This is about pushing life to the utmost limits of possibility, of bringing to be an imaginative politics of a true just society. This "something", as (Caputo 2016) discusses, that does not conform to worldly notions of justice is what is being called for, hoped for, prayed for even. This is part of the task of, "providing alternative images for a subversive imagination" as Walsh & Keesmaat (2004, p.84) indicate in considering that St. Paul's letter to the Colossians is about shaping the imagination of the Christian community. Their warrant is from Walter Brueggemann (*Interpretation and Obedience,* Minneapolis:

Fortress Press. p.199) namely – "the key pathology of our time, which seduces us all, is the reduction of the imagination so that we are too numbed, satiated and co-opted to do serious imaginative work". This is the thrust of the whole text of Merrifield. In the same way it is that imaginative politics in its counter-imperial form that has drawn neo-Marxists like Žižek, Badiou and Derrida to St. Paul and, again, provides focus in this thesis. It is to repudiate, as Elliott (2012, p.9) does the: "overused answer that Marxism – or indeed *any* political interpretation – is simply inappropriate to the New Testament writings because they are fundamentally *religious* or *theological texts.*" Caputo refers to this imaginative politics by stating that: "in almost every respect (it is) the opposite of the politics that presently passes itself off (in Western democratic market state societies) under the name of Jesus" (2007, p.97).

The appeal to St. Paul and the consideration of the dispute between 'justice' and 'injustice' is a challenge to Dutton, Joyce and other Australian political leaders who would call themselves 'Christians'.[25] It is to note, in this reading of Romans, that the law fails to bring about justice. As St. Paul continues to discuss in chapter 4 it is only by Χάρης in the form of a welcome extended to the other without preconditions that the impious become just. Or, in other words, it is only in faithfulness to the reality of the risen Christ that there will be a replacing of injustice with justice. That will require a true μετάνοια, on the part of the believer not, as Žižek states it so wonderfully well with respect to the 'Christianity' practiced by these 'believers':

> "What we are getting today is a kind of "suspended" belief, a belief that can thrive only as not fully (publicly) admitted, as a private obscene secret. Against this attitude, one should insist even more emphatically that the

[25] Of the 'Christian Australian' not 'Australian Christian' type.

> "vulgar" question "Do you really believe or not?" matters – more than ever, perhaps (2003, Section Introduction. Para 7).

This is an echo of Romans 3:19,20 where, according to Paul, individuals may do what society has decided is just and right. However, and this is the hinge as with Niebuhr, when viewed as those upholding unjust social structures they are judged as the whole society is judged. Adherence to the law as Dutton desires does not produce loyalty or justice, even though he may say that what he does is on the basis of a mandate, in a democratic vote, from the people. It is worth considering Derrida with respect to democracy and "the will of the people" as this will be a contentious consideration in the final chapter of this thesis.

> Historically, fascist and Nazi totalitarianisms ascended to power through formally normal and formally democratic electoral processes … The aporia in its general form has to do with freedom itself: must a democracy leave free and in a position to exercise power those who risk mounting an assault on democratic freedoms and putting an end to democratic freedom in the name of democracy and of the majority that might actually be able to rally around to their cause? ... When assured of a numerical majority, the worst enemies of democratic freedom can, by a plausible rhetorical simulacrum … present themselves as staunch democrats (2005, 34).

What we may deduce from St. Paul is that the 'injustice' of the Coalition government of Australia, representing the nation as a whole, causes each citizen to be indicted for the practice of injustice. No matter how decent the church may be, in its acceptance of injustice by its acquiescence, it too comes under God's judgment. With respect to asylum seekers and changes, especially cuts and the imposition of oppressive conditions placed upon the unemployed and welfare dependent, the appeal to "the will of the people" as a sovereign entity by those in democratically elected power brings us face to face with St. Paul's discussion regarding the crucifixion of Jesus; challenging the view of those who crucified Jesus having done so legitimately. Recent repeated use of the phrase appears to be a short-cut device to frustrate any opposition. However, given the very close

result of the last federal election in Australia, the government holding power by one seat, any appeal to “the will of the people” must be understood in a very narrow sense. Extrapolating from St. Paul Christians have every right to be suspicious of a government that views its position as absolute on the basis of a very narrow mandate. This is not cause for a despairing of the democracy that we have in Australia. Rather what is viewed, when Derrida writes of democracy *à venir* in this context, as its imperfectability, keeps us alive with the hope that notwithstanding the tensions change is possible.

The subversive domain of the Parables of Jesus

Parables, ‘earthly stories with heavenly meanings’, said my New Testament lecturer at College. But maybe there is something else, a subversive vision of faith in the parables of Jesus. Could they be, as Rollins suggests, “weaponized discourse”? The term is taken from the introduction to one of his online programs (Section ‘Pints and Parables’, peterrollins.com).

> Parables are a type of weaponized discourse that knock the sensitive listener off course and onto a radically new one. They tactically confront us with disturbing truths we might otherwise miss, and bring to light what otherwise lies in darkness … operating on those parts of our being that more direct speech can’t touch.

They are, as Rollins commented in a public lecture in Adelaide in early 2015 (2015a), to unsettle “thousands sitting in padded theatre seats listening to sermons glorifying an itinerant peasant-god”.

Herzog (1994, p.19), referring to the writings and research of neo-Marxist educator Paulo Freire into the *sitz im leben* of the Brazilian urban proletariat, indicates that they had internalized the world of their oppressors. Freire’s “conscientization” (Herzog, W. 1994, p.22) “reflection and action upon the world in order to

transform it" p. 22) and his 'pedagogy of the oppressed' is the teaching/learning process of unblocking the proletariat's closed world through reading, writing and story-telling, a narrative that confronts inequality politically. There is a given and an acceptance across the marginalized in society of the 'social construction of reality', which includes class relations, distribution of wealth, power and privilege and wide expressions of domination with respect to the poor. For Freire the church can function as an agent for transformation and liberation. With respect to his juxtaposing of Jesus and Freire and the action taken by the authorities against both, Herzog draws the conclusion: "Any teaching that exposed exploitation and demystified the forms of legitimation used to sanctify oppression would be considered a threat" (1994, p.27). This leads Herzog to what he wishes to undertake in what follows in his book, and is central to the development of this analysis: "If parabling was part of Jesus' public activity that was followed with suspicion and eventually deemed objectionable, then his parables must have dealt with dangerous issues, which always means political and economic concerns" (1994, p.27).

Žižek (2003) indicates in his opening pages that he believes one of the only options before Christianity in the twenty first century is to reactivate the "dangerous memory" of Jesus. He indicates that this will allow the institutional church to recover its true heretical position that it has repressed in order to be accepted in the reigning capitalist society. The parables of Jesus are a means to assist in shattering the coordinates of the existing order of things. This is the position Žižek shares with Gunjević (Žižek & Gunjević 2012, p.248) in his referring to "The methodology of collective emancipatory teaching" in the parables of Jesus along with the "ideological warfare" of their focus. One of Gunjević's examples is

that of the Parable of the Mustard Seed (St. Mark 4:30-32). This parable fits well with Gunjević's discussion of the Gospel of Mark in the book's chapter eight where Gunjević refers to the author of the gospel as "a member of the marginalized community" writing for a "politically marginal community" and the story of Jesus is "theopolitcal" and "subversive" in nature (2012, p.241, 242). Belo similarly (1981, p.10, 124) places this within the context of the subversive struggle of the poor under a 'repressive imperial apparatus'. For Gunjević the point of the insertion of the comment re the parable is to prepare the reader for his discussion of the "Messianic Subversion" of the Gospel of St. Mark. He states: "Jesus says the Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed from which the Jews made no herbs, viewing it as a species of pesky weed to be controlled to keep it from destroying the harvest" (2012, p.254). As Capon (2002, p.97ff) comments, in linking it with the parable of 'the Leaven' (St. Luke 13:20-21), that which is so small grows to be surprising large and also significant. The Kingdom of God (mustard seed, leaven) that Jesus both announces and inaugurates in his person is therefore a threat to the establishment and status quo. Further, taking Gunjević's comment, the parable of the mustard seed is to indicate to those who would follow Jesus how the powers and populace will view them, as people to be controlled and rooted out. With such a threat in mind we too are thus addressed by the pivotal question addressed to his followers by Jesus, "Who do you say I am? (St. Mark 8:29). Peter's response that Jesus is the Messiah will be unpacked by Gunjević to reveal the messianic reality of the non-Messiah.

The threat of the parables of Jesus is that they break open established thought forms, and thus accepted practice. As Funk (1996, p. ix) has commented:

> It is becoming clear that Jesus infringed the symbol system of his religious tradition so that he modified the fundamental structure of the correlative semantic code. The system of oppositions on which every linguistic code depends … is a kind of screen or grid through which one sees the world. As a modification of the semantic code, the parable and the aphorism became an event of language: a new tradition, a new code, with new polarities – and thus a fresh sense of the real, emerged.

For example, *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* (St. Luke 10:25-37). In this parable, simply, those who regularly appear to the populace to be "upright" citizens are shown to be far from that. Those who are considered by society to be "degenerate" are revealed as the really true and upright persons. To draw on a psychological term utilized a few pages ago, those who are hearers of this parable have to come to terms with their own 'cognitive dissonance' with respect to the dilemma occasioned by the paradoxical reversal of the class acceptance and thus classification of who constitutes the upright and degenerate. Johnson's comments (2014, p.140-142) regarding the parable are more sharply perceptive echoing Merrifield's (2011, p.26ff) reference to Debord and the notion of *détournement.* According to Merrifield the motif for Debord is that which "pillories and negates existing reality in the name of a higher reality". Johnson's (2014, p.141) use and explanation of the term is fundamental to his suggestion of the seditious nature of Jesus' parables. Marx's notion of 'the negation of the negation' can assist us here by allowing Christians, via the parable, to move from a notion of society's excluded (content) in the person of the Samaritan, to a society of the excluded, the person by the side of the road (form). Or as Johnson puts it:

> In the light of Jesus' teaching on enemies it is perhaps predictable that someone wanted to clarify just who his neighbour was (Luke 10:29), but the question can easily be read as a loaded enquiry; less 'Who is my neighbor?', more 'Who can I exclude?' … the scene is no longer about *who* is your neighbour, it is about what you *do* as a neighbour; the focus no longer on the 'other', but on you (2014, p.141).

Capon tosses the parable 'into the face' of those who would want, and we have so

regularly in the church, see salvation in ‘imitating good examples’, or lifting up ‘the power of human niceness’. In speaking of salvation Capon states, with some cynicism, that: “if the world could have been saved by providing good examples to which we could respond with appropriately good works, it would have been saved an hour and twenty minutes after Moses came down from Mt Sinai” (2002, p.213-214). “Inconvenient”, “distasteful”, acts outside our own comfort, well-being and societal acceptability, these are what mark the kingdom of God according to Capon. That is, the true disciple is the excluded/degenerate who is known by the praxis of non-discriminatory generosity and love. This leads Borsch to affirm what Capon is saying throughout his discussion: “a parable may also be experienced by its hearers as a calamity – as a disaster for their sense of self-worth and place in the moral order of things” (1988, p.14).

This was part of the debate between Ann Morisy, others and myself regarding ‘community ministry’ when she led a workshop at the church where I was the minister. On that occasion referring to her then forthcoming book she spoke of the important involvement and thus contribution the church can make within the community. However, in dealing with the topic “helping people discover their potential” (2007, p.131ff) she illustrates this reference to a “drop in centre” being run by the church. People can come in for a listening ear, a cup of tea or coffee and a biscuit or piece of cake. All that we were doing. Morisy indicated that this was responding to the call upon the church to assist the ‘left behind’ to discover their potential. The point of this comment is that neither Ann Morisy nor the other interlocutors on the occasion of the debate at my church were willing to step into a socio-political arena. Rather their focus was how can we assist the ‘poor’ to “discover their true nature as children of God” and “help people to cope with hard

times” without that implying a confrontation with “the powers”, those who are the cause of much of the hard times. The practice of confrontation with respect to those who hold power is what Augusto Boal (2006) attempts with his theatre of the oppressed and the role of problem-posing. The theatre of the oppressed uses the subjunctive mood in either past “what if I were doing that?” or in the future “what if I were to do this?” The stage provides an accessible shift in boundaries by including the excluded and excluding those thought impossible to exclude in a seditious juxtaposition in an expression of “parabling”. As Johnson concludes with respect to the Parable of the Good Samaritan: “Jesus was proposing that the kingdom of God was not so much a religious entity, but a fresh way of imagining others in an entirely different way - as objects of love – even though on one level they remained the enemy” (2014, p.142). Again, Jesus has seditiously cleared boundaries, and as will be important for the ongoing discussion concerning the words of Australia’s Immigration Minister, the whole notion of borders and obeying the law is swept away.

Similarly, I draw a conclusion from the parable of the *Workers in the Vineyard* (St. Matthew 20:1-16). In terms of God’s boundless love, and blessing, the deserving are reprimanded for being jealous and ungrateful. Those who perhaps thought themselves as excluded find themselves blessed and included by the graciousness of the owner of the vineyard. What we have are not simply moral tales, they are political to the core and the teller is a threat to the social order and those who hold power as Shillington (1997, p.20) suggests: “The parables of Jesus *effectively* subvert [the world dominated by the strong].”

On the one hand Christians have sought to live in an oft-times uneasy relationship

with parables such as the two just mentioned. On the other hand, we have found welcoming comfort in a parable such as the ‘Forgiving Father’ (St. Luke 15:11-32) and ‘the human race’s relationship to grace’ (Capon 2002, p. 93). In this instance there has been an eschewing of a socio-political reading by the church of the parable as being an inappropriate approach. However, taking the example of Segundo’s “hermeneutic spiral”, not circle, can there be a reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, a political/subversive reading, that destabilizes the relaxed state of the church with respect to the parable and pushes us provocatively to face the, again, ‘suspended belief’ of our faith? Brewin (2012, p.114ff) suggests a ‘dark reading’ that is the opposite of what generations of interpretations and sermons have proposed. What rankles with Brewin is the ease with which the son allows himself to be reintegrated into the feasting and celebration of his father’s estate and forgets the life of the poor and hungry he once shared. In that sense the story ends as it began. The son is someone again, and the marginalised, and situation as marginalised in the task of feeding the pigs, the lowest of low tasks for a Jew, are forgotten. Brewin continues with the notion of the church/Christians being convinced of the Father’s forgiveness but failing to see how that personal assurance can beget forgetfulness with respect to the situation of the people of nowhere.

Is it permissible then to push the parable out into what might be considered unfaithful waters with an alternative reading leading to a, perhaps, diametrically opposite outcome? In keeping with the thrust of this thesis I take Brewin’s point that the story of the parable charts a failure, but not the failure usually presented. That is to say, not the son leaving the estate of his father, nor his degraded and starving condition that leads him to plan to return to a lowly position in his father’s

household. Rather it is the son accepting the extravagant reintegration into the household by his father. Seemingly the estate is still a wealthy place with wealthy owner/s. The son allows himself to be received into the bosom of that wealth appearing to forget what has led to his return and, indeed, the suffering of the other poor with whom he was associated. There is no message or challenge of change presented to the family by the son. As Brewin comments: “The tragedy of the prodigal son is thus the tragedy of the church. Christianity eventually became the religion of the empire and quickly settled into the easy throne of fattened calves, of comfortable robes and jewellery” (2012, p.124). The challenge of the parable of the prodigal son is, says Brewin, the challenge faced by Jesus which also becomes our challenge – to stay or return. The parable is an unsettling challenge and politics. In a sense Jesus: “came to earth from a place of comfort and experienced hunger, saw suffering, and knew pain. He came from a “kingdom of heaven” into an occupied territory, where he was excluded, disenfranchised” (2012, p.125). In the staying, not even accepting the offer of angels who can prevent his foot from striking a stone (St. Matthew 4:7) Jesus accepts arrest, torture and an excruciating death on the cross. For Brewin (2012, p.127) the temptation for Jesus is to return to the security and comfort of the father. But that would change nothing. The old order would remain and the poor would continue to sit outside the father’s gate whilst feasting and rejoicing occurred within. Similarly for us, as will be tested in the final chapter, do we allow ourselves to be reintegrated into a comfortable life as church practicing charity in some misguided belief that by our involvement in societal charity capitalism can be made just. Or do we run the risk of a subversive witness and praxis in the market state? To undertake what Funk (1982, p. 52) understands that parables interpreted through

a liberationist orthopraxis provoke the sign of the kingdom of God and are: "declensions of reality that disrupt the order of everydayness by reversing certainties or turning things upside down."

This thesis wishes to advocate a subversive hermeneutic of the parables of Jesus as an ongoing task for the church. Such a hermeneutic, as is the case with poetry, evokes sentiments and speaks in a kind of glossolalia that challenges not only power but also confronts as Debord says (1967: Thesis 9) "le vrai est un moment du faux". Such is the grip of the now accepted thinking, as this thesis has been highlighting, that falsity really is the truth. What governments say and do with respect to the poor is now normalized in the society we inhabit. The parables of Jesus are part of the church's subversive armoury.

Jesus and the sedition of the non-Messiah

Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder[26] in discussing the 'politics of Jesus', concludes his text with:

> A social style characterized by the creation of a new community and the rejection of violence of any kind is the theme of the New Testament proclamation from beginning to end, from right to left. The cross of Christ is the model of Christian social efficacy, the power of God for those who believe (1972, p.250).

Even in an act such as the 'Cleansing of the Temple' the action of Jesus and the mention of a whip is linked to its use to drive out the animals. Yet Yoder avers:

> Still the events in the temple court and the language Jesus used were ***not*** calculated to avoid any impression of insurrectionary vision ... a man who threatens society by creating a new kind of community leading a radically new kind of life (1972, p.59, 63).

There is theopolitical subversion, even sedition, in Yoder's use of the negative

[26] I acknowledge the charges brought against Yoder relating to the sexual abuse of a number of women.

“not”, but he sees it being undertaken without resorting to ‘subjective’ violence. However as was discussed earlier there are other expressions of violence. The aporia before us is the chosen praxis in responding to the likes of objective and systemic violence expressed toward the marginalized and the role of the Christian and church in that response.

Herzog in his comments on this ‘incident’ firstly highlights what has been the accepted view since the nineteenth century, namely that Jesus is offended by the commercial activities which interfere with the inward and spiritual nature of worship and this is the basis for his action. However Herzog moves on to say that this view now needs to be challenged because: “The contrast between true religion, which is inwardly spiritual and ethical, and false religion, which focuses on external trappings, is a modern dichotomy unknown in the ancient world” (2000, p.132). In his analysis he suggests that what appears to be missing in considering the action of Jesus in the story of “*The Cleansing of the Temple”* (St. Matthew 21:12-17; St. Mark 11:11, 15-19; St. Luke 19:45-48; St. John 2:13-17) is that the Temple was more than a centre for worship. It was also a major site of economic activity, and he adds, a place of oppression of the *“הארץ”*, (‘am-ha’aretz’, the poor of the land), by those who held economic power within the religious establishment. Herzog concludes that:

> The temple was, therefore, at the very heart of the system of economic exploitation made possible by monetizing the economy and the concentration of wealth made possible by investing the temple and its leaders with powers and rewards of a collaborating aristocracy (2000, p.137).

Eagleton in commenting on the action by Jesus in this story gives it a socio-political context which heightens its seditious nature: “A reverence for the temple was an essential feature of Judaism, and a strike against it was a strike against

Israel" (2007, p. xiii). To add to his actions Jesus not only alleges that the chief priests and others thieve from the temple treasury but, even more outrageously, he refers to them as a den of robbers, (ληστές). This appears to be a quotation of Jeremiah 7:11 "has this house which is called by my name, become a den of robber." In that case the "you" referred to in Jeremiah 7:7 "If you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow" is not addressed to the nation as a whole but particularly to the temple elite/chief priests, those who hold religious and social power. Herzog (2000, p.142) juxtaposes St. Mark 14:7 "for you always have the poor with you" and Deuteronomy 15:4 "… you should have no poor in your midst" and concludes that there continue to be the poor because of the corruption of the robbers, the chief priests and the wealthy. The inference to be drawn is that the real outlaws or criminals in Israel are not the poor guerrillas hiding out in the desert, rather they are those who present themselves as, and are believed to be by the populace, the very paradigm of rectitude. These robbers use the temple as a cave or den where they store their ill-gotten gains. According to Johnson (2014, p.131), "this 'explosion of indignation at the temple" along with the accompanying accusation made by Jesus was enough for the chief priests, as is evidenced from the verse immediately following Jesus' action, namely, that they *"began looking for a way to kill him"* (St. Mark 11:18). Jesus' words and actions have revealed his seditious nature.

Johnson, in his 'world negating' juxtaposing of punk and the ministry of Jesus begins the section which focuses upon the person and ministry of Jesus with: "what concerned him (Jesus) most was the seditious inauguration of his kingdom and confronting people with the fact" (2014, p.102). He places that seditious confrontation in the context of what he believes are the four primary symbols of

Israelite society, namely land, family, Sabbath and food. In other words, as Johnson analyses it, how could the Messiah, if that is who Jesus is, act and speak in a manner which is opposed to the pillars of Israelite society? Being a threat to land and family (2014, p.104) would undermine the nation's cohesion, identity and security. The action of the disciples in plucking and eating grain (St. Matthew 12:1-8, St. Mark 2:23-3:6, St. Luke 6:1-11) is a violation of Sabbath precepts (Exodus 20:10). In this case being that of working on the Sabbath raises the question of do the disciples do this knowingly, or unwittingly. If knowingly, and Jesus is not prepared to reprimand them, then this is a seditious act. Johnson's final example (2014, p.105), food, is related to ritual hand washing and Jesus apparent disregard for it (St. Mark 7:1-23). Jesus is seditiously usurping the power, in these examples, of the role of the Pharisees. Their opposition to Jesus is because Jesus, as Johnson concludes, places before them:

> a demand that a nation re-evaluate itself; propositions that undermined values that a country held sacred; the exposure of the detachment of symbols from their original intention; and a challenge to the way in which people are judged and valued (2014, p.106).

With such a gap appearing between what the daily expectation of the Jewish populace was and a stream of reversal statements by Jesus the more than half a century ago comment by Bultmann (1965, p.27) strikes one as being appropriate as Johnson (2014, p.111) uses it as a prelude to his Chapter 6, 'Confrontation', namely: "the synoptic tradition leaves no doubt about it that *Jesus' life and work* measured by traditional messianic ideas was not messianic."

In a section entitled "Open Commensality" (1994, p.66ff) Crossan remarks on Jesus' 'social deviancy' and his disregard for 'vertical discrimination' in eating with sinners. Markus Barth comments "In approximately one-fifth of the sentences in

Luke's Gospel and Acts, meals play a conspicuous role" (1998, p.71). In five of the reported meals in the Gospel of Luke the participants are tax collectors and sinners (5:27-39); Pharisees, others and a sinful woman (7:36-50); Pharisees and Scribes (11:37-54); Pharisees and others (14:1-24); Zacchaeus and others (19:1-10). The incidents in chapters 5, 11 and 17 of that Gospel involve Jesus being invited to table fellowship with members of the higher echelons of Jewish society. In inviting Jesus, and not only to find out more about him, the hosts were inviting him into a context which paralleled the deepest intimacy of relationships. During the meal recorded in chapter 7 a sinful woman (prostitute?) enters. The how is unimportant. In what follows Jesus rebukes Simon the Pharisee for not following custom regarding the washing of a guest's feet and a kiss of welcome. The prostitute has performed the tasks of both slave and host and thus Jesus indicates that all she has been and is, is 'forgiven'. By this action Jesus is deeply offending his host. In chapter 11 Jesus ignores the requirement for pre-dinner washing and proceeds to, once again, rebuke the Pharisees for their sham practice of religion. They keep to the precepts of the Law but ignore the claims of justice. When one of the lawyers confronts Jesus admonishing him for his insulting words Jesus continues castigating those present with the "woes" of judgment. Thirdly Jesus is invited to a Sabbath meal. Again the religious practice of Pharisees and lawyers is attacked by Jesus. The attack is based on the rich inviting each other to meals, but showing no concern for the "crippled, lame, blind", indeed the poor in society. At every turn, as Gunjević indicates, Jesus is openly subverting the whole social canopy. With his words not only does Jesus call for the excluded to be included but, as with the parables, the included are admonished for the way in which they apply the Law.

Specific focus will be placed in the conclusion of this thesis through reference to Cavanaugh (2002) and his earlier work "*Torture and Eucharist"* (1998) and the way in which Jesus has undermined table fellowship is tantamount to challenging the will of God, to say nothing of the magnitude of the insult given to the "upper class" of Jewish society. As well, not only insulting the presumed "righteous" to their face, Jesus shares in meals at the homes of those considered excluded in society, sinners and tax collectors (chapters 5 and 19). As Johnson comments Jesus is actively engaged in:

> a serious undermining of some of the most important rules governing society.
>
> His (Jesus) choice of dining companions thus scandalized those accustomed to thinking in terms of readily identifiable and therefore rigid social categories and ensured that Jesus was seen as an enemy of social stability" (2014, p.144).

If Jesus' subversive reversal with respect to table fellowship was not fully grasped by Pharisees and others then his words in St. Luke 7:36-50 must surely have been too much. His act of pronouncing "Your sins are forgiven" was a seditious challenge to a divinely established society.

Conclusion – Toward a Theopolitical Subversion and the Conspiratorial Folly of Hope

Introduction

As Kara (2017) discusses, trying to hold separate being both a researcher and an involved participant can lead to identity confusion and communication problems. Although this thesis is not co-produced an ongoing interaction with marginalized people, which is evidenced in the inclusion of autobiographical comments, has no doubt had an effect upon 'the how' and 'the what' of its discussion. The abuse and punishment by withholding support meted out to many of those with whom I have worked, the lack of food, support for children, a long litany of violence by the market state toward the poor and welfare dependent, has led to a search for writers to assist in an adversarial response. Thus the engagement in this thesis with some of those who have practically and intellectually opposed the market state. As liberation theologians have revealed, many of those of a Marxist, but not old Stalinist perspectives, commitment have also discovered in Christianity insights for a truly justice formed response to the anti-poor practices of the market state. Nevertheless, the caveat, again drawing on Kara's insights, of creating a theologically polarizing situation for any reader, especially within the life of the Christian Church, with respect to the choices made. However, some comfort is taken from Badiou who has said that any idea worthy of consideration is one that will divide.

Thus is raised the rhetorical question, in today's neo-liberal capitalist society, does

it make any sense to utilize a theological language from pre-Constantinian times in seeking to address present concerns utilising what this thesis suggests are seditious words and action from Jesus and what Jennings (2013) refers to as a 'counter imperial' grammar in the writings from St. Paul? As previously commented the current Australian government's use of pejorative language with respect to marginalized people has been one of its weapons to engender a false "pax" and build solidarity through an "us" and a despised "them". Nonetheless as Jennings (2013) and Taylor (2015) both note there is a dialectic in the grammar used by Paul in his letters that subverts the language used by the empire to create a false civitas predicated upon an agreed narrative and an accepted practice of law. However, it appears that in its regular use of subversive language as the very core of its faith, and Sunday worship, the church is oblivious to what it is affirming in the liturgy it intones. Taylor (2015, p.229ff) presents examples of that grammatical subversion and εὐαγγέλιον (gospel) is his term of choice. It is also part of, noting Gunjević's comments, the subversive opening to St. Mark's Gospel (Mark 1:1). The term was used to announce and eulogize Roman military victories and is often linked to Caesar as σωτήρ (Saviour) and the bringer of σωτηρία (salvation or deliverance). Conversely with St. Mark and St. Paul it is Jesus who is the true liberator and saviour.

As will be highlighted in this thesis' concluding comments, in Acts of the Apostles chapter 17 and the record of St. Paul and his witness in Thessalonica, part of the accusation brought against him is that Paul is speaking and acting against the decrees of the Emperor, Caesar, and as well that includes specific reference to Jesus as κύριος (Lord). Taylor concludes: "Gospel, faithfulness, Lord, peace – these are all central structuring notions of his (Paul's) reflections of Jesus. They

carry in the context of Roman imperial control a distinctive political resonance" (2015, p.232). Noting Taylor's comments this thesis has chosen to "read" the situation of the welfare poor and those subjected to objective violence in current Australia within the context in which the New Testament writings arose and also apply the subversive grammar of St. Paul. This is to utilize the exegetical methodologies of Belo (1981) and Myers (1988) and from there to reflect Walter Benjamin's suggested process: "what is at stake is not to portray literary works in the context of their age, but to represent the age that perceives them – our age – in the age during which they arose" (1999, p.464). The implication is that the interpreted texts form a historically forceful social logic and meaning. Or as Benjamin adds a few lines further on, "The texts that I read yield not just interpreted texts, but more importantly, an organon of history".

As part imperative this thesis has therefore sought to address anew the 'first step' question of traditional Liberation Theology, that is in today's context what might we do to try and disentangle our lives as Christians from the assigned place we have been given to inhabit by the neo-liberal democratic state? Should we try and reframe the Christian theological task so that, as has been remarked upon, we focus more deeply on Justice as a/the name for God? In advocating for resistance as a part of the enacting of Justice one is very much aware that resistance movements can become part of the dominant culture, indeed sometimes perversely replacing it. For example, those who supported Mugabe and his struggles for a free and independent Zimbabwe are now confronted by Mugabe the dictator and a new oppressive state. Any political insurrection, seditious behaviour or act of civil disobedience, is not always transformative. This thesis wishes to take care and be cognizant that any act against the liberal democratic

market state on behalf of the poor and marginalized is, as Merrifield comments, not a mirror, even in miniature, of pulling the same levers of power as the empire. In the end the thesis stands with Taylor's (2015) "Epilogue" and the comment of Walter Brueggemann, that an adversarial praxis with respect to the Empire is, in fact, the risk of a faithful following of Jesus in the twenty first century.

Critiquing Collaboration

It is said that changing people's mind is the very foundation of achieving any level of social change. However most efforts made to point out to others that their social, political or religious views are mistaken, or even to encourage considering another point of view, seems to make most people more firmly fixed in what opinions they do hold. Nevertheless, in Australia there still exist a number of people who are open to being persuaded on issues with respect to the environment, refugees, poor, disabled and elderly. Yet the question that confronts Christians and the Church, and others too, daily, with respect to the well-being of the poor and welfare dependent, is surely "why are things so slow in changing?' Australia likes to think of itself as an open-minded and enlightened society, as the society of 'being a mate' and a 'fair go for all' as our Prime Minister said again just recently in discussing a revised statement of "Australian Values". Though as this thesis has more than once stated, even people who believe in a 'fair go' are subject to cognitive biases. There is a false universality in our appeal to values we are told that we hold in common. It would be more effective to commence by asking what the societal antagonisms are. For example, we have a leader of a small political party, with some significant influence, presenting itself as the party for the fair go of ordinary Australians talking of Australia being a Christian country

and at the same time demonizing people from other countries and other religious faiths. This is within an effort to reengage politically with those who believe themselves to be the economic victims of immigrants and welfare cheats and bludgers. A trickle of moral arguments from Christian and other leaders against this ugly grammar appears to be counter-productive with some Christians being labelled as un-Australian.

Atherton, Baker and Reader (2011) have as their aim, as the statement on the cover of the book presents under a photo of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, other bishops, a Rabbi, a Hindu leader, people carrying various placards all behind a large banner reading *"The Promise", "A manifesto for a fairer future".* The authors begin by quoting, and they are all members of The William Temple Foundation, from William Temple himself in 1942, namely: "it is legitimate for the Church to state the broad principles on which a society and economy should be based, but it must leave to the politician the devising of the precise means to those ends" (2012, p.2). What follows is an examination of how religion today is to be involved in the public square in a renewed relationship for the 'common good' between faith organizations and the political and business hegemony of the day. The authors eschew the 1942 suggestion of leaving it to the politicians to devise the means to those ends of the fairer future! The conclusion of the book revolves around seven guidelines, a manifesto, but very unlike the "Manifesto" of Sweet and Viola, of how religious believers, secular people, the government of the day and business can share together in the pursuit of a greater wellbeing for all, with an emphasis on the all in terms of the inclusion of those who have been relegated to the margins of society. They favour as a first step a respectful dialogue across the various social constituencies, in searching for "ways and means" together, as

Crossan (2012, p.113ff) discusses under the rubric of *"The Challenge of Collaboration".*

However, such a choice is tantamount to an admission of a failure in the sense that this collection of religious leaders is unable to posit a coherent political-economic alternative to the capitalist framework of the state. One, perhaps unfairly, is driven to suspect that the aim of those participating for a "fairer future" is that their aim is not so much to replace the neo-liberal market capitalism of the state which is driving so many to the edge of poverty but mitigate the worst excesses of the democratic state. It would appear that the staging of street protests, including in appropriate clerical attire, rather than resorting to something like resistance or civil disobedience as a specific tactic toward achieving the desired outcome of a 'fairer future', is the chosen form. But, is a well-behaved protest a sign that the participants don't expect that their "demands" will be met and, as Žižek suggests: "It is the 'democratic illusion', the acceptance of democratic mechanisms as providing the only framework for any possible change, that prevents the radical transformation of society" (2017, p.30).

In aiming for a "fairer future" within the suggested renewed relationships in a collaboration between advocates for the poor and the leaders of the market state might it be worth reconsidering the critique of Žižek's now famous article entitled *"The Liberal Communists of Porto Davos"?* (Žižek, S. 2006). In seeking to present suggestions for a fairer future it would appear that the coalition of proponents, especially those of a religious/Christian faith, have forgotten that a "just", not a "fairer", future will only be possible if 'capitalism with a more saintly face' is not simply invited into dialogue concerning the building of the fairer future but as

Taylor proposes (2015, p.456) that “fairer future” emerges only through resistance and an adversarial politics with respect to the capitalist market state. Gramsci’s work is still relevant here as he discusses how the consent of the dominated is part of the hegemony maintained by the dominator class as to the manner in which dialogue takes place with respect to social concerns presented by and on behalf of the oppressed. (Valeriano R.1982)

The reason for suggesting resistance, even confrontation, rather than a simple collaboration is that the questions and problems themselves are re-formulated in such a way by the market-state interlocutors that nothing will really change, that the system will remain intact. According to the ‘Liberal Communists’ (political and business leaders) in this ‘post-political’ world the need is to leave behind old ideological struggles and, instead, focus on the management and administration that business can bring to major human concerns (Žižek 2008:34). In re-formulating the problems themselves business and government do not see that there is an exploited, oppressed class of people but, rather, there are, albeit humanitarian, problems to be responded to, and with the resources of business solutions can be found. They agree that things have to change and resourcing the community, and especially assisting the poor, is a crucial aspect of that. As has been observed in Australia recently, tax cuts for business will enable, our political and business leaders tell us, more jobs to be created and this will benefit those unemployed and on welfare. However as Marx and Engels observe in *The Communist Manifesto:* “[Capital] has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm … it has resolved personal worth into exchange value …” We are advised that this ‘good debt’ of tax cuts for the wealthy will assist in reducing the ‘bad debt’ of welfare. In other words if the rich are able to

become richer then they will be able to do more good via what is known as the 'trickle down economics' model. As was discussed previously, and to quote again from Žižek's 2006 article: "(Big business help) is the humanitarian mask that hides the underlying economic exploitation."

Badiou's notion of the inclusion of the 'excluded part' (poor, marginalized) is an important consideration in current Australia. Our Australian politics has recently abounded in references to how, and it has been through legislated punitive measures, the excluded could be included through such reforms. However as has been evidenced in the comments by political leaders the whole edifice of those on welfare is built on exclusion. That is why, utilising Badiou, and Žižek's notion of the 'social symptom', the marginalised (excluded) can only be included as truly human subjects if the situation is changed. Sigurdson (2012, p.168) states it within an understanding that the change required with respect to the marginalized will not occur within the coordinates of existing politics. She comments, echoing Žižek and others, that real change can only come if there is a change in the very coordinates themselves.

In following a path not dissimilar to that of Atherton, Baker and Read (2011) Bretherton states as the intention of his book:

> The book assesses the relationship between Christianity and contemporary politics through an analysis of various "telling" or paradigmatic case studies. Through the theological analysis of these case studies the book develops a constructive account of how Christians can engage in forms of hospitable witness in a multi-faith, morally plural liberal democratic polity (2010, p.27).

One of his most powerful case studies is that of community organizing in the work of Saul Alinsky. *'Broad-Based Community Organizing'* for Alinsky is:

> the fostering of a common life amid the fractured anomie and injustice of the modern city through ensuring that those excluded from the decision-making process that affects them have power through being organized to act together in the defense and pursuit of common goods (2010, p.73).

In the Epilogue to his book amongst a number of “rules” Bretherton includes some important caveats that this thesis cannot ignore:

> such action is not simply humanitarian or pastoral in scope, but seeks to address broader structural issues.
>
> such action embodies a generative contradiction rather than saying “no” or “yes” to the status quo (2010, p.221).

Earlier Bretherton sees the Church faced by the dilemma of:

> far from constituting an alternative society, is either a threat to the liberal democratic order, or it is subsumed to the demands of the liberal democratic order so that they share the same aim: the humanization of social, economic, and political life (2010, p.90).

Taking the cue from Bretherton the direction of this thesis is to exercise a ‘hermeneutic of suspicion’ following Segundo’s analysis (1977, p.9), that is the applying of “ideological suspicion to the whole ideological superstructure” and exposing the sham of the market state with respect to the welfare poor.

Mutiny

Following from what has been analysed and discussed the Church, and individual Christian, is faced with the challenge that Bretherton poses, that of consciously stepping away from the often apolitical space of being a provider and advocate of, or a compassionate interest organization in, the modern neo-liberal democratic state. As has often been the case through the centuries a new tipping point has been reached. This thesis suggests that there is an alteration to the moral, lawful and political limits of resistance that have been self-imposed as part of what Žižek calls the “Symbolic” and “Systemic” violence of the liberal democratic market state. As indicated in the explanatory comment related to the title of this thesis there is

now action called for which will be a “combination of persons for an evil or unlawful purpose” – “going beyond the law”, and “breaking free of the current symbolic order”. That is to say the church is faced with taking its true heretical place with the poor and marginalized thus enacting a mutiny in society, along with a willingness to accept the consequences of that stance.

This is no easy decision as has been indicated in the brief consideration of St. Paul and some of the chapters in his ‘Letter to the Romans’. In fact it is a reversing of the outcomes of the legalisation of Christianity in AD 313 by Constantine. It is almost as if, and the trend has continued, of the Church reading the Gospel from its new position of power, which it shared with government, rather than maintaining the powerlessness and resistance of Jesus toward the dominant social order. As most of the church’s caring and compassionate work is funded by the largesse of the taxpayer via the Government budget a step too far is a real fear. Will the Church, a small but important section of Western societies, continue, as previously commented, in a state of “suspended belief” with respect to the analysis in Chapter Two concerning Empire and the crucifixion of Jesus from St. Paul in the Letter to the Romans, as well as the destabilizing teaching of Jesus himself, “You have heard it said, but I say to you”? Such a challenge involves an inescapable alternative praxis. Again, will the Church accept the mutinous action of resistance that will lead to seriously interrupting the processes of the liberal democratic state? Are we able to take the step to consider, and agree, that it is morally permissible to go further? Would such a step be strategically wise? Such a situation became very real in Australia in March 2017 when the new head of the ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) suggested that when the law is unjust “I don’t think there is a problem breaking it.” (McManus, 2017). In an article entitled “Why should we

obey the law?" Duncan Ivison, Professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Sydney, in responding to the ACTU leader's comments concludes his discussion by referring to Martin Luther King and his 'genuine civil disobedience' (Ivison, 2017). The point Ivison makes is that we must be willing to suffer the consequences of disobeying the law in the hope of transforming the views of our fellow citizens recognizing the commitments and agreements we have with them. However as has been remarked in many places by many people – 'there comes a point where strategic thinking has its limits'.

As Brewin discusses in "Mutiny" (2012, p.7ff) there is an understanding of healthy mutiny to be considered. In a section entitled "We Are All Pirates Now" he juxtaposes the notion of the view of the majority in our societies that law-breakers need to face punishment if society is to hold together, and Jesus breaking Jewish law in order to expose that Jewish law and the violent falsity of it being used to maintain order in society. Rollins (2011) presents an example of healthy mutiny when he discusses the unique mutiny of Mother Teresa, although she has been accused of eschewing politics in some quarters. He says that her protest against the legal caste system in India was to live as if it did not exist and to accept the consequences of that particular protest. As Rollins presents her unique political mutiny: "This act of living the not yet state of equality as if it already existed in the now is the truly political act, and act that directly confronts unjust systems by ignoring them and living in a different reality" (2011, p.150).

Yet the Western Church continues to vacillate between being faithful to the way of Jesus and at the same time being faithful to the democratic market state. We in the church remain hopelessly divided as to what our faithful living should be. We

seem to “speak Christian” (Hauerwas 2011) in whispers from the side of our mouth. Listening to that grammar is like taking a tepid bath, and we rightfully fall under the condemnation of Revelation 3:16: “I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. (NOAB). This lays a serious burden on those of us who are also preachers. As Lischer comments:

> The preacher’s job … is to do nothing less than shape the language of the sermon to a living reality among the people of God – to make it conform to Jesus. The sermon is, in fact, is Jesus trying to speak once again in his own community (2005, p.7-8).

The difficulty is in a society that appears to have little problem with the word “god” across the spectrum of its daily discourse as far as legitimating statements from Government ministers. “God” has been used as a legitimating term for ages. But what if instead we used the name “Jesus”? Could the state co-opt that name as easily as it does “god”. By reference to Jesus we will better identify whose we are and by that name we act in a mutinous way in a society that is broken.

Mockery

In contrast to the figure of Jesus as the Christ (Messiah) presented by Sweet and Viola (2010), Myers (1998), Jennings (2003), Gunjević (2012), Johnson (2014) and Taylor (2015) in their discussion of the Jesus they encounter in the Gospel of Mark, present an altogether different picture. Sweet and Viola may have no problem with the likes of the grammar and images linked to Jesus in the well-known Palm Sunday hymn “Ride on, ride on in majesty”,“ the winged squadrons of the sky, look down with sad and wondering eyes, to see the approaching sacrifice”; “then take, O God, your power and reign!”. However for Gunjević (2012,

p. 260ff) in his discussion of the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (St. Mark 11:1-11) the whole incident reeks of irony. Myers views it as “carefully choreographed street theatre”, and “intentionally conflicting messianic signals” (1998, p.294). Taylor (2015, p.252) points to the using of “mockery to point to an alternative power”. Johnson (2014, p.129ff) similarly views the ‘triumphal entry’ as a piece of “guerrilla theatre”. Gunjević’s conclusion is that the author of Mark’s Gospel picks up what Jesus is doing, and that is: “(reducing) to absurdity any form of Messianic triumphalism which might have been expected by an enslaved population longing for freedom.” The clue to the theopolitical mockery is highlighted in what immediately precedes the triumphal entry, that of blind Bartimaeus calling out to Jesus as “Son of David” (St. Mark 10:47). With that royal title would not one have expected Jesus, says Gunjević, to enter Jerusalem with: “imperial pomp, horses, chariots, a powerful armed force and other royal trappings.” However, as Taylor suggests: “not all adversarial politics need be frontal assault. Frontal assault is usually a luxury afforded to the already powerful” (2015, p.267). Jesus himself appears to proffer advice re considering frontal assault as the preferred option in stating (St. Luke 14:31): “Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?”

Taking up sweeping references by Johnson, Taylor and Gunjević, we also encounter sedition in theatrical parody. As Boal revealed in Brazil in numerous stage presentations power cannot abide being ridiculed. In theatrical acts of resistance akin to that which Boal introduced onstage, I remember witnessing in the streets of Montevideo, Uruguay people from various barrios would bang on

pots or pans in the streets in the late evening as the drumming of resistance. As well when folk would pass each other in their motor cars they would quickly and very briefly switch on their windscreen wipers. An index finger waving back and forth is a usual parent gesture to a child indicating that they disapprove of what the child is doing. In other words, “No!” These became honoured mocking practices of civil resistance. This is given added emphasis in the Gospel of Luke (19:39-40) with the inclusion of the retort to the Pharisees about stones having voices: “Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.” Stones shouting out? Surely you jest? The parody builds. From this incident of mocking theatre the very next act of this seditious non-Messiah is to cause havoc in the central site of the nation, the Temple, a building which is bursting with political and spiritual significance. The place, if you like, which is the seat of God’s rule over the universe. The non-Messiah plays with the topsy-turvy presentation of ‘the kingdom of God’ that he is announcing in his person in this mocking entrance into the site of God’s presence. He then further mocks the place and role of the temple by curing the lame and blind, outcasts, within the temple precincts (St. Matthew 21:14)

One would not want to mock, parody or show disrespect for what is undeniably the centre of the Christian faith, the Eucharist. However, there is a seditious nature to it that invites a mocking of the wealthy, the holders of political and other power. At the Eucharist it may well be that we believe that “all distinctions fall” in a kind of Orwellian doublespeak, and bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, are given without distinction and consumed by each one who comes to the table. Yet although at the Lord’s Table we may have partaken of the bread and wine standing side by side and saying “peace be with you” we nevertheless depart with

our inequality intact. As St. Paul points out in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, namely, that the way in which the rich eat and drink, ignoring the poor, in the meal alongside the sharing of the Eucharist renders them judged as partaking of the elements in an unworthy manner. That is to say the lives we lead before and after we share together the Eucharist are also important in the sharing at the Lord's Table.

Cavanaugh at the very beginning of his book states that "Politics is a practice of the imagination", (2002, p.1) which is the whole thrust of what Merrifield (2011) wishes to assert. Merrifield's intention is to place a re-imagined Marxism at the centre of his reflection in an illicit subversion of the topsy-turvy world, the democratic capitalist state, that notwithstanding its schizophrenic reality we have normalized as the "Real" (Debord). For Cavanaugh, echoing Debord, one's true identity is in accepting that: "The consumer of the Eucharist is no longer the schizophrenic subject of global capitalism, awash in a sea of unrelated presents, but walks into a story with a past, present, and future" (2002, p.118). Cavanaugh's "Theopolitical Imagination" (2002, p. 112) is an imagination that perceives the church as a religion with distinctive practices. He places this perspective alongside a consideration of what he refers to as the practices of the 'religion' of the state. He views the particular politics of the church as a rival to the politics practiced by the democratic market state. That is to say that church and state offer competing narratives as they aim for a "catholic" imagination of what it is to live in the modern democratic state. Cavanaugh acts seditiously in repudiating the position that, again our example of Australian Immigration Minister Dutton, the church must submit its claims and actions before the state for acceptance and validation, and that the state is able to adjudicate on them as part of its process of legitimating inclusion. That in his view is to immobilize the life of the church by suggesting its

Lord/Law is located outside the life of the Christian community. In seeking a place from which to affirm (vide Martin Luther's "Here I stand, I can do no other") the particular inclusiveness of the faith Cavanaugh presents the Eucharist as the Church's politics, indeed it is presented as a counter politics. As such, in our ongoing reference to Immigration Minister Dutton's comment, the practice of the Eucharist challenges the state in the mantle of an anarchic act.

In the argument that Cavanaugh presents in pages 49-50 he indicates that the members are firstly united to Christ who is the centre of what is shared and done. As well the dichotomy of me and you, us and them is overcome as we together share in Christ. This leads to, in the following two or three pages, a reinforcement that not only do divisions fall, and this is linked to St. Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 1:10: "Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose." but that within the embrace of the Eucharist all political boundaries of the state are mocked as not being determinant of one's fellow citizens/other human being.[27]

As Cavanaugh discusses with respect to the Chilean dictatorship for the state to maintain its position and power it is necessary for there to be a designated other that can be viewed as the enemy. This is part of the theatre of the state in its creating of scapegoats in order to draw the populace together. In his discussion of the interplay of "Torture and Eucharist" Cavanaugh wishes to present the power of the Eucharist in combatting the state's aim to dismantle, to usurp the roles of all other entities, including the Church. In the telling Cavanaugh relates that, not

[27] Use of the term "citizen" in a generic sense even though the other might not be a legally recognized 'citizen' of the nation.

unlike what Bonhoeffer had to say about the church in Germany early in the time of the Nazi regime, the Chilean church was not aware of what the state was doing, especially with respect to the torture of its citizens. Indeed, when I was in Chile in 1978 clergy and others with whom I met, in the same way as those I worked with for nearly a decade in Uruguay, were publicly full of praise for what the dictatorship was doing. In many densely written pages (1998, p.21-58) Cavanaugh recounts how the state functioned with respect to its citizens and how long it took for the Chilean church to develop a practice of resistance.

Finally, cognizant that it could not respond to the state by seeking to utilize the power and violence of that entity the church mocked the power of the state through humble power by drawing upon the theology and practice of the Eucharist as a direct counter to the actions of the Pinochet state. Sections of the Chilean church, and not all were in favour or gave their support, began a careful process of excommunicating those known to be engaged in violent torture through a careful liturgy in public worship. Now I am very clear that actions by the Australian government and comments by recent Prime Ministers and Ministers for Immigration cannot be placed in the same basket, as it were, as those in Chile some forty or more years ago. However, the church in Australia has not yet tested, and maybe it needs to consider, the implications of a special liturgy in excommunicating government members, and other leaders, who profess a Christian allegiance and belong as members to a local church and thus a Christian denomination, and yet preside over dreadful actions toward the refugee and the poor and disabled in the Australian community.

The Cross

Just prior to Easter 2017 the Australian Advertising Standards Bureau found an

advertisement for a tattoo and body piercing parlour to be offensive to Christians. The Bureau found:

> In the board's view, the use of the image of a hand being nailed to a cross to promote body piercing services trivializes and is mocking of the significance of the crucifixion … adds to the trivialization of the important part of the Christian faith (Samios, Z. (2017)

There is an irreducible uneasiness in the way in which the symbol of the cross morphs from its usage in the church to huge stone structures at war memorials and to roadside billboards advertising tattoos. In a sense the meaning and usage of the cross is now beyond the church's control. I/we Christians, can offer perspectives on what I/we think represents the meaning of the cross in the light of the life and death of Jesus but its multivalent usage continually outstrips us.

In his final chapter Johnson draws a conclusion with respect to the ubiquity of the symbol of the cross within the symbols of punk:

> the offence of the symbol of the cross and its correlate message has, for all intents and purposes, been significantly absorbed by the culture that surrounds it and thus has become largely detached from its original message (2014, p.159).

Today, at the centre, can we say heart of Christianity, there is a surfeit of crosses with almost limitless meaning. Crosses of all shapes and sizes are worn around the necks of believers and non-believers alike, and the cross, in a number of stylistic forms, appears in a multitude of adornments. However, apart from, let us say, a particularly violent character currently in gaol who has chosen to have an upside down cross tattooed on his body as a sign of how far he is willingly to go in his opposition to the norms of society very few consider that the cross worn is a symbol and reminder that the Jesus whom Christians follow was a first century Jew who was arrested, imprisoned, tortured and then publicly executed by the

state in a most dreadful and excruciating punishment and death. As a symbol of terror in living memory the equivalent would be wearing, or having tattooed, some figure that would be emblematic of Nazi extermination of Jewish people, or present an image of a little child in agony and death having been the victim of sarin gas being dropped on them, or the almost daily television images of children dying of starvation in some corner of the continent of Africa. Taking up one's cross in the sense of wearing a small jewelled cross around the neck by many Christians has become, as Johnson suggests, a kind of 'de facto talisman'. Along with that some kind of associated belief that wearing it will provide the wearer with a measure of protection against any ill that may be about to befall them, although there is also here a kind of suspended belief with respect to its actual efficacy.

For Taylor (2015, p.235) Christians have strayed from their revolutionary origins and long-term mission by over-spiritualizing Jesus' crucifixion and accepting the false narrative that Jesus was the ultimate scapegoat for our sins and the crucifixion was the measure of the punishment taken from us. The position that this thesis wishes to propose is that Jesus' death was not a transcendent moment of atonement, but a horrific killing by the Roman Empire. In a sense that is a salutary reminder that we are first of all defined by one who was executed as a criminal, and what that originally implied for those who became members of the community that followed Jesus (Taylor 2015, p.236). In the end I am most aware that the cross and how we use it today offers a multiplicity of perspectives and there is not just one interpretation to be taken. Alongside the spiritual and atonement interpretations this thesis wishes to present a statement of our complicity in the pain and suffering of the poor and marginalized and an accompanying call for us to be involved in the personal cost of a liberating praxis

as a response to that complicity. The wearing of a cross but not living by the way of the cross appears to be contradictory.

Conversion

Taylor (2015, p.271) understands by the phrase ‘taking up the cross’, that is by becoming a disciple of Jesus and joining the community of those who follow Jesus, you did not simply participate in following the spiritual teachings of Jesus. Rather you were placing yourself alongside those marginalised, divesting yourself of whatever previous identity you had, and by your identification with the poor adopting an adversarial position with respect to the state. Therefore the ‘taking up of a cross’ in the following of Jesus entailed a conversion to the person and action of Jesus. Nouwen (1979, p.15-22) in discussing three ways of liberation in a section of his second chapter places the following comment, surprisingly not in “The Revolutionary Way” but in “The Christian Way”, stating (1979, p.19): “I am increasingly convinced that conversion is the individual equivalent of revolution.”

He then proceeds to discuss briefly how mysticism and revolution are twin aspects of bringing about radical social change whilst at the same time interrogating the reality of one’s own ‘human condition’. He concludes the three “ways” by referring to Jesus as a revolutionary in his turning and leading others in a conversion to a praxis of liberation, both personal and within the community. Indeed, it is still the case that a conversion experience with respect to Jesus is in many conservative churches almost mandatory if one wishes to become a member and belong to that church. However, many of those experiences in requiring a turn to Jesus, do not place that Jesus in any kind of social justice perspective as is stated by Sweet and Viola (2010).

From another position, with respect to the turn toward St. Paul by non-religious thinkers in the post-modern world, Caputo comments that the event of St. Paul's 'conversion' to the resurrected Jesus, Christ, is central to that turning: "the surprising comeback St Paul has made among a group of neo-Marxist philosophers who are impressed by his *conversion* experience" (2013, p.97) (italics mine). Although Žižek is not about to join the local church of the denomination to which I belong, it is interesting to note that Boer (2007, p.335ff) in his Chapter Seven "The Conversion of Slavoj Žižek" refers to his placing of the word 'conversion' in the text within quotation marks because of the manner in which St. Paul and his conversion has impacted upon the thinking of Žižek and his revolutionary project. This finds itself echoing a Christian ethic: "If the order of being is the domain of law, then the truth-event and fidelity to it, characterised by Paul and the early Christian communities, belongs to the way of love, or rather 'the properly Christian way of Love [agape]" (2007, p.359). Žižek is affected by St. Paul (Saul) in his initial implacable opposition stated in Acts of the Apostles chapter eight, verses 1-3 and chapter nine, verses 1-2 to this subversive sect within Judaism, Christianity. Saul's opposition is such that he seeks a warrant from the Jewish leaders that supports his involvement in the persecution and the arrest of the members of the sect.

> And Saul approved of their killing him (the disciple Stephen). That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem … Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

(Saint) Paul's conversion from that violent opposition to not only become a member of the 'sect' but to be the leading proponent and articulator of its subversive message leads to his own imprisonment, and although not specifically

stated in the New Testament, his most likely death, leads Žižek to make the remarkable statement, “there is no Christ outside Saint Paul” (2002, p.2). In seeking some kind of grammar to present an explanation of what the Damascus Road experience of St. Paul implies Žižek himself (2014, p.2,6) refers to the nature of conversion by linking it to the notion of “event”. He sees in that something which is outside, and interrupts, the daily flow of life as expressed in such as Acts 9:3-9: “There is, by definition, something ‘miraculous’ in an event, a trauma which destabilizes the symbolic order we dwell in, the rise of a new ‘Master-Signifier’, (2014, p.136). A signifier which structures an entire field of meaning. The reference to the destabilizing of the symbolic order leads to the considering of what follows from the trauma. For Žižek (2014, p. 2ff) an “Event” occurs when the excluded part, in St. Paul’s instance the crucified Jesus on behalf of the persecuted community of the “Way”, appears unexpectedly on the scene rupturing all notions of normality. After the experience of the blinding light on the road to Damascus Saul is confronted by a voice that says, “*I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”.* From this point, as is the case with respect to revolution, a space is opened up which causes not only a radical rethink of reality, but a real μετάνοια in terms of thinking, believing, being and subsequently, acting. Politically, as touched upon in utilising a Marxist lens in undertaking readings in *Romans*, Žižek understands the excluded part as being subversive in the sense that it, in this case Jesus, has no interest whatsoever in preserving the existing order. Saul/Paul now finds himself opposing the state whose agent he formally was, so much so that (Acts 9:23) his former comrades discuss a plot to kill him. St. Paul is now within the orbit of the judgment of the cross. As well this situation, as Žižek comments re considering a piece from Benjamin (2014, p.116), is modified initially through its

language. Acts 2:36 “God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” becomes the ‘signifier’, re Žižek, for the call to conversion and a new reality and, as well, a revolutionary praxis within society.

Scapegoat

In seeking peace and harmony many states, including current Western, democratic nations have utilized “scapegoats” to foster allegiance and national solidarity and to blunt any internal opposition. Refugees and the welfare dependent are currently those in Australia, as was discussed early in this thesis in the analysis of the article by Dutney, where the government seeks to garner support by suggesting that such outsiders are behind the spread of lacks and fear experienced by the citizenry. Regularly our political leaders are anxious to demonstrate to us that they are deeply committed to “keeping our borders safe”, and that they are similarly tough on those members of our society who through their welfare dependency take our hard-earned tax dollars. Within his discussion concerning the “Scapegoat Mechanism” Rollins (2015, 40ff) in considering the place that the scapegoat has occupied, and he relates some of his examples to the Nazi use of Jews as scapegoats to build commitment to the Reich touches on the conversion story of St. Paul. Following Rollins’ discussion, always with the comment by Dutton in mind, the other, the one who will not comply or by dint of who they are seen as not complying, with the perspectives and dictates of the State, is one who prevents, in the presentation of the leaders, a minimal level of well-being and harmony for society. Two examples help here, both related to the Nazi regime and dealing with theopolitcal subversion and what may be considered as the conspiratorial folly of those actions. Together they present a challenge for Christians who now seek to discern ways of confronting the state. Both eschew

violence in the subjective sense, however both undertake civil disobedience and thus there are the consequences of those acts. One is from a movie, the other the actions of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Although there are a host of movies relating to the Holocaust *Amen* directed by Costa-Garvas and released in 2002 does fall under the consideration of Žižek's "Perverts Guide to Ideology" which provides a useful bridge for our reflection. In a series of cinematic presentations Sophie Fiennes inserts herself and Žižek into scenes from a host of recognizable movies. The aim is to have someone such as Žižek, along with Fiennes, comment on what movies say about ideology and how ideology influences present day life. With Žižek's many pronouncements in mind the point I wish to make regarding *Amen* is that it takes up the example of St. Paul with someone changing, identifying with a persecuted group and then acting in a seditious manner with respect to, in this case, the Nazi persecution of the Jews. The main protagonist, a young priest, concerned about what he witnesses as the actions of the Nazis against the Jews, muses aloud, in what is to be understood as a fantastic (in its correct meaning) suggestion, on whether or not Christians might convert to Judaism as a way of confronting the horror. His ecclesiastical superiors are unsympathetic to his musings and direct him to exercise his priestly vocation according to the dictates of the church. Wracked with inner torment the priest turns from his priestly status choosing to identify with his Jewish neighbours and voluntarily taking a place on a train laden with Jews headed for Auschwitz. In one scene the movie shows us a man frustrated by the practice of the leaders of his own faith tradition, with tears pouring down his face, a Christian priest, finding that he has no option but to turn away from that which he loves more than life itself, in this instance the Church and his priestly vocation, and identify with others outside

of his faith. The point of the movie is, and perhaps it has been the obvious and simplistic assertion of this thesis, that the conspiratorial folly is giving up the orthodox form of one's faith and the accepted norms of the society in which one resides as to the exercise of that faith in favour of a theopolitical subversion of both. Toward the end of the movie we see what is, perhaps, kitsch: an incongruous image of the priest in his cassock with a Star of David stuck to the front of it. There is congruency however with respect to St. Paul radically identifying with the persecuted group of Christians, and the priest identifying with the persecuted Jews.

In the current Australian political climate converting from, to be personal, Christianity to Islam is not only foolish but, in reality, an absurd act. However bizarre though it may be the Church has not been averse to seeking people to convert from other religions, as well as philosophies, to Christianity. The whole overseas missionary movement was bound up in that for centuries and as a young person I remember hearing missionaries recently returned from Africa and Asia speaking to denominational church groups concerning conversions and the growth of the church in that land. With respect to my/our upbringing it is not only contingent upon home, school, church and the ubiquitous moulding of the society into which, without choice, we are born. There is a logic of ultimate commitment to all of that as, again, we see evidenced in the person of St. Paul with respect to his Jewish upbringing and shaping. Nonetheless the most powerful way presented to St. Paul to affirm his 'Jewishness', his commitment to the call of Yahweh, was to lay it down and take up a commitment to what was essentially a faith and socio-political practice subversive of his whole life. As Walsh and Keesmat are at pains to remind us: "A politics rooted in love is not the sentimentality of warm feelings in

the political arena. Rather, love takes on political shape in justice. Justice as the political face of love is *never impartial but is always biased"* (2004, p.182 my italics). Might that 'justice as the political face of love' within theopolitical subversion place before us a similar choice? Ecclesiologically it may appear to be all but unthinkable. Bonhoeffer assists us to think more about that.

Eighty five years ago Dietrich Bonhoeffer provided insight for our efforts toward a theopolitical subversion. This is centred upon his concerns about the German church and church leaders who felt that they should make peace with the Nazis for the sake of the harmony and well-being of Germany. The willingness of parts of the German church to ignore what was being perpetrated against the Jews is not only a salutary reminder but still provides a mirror for us. Of course our Australian democracy is not a Nazi state, however our actions regarding refugees on islands such as Nauru and their scapegoating to assist us to feel safer and secure have brought comparisons and international opprobrium. In an article[28] undertaking an analysis of Bonhoeffer's essay of March 1933 entitled "The Church and the Jewish Question, deJonge states that Bonhoeffer agrees with Romans 13:1-7 concerning all, including the church, to be subject to the governing authorities in the way in which our repeated quote from Immigration Minister Dutton implies. However deJonge juxtaposes that with Bonhoeffer's radical comments that there are "three possible ways in which the church can act towards the state". The first is to assist the state to be the state as God has ordained. This will involve the church accepting the reality, as Cavanaugh has commented, that both church and state offer competing narratives and pathways concerning the creation of the social

[28] deJonge, M. *How does the church resist an unjust state? Dietrich Bonhoeffer's theology of resistance* abc.net.au, 31 January 2019

body, thus an imaginative public theology is required. The second is a bold leap, but acceptable for us today, to assist the victims of any of the state's actions even if they do not belong to the Christian community. This is to comprehend that the state seeks to cause its members to relate to each through the state and the legislative and ideological viewpoints that it seeks to impose upon the populace. Thus is created a barrier to any expressions of love that would run counter to an imposed imagination (Brewin 2010, p.153-4). Finally deJonge states that Bonhoeffer's third step is that the role of the Christian "is not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself". This was outrageous for many of the church leaders who originally heard it. In other words it is sometimes not enough to help those "crushed" by the actions of the state, as was discussed earlier concerning the church today's weddedness to charity, but at some point the church is called to actively oppose the state.

The church needs to eschew the neo-liberal myth sold to us daily that the unemployed and poor in our society are a kind of aberrant corporeal entity and are to be understood through narratives of failure and lack of personal agency. An aesthetic of the poor emerges through the discourse of the holders of power and their neo-liberal ideologies. As Fisher notes in quoting Badiou: "We live in a contradiction, a brutal state of affairs, profoundly inegalitarian – where all existence is evaluated in terms of money alone – is presented to us as the ideal" (2009, p.5). Or as Marx and Engels observed in *The Communist Manifesto:* "[Capital] veiled by religious and political illusions it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation." This is where resistance and subversion express themselves in civil disobedience and, perhaps, revolutionary, and violent, acts. In a way he is saying that a church that does not actively work to 'put a spoke

in the wheel' of a society abusive toward the stranger/other and the poor and marginalized has forsaken the gospel. This is what Bonhoeffer meant by confessing Christ and taking up one's cross even unto one's own annihilation as he was ultimately to do as Lindsay (2011, p.298-299) discusses.

A 'Cruciform' lifestyle

In a cardboard box in my shed I still have some notes, now old and tatty but treasured nevertheless, handed out by an entity which called itself the "Ecumenical Institute" at a number of their seminars that I attended very early in my ministry. The group originated from the United States of America and was a precursor of radical church movements in the ecclesiological circles in which I moved in the early 1970's. The reason why I have kept these notes is because of a particular term, now used by a number of authors and other writers and speakers, which I had never encountered before. The term is "Cruciformity". In the notes it was not only to be conformed to the Crucified Christ, but also to the 'fate', for that is how it was expressed, that might await one in being faithful to the alternative ethic of Jesus. As Johnson remarks with respect to the calling of the first disciples by Jesus: "Jesus' disciples therefore embark on their mission clear in their minds that the cost of discipleship may involve self-denial, marginalization, persecution and perhaps even martyrdom" (2014, p.111). It is the 'may' that will exercise efforts in drawing theopolitical conclusions as following Christ may involve sacrifice and even 'crosses' but, as is also evidenced in the life of the church by the disciples of Jesus, it may not. However faced with that particular reality the disciples, and those who hear his words and wish to follow him, cannot ignore the challenge that Jesus presents in St. Luke 9:23 "If any want to become

my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

In 1978, coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the Methodist Church in Uruguay, I was invited to meet with a small group of theologians from Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, hosted by Juan Luis Segundo at his home in Montevideo. One of Segundo's presentations was a reworking of his article "Capitalism Versus Socialism: Crux Theologica". Foundational to the thesis is Segundo's discussion of the state of exploitation and underdevelopment in Latin America and the place and role of the church. One of the points from the discussion, and the article, is Segundo's conclusion, which impacts on the movement of this thesis, namely: "Christian theology will have to be grounded much more on sensitivity to what liberates concrete human beings *here and now"* (1980, p.257, author's italics). In opting for a 'Socialism over Capitalism' Segundo acknowledges the disagreements that will occur between individual Christians and churches (1980, p.243). However a praxis viewed as adversarial is central to the pragmatic refusal of the church and Christians to acquiesce to the demands of the capitalist state. That pragmatic refusal is to be expressed through the early liberation theology lens of "encrucijada" (crossroads) for the individual Christian and the church.

As Žižek is at pains to point out in 'The Courage of Hopelessness' (2017, p.23), and commented upon in this thesis, is there nothing left but to accept capitalism expressed through the democratic market state as an inescapable reality? Swift states it baldly: "If there is no decisive challenge to the logic of capitalism, such alternatives will continue to be marginalized and deformed" (2014, Section Foreward, para. 4). Merrifield (2011) indicates in his discussions concerning

“imagination” that what is needed is a different kind of politics, Marxism in an autonomous form; and as Žižek indicates (2017, p.94) a different way of viewing democracy. We need to eschew simply reacting to market state political arrangements which we believe are unjust by, for example, passing motions at church synods, or demonstrating by standing with placards out the front of parliamentarians’ offices. This will mean stepping away from safe politics into a negation that takes up the subversion of Jesus and the ‘carrying of the cross’. I agree that while many churches do not simply acquiesce to what is experienced as the privatization of the church in this twenty-first century, nevertheless notwithstanding statements and the occasional action to the contrary, churches and their members do feel that their influence on the market state to be not only indirect in approach, but also minimal. Perhaps there is a renewed challenge to find ourselves, as per Žižek’s cinemagraphic suggestion, in Paul’s Thessalonica as previously noted (Acts 17:6): “they dragged some believers before the city authorities, shouting ‘These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also.’ With that Thessalonican experience before us are Christians therefore to be in an easy accommodation with the neo-liberal state, or is there a dialectical point in being those who continue to resist, who bear witness to another counter-reality? As Taylor suggests, (2015, p.471) in our going beyond a mere negative act of rebellion we find that resistance is the very ground of ‘human flourishing’.

We appear in every age to be caught in the perennial Christian problem of “how to live in the world but not of it”. As George Orwell (1962, p.44-5) referenced by Žižek states: “every revolutionary opinion draws part of its strength from a secret conviction that nothing can be changed” (2006, p.ix-x). We need to be prepared to

question our own subjective position as Christians and, as previously remarked upon, our apparent willingness to live with suspended belief. Žižek (1989, p.33) relates this to our notion of ideology and an overvaluing of belief. So long as we believe in our hearts that our neo-liberal market economy is bad, in the way that we perceive it treating the poor and marginalized, and we pray for such people in the prayers of the people each Sunday worship, we are free to continue to participate in the capitalist economy on a daily basis. Such behaviour depends on our prior disavowal. By that is meant that we are able to freely engage in the market state and receive taxpayer monies to fund our 'good works' only because we have already taken an ironic distance towards the cruel actions of the state in our minds. Our prevailing attitude toward the market state may indeed be cynicism, but even if we have that attitude toward the market state and keep a faith distance, we are still, as Merrifield repeatedly comments, ideologically concerned about mitigating its worst excesses, not about imagining a different kind of society. This is despite the human world we inhabit being characterized by adjectives used in this thesis, such as violence, greed, exploitation etc.

The history of the church reveals that in every age it has tried to keep a balance with the refrain in Genesis "and God saw that it was good" and a world alienated from God insomuch as it practices widespread injustice and acts out of character toward the other in that the ongoing abuse of the other maintains the false belief that not only 'it is good', but that what we allow the market state to do is, as the hegemony state, 'for the good'. Of course such a pessimistic view is countered with views that things may not be as bad as here presented. Peoples around the world, including the church, point to positive actions and outcomes. In an interesting twist Žižek has another take on the cliché "the light at the end of the

tunnel". He suggests that it is the headlight of a train approaching from the opposite direction! In that moment/state of hopelessness he suggests is the seed of the possibility of change, and with that opportunity the folly of hope takes on an experience of the risk of hopefulness. (2017, p.xii) That foolishness is, as this thesis has sought to suggest, that the theology of liberation and autonomous Marxism together become a locus of theopolitical subversion in an ongoing resistance to the neo-liberal market state. As Braune (2014, p.143) comments in asking the question 'What should I do?' what we find is that the practice of resistance happens to us, and that hope becomes real through our actions.

Precursors

This thesis wishes to claim nothing more than modestly attempting to speak to what a seditious reading of the person of Jesus as witnessed to in the Christian Scriptures can offer the welfare oppressed today in terms of their liberation, and the Church as its specific calling with respect to its place in twenty-first century Western neo-liberal democratic market society. This is not to be understood as but another revised utopian project whose aim is to map the route to something akin to the early Christian community presented in the Acts of the Apostles 2:45: "they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need." as Christoyannopoulos (2011) suggests. Rather it is to take up the suggested implications of Taylor in his brief discussion of Albert Camus' 1951 book The Rebel. Taylor's argument is that there is a dialectical framework to resistance as practiced by Christians in choosing to adopt what he understands by 'the Way of the Cross': "The good", the positive that is worth celebrating, is not available to us as something other than the practice of resistance (2015, p.452). In

the context of the earlier discussion concerning violence Taylor sees resistance to state sanctioned objective and symbolic violence as part of the complex building of the 'good' toward a truly just and inclusive society. Taylor links this to Benjamin's notion of: "splinters of messianic time are shot through a conception of now-time (Jetztzeit) as discomfort introduced into every age by those, past and present, abused by the (status quo)" (Simon, 2007, p.80). Žižek draws upon a particular Derridian French language usage as providing an insight to the adjectival step, congruent with the perspective of this thesis, and as Benjamin also proposes, to keep hope alive:

> There are in French two words for "future" which cannot be adequately rendered in English: *futur* and *avenir*. *Futur* stands for "future" as the continuation of the present, as the full actualization of tendencies already in existence; while *avenir* points more towards a radical break, a discontinuity with the present – *avenir* is what is to come, not just what will be. (2012, p.134)

That is why Benjamin's messianic time is always understood in a proleptic sense as having always been, in the advent of Jesus, but still *avenir,* in that justice is not yet.

The messianic age has not dawned in the sense that we find ourselves surrounded by the various violences of society, especially with respect to the marginalized and "folly" may indeed be an apt description of any resistance to it. Yet I cling to faith, albeit in a horizontal perspective, always looking for signs within the present, and options for practicing a theopolitical subversion. Aslan (2013) and Taylor (2015, p.205-217) both refer to the returning of Jesus, in the resurrection narratives, to Galilee (St. Mark 16:7; St. Matthew 26:32, 28:7). Galilee is the source of resistance against the Jewish aristocracy and the agents of the Roman Empire. As Aslan comments: "To the faithful, these peasant gangs were nothing

less than the physical embodiment of the anger and suffering of the poor" (2013, chapter 2 King of the Jews, para. 3).

So, why does the Galilean resistance matter? It matters, as this thesis has sought to suggest, because it reveals, in the example just given, of the necessity of hope in an adversarial praxis. Yes there is pessimism because of the obstacles before having hope. Yet notwithstanding the existential dichotomies hope's connection to life is tied to hope's connection to faith. Today resistance is still a mark of true faith and the Christian ethos. Hence a return to Galilee, a recovery of the seditious words and actions of Jesus is crucial for the church if there is to be any real effort to overturn and be liberated from the thrall of the neo-liberal democratic market state and a "fairer" more "just" society come to be. As Sigurdson (2012, p.197) reminds us it is the 'conspiracy of hope', those engaged in the praxis of memory who continue to keep before society the lack of justice. This is the practice of Benjamin's notion of "weak messianism". As Taylor likewise reminds us in his 'Epilogue', "*Rebellion has a revelatory capacity"* (2015, p.454) in the cause of justice.

Liberation Theology arose because the church in South America viewed itself as the religion of the continent and began interpreting the Gospel from the position of the dominant social order. Christianity had become almost a different religion in that the daily reality of the peasantry was of little consequence and Jesus' concern for the poor forgotten. The various revolutions, in which many laypeople and priests were involved, were, in Žižek's (2001b, p.144) understanding "premature" in their relationship with Marxist analysis. As Boer (2016, p.18) suggests, as this thesis has identified, one does not follow prescriptions of established stages, or

recommendations for the correct way of going about change. To follow the directions of Australian church bureaucracies one would work within coordinates of the hegemony of the state and would seek to effect change by adhering to Dutton's admonition to Christians. Instead, as Boer proposes, following on from Žižek, by stepping outside the accepted coordinates and practicing resistance one establishes a new order by virtue of the adversarial stance.

> Rather than some sense of gradual progress, or of keeping the revolutionary flame alive, or of delayed anticipation of final success in the light of a series of "failures", the revolutionary tradition itself is constituted by this struggle at each revolutionary moment. And at each moment it recreates its precursors as a revolutionary tradition to which it now must relate (2012, p.209).

A theopolitical subversion comes about as much because of pervasive changes in a reimaginative reading of the New Testament witness to Jesus as because of visible acts occasioned by such a reading. In this moment fit for theopolitical subversion it is the turning to precursors such as St. Paul and Jesus and their adversarial grammar and praxis that is the vocation for the church that resides in the neo-liberal market state. What happens is that in the midst of conferences and local motions and lengthy prayers the church gets caught up in the reality of its liturgy and thus is prepared to call into question its reams of laudable phrases and its subjective position.

We talk about what we hope for more often than not in terms of what we hope will come to pass. Yet we could think of it another way, as why we hope. We hope because with what is happening around us the future is dark and our despair presumes that what will happen next will be like what is happening now. However to quote part of that magnificent section from 1 Corinthians 4:9-13, verse 10a: "We are fools for the sake of Christ." It is because we are fools that we undertake the

adversarial politics believing that a theopolitcal subversion is a worthy posture for the church today. Merrifield (2011) reminds us that changes come about in politics as much because of the depths of a new collective imagination as because of visible acts. Sometimes our major efforts have little effect. Yet occasionally the smallest of gestures have significant consequences. Perhaps giving a penultimate word to Žižek as he comments upon the example provided by Lacan:

> the distinction between the 'subject of the enunciated' and the 'subject of the enunciation': first, in a direct negation, you start by wanting to 'change the world' without endangering the subjective position from which you are ready to enforce the change; then, in the 'negation of negation', the subject enacting the change is ready to pay the subjective price for it, to change himself, or, to quote Gandhi's nice formula, to *be* himself the change he *wants* to see in the world (2006, p.xi).

Why does this adversarial posture, this theopolitcal subversion matter? Because of what is revealed in the New Testament witness concerning Jesus, if read through an apposite Liberation/Marxist lens. It matters today because it shows not only the drive to build hope but also to maintain an appropriate pessimism with respect to the democratic state and the church that resides in it. This "praxis for liberation", Gutiérrez tells us "is pregnant with the future; hope must be an inherent part of our present commitment in history" (1973, p.14). However, as this thesis has sought to indicate, developing an adversarial stance is problematic in a number of ways. Part of that is because, following Žižek (2017, p. xvii, xi), the adversarial stance has become inertia. Because we cannot imagine moving from prayer and symbolic protest our theopolitical praxis is atrophying along with our commitment to history and the future. Yet even with the pervasiveness of inertia this thesis suggests that an adversarial libertango of Liberation Theology and Autonomous Marxism can have a disproportionately significant effect. Faced by our current societal contradictions it is for the Church and individual Christian to equally hold open

adversarial contemplation and praxis as integral to the inner life of the church and also politics in this time of progressive regression of both in the capitalist state. This is a conspiratorial folly of hope through a theopolitical subversion that when it seems nothing can change “anything can be possible again.”

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