

The Singular Event of Jesus' Death in Early Christianity

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Introduction

Toward the end of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906), Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965) beautifully summarizes the story of Jesus the Nazarene:

There is silence all around. The Baptist appears, and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them.¹

This synoptic paraphrase underlines the failure of Jesus' death in terms of not bringing in the promised new age (God's reign), and leaving the crushing machinery of the world intact, postmortem. Further, by describing Christ's death as an undoing of "the eschatological conditions," Schweitzer points to the death-event as an actual messianic endpoint and not as a mere rite of passage toward inevitable resurrection: a messianic ideal dies with Jesus. Most importantly, however, Schweitzer's paraphrase treats Jesus' death

1. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, London 1910, 370–371.

as a distinct and singular happening not in synthesis with the resurrection, the ascension, or the *parousia*.

In contrast, some expressions of early Christian theologizing, at present described under the rubric Paulinism, actively conjoin Jesus' death and resurrection (D & R) to form a micronarrative.² Further, exegetes sometimes describe this messianic micronarrative as essential to a "primitive" Christian kerygma.³ When Christ's death is grasped via a postmortem, resurrection-happening, the two elements form a sequential bond, where Jesus' cruciform death becomes inseparable from a rising up on the third day. The sequential micronarrative of Jesus' D & R is the essence of what I here call Paulinism.

A problem with this sequential micronarrative, as with the primitive Christian kerygma, is that other expressions of early Christian theologizing from the first through the fourth centuries, do not easily fold back into Paul's Christological vision.⁴ In other words, Paulinism is not the core of early Christianity.⁵ Regardless of attempts by Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–202), a harmonization of the different theological traditions of the New Testament (NT) is only possible against the background of the creative multiplicity that is the make up of early Christian ways of theologizing about Jesus' death in the NT, Apostolic Fathers, and early Gnostic literature.⁶ A similar

2. In exegetical literature, there is no fixed definition of Paulinism, and use of the term ranges from reference to a wider perspective on Paul's ministry and theology (see Ernest DeWitt Burton, "Some Implications of Paulinism", *The Biblical World* 40 (1912), 403–412), to the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Pauline theology (see Markus Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament*, Farnham 2011, 4; Frederik Mulder, "The Reception of Paul's Understanding of Resurrection and Eschatology in the Epistle to Rheginos: Faithful Paulinism, or Further Development?", in Dan Batovici & Kristin De Troyer (eds), *Authoritative Texts and Reception History: Aspects and Approaches*, Leiden 2017, 199).

3. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament: Volume One*, London 1952, 42–43: "[the] kerygma of Jesus as Messiah is the basic and primary thing that gives everything else – the ancient tradition and Jesus' message – its special character. All that went before appears in a new light – new since *the Easter faith in Jesus' resurrection* and founded upon this faith." Via the theories of memory-studies, a recent take on the centrality of Jesus' D & R as a single fundamental event is seen in Jens Schröter, *From Jesus to New Testament: Early Christian Theology and the Origin of the New Testament Canon*, Tübingen 2013, 2, 49–70. See also the well received study by N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, London 2003, 476–479.

4. As seen in the seven undisputed letters, emphasized for instance in Rom. 6 and 1 Cor. 15.

5. The treatment of an *eschatological resurrection of all believers* and *Christ's resurrection* in Wright, *Resurrection*, chap. 9–10, is an excellent example of a Pauline overcoding of significant textual differences in the NT corpus. Summarizing the chapters, Wright states that "there is virtually no spectrum in the New Testament. One might say that, from this point of view, Christianity appears as a united sub-branch of Pharisaic Judaism" (p. 477), which is more or less an elaborate way of saying that early Christianity is a Pauline religion *per se*.

6. Following scholars like Hugo Lundhaug and others, I will treat Gnostic literature, especially from the first to the fourth century, as expressions of *Christian* theology, given that

tendency to unify the equivocal theologizing about Jesus' D & R can be seen more recently in the philosophers Alain Badiou's and Slavoj Žižek's interest in Paul, basically accepting the kerygma as a given for early Christianity.⁷

What do I mean by Paulinism? It is a particular theological sequence of the events of Jesus' death and Jesus' resurrection, constructed from a combination of significant keywords. In Rom. 6:5–11, Paul elaborates a theological identification with Jesus' D & R through a serialization of the noun ἀναστάσις (“resurrection”) and the genitive phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν (“from/of the dead”) with the infinitive ἐγείρειν (“to stand, raise up”). In some “Pauline” texts, categorized under the rubric of *Corpus Paulinum*, e.g. Ephesians, there is a lack of one element of this series, or a creative elaboration of the formulae of Rom. 6:5–11 and the usage of ἀναστάσις + ἐγείρειν + ἐκ νεκρῶν. There is therefore a difference between “Pauline,” “disputed,” and “pseudo-Pauline” letters on the one hand, and Paulinism with its specific theological combination of ἀναστάσις + ἐγείρειν + ἐκ νεκρῶν on the other.

Certain broadly Pauline texts, here Ephesians, that lack the elements of Paulinism, of ἀναστάσις, nonetheless, with the aid of the other elements ἐκ νεκρῶν + ἐγείρειν, seem to develop an incorporeal ascension-motif in contrast to the somatic resurrection of all believers as a gritty, earthy happening, e.g. in parallel to 1 Cor. 15. Eph. 2:5–6 can be read as envisioning a raising from the dead of the believer directly to a heavenly realm, distinct from Jesus' appearance in Galilee (Mt.) or elsewhere (Lk., Acts, and 1 Cor.). All this is to say that Paulinism is a particular theological theme or motif, developed in certain Pauline texts, but is not the sum total or an underlying, hidden identity of the entire *Corpus Paulinum*. In the terminology developed below, Paulinism is created by a serialization of particular happenings and forms a distinct theological becoming of Jesus' resurrection, expressed most clearly in 1 Cor. 15 and Rom. 6. This series is then made into a kerygmatic sequence (Jesus' D & R) that is reproduced as a narrative shorthand for Paul.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the ramifications of a possible prolongation of Schweitzer's dark Christology, and its separation of Jesus' death from Christ's resurrection. This prolongation, I argue, will allow the cross-happening in Jesus' death the abilities of a *singular event*. What does this mean?

one should refrain from speaking about an “Orthodox theology” prior to Byzantium. For a recent discussion on this topic, see Hugo Lundhaug & Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, Tübingen 2015.

7. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Stanford, CA 2003; Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, Cambridge, MA 2003.

1. On the one hand, singularity conveys the serial, rather than sequential, traits of Jesus' death in early Christianity.⁸ Jesus' death is considered here to be irreducible to other (similarly irreducible) happenings, such as resurrection, ascension, and other forms of postmortem appearances. The "Body-without-Organs," or BwO, is used as an image for an assemblage of irreducible happenings. In a sense, a serial happening is isolated from other similar happenings, and an organization of a happening, e.g. in a sequence of Jesus' death and Jesus' resurrection, reveals the gap between such happenings. In short, the BwO connects happenings, as "organs", serially, and makes them interact without reducing them to a pre-established ideal.
2. On the other, the event signifies how a happening functions as a becoming. Events are, in this paper, described as standing in a paradoxical and obscure relation to sequences of events or an encapsulation of sequences of events, e.g. within a narrative. The serial nature of a singular event (such as Jesus' death by crucifixion) is seen as irreducible to other happenings via its paradoxical and obscure nature.

The first section of the paper deals with the singularity of Jesus' death. Using the image of the BwO, this section discusses the organization of Jesus' death within selected early Christian texts (Hebrews, 1 John, the Letter of Barnabas, the Treatise on the Resurrection). The second section focuses on the eventive nature of Jesus' death, by focusing on its instantiation in the Gospel of Mark as accentuating paradox and obscurity. The two sections are connected, in that the first section's mapping of singular uses of resurrection-language is exemplified with reference to the becoming of the event with more depth in section two. The seriality of resurrection-language in early Christianity is ultimately inseparable from resurrection as event. The same goes for the BwO, which thrives on events and moves according to the becoming of events.

(Re-)Organizing Jesus' Resurrection

Even though a resurrection motif appears frequently in Christian texts from the first through the fourth centuries, a review of these texts reveals absence of anything like a rigid theological structure securing the primacy of the Jesus' death – Jesus' resurrection sequence.⁹ As will be demonstrated below,

8. The present use of "singular event" thus stands in contrast to Badiou's understanding of the event. Badiou is not interested in keeping the multiplicity that the event stems from open, but, to the contrary, in the violence that forces its manifold origin into a uniform mold.

9. See Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection*, 1–5 for an introduction to the author's chief research

a resurrection¹⁰ discourse, for instance in the theology of early Christian non-Pauline texts, is at times connected and discussed in relation to the Christ (e.g. 1 Pet.), but sometimes not (e.g. Letter of James), which is to say that these texts drew from Jesus' death as an isolated, and distinct force. That is, Jesus' death and texts encircling this happening stand in an open and creative relation to the idea of Christ's resurrection. If this singular and serial notion of Jesus' death, as seen in many early Christian texts, is correct, this also means that a resurrection motif – whether it be a second temple doctrine of believers' resurrection, or specific to the Christ of parts of *Corpus Paulinum* – is irreducible to other theological ideas.

A point of departure for the current paper is found in Markus Vinzent's *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament* (2011), which attempts a provocative re-reading of early Christian materials, allowing Marcion of Sinope (d. 160) a significant role in the shaping of the NT.¹¹ Influenced by previous research and preceding hypotheses by Raniero Cantalamessa, Reinhart Staats, and Adalbert Hamman,¹² Vinzent proposes a second-century revival of Paulinism through a rediscovery of the potentiality of a resurrection motif. Vinzent claims that "although a strong belief in Paul, the Resurrection was of little importance to most early Christians," and he considers Paul's theological trump card as fallen out of influence by the second century. It was only with Marcion's theology and his redacted collection of NT texts that a majority of Christian thinkers and philosophers came to appreciate the concept.¹³

Vinzent's genealogical project is provocative, in particular its radical emphasis on the historical centrality of Marcion as a theologian. However, Vinzent's re-reading of early Christian texts nonetheless demonstrates a thought-provoking confrontation with Paulinism's D & R sequence.¹⁴ As such, Vinzent's main contribution is arguably found in his analysis and overview of the NT, Apostolic Fathers, and other Ante-Nicene Christian theological treatises that display an intriguing plurality of early Christologies concerning a resurrection of Christ. Unfortunately, Vinzent employs the structure of this plurality in the service of an anti-Pauline counternarra-

questions. As will be seen below, sequence is to be understood in terms of a closed causality, in contrast to the open "quasi causality" of the series, as seen in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, London 2004.

10. Resurrection most often signified via a combination of the noun ἀναστάσις, the genitive phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν and/or the verb ἐγείρειν.

11. Vinzent, of course, stands in a scholarly lineage reaching back to the research of Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930) and other Marcionite scholars.

12. Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection*, 17–18.

13. Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection*, 1–5.

14. Especially in the first section of the book: Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection*, 1–76.

tive. The historian's gaze should turn from the influence of Paul to Marcion, Vinzent argues, and thereby effectively misses out on what I consider the main finding of *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity*: there was no hierarchical point of reference for early Christian theologizing of Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection.

The lasting contribution of *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity* is its emphasis on the potential seriality of Jesus' D & R. Yet caution is also needed when evaluating the monograph, since Vinzent ends up giving the hermeneutical keys to a myth of Christian origins, regularly handed to Paul, to Marcion, and ends up paying too little attention to the significance of the non-Pauline texts, in themselves. In my view, the main problem with Vinzent's hypothesis is that it does not engage in a theoretical discussion on the significance of the main findings, and falls prey to a dialectical argument, substituting the centrality of Paul of Tarsus by advocating for a linear account of Christian origins via Marcion of Sinope. Vinzent's Marcionite counternarrative redeems the arch-heretic at the cost of a more interesting project, namely, the unleashing of the creative potentiality of Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection as irreducible, singular events.

The task at hand, in this section, therefore is to pick up the place where *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity* leaves off, and theorize early Christological D & R series in relation to the fluid structure of Christian thought, demonstrated by Vinzent's analyses. Traversing a Pauline somatology (e.g. in 1 Cor.), what happens to the resurrection motif in early Christianity, if Guattari and Deleuze are brought in to ground Vinzent's reading of the resurrection, as Christological BwO?¹⁵ A privileging of Paulinism's locked link of Jesus' D & R would, with the figure of the BwO, be regarded against the context of the open-ended nature of ancient Christologies.

What is the BwO, and what specifically is a Christ-BwO? Briefly, Guattari & Deleuze described the BwO as the disorganized state and potential of all bodies, prior to and underlying any organization.¹⁶ Christ-

15. See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, London 2013, 20–28. Guattari and Deleuze cite Artaud: “The body is the body / it is all by itself / and has no need of organs / the body is never an organism / organisms are the enemies of body” (p. 20). They contrast the Body, as organism, with the BwO, which is entirely made up by “programs” for organs and body parts, what they call “desiring-machines.” The machine draws its energy from wild flows and puts up a sort of resistance to the organization of bodies and flows: “In order to resist organ-machines, the body without organs presents its smooth, slippery, opaque, taut surface as a barrier. In order to resist linked, connected, and interrupted flows, it sets up a counterflow of amorphous, undifferentiated fluid” (p. 20).

16. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis, MN 2011, 151: “The BwO is what remains when you take everything away.” The BwO is therefore a concept for how bodies can be organized, with a non-teleological understanding of bodies in mind.

ologies, during the historic period in question, developed similarly to a growing body lacking a definite τέλος. The resurrection is simply one (singular) organ among many that can be organized in relation to other organs, such as the death of Jesus, or the organ of the death of the believer. There is, however, no necessary connection between these organs and a relation established between them, by texts such as Rom. or Eph., will express their relation differently.

As BwOs of Christ, the plurality of early Christologies, seen in early Christian texts, fall back on (un)grounding porosity, where some communities, texts, and theologies develop certain Christological “organs” more fully and differently than others. With the BwO as a theoretical image of thought, no primitive and ideal Christological organization of D & R is needed when addressing the plurality of early Christian texts. Some texts will completely ignore some organs (read happenings), and keep them at the periphery of its body. Once more, there existed no complete image of Christ’s BwO, only particular *organizations* of the Christological organs of resurrection and death.

As a BwO, Jesus’ resurrection is one organic happening among many. Further, all early Christological organizations of the BwO functions positively, in some way or another. In short, the Christ’s BwO(s) is a fundamentally productive entity, regardless of whether there is a nose, liver, lung, or leg missing, in any particular Christian text or theology. To the contrary, there is never anything missing in the BwOs of Christ. During this formative period, Christ’s body is grotesque and open, in that it is always working and operational, even without resurrection-organ(s).

*The Letter to the Hebrews*¹⁷

In the homily known as the Letter to the Hebrews, Jesus’ death is time and time discussed without reference to resurrection.¹⁸ “Hebrews is different

17. My brief review of early Christian theologizing about Jesus’ death and Christ’s resurrection is inspired by Markus Vinzent’s readings of these texts in Vinzent, *Christ’s Resurrection*, 27–70.

18. Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, Cambridge 1991, 35–37. Lindars’s stance toward Jesus’ resurrection in Hebrews follows that of scholars like David A. deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”*, Grand Rapids, MI 2000, 37: “There is [...] a glaring gap in 1:3, inasmuch as the resurrection [of Jesus] is omitted altogether. Moreover, it is never mentioned in the body of the letter. However, it is referred to in the formula of blessing at the end (13:20). If this is an integral part of the letter and not a later interpolation [...] the explanation must be that *it did not seem necessary to mention it separately*, seeing that it is implied by the juxtaposition of death and exaltation” (my italics). This manner of “filling the gap” of an ancient text, instead of working with what’s there, is highly problematic. Lindars’s argument for the centrality of Jesus’ resurrection does not do justice to the text, but to the contrary relies on an “implied” logic that is obviously Pauline to its nature. There is no “gap” in Hebrews, 1 John, Barn. or Treat

from the letters of Paul in that the cross itself had little theological significance, and no mention was made of the resurrection.”¹⁹ However, in a closing benediction in the thirteenth chapter, the author unexpectedly writes: “Now may the peace of God, who led up from the dead (ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν) our Lord Jesus [...] equip you with everything good” (13:20–21).²⁰ In light of the insignificance of Jesus’ resurrection to the overall soteriological argument of Heb., what are we to make of the phrase ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν?

First, Jesus is said to have been “led up” (ἀναγαγὼν) from the dead and not “raised from the dead” (ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν: Rom. 6:9). The difference is one of kind and not one of degree, since the corporeal focus in Pauline theology is here completely lacking, in favor of a reinstatement of Christ to God, from the dead, rather than a Pauline resurrection. That is to say, Heb. does not emphasize a corporeal postmortem state of the Christ, but speaks of Christ going directly and ascending to God. Given that the ascension of Christ, in contrast to a Pauline resurrection, is an essential event for Heb.,²¹ Christ being “led back” from the dead expresses a “hauntological” theology – to speak with Derrida²² – and is an example of a spooky, haunting non-dead state of the Messiah. Jesus does not come back in the flesh, as if death never really happened. Rather, an ontologically *Unheimlich* being is now seated at the right hand of God.

Second, there is reason to doubt whether the thirteenth chapter was originally a part of Heb.²³ “Doubts [about] the integrity of 13:20–21 because of its different tone from the rest”²⁴ would of course explain the theological strangeness of the liturgical benediction given the *ad hoc* appearance of ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν. However, since Heb. here displays an interesting similarity to the relation to Christ’s resurrection in the Letter of Barnabas, as an example of a liturgical reference in the last instance (which will be discussed more below), there might be something else going on that cannot be explained away by pointing to the redaction history of these texts. More importantly, considering Heb. as displaying a BwO of Christ, the

Res., only a will to fall back upon the familiar theological terrain of Paulinism.

19. George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, New York, 1972.

20. My translation of Ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶ ... τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν, καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς ἐν παντὶ ἀγαθῷ (Heb. 13:20–21a).

21. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 253.

22. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, New York, 2012. For Hauntology in NT exegesis, see Denise Kimber Buell, “Hauntology Meets Post-Humanism: Some Payoffs for Biblical Studies”, in Jennifer Koosed (ed.), *The Bible and Posthumanism*, Atlanta, GA 2014, 29.

23. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 267–268.

24. Lindars, *Theology of Hebrews*, 37, n. 16.

appearance of ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν functions positively to its particular organization and testifies to the non-centrality of Christ's resurrection in the homily. The specific liturgical use of Jesus' resurrection is distinct from a theological account of Jesus' death and ascension, and marks out a territory for Christ's resurrection to a particular part of the textual corpus, and isolates an overcoding tendency of Paulinism. However, this is not the time or place to elaborate on this differentiation.

Regardless, it is safe to say that Jesus' death is a central organ of the theological argument of Heb., and that this homily testifies to the thanatological importance of the Christ, without clinging to Christ's resurrection. The Christology of Heb. functions with Jesus' resurrection existing on its borders.

The First Letter of John

The First Letter of John is often dated to the late first and early second centuries and attributed to an anonymous Elder (πρεσβύτερος). It treats salvation and eternal life in terms of communal love, revelation, and incarnation – not resurrection.²⁵ In terms of theology, the πρεσβύτερος writing in 1 Joh. demonstrates a fascination with the opposite concepts of sin (ἁμαρτία) and love (ἀγάπη). Sin is the inability of loving one's "brother," and doing unrighteous acts harmful to the community.²⁶ Sinners are unbelievers, and in some cases even antichrists, meaning those who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ and has come in the flesh (1 Joh. 2:18, 4:3). Resurrection is not mentioned in the Johannine epistles either as an eschatological event of all believers, or as a proleptic actualization of this event with Christ.²⁷ Instead, the author is heavily invested in arguing for the possibility of the community of Christ leading a sinless, loving life, now. Such a state of sinlessness was normally only made available at the end times, following a contemporary, standard Jewish perspective.²⁸ 1 Joh. locates the end times in the here and now: "Children, it is the final hour" (παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν 1:18). The Johannine epistles thus theologize a realized eschatology where "the blessings of the age to come are already experienced in the present," with sinlessness for those who follow the commandments of Jesus the Christ.²⁹ This might be a reason for its silence regarding resurrection.

25. Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection*, 70.

26. Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles*, Cambridge 1991, 59.

27. Since the Second and Third Letters of John (much shorter in length) deviate very little from the theology of the first.

28. Lieu, *Johannine Epistles*, 59.

29. Lieu, *Johannine Epistles*, 58–59.

There are, however, comments on the suffering and sacrifice of Christ, which function as prolegomena, or a past historical fact, for the Johannine eschatological agenda:³⁰ “My little children, I am writing these things so that you will not sin. But if anybody sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is atonement for our sins, and not only ours, but also for the whole world” (2:1–2).³¹ Christ’s suffering therefore allocates the forgiveness of sins by his cleansing blood. This cleansing is primarily realized when individual members of the community confess their sins, in public (1:5–10.) This entire process, and the theology behind it, is built around belief in the “name” of the Christ (3:23), when the “brothers” (John’s favorite term for the community members) follow the commandments of Christ and thereby “abide” in him (2:3–6).

What are we to make of this talk of atonement (ἰλασμός), and the specific reference to the cleansing properties of Jesus’ “blood”? First, it is important to note that the popular soteriological trope of Jesus’ cleansing blood is in no need of resurrection in order to work.³² Secondly, the discourse on forgiveness is rather vague and according to Lieu, “the author has no fixed idea of the significance of Jesus for forgiveness.”³³ The letter expresses an ongoing negotiation regarding Jesus’ death. Thirdly, drawing from the greater plethora of sacrifices in contemporary Judaism, the machinery of sacrifice can be defined as (1) a gift to God (2) mediated by a religious figure (here, the Son-of-God), (3) representing the guilt and thanks of the community member to God (4) if, and only if, the member partake in the sacrifice via personal labor and/or attachment to the gift (here, belief and abiding in Christ via commandments).³⁴ In 1 Joh., the fruits of forgiveness is therefore, in summary, given to the Johannine community member without any reference to Jesus’ resurrection.

Lastly, even though it is very unlikely that a resurrection of Christ played no part at all in their overall theological *Weltbild*, the Johannine letters could be taken as examples of a Christian-pharisaic theology, without the explicit need for Christ’s resurrection. The realized eschatology of eternal

30. Lieu, *Johannine Epistles*, 62.

31. My translation. Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ἀμάρτητε. καὶ ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον· καὶ αὐτὸς ἰλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου.

32. That is not to say that resurrection-language could not be added to this imagery (1 Pet. 1:10–11, for instance, explicitly connects Jesus’ suffering and death with “subsequent glory”).

33. Lieu, *Johannine Epistles*, 63.

34. This list is an abbreviation and paraphrase of the discussion on second temple sacrifices in Daniel G. Reid, “Sacrifice and Temple Service”, in Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds), *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, Downers Grove, IL 2010, 1036–1050.

life (1:2) is present now, making talk of resurrection in a sense redundant. A resurrection of the believers might very well happen in the future, but a resurrection-life is already here, for those who believe in and are cleansed by the Christ.

What is the organization of resurrection in the BwO of Christ as seen in 1 Joh.? The resurrection motif is peripheral here just as in Heb., but for somewhat different reasons. While the cross is not mentioned at any point in 1 Joh., Christ's suffering is still said to make a sinless state possible in the here and now, if the brothers are able to love one another and thereby follow the commandments and "walk similar to how he walked" (καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιπάτησεν, καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως περιπατεῖν 2:6). This homily could thus be said to exemplify an organization of Christ, as a covenantal body, driven by mimesis and inaugurated eschatology.³⁵ In contrast to Heb., 1 Joh. emphasizes a covenantal theology, without any mention of resurrection-language.

The Letter of Barnabas

According to the author of the Letter of Barnabas (generally dated late first century–early second century),³⁶ salvation is given to those who follow the path of righteousness (ἐν ὁδῷ δικαιοσύνης 1.4), by having "perfect knowledge" (τελείαν... γνῶσιν).³⁷ "Barn. is essentially an exegetical work. Its aim on one level is to show that faith of those who follow Jesus is in complete accord with what the author terms 'the scriptures' (the Old Testament in later Christian tradition)."³⁸ The purpose of Barn. aligns with the outline of the tract, since its overall message consists of the spreading of γνῶσις, which can be described briefly as consisting of (1) a specialized exegesis of scripture (corresponding to chapters 2–16) and (2) ethical *parenesis* (corresponding to chapters 17–21).³⁹ For Barn., γνῶσις is then primarily "a special method of interpreting scripture in which scripture is interpreted in a spiritual way."⁴⁰ The parenthetical section of the tract, thematically centred on the early Christian trope of the "Two Ways," results directly from γνῶσις, as perfect knowledge puts you on the path of righteousness.

35. I would like to thank Birger Olsson for pointing this out to me.

36. James Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, Tübingen 1994, 9–27.

37. The reason behind the letter is summarized in the following sentence: ἐσπούδασα κατὰ μικρὸν ὑμῖν πέμπειν ἵνα μετὰ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν τελείαν ἔχητε καὶ τὴν γνῶσιν, "I have hastened, then, to send you a brief letter, that you may have perfect knowledge to accompany your faith" (Barn. 1:5). All translations of Barn. from Bart Ehrman.

38. Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 55.

39. Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 51, 55, 68–69.

40. Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 50.

The death of Jesus lies at the centre of the tract's theology.⁴¹ The resurrection of Jesus, however, is only mentioned once, close to the end of a section dedicated to prove a point regarding the Sabbath and its spiritual replacement on the eighth day (15:9).⁴² As a result, Jesus' resurrection (ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν) exists on the periphery of the tract's body and is best described as an "incidental" remark without much value for the main arguments.⁴³ Instead, Barn. treats the incarnation and death of the Christ as producing a "duality of suffering" – salvation and judgment.⁴⁴

Christ's death, referred to throughout as suffering on a "tree" (ξύλον),⁴⁵ is unfortunately, for present purposes, considered a fact rather than elaborated upon. In chapters five and eight, for instance, the author demonstrates an existing typological relation between death-event and the sacrificial imagery from Lev. 16 (specifically, the goat of Azazel) and Numb. 19:17–22 (the red heifer), respectively. Both readings of the Pentateuch should be understood as corresponding to the statement of 5:1 and as an introduction to the larger section 5:1–8:7⁴⁶: "This is why the Lord allowed his flesh to be given over to corruption, that we might be made holy through the forgiveness of sins, which comes in the sprinkling of his blood." The death-event is salvation for those listening to the teaching of γνῶσις, while judgment awaits those who rejected Jesus, gave him up for crucifixion, and lack knowledge of scripture, namely "Israel."⁴⁷

The interesting soteriological mix in Barn. of Christ's incarnation and suffering, flesh and tree, is in no need of Christ's resurrection to do any theological lifting. The forgiveness of sins is available through the event of the crucifixion of the incarnate God (5:1–7), and embraced by listening to the word of the Gospel (8:1–7). A resurrection of all believers is mentioned in relation to Jesus' death, as a reality available after Christ's destruction of

41. Few scholars would today subscribe to the opinion of Barn. as an actual ancient epistle.

42. διὸ καὶ ἀγομεν τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ὀγδόην εἰς εὐφροσύνην ἐν ἧ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέστη ἐκ νεκρῶν καὶ φανερωθεὶς ἀνέβη εἰς οὐρανοῦς, "Therefore also we celebrate the eighth day with gladness, for on it Jesus arose from the dead, and appeared, and ascended into heaven" (Barn. 15:9).

43. Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas*, 179, discussing Klaus Wengst. In note 359 on that same page, Paget brings in the syntax of 15:9 (especially καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς) in support of the reading of Wengst.

44. Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, Tübingen 1996, 180.

45. A paraphrase for the cross and crucifixion, with the agenda of actualizing the Hebrew Bible in service of fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus' death happening.

46. Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 177.

47. Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture*, 180: "The most important thing, however, is not that Christ suffered on a tree, but that his crucifixion demonstrated that he was rejected by Israel. Consequently Israel herself was rejected, as Barnabas repeatedly hinted."

death (5:6–7) in the end of days. In short, Barn. only turns to resurrection as a future, salvific benefit for the believer “because the kingdom of Jesus is on the tree, and because those who hope in him will live forever” (8:5).

The focus in Barn. is on how Holy Writ is fundamental, as a BwO. The body of Christ here organizes itself especially through a gnostic relation to the Septuagint corpus, and a resurrection motif is only emphasized insofar as it corresponds to a certain exegetical γνῶσις, revealed in Barn. Jesus’ D & R is not particularly Pauline, nor does Barn. represent the kerygma of Paulinism, rather the BwO created by the organization of Barn. moves according to a particular desire to understand and exegete Scripture.

The Treatise on the Resurrection (Letter to Rheginos)

The fourth century collection of Christian manuscripts known as Nag Hammadi (in Codex I 43:25–50:18) contains a Valentinian letter to the Christian Rheginos, possibly from late second century,⁴⁸ known as the Treatise on the Resurrection. The letter demonstrates an interesting complexity in relation to themes from Pauline theology – and even refers to him as “the Apostle” at one point.⁴⁹ The treatise is best described as deviating from, or better still elaborating on, themes found in Pauline theology, and in particular a Pauline view on resurrection. Not unlike the theological tendencies of Heb., Treat. Res. could be said to spiritualize elements of Paulinism, in line with Middle Platonism.⁵⁰ In a word, the treatise is a polemical theological tract against Christians who think they understand the significance of resurrection, but ultimately ends up deviating from the truth of the Word (50:5–11).

Most important for present purposes, the treatise considers the elect as participating in Christ’s ascension and developing a realized eschatology by spiritualizing a resurrection-event of Christ into a participatory and communal experience, available for the believer now, at the time of death.⁵¹ In effect, resurrection is similar to the Pauline ascension-event, with the difference of an incorporeal saving of the inner self or the living members

48. Malcolm L. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection: 1:4; 43:25–50:18”, in Harold J. Attridge (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex): Introductions, Texts, Translations, Indices*, Leiden 1985, 146.

49. 45:23–28, quoting 1 Cor. 15:54. “Despite its explicit reference to the ‘Apostle,’ there is little left from Paul’s kerygma of the Risen Christ.” Vinzent, *Christ’s Resurrection*, 19. For a discussion on Paul and Treat. Res., see Peel, “The Treatise of the Resurrection”, 162.

50. “The author of Treat. Res [...] is most accurately characterized as a ‘second-century Middle Platonist.’” Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection”, 135.

51. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection”, 162–163. Other Pauline soteriological elements, such as a connection between the baptism and resurrection of Christ, is also lacking. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection”, 162.

of the body, rather than the visible members “within” (47:55–48:5). In line with this non-Pauline line of thought, the Lord is said to have once “existed in the flesh” (44:15) ante-mortem, but the treatise discusses somatological aspects of theology by claiming that the spiritual resurrection will do away with “the fleshy” (46:1), distancing the tract from a Pauline understanding of resurrection.⁵²

Using the metaphor of light beams and the sun, the author of the treatise describes participation in Christ’s resurrection in the following manner: “We are drawn to heaven by him, like beams by the sun, not being restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection.”⁵³ Similar to how sun beams fade into the sun at its setting, so are believers at their death drawn toward Christ and heaven.⁵⁴ At the time of death, the elect will thus ascend to heaven and once there partake fully in the heavenly state. In contrast to the First Letter to the Thessalonians, resurrection of the believers happens immediately postmortem and not at the παρουσία, as a spiritual ascension and sharing with Christ’s own ascension.⁵⁵ Similar to Heb., there seems to be a spiritualization of resurrection, in favor of replacing this event or interpreting it via the event of the ascension to heaven, and therefore Treat. Res. marks a significant deviation from Paul.⁵⁶

According to the treatise, Jesus the Saviour “raised himself up”:

The Savior swallowed death [...] for he put aside the world which is perishing. He transformed [himself] into an imperishable Aeon and raised himself up, having swallowed the visible by the invisible, and gave us the way of our immortality.⁵⁷

In contrast to Paul, God does not raise Jesus. Another point of contrast to Paul is that there are no mentions of the cross or crucifixion as the cause of

52. Vinzent, *Christ’s Resurrection*, 18–19, on the peculiar Paulinism in Treat. Res. All translations of Treat. Res. by Peel, as given in James M. Robinson (ed.), *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, vol. 1–5, Leiden 2000.

53. 45:35–46:1.

54. Peel, “The Treatise on the Resurrection”, 163.

55. “[We] who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command [...] And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:15b–17c, Revised Standard Version, 2nd ed.) In short, according to Paul, in this early letter, there will be no resurrection until the Lord descends, but then (similar to Treat. Res.) the dead will rise, and only later the living believers.

56. For a treatment of how Hebrews spiritualizes and Platonizes early Christian traditions and in particular Paulinism, see Martin Wessbrandt, *Transformed Readings: Negotiations of Cult in Paul, Hebrews, and First Clement*, Lund 2017, 89–130.

57. 45:15–25.

suffering and death of the Christ. Nor is there any mentioning of the “third day,” Jerusalem, or other essential “kerygmatic elements.”

In summary, the letter to Rheginos displays a robust theological tract that thinks of itself as Christian, referring to both the Apostle and the Gospel (48:10: the transfiguration-pericope, where Jesus meets an “ascended” Elijah), yet displays a distinct and non-Pauline resurrection theology. *Treat. Res.* is clearly part of an ongoing discussion in the second century on the topic of the resurrection of Christ and the believers, displaying similar objections raised against Paul in 1 Cor. 15:12–15 (on the possibility of a bodily resurrection of Christ.) Further, with the treatment of Pauline theology and Jesus-traditions, the author exemplifies theological creativity in relation to a resurrection motif and a relaxed, interpretative posture toward these sources. As with all hitherto discussed texts, resurrection-language acts and is acted upon in relation to a body of terms and theological concepts, displaying difference and movement in relation to other early Christian texts. In short, the BwO of Christ is as active in *Treat. Res.* as in the other texts previously discussed, but not prefigured after Paulinism.

Other Early Christian Texts, Then?

Before I move on to look closely at Mark, something should be said about other early Christian texts. In the Letter of James, Jesus’ D & R are not mentioned at all, similar to the Gospel of Thomas, Shepard of Hermas, and the hypothetical Q-source. In the Didache, where an eschatological resurrection of all believers is discussed, Christ’s singular expression of this happening is not mentioned, nor his death. And in other NT texts, such as the Second Letter of Peter and the Letter of Jude, the *parousia* motif is intensified at the cost of a theology focused on resurrection, even though these texts clearly stood in a Pauline tradition in some way.

The above texts from the first to the fourth centuries contain central Christological organs of Paulinism’s Christ, but when it comes to Jesus’ D & R as sequential, few share the exact organization of *Corpus Paulinum*. Following Vinzent’s reading of early Christian theologizing of Jesus’ death and Christ’s resurrection, the organization of salvation with reference to resurrection can thus be discussed in a non-Pauline manner. In short, identification with Paulinism’s Christology and a primitive early Christian kerygma does not do justice to the multiplicity of theologizing about Jesus and salvation.

The Christological Series in Mark

In this last section, I will briefly develop the perspective above by looking closer at Jesus' death as event and its twin aspects of paradox and obscurity, and discuss (1) Jesus' death as a "paradoxical element" in the Markan Gospel, as well as (2) the obscure nature of the Markan death of Jesus by crucifixion, by addressing a Deleuzian call to "becoming worthy of the event."⁵⁸ In relation to the previous discussion, paradox and obscurity is a way of expressing seriality and the propelling force that animates the movement of the BwO of Christ. A Deleuzian event is therefore a way of conceptualizing what is going on in texts like Barn. and 1 Joh. when they express resurrection with difference and organize Christ's body accordingly.

In *The Logic of Sense* (Fr. *Logique du sens*, 1969), French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995) develops an intriguing theory of the event, and in particular language's ability to express the inner becoming of a happening.⁵⁹ Deleuze's event finds its sources in the philosophy of Stoics, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), Gilbert Simondon (1924–1989), Albert Lautman (1908–1944), and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and "points at the virtual region in which a constant immanent flow of becoming affects the historical present." The event, as a flow of becoming, "make[s] history happen, yet it never reduces itself to a concrete place and time."⁶⁰ In short, the Deleuzian event is a philosophical concept describing the expressivity of language as creative and productive, with attention to the becoming-of-things.

If the core of a narrative is defined as "a sequence of events,"⁶¹ Deleuzian events happen in series, located within sequential structures (as with the combination of ἀνάστασις + ἐγείρειν + ἐκ νεκρῶν in the kerygma of Paulinism). This "virtual character" of events, as hiding within and animating narratives, can be seen in elements of paradox and obscurity. With paradox I mean to point to a regressive feature of a narrative, restlessly running through the story without the ability of settling down. In the context of Mk., as will be argued below, Jesus' death expressed via σταυρός/σταυροῦν

58. The stoicism of Deleuzian events is clearly demonstrated in Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 169: "Either morality is senseless, or it means this and nothing more: not to be unworthy of what happens to us. To grasp what happens to us as unjust and unmerited (it is always someone's fault) is, on the contrary, what makes our wounds repugnant – this is resentment in person, resentment against the event."

59. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 170: "The event is not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed." For a thorough presentation of the concept and its relation to the overarching arguments of *Logic of Sense*, see Sean Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense*, Edinburgh 2011.

60. Iliac Rowner, *The Event: Literature and Theory*, Lincoln, NE 2015, 141.

61. For a discussion on "story," see Andreas Seland, *Divine Suspense: On Kierkegaard's Frygt og Bæven and the Aesthetics of Suspense*, Lund 2016, 39.

(cross/crucifixion) functions as such a paradox, testifying to its force of becoming. With obscurity, I mean an aspect of indiscernibility of a narrative element, such as the imperative to take up one's σταυρός in Mk., in light of Jesus' non-resurrection. As will be developed below, the cross and crucifixion (as σταυρός/σταυροῦν) is a particularly obscure point of reference and an indistinct form of wounding on many levels that disturbs the audience of Mk.

Jesus' Death as Paradoxical Element

A description of events as paradoxical, in my reading, aptly summarizes the Markan discourse of Jesus' death. In this enigmatic and anonymous first-century text,⁶² (1) Jesus a number of times predicts the death of the Son-of-man and a postmortem appearance to the twelve and the world (e.g. 8:31, 9:31, 10:33). After Jesus' death, the promise of a postmortem appearance with its eschatological significance is left hanging in the air, resulting in the suspension of Jesus' message. What does the Markan assemblage known as "the Gospel" mean, when the audience is left without any assurance of Jesus' credibility? (2) No cohesive reason for the death of the Son-of-man is given. In one pericope, the death is said to be "a ransom for many" (10:45). In another pericope, the death is symbolically ritualized with bread, wine, and the idea of a covenant, and all are connected to the coming of God's kingdom (14:22–25). In the end, Jesus is killed because of a controversy about the temple and the title "King of Jews" is attached to Jesus, a name never used by him, or by anybody else in Mk. prior to the meeting with Pilate. In short, the audience is not sure why Jesus dies, or what it is exactly meant to accomplish, in the last instance. (3) An important aspect of Jesus' identity on the last point deserves more attention: given that Jesus is named with many names throughout the Gospel, but ends up betraying the preferred Son-of-man by lack of resurrection; who was Jesus? (4) Lastly, what is the function of the occasional break of the fourth wall with the Markan imperative to "take up their cross and follow me" (8:34) and "let the reader understand" (13:14), when Jesus is left somewhere between life and death, when the Gospel comes to a close? What should the audience do with the Markan text after reading?

Mk. is paradoxical insofar as the text expresses a restless element, with the death of the Nazarene. Mark cuts the sequence of events open with an insufficiently executed, motivated, and explained culmination of the Gospel-story with the death of its protagonist, and is then unwilling to deliver any

62. For a discussion on the isagogs of Mark, see William R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark*, Cambridge 1999, 1–21.

promised closure. The Markan death of Jesus, as the execution of a would-be, failed Messiah promising to bring in the end of the world, continues to hover over the audience as an event vibrating through the Markan series. The report of the shiny man in Mk. 16 proclaiming Jesus' resurrection leaves the wound open and therefore serial, rather than forming a solid sequence between Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection.

Jesus' Death as Obscure Wound

An equally important approach to Jesus' death as event is seen in relation to the function of the σταυρός/σταυροῦν in Mk., and the imperative "to take up the cross and follow me" (8:34). In the language of Deleuze, how does one "become worthy of the event," in light of the utterly paradoxical happening of Jesus' death and subsequent (non-)resurrection? Further, what is the response to an imperative to be wounded by a cross, when the same wound in the happening of crucifixion seemingly breaks the promise of resurrection, given in the same narrative?

Gunnar Samuelsson's philological research on the crucifixion in the monograph *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion* allows for a rich definition of the infinitive, σταυροῦν, and the noun, σταυρός, important for an understanding of the event of Jesus' death. Consider the following summary of σταυροῦν/σταυρός in late antiquity:

The [NT] texts are not necessarily intended to visualize "the cross" [...] but *any kind* of suspension or torture device used in both ante- and post-mortem suspensions or acts of torture. A device connected with death, pain and shame – in an unspecified way; not with all the distinctive features with which the church later filled the label "crucifixion." A person carrying a σταυρός is not necessarily on the way to Calvary, so to speak, but on a path towards an unspecified execution or torture form. Thus, contra the common view expressed in commentaries, it is not possible to fully define what the texts describe Jesus as talking about.⁶³

Following Samuelsson, crucifixion historically signified an obscure suspension-till-death. Joined up with the restless aspect of the Markan story discussed above as paradox, the invitation to share in this obscure death creates a troubling event for the audience to interact with. In the "Twenty-First Series of the Event" in *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze writes "To the extent that

63. Gunnar Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion*, Tübingen 2011, 242.

events are actualized in us, they wait for us and invite us in. They signal us ‘My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it.’”⁶⁴ The last line, a quote from Joë Bousquet (1897–1950), is a most fitting description of Jesus’ relation to the cross and the happening of crucifixion in Mk. What is the audience left with, after experiencing Jesus’ suspension-till-death? An imperative to share the paradoxical and obscure event of cross-wounding: “follow me: be suspended, be worthy of the σταυρός.”

In the earliest surviving manuscripts of Mk. 16,⁶⁵ Jesus’ death is wholly separated from a promised resurrection of the Christ, since the narrative ends with 16:8, and women running away from an empty tomb rather than witnessing a resurrected prophet. The pericope of a resurrected Christ was either cut out, or was never there to begin with. In either case, the earliest surviving versions of the Markan ending demonstrates the seriality of Jesus’ D & R in early Christianity. According to the story, resurrection was meant to be a part of the equation of this particular σταυρός-wound, but at present simply remains as a “dark precursor” to something unclear, something that *might* happen. The prophesied sequence of D & R does not hold.

Concluding Reflections

The first section sought to demonstrate differences in early Christian resurrection-language with reference to Jesus and used the image of BwO to emphasize this fact. The second section looked closer at Mk. and a particular organization of Jesus’ resurrection, with explicit reference to Jesus’ death by crucifixion. With the distinction of crucifixion and σταυροῦν (or cross and σταυρός) from the second section in mind, understood as the difference between serial and sequential, the BwO of Christ finds nourishment from the obscurity and paradoxical elements of suspension-till-death and non-resurrection, in short an event of Jesus’ death. The same kind of distinction could be made with all the early Christian texts mentioned above, although this is not the purpose of the present paper.

The BwO of Christ in 1 Joh., Barn., Treat. Res., Heb., and Mk. feeds on events of death and events of resurrection as organs, and is able to move according to the lines of becoming embodied within these texts. The seriality of Christ’s resurrection is a manner of conceptually mapping the movement of the BwO in the textual corpora above, while the sequences and the logic of narrative, here discussed as Paulinism, is more like the wake or afterthought of a story’s event and its serial movement.⁶⁶ The organ of resur-

64. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 169.

65. *Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*, generally dated to around mid-fourth century.

66. Following the terminology used by Deleuze outside of *The Logic of Sense*, seriality comes close to “the virtual,” while sequentiality is similar to “the actual.”

rection was shown to be different from the one of Jesus' death, and that no kerygmatic sequence existed which bound the BwO of Christ to use both Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection serially and thus without referring to the resurrection-logic of Paulinism.

Lastly, I would like to pose the question of what it would mean to take up the serial σταυρός and conceptualize its embodiment, more generally. What would it mean to take Jesus' death as a singular becoming, a wound to embody, in relation to early Christianity? Fourth-century Christianity and perhaps also some ante-Nicean early church fathers, have doubtlessly been keen to valorize the cross and crucifixion as the salvific point of mediation, and as a foreshadowing of the resurrection in line with Paulinism. However, as a Deleuzian event expressed in Mk., Jesus' death by suspension cannot be monumentalized.⁶⁷ Rather, the death of Jesus looks to the reincarnation, or re-embodiment of σταυροῦν for the sense of becoming worthy of this event.

Deleuze asks: "What does it mean then to will the event? Is it to accept war, wounds, and death when they occur?" No, "but something *in* that which occurs, something yet to come which would be consistent with what occurs, in accordance with the laws of an obscure, humorous conformity: the Event."⁶⁸ The event articulates a particular relation between paradox and obscurity, becoming and difference, and also a call to action, or at least affirming the forces of becoming at work in that which happens. As seen with "to suspend-till-death" and non-resurrection, both in the sense of a paradoxical element and the obscure consequence of σταυροῦν/σταυρός, this happening cannot be bogged down with a singular, simple definition, or even actualized once-and-for-all. As event, Jesus' death in Mk. escapes fixation and remains an open, ongoing happening – hovering and lingering with the Markan audience, even after reading.

As singular events, Jesus' death and Christ's resurrection resist the uniform tendency of locating the essence of Christianity with Paul. Rather, the event animates the BwO of Christ through a becoming awaiting incarnation. To take up an obscure σταυρός of Christ, rather than the pre-established notion of "the cross" as the death of Jesus, for instance, invites ever new creative theological engagements, rather than falling back on an understanding of a monolithic birth of Christianity and a repetition of an essence without difference. ▲

67. On the problem with monumentalizing particular events, especially contemporary black suffering, see Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Durham 2016.

68. Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 170.

SUMMARY

This article looks to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze in order to theorize the crucifixion of Jesus as event in early Christian literature. A Deleuzian view on the event is primarily articulated with the distinction between a sequential and a serial understanding of happenings, where the latter forms the basis for singular events. It is argued that Jesus' death is best considered a singular event in early Christianity, meaning that it displays a particular, distinct force in early Christian theologies that is irreducible to other happenings, such as the resurrection. The article's first section investigates the difference between a sequential and serial view on Jesus' death, by comparing a Pauline view of Jesus' death and resurrection, on the one hand, with the function of Jesus' death in a selection of Christian texts from the first to the fourth century, on the other. In the last section, the singularity of Jesus' death in early Christian texts is explored further, by turning to the Gospel of Mark. Returning to the Deleuzian theory of events, Jesus' peculiar death in the Gospel is described with the eventive traits of paradox and obscurity. It is argued that the Markan portrayal of the death of Christ – as a singular event – invites embodiment of Jesus' enigmatic death, in the lives of the Gospel's audience.