Imitatio Christi and Violence to the Self
Winnicott's True/False Self and Possible Health Risks of (Mis)reading Paul

Prefatory Remarks and Caveats

Is it healthy to read Paul? Can 'this feels unhealthy' be a good reason for revisiting the interpretation of the text? A year or two ago, I heard a talk by an archdeacon who emphasised repeatedly that she wanted to see 'healthy churches' in our diocese; conversely, as a voluntary lay chaplain on mental health wards I have sat with several patients who are fairly new to faith, who wanted advice on how to read the Bible. It is not an easy question in that context or any other, and I wonder how well equipped we are even in academic circles to speak of the risks and the ways in which they may be counteracted. This paper was originally confected in 2014, when 'Religiously Motivated Violence' was chosen as a conference brief within a biblical research network that I was involved in.[1] I long hesitated to publish it, because the issues seemed too pastorally serious and too far beyond my wisdom or expertise (especially on the psychological side). That remains true, and one reason for publishing now is to stimulate further careful, critical discussion at the interface between devotion and health, between *salus* as 'salvation' and *salus* as 'health'.[2]

The paper reads Paul's teaching on *imitatio Christi* in 1 Cor 9-11 through the lens of Winnicott's 'false self' theory, in order to show how easily Paul could invite people into cultivating a 'false self', and to suggest how (or at least *that*) Paul himself manages to avoid this path. At the end, it also considers Gal 2:19-20, which has been more prominent in recent exegetical discussion of the Pauline sense of self. Since the essay was originally drafted, I have become aware of various developments in the wider field which reframe or sharpen some of the issues that are raised here, but I think do not replace the contribution of this essay.

Firstly, research into spiritual abuse (sometimes called 'religious abuse') has become more widely known, albeit still not widely *enough* known. This field is still in its infancy, and will need to be much more thoroughly integrated into programmes of formation for ecclesial leaders in years to come. It resonates with a concern that threads through this essay, both in its questions and in its method. The essay implicitly questions whether these texts, in conjunction with the rhetoric of those of us who dare to exegete them in public, may potentially be conducive to developing a 'false self'; this resonates with the concern that some uses of religious texts in conjunction with socio-religious structures of power are experienced as devastating toward people's self-relation.[3] By choosing a comparative method that enables

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[1] I am grateful to participants in the conference of the Themes in Biblical Narrative Network, March 2014, and to [*names still omitted in this final stage of peer review*] for further advice at the time. None of them has read the final version nor do they bear responsibility for any of its missteps. My thanks are also due to the anonymous readers for this journal, especially for the critique, probing questions, and bibliographic recommendations.

[2] In secular psychology, there is currently ongoing research into the relationship between how texts and health interact with each other, e.g. https://troscianko.com/textual-therapies/ (accessed 12th December 2021). I do not have the expertise for this kind of study in the reception of scripture, and it would be a complex kind of study to pursue, as it would involve taking into account the social setting in which scripture was read and the *kind* of text scripture is believed to be, and allowing the scientific discourse of health and the theological discourse of *salus* to interact fruitfully in dialogue, without foreclosing the dialogue by subordinating one to the other as a matter of principle. I think this kind of study would be valuable, and should displace the rudimentary exegetical groundwork that I attempt here. Nonetheless I hope that this groundwork offers some useful directions for further exploration. Since this essay was written, some relevant debates have begun to be opened up through the impact of Eastman 2017, which I have greatly appreciated. See Spezio 2018; Eastman 2018; Gallagher 2019.

[3] E.g. one survey respondent quoted in Oakley, Kinmond and Humphreys 2018, 149, referred to '*harm caused by being made to feel* not a good enough Christian/not a proper Christian or *that your identity* or behaviour *is somehow unacceptable to God*' (emphasis added) – clearly more needs to be said, but this points in a general direction of concern that resonates with the issues addressed in this essay. See also: Ward 2011; Oakley and Kinmond 2013, 57, 74-81;

comparison *across* a secular-theological divide, and a discourse that draws on medical concepts and appeals to common instincts about the healthy self, I seek to open up a space for dialogue between extra-ecclesial and ecclesial interpretation. The hope is of finding a basic way to differentiate between better and worse interpretations of these texts that can on the one hand be serviceable for those whose deepest insights come not from Christian theology but from pain and fear, and that on the other remains faithful and flexible enough that it admits of rich theological elaboration and development.

Secondly, since writing this essay I have become more aware of the significance of discourse of true/false self in the contemplative writings of Thomas Merton (Merton 1955; 1961; Craig 1994; Reilly 2008), together with some attempts to appropriate this in the context of spiritual care of others, whether in counselling, spiritual direction, or psychotherapy (Kline 2007; Haynes 2016). One research paper suggested that Merton's *true self* may be especially helpful for benefiting survivors of clerical sexual abuse (Kline 2007). Another has pointed out that Merton's great emphasis on mysticism went hand in hand with recurrent attempts to explain what mysticism is *not* (Robinette 2001). Merton was not engaging directly with Winnicott in the way this essay does, but the enthusiasm for this language in his writings and among some of his interpreters suggests that this is a potentially fruitful direction to pursue in a modern attempt to explain exegetically what *imitatio Christi* is *not*.

Thirdly, there have been several recent studies of scriptural concepts of personhood and identity, especially in Paul. Often scholars have focused on the 'problem passages' of Rom 7-8; Phil 3; and especially Gal 2:19-20. Most of these studies are deliberately theological in approach, rather than seeking to open up a method for comparative dialogue such as I am attempting here (Macaskill 2019; Linebaugh 2020).[4] The most significant exception to that is Susan Eastman's *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Eastman 2017).[5] She too explores a dialogue between modern and ancient interpretations of the self and Paul's; she too is concerned with the care of people *in extremis*, and the potential for trauma to disrupt the sense of self. She too finds the Pauline self to be relational and intersubjective 'all the way down'. Her method and focus are somewhat different from mine. She studies a series of important authors and concepts in the history and theory of the self and juxtaposes them constructively; she focuses on passages from Paul that seem to negate the self or problematise the self-identity (Rom 7, Phil 2, Gal 2); she is critical of criteria-based approaches to the self, while she emphasises the benefits of *mimêsis*.

I think her approach does better than this essay at conveying a vivid sense of how things may go *right*, and the overall picture of what Paul invites people to hope for. Criterial approaches, such as the one taken here, entail the risk of depersonalising through choice of method, as they organise our reflection by disaggregating and generalising characteristics that are more humanly and humanely encountered in the lived, particular, whole.[6] Nonetheless, I think that this approach has some diagnostic benefit as a basis for comparing ancient and modern, and differentiating good exegetical directions from bad. It can help focus our study by naming significant issues at stake, rather than letting them emerge implicitly. It may also support constructive dialogue with the medical sciences, and those for whom a healthy sense of self is currently elusive. Many of the criteria that I highlight here are manifestly concerns for Eastman, explored in less systematic way. This essay also goes further than she did in grappling with a particular set

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Cashwell and Swindle 2018. The concerns that Daphne Hampson raised in her work on feminism and Christianity are in a similar general area: Hampson 1996; 2001. Studies of 'spiritual abuse' are distinctive insofar as they normally operate with a model of grossly abusive and controlling power structures in the interpersonal dynamics of particular religious communities. But we should not overlook the potential continuity between abusive ends of the social spectrum, and the underlying tendencies of texts and/or their publicly accepted exegeses.

[4] For studies of wider scope, see esp. McConville 2016; Rosner 2017.

[5] But see also now the excellent article, Lang 2020, focusing on Col 3:1-4 alongside not only Gal 2:19-20 and other Pauline texts, but also other comparative sources from Classical philosophy, Second Temple Judaism, and early Christian apocrypha. For discussion of Eastman, see Rabens 2018; Linebaugh 2018 and essays cited in n. 2, above.

[6] The passage that Eastman quotes from Rowan Williams' reflection on Thomas Merton captures this nicely, Eastman 2018, 535. Eastman here also slips briefly into the language of 'real self' for what is revealed to Paul in 'the divine apocalypse.'

of problems of misreading Paul, and highlighting the potential of the text to elicit those risks. I have largely let the paper stand in the form in which it was originally composed back in 2014,[7] with a little extra bibliography but only one substantial addition to the text: since Gal 2:19-20 has been so much discussed recently by those who develop a theological rhetoric of the centrality of 'no longer I' in Christian formation,[8] I have added a section at the end of the essay that extends the scope of the enquiry to include Galatians.

Although the antidote offered here depends on historical exegesis, I do not think that this is a complete remedy, even at a scriptural level, let alone at a human one. As Eastman points out, and as this essay discerns, the Pauline self is inter-subjective and experienced in community with God and others. That means that a full remedy needs to involve both contemplative and communal dimensions, including mutual recognition within a liturgical and devotional community. Historical exegesis, such as this essay offers, is only one of the modes of exegesis that contributes to constructing the self in relation to God and others in that ecclesial devotional setting.

This essay, then, is limited in scope, method, and qualifications of the author. But that reflects the state of our wider academic context, where such weighty topics as this may never be discussed at all. I hope the paper will be received as (only) a provocation for further study and deeper contemplation, and that it will be helpful in articulating a set of questions, which will need to be replaced with others as the issues become better understood. That is to say, I hope that like all good scholarship, it demonstrates its success by becoming irrelevant, when the issues are grasped and taken to a new and deeper stage, such that the old falls away.

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Imitatio Christi and Violence to the Self

Imitation of Christ has often been understood to involve violence to the self, particularly when focused on the imitation of the crucifixion, as in Jesus' discipleship command in the Synoptics, 'If anyone wishes to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mk 8:34), or when focused on his kenosis, as depicted in Paul's letter to the Philippians, 'He emptied himself, and took the form of a slave' (Phil 2:7).[9]

In some New Testament scholarship, the combination of imitation and self-destruction has been uncompromisingly articulated and influentially affirmed. Ernst Best, in his *Disciples and Discipleship*, writes on Jesus' command to 'deny oneself', that this 'is not a call to deny things to oneself, which is the popular meaning of self-denial and which leads to asceticism and self-mortification; it is a call to the denial of the self itself' (Best 1986, 8). More nuanced, but still bold, is Grant Macaskill's *Union with Christ.* He closes with an emphatic call concerning 'the properly Christian configuration of ethics'. He writes: 'for Paul and John, at least, and probably for all of the New Testament writers, this requires a negation of the natural self, since that self is blind and dead, incapable of loving God and others. Their anthropology is fundamentally negative' (Macaskill 2013, 307).[10] Underlying this New Testament discussion is a

[7] It has already had some informal circulation as it was posted on my academia.edu page for some time.

[8] Esp. Macaskill 2019. I am afraid I find some of the rhetoric in that book concerning: the insistence that *all* Christian moral formation *must* begin and end with two verses in the middle of an angry apostolic letter delegitimises diversity of perspectives and interpretations, which I think are essential to a healthy community in which 'selves' *can* flourish, not only in the academy, but also beyond it (cf. Macaskill 2019, 1, 39-40).

[9] I would interpret this as a reference to the incarnation rather than the crucifixion, although it opens a sequence that leads to crucifixion (Phil 2:8). Cf. Gorman 2009, 21-9, MacLeod 2001.

[10] What is understood by the 'natural self' is crucial, as one of the anonymous reviewers of this article rightly pointed out. In this article, it appears only in quotations from Macaskill, so I have not entered into this issue closely, but this would be an important route into a fuller *theological* engagement with the questions raised. 'Natural self' is not a

celebration of a thoroughgoing self-denial, and yet the concept of the 'self' remains un(der)interrogated. What exactly is it that one is meant to deny and destroy?

There have been sharply critical appraisals of Christian teaching on self-denial from other quarters. Michel Foucault compared Christian 'technologies of the self' unfavourably with the Greco-Roman tradition. He argued that the Stoics achieve self-mastery through their *conversio ad se,* whereas Christian asceticism produces only 'aversion of the self' through *conversio ad deum.* He regards the Stoic version as a 'virile model' and an 'aesthetics of existence', whereas the Christian type appears feminine in his eyes, and a renunciation or sacrifice of the self (Ramos 1994). Foucault's gendering of the two models of asceticism is interesting, for it is feminist scholarship which, in the latter half of the 20th century, has most vociferously protested against Christian teaching on self-sacrifice. Following Valerie Saiving Goldstein's influential articulation of 'The Human Situation: A Feminine View' in 1960, many feminist works have identified women's characteristic sin as the failure to develop a self at all.[11] They have associated this with specifically feminine experience, in which there is an expectation that women will serve their menfolk. Thus for women scholars such as Daphne Hampson or Judith Plaskow, kenosis, self-emptying and self-abnegation are suitable models for (as they would have it) arrogant men, but women need a different understanding of God, because they are too prone to self-abnegation anyway, through both nature and culture (Hampson 1990, 155; Plaskow 1980). 'Practised in excess,' Plaskow argues, '[the traditional Christian virtues of self-sacrifice, obedience etc] undermine the self's relationship to itself and ultimately to God' (Plaskow 1980, 2). Some feminist writers resist such extreme gender stereotyping and thorough rejection of kenosis. Sarah Coakley and Ruth Groenhout dispute that vulnerability is the exclusive property of either sex, and seek to retain a significant place for kenosis and self-sacrifice among both genders, but they concur that 'spineless submission' is a dangerous distortion of these doctrines (Coakley 1996, esp. 98-99; 2001; Groenhout 2006).

This discussion is underpinned by wider issues in Christian theology and ethics. The role of human flourishing as a goal of a relationship to God is at stake, together with the character of what such human

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quotation from scripture, but a technical term of theological anthropology that is anything but self-evident. Macaskill's use of it is shaped by Reformation theology, but I think he needs to define it more directly and prominently than he does in his books on *Union*. His discussion of 'nature' focuses on participation in the divine nature (most explicitly in 2 Pet 1:4, see Macaskill 2013, 280-3) and on the 'two natures' of Christian doctrine (highlighted at Macaskill 2013, 8), but not on the 'natural self' that he so strongly negates (though see briefly, Macaskill 2013, 305; the concept appears recurrently in the early chapters on the history of tradition, but is not given separate attention, therefore comes across at least to this reader as if it were more self-evident than it is). The term 'nature' (φύσις/*natura*) is polysemic in English as well as in Greek and Latin; the interpretation of human 'nature' or the 'natural self' intersects with understandings of 'nature' and 'natural law' and debates about the 'supernatural' (Hornauer and Köpf 2011). Early Christian theological anthropology and soteriology often emphasised a positive doctrine of humanity as created 'in the image of God' (for the Jewish background, see McConville 2016; Najman 2021) and able to reattain it through *oikeiôsis* (a Stoic term for 'appropriation' of what is one's 'own', which Christians understood as that which characterises the divine image, see Ramelli 2014) and *mimêsis* (a prominent term in educational theory, including Platonic philosophy, which Christians focused on imitating Christ as *eikôn theou,* Giulea 2011). Similarly, Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity accepted that universal, 'natural' law (*physis,* here understood as divine ordering of creation) and revealed Torah were consonant, and one should be used to interpret the other (Bockmuehl 1995; Zurawski 2017; Najman 2003, 2021, 313, 321-3), and this informed scriptural teaching on the 'conscience' in both OT and NT (Vandrunen 2021). In the second century, Tertullian referred to humanity's fallen nature as 'second nature'; Reformation and post-Reformation theologians often linked the term 'nature' with what was corrupted by the fall, thus moving away from, and against, traditional understandings of 'nature' as *good*. For the dichotomy between two trajectories within Christianity that pursue positive/negative approaches to human nature (Catholic/Protestant respectively), see Hampson 2001. The doctrine that underlies the Reformers' understanding of the 'natural self' as wholly corrupt is original sin (Wiley 2002), while twentieth century Catholic theology has been shaped by debates about whether or not humanity has a 'natural' desire for the vision of God (de Lubac 1946).

[11] Saiving Goldstein 1960, 108, lists specifically feminine sins as: 'triviality, distractability, and diffuseness; lack of an organizing center or focus; dependence on others for one's own self-definition; tolerance at the expense of standards of excellence; inability to respect the boundaries of privacy; sentimentality, gossipy sociability, and mistrust of reason – in short, underdevelopment or negation of the self.'

flourishing might mean. While classic Christian theology prior to the Reformation consistently affirmed the coincidence and commensurability of love of self and love of God, significant tensions between the two were opened up through the Reformation. Today ethicists continue to debate whether it is proper to love the self at all, and if so how, and how that operates in relation to love of God and love of neighbour (James 1981 [1890], 302-13; Nygren 1982; Ramsey 1950; Vacek 1994; Weaver 2002). Such debates often draw little directly from scripture. Frequently they treat erôs and agapê as technical terms for selfish and selfless kinds of love respectively (Weaver 2002, 5). Yet scripture has a much more complex breadth of use and interrelationship between the two (Zimmermann 2001).

There is not scope within the present paper to develop a full discussion of the issues raised by 'imitatio Christi and violence to the self'. It is my hope rather to open up an area of scriptural concern in order to show how 'violence to the self' can become a serious source of anxiety in reading the sacred text, and to root the discussion of the ethical, psychological and social issues more deeply in the reading of scripture. Paul is chosen for the case study because of all the NT authors he provides the most material for a structured, psychological approach to the self. Within his corpus, I shall focus on Paul's presentation of his own *imitatio Christi* in 1 Corinthians 9:1-11:1. Language of violence introduces these chapters, as Paul appeals to the Corinthians not to do violence to a brother's conscience:

> ἀπόλλυται γὰρ ὁ ἀσθενῶν ἐν τῇ σῇ γνώσει,
> ὁ ἀδελφὸς δι' ὃν Χριστὸς ἀπέθανεν.
> οὕτως δὲ ἁμαρτάνοντες εἰς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς καὶ τύπτοντες αὐτῶν τὴν συνείδησιν ἀσθενοῦσαν
> εἰς Χριστὸν ἁμαρτάνετε.
> For the weak man is destroyed in your knowledge,
> the brother on account of whom Christ died;
> so when you sin against the brothers and beat up their weak conscience,
> you sin against Christ
> (1 Cor 8:11-12)

Christ's violent death is brought into the middle of the picture. There is a parallel between what he suffers and what the weak brother suffers, but Christ's death is envisaged here primarily physically, whereas the weak brother's death is spiritual and it is his conscience rather than his body that suffers the beating. To inflict this, either on Christ or on the brother, is regarded as sin. In the course of his ensuing self-presentation, however, Paul's language of violence is turned against himself. In a verse held dear by later ascetics (Yinger 2008), he declares, 'I bruise my body and lead it about as a slave' (1 Cor 9:27). Whether his intention here is physical or spiritual is not clear, but after developing further his discussion of how to eat in company and in conscience (1 Cor 10:14-33), he indicates that his own example itself comprises an *imitatio Christi*. Thus he appeals to the Corinthians, 'Become imitators of me, as I also am an imitator of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). This essay responds to this presentation by Paul of his own *imitatio*. Is it the case that Paul evoked sympathy for the brother who is beaten up in conscience and destroyed like Christ on the cross, only to solicit Christians to inflict violence on themselves? Is their attitude to the self to be one of hostility, while affirming that *this* is *imitatio Christi?* I will begin by unpacking the terms of the question and setting the horizon for discussion against a wider debate about the 'self'. Then I will turn to an examination of 1 Corinthians 9-11, so as to open a way into a discussion that could draw on a great many more passages.

Problems of Definition: What is 'Violence to the Self'?

In order to investigate 'violence to the self' in Paul, we must first clarify what constitutes 'violence to the

self'. Both 'violence' and 'self' can be interpreted in many different ways; taken in combination, they produce an ambiguous expression.

Let us begin with 'violence'. The term has been made to bear many meanings, but I take it here as that which violates, undermines or destroys (Carlson 2011). Although it can refer to physical violence, and this has played a significant role in Christian tradition,[12] what I want to focus on in this paper is the psychological and spiritual interpretation of violence in *imitatio Christi*. The crucifixion had a psychological dimension as well as a physical one. This finds agonising expression in Jesus' cry of desolation on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matt 27:46/Mk 15:34 = Ps 22:2). Violence to the self, then, shall be studied here as that which violates or damages *the self*. The key term that needs definition, therefore, is not 'violence' but 'self'. But what is the 'self'? It proves elusive.

The concept of the 'self' has been called 'provincial', homegrown in the West (Shulman and Stroumsa 2002, 3). Its origins have been variously ascribed, from antiquity to the Renaissance. Candidates have included Plato's divided soul; Aristotle's concept of memory; the Hellenistic philosophers' structured selves conceived as psychosomatic wholes; Paul's developing sense of consciousness, narrative self-reflectiveness, and thematisation of personal continuity in the resurrection; or Augustine's metaphorical space where guilt, sin and responsibility operate. Luther transformed the Augustinian notion into a private cave for encountering God at regular intervals. In the seventeenth century, the Reformation imagery was secularised, politicised, and built into the concepts of capitalism and liberalism, opening the way for diverse modern versions of the quest for the self, characterised by emphasis on individualism, emotional satisfaction, and disenchantment with traditional authorities.[13] Some modern literature has abandoned the term 'self' altogether, in favour of a number of related, overlapping concepts, such as 'consciousness', 'identity', 'individuality', 'personhood', 'personality', 'soul', 'subject' and 'subjectivity'.[14] While all of these are aspects of the 'self', however, none of them quite replaces the category of 'selfhood'. In this essay, I accept the insight of those scholars who suggest that the self is a poetic rather than a scientific category, one which lies in the same realm as vices, virtues, beliefs and aspirations (Berrios and Marková 2003, 10). As a concept it arises in the attempt to realise happiness; it is a construct that enables us to speak of and think about human flourishing (Baumeister 1988, 34). That is to say, my 'self' is who and how I am when I am healthy and whole. So cultivating the self is what helps me to become healthy as a 'self', while violating it destroys that.

The first thing to say is that violating the 'self' is does not necessarily coincide with the infliction of pain, alienation, loss of control or humiliation. It has often been tempting to critics of religion to take it in this way, both in antiquity and today. The fact that Jesus did not save himself from the cross prompted some people to mock his identity as 'the Christ, the king of Israel' (Mark 15:32). Paul's sufferings

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[12] In some Christian traditions, physical self-harm has been fostered by the reading of scripture. Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, 'If your right eye offend you, pluck it out; and if your right hand offend you, cut it off' (Matt 5:29-30) have led to some sad acts of self-mutilation (e.g. Turner 2002, 112-13). Physical self-harm, however, remains without exemplar among Jesus' disciples in the NT. The physical violence to the self that is more widely and unequivocally attested involves enduring the persecution inflicted by others. Christ is the ultimate model for this, and his crucifixion focuses his followers' contemplation on physical pain. Paul accepts physical suffering in his body for confessing Christ, and he interprets that as carrying the death of Jesus in his body (2 Cor 4:10) or filling up the sufferings of Christ in his flesh (Col 1:24). Thus, there is a kind of physical imitation of or indeed participation in the death of Christ. In the second century, this theme was developed in martyr literature. This physical violence, however, does not necessarily constitute violence to the self as such. For Paul, Ignatius and other Christian sufferers, their physical afflictions help them to construct their self-identity in their own eyes and those of the communities to whom they write (Perkins 1995; Castelli 2004).

[13] On ancient philosophies of the self: Gill 2006; Sorabji 2006. On Paul, see below, n. 15. For developments in modelling the self from the Renaissance to Modernity see: Taylor 1992; Porter 1997; Berrios and Marková 2003; Seigel 2005.

[14] Cf. Olson 1998. One article by Galen Strawson listed twenty-five different notions of the 'self' just as a point of departure (Strawson 2000, 39).

challenged onlookers as to whether they identified him as a true apostle or a weak fool (2 Cor 10:10-18; 12:7-10, cf. 1 Cor 1:18-31). We have seen similar reactions in modern times. Scholars have sought to diagnose Ignatius of Antioch's attitude to his suffering as 'abnormal', 'neurotic', or 'bordering on mania'.[15] In our own day, the discovery after Mother Teresa's death of her forty-nine year long sense of desolation provoked very mixed reactions among the public. And certainly such experiences can challenge those who experience them to question themselves. Paul and Ignatius both express a robust sense of self, but those who mocked Jesus as the Christ did so just when he was approaching his ultimate internal sense of abandonment by God (Mark 15:34), and Mother Teresa is said at first to have attributed to sinfulness her sense that God is not there (Kolodiejchuk 2007, 3). These last two cases show just how hard it can be to interpret what constitutes violence to the 'self'. Was Jesus' cry of desolation after all a destruction of *his self*, or was it merely a painful sense of abandonment? What, if anything, is the difference between the two? For Jesus this raises doctrinal questions, but for those who seek to practise *imitatio Christi* it also raises psychological, social and practical spiritual ones (Podmore 2013). Mother Teresa is said to have found a way to cope with her sense of abandonment through awareness of participation in Christ's passion (Kolodiejchuk 2007, 214-16). But that does not mean that this is an answer to every kind of spiritual desolation or sense of abandonment.

Considered more broadly in a contemporary context, the relationship between pain and the construction or destruction of the self appears extremely ambiguous. In both religious and non-religious spheres there is a strong drive to development of the self, and this is usually understood to involve some level of pain and destruction, such that what is considered bad or sick may be effaced and transformation may occur (Shulman and Stroumsa 2002). However, most who embark programmatically on self-change encounter limits to what can be changed or transformed (Polivy and Herman 2000). This may indicate that there is a limited and definable self, a self who is 'me' with scope to be realised, beyond which it would be misguided and destructive to inflict further pain with a view to self-transformation. In that case, there is a finite goal of self-fulfilment where, once achieved, there would be no pain to *the self itself,* even though the circumstances of life may still bring anxieties. However, in the sight of others such limitations to human self-development seem painful in their very limitation, or even wrong. This leads people to seek to embody an ideal that lies beyond fulfilment in this life. This is a project that involves pain in continual self-development. It is difficult to use the presence of pain alone to identify violence to the self; indeed we are still left with a problem of what the self is, and whether it is inherent in the human condition that the self is, if not violated, at least always impaired.

The question for this essay is not primarily the philosophical, psychological, theological one of what the true self is and how should it be cultivated, but the more biblically grounded one of how a reading of Paul may cultivate destruction or construction of the self. And yet, this does require us to tackle the delicate issue concerning what constitutes destruction or construction of the self. Not only are there differences of perspective between secular and Christian people today, but also among Christians, and the debate is grounded in experience not just in texts or ideas. In studying Paul's self-presentation of his *imitatio Christi,* we need a model for discussing the 'self' that will make it possible to investigate why some things that do not appear to trouble him in his relationship to himself, can trouble devout readers of Paul in their relationships to themselves. We cannot hope to identify definitively what is violation of the self, precisely because the 'self' lies in such an ineluctable realm of human longing, but we can hope for clearer insight into how the biblical text can give rise to both imperatives and anxieties about its implications for the 'self', such as those with which this essay began. The next section will offer a method for seeking a fruitful comparison, and then we will turn to closer theological and exegetical study of Paul.

[15] See references in Castelli 2004, 79.

A Comparative Approach

In seeking to understand how Paul's text speaks to modern sensibilities about violence to the self, we immediately encounter problems of method, as well as definition. We are attempting a cross-cultural comparison with ancient texts that did not approach or conceive of the self in the same way as people do today. In the New Testament, the language for conveying things about what we would call the 'self' is not fully worked out. It is not technical, philosophical or standardized. It consists chiefly in personal pronouns; narratives about the self, such as the prodigal son coming 'to himself',[16] or Mary's developing self-understanding through the scenes of the annunciation and visitation;[17] anthropological terms like *psychê, sôma, sarx*; and self-involving concepts and vocabulary such as 'shame', 'reward', 'conscience' and so on.[18] In Paul, to be sure, there are also some terms that begin to attempt to depict a structured self, as he distinguishes the inner from the outer man, or the old man from the new. Some English versions translate these at least on some occasions as a differentiation between the inner self and the outer self, the old self and new self.[19] This language, however, remains underdeveloped and in places irreducibly different from contemporary debate.

In approaching comparison between ancient and modern concepts of the self, it is important to hold onto the premise articulated by Christopher Gill, philosophical historian of Greek and Roman concepts of the self. He writes that such comparative investigation presupposes that:

> … we can, in some sense, take these ideas seriously. That is, we can imagine adopting these ideas as our own, either in their original form or after some process of interpretive translation. If the ideas remain, ineluctably, primitive or alien for us, it seems unlikely that our interpretive engagement with them will be either revealing or profound (Gill 2008, 36)

In this section, then, I will outline a number of partially overlapping categories that would widely be considered integral to a concept of a healthy self today. However, I shall list them in general terms, such that they each require interpretation in order to make sense within a particular social, cultural or personal situation. This approach to the concept of the 'self' draws on Robert C. Neville's work on the use of 'vague categories' as a method of organising cross-cultural comparison. A 'vague category' is not simply a woolly notion, but a category that is shared in general terms, but that requires narrower specification. The specifications by different groups may be in conflict with each other, and in the process of exploring these tensions, it is possible to distinguish between significant and insignificant aspects of the category, and to make comparisons between different religious cultures.[20] In the case of the 'self', we are concerned not only with comparing different concepts of what the self is, but also different ways of valuing what constitutes human flourishing.

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[16] Modern scholarship that underscores self-fulfilment often draws attention to Luke 15:17, where the prodigal son 'came to himself' (εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθών). The restoration of the self involves reevaluation of his place in the eyes of 'heaven' and his father, and a restoration of the relationship between them. This self is dialogically formed, in relation to an 'other', to whom, in this instance, it offers abnegation, only to be received and welcomed as newly 'alive' from the dead (Luke 15:24) (Lubbers 1952, 296).

[17] Mary's fiat expresses complete obedience by presenting herself as servant of God (Luke 1:38), and establishes her persona not only in the eyes of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45), but also in her own self-understanding, which she interprets through her relationship to God and to Israel (Luke 1:46-54) (discussed in Marin).

[18] Jesus' discipleship command, that 'Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it etc' (Mark 8:35-38) uses the language of *psyche* to express the soul, life, or self of the person, which must be lost in order to be saved. He invokes shame in order to support this: 'Whoever is ashamed of me and my words … I will be ashamed of him…' (Mark 8:38). Shame is a quintessentially self-reflexive emotion, concerning failure to live up to one's self perception in one's own eyes; this is one of its central differences from guilt. Thus in Jesus' command the concept of self should involve a relationship to him, and his words or gospel.

[19] E.g. Rom 7:22 'inner self' in RSV, NRSV, NAB [rev. 2011]; 2 Cor 4:16 'outer self'/'inner self' in NAB [rev. 2011], 'outer nature'/'inner nature' in RSV/NRSV; Eph 3:16 'inner self' in NAB [rev. 2011], 'inner being' in NRSV.

[20] Neville 1995, 59-84; Neville and Wildman 2001a, 2001b. This approach is used for studying asceticism in Saldarini 1999, 13-18; Vaage 2009; and for studying violence in Vaage 2012.

The following categories or specifications seem to me widely and plausibly interpretive of how to construct the 'self'. There are partial overlaps and mutual correctives between them, such that the different aspects reinforce one another. I shall begin here by elaborating them in terms that are chiefly familiar in the modern West. This will serve as a basis for indicating how they may be, or be perceived to be, distorted in the name of Christianity, which will in turn provide a structured ground for comparison with Paul.

Five Characteristics of a Healthy Self

1. **Freedom.** A flourishing self experiences a sense of freedom in control over the environment, and ability for intentional action. However, this can be interpreted in widely varying ways, from the individualist fantasy of being able to *do* whatever one likes to the Stoic aspiration to inner freedom from desires, attachments or thoughts that warp one's disposition toward the circumstances that present themselves. The former requires substantial co-operation from the social system; the latter requires inner control, and a capacity for discernment.

2. **Individuality, Alterity and Relationship.** A self needs an identity of its own; if it is wholly assimilated to another or a wider identity or need, then it loses its sense of individual selfhood. Part of being individuated, however, is the experience of alterity and relatedness. Healthy human selves are embedded in relationships with others. This property of the self is damaged by social isolation or alienation from others. The proper balance between individual and dialogical construction of the self is important in both ancient and modern accounts of the self.

3. **Continuity.** The concept of self presupposes a sustained identity over time. This does not mean that it cannot support diversity within itself, nor that it cannot undergo transformation as it grows and develops, but too much diversity or too radical discontinuity threatens the sense of self.

4. **Reason, Affect and Embodiment.** For many philosophies both ancient and modern, the self is located primarily, even if not exclusively, in the mind. To retain the degree of control and freedom that is associated with the flourishing of the self, a developed, strong and independent rationality is vital. Conversely, to construct the self in relation to others requires affective, interpersonal sensibility. Furthermore, the concept of the self is so closely bound up with the concept of human flourishing that too great emotional strain can challenge the notion of an integrated, flourishing self. Thirdly, the self is embodied, and a flourishing self needs an appropriate relationship with the body. In some cultures and philosophies the body has been denigrated with the hope of living through the mind or freeing the soul from its prison; in others, a healthy body has been understood as integral to the peace of mind that belongs to a healthy self. These three categories, reason, affect and embodiment, recall Plato's tripartite soul, which was divided between rational, spirited and appetitive parts. It is, in fact, difficult to separate the three in discussing a well-ordered relationship to the self.[21]

5. **Integration and peace.** The concept of the self depends on the idea of human flourishing, and this means that a properly integrated sense of self is conceived as the most appropriate goal.

[21] E.g. there is substantial resonance and overlap here between Plato and William James (1842-1910): cf. James 1981 [1890], 299, 'A tolerably unanimous opinion ranges the different selves of which a man may be "seized and possessed," and the consequent different orders of his slf-regard, in an *hierarchical scale, with the bodily Self at the bottom, the spiritual Self at the top, and the extra-corporeal material selves and the various social selves between'* (emphasis original), and p.313.

The selection and elaboration of categories for characterising the healthy self could be much extended.[22] These were chosen both for being core in ancient and modern accounts of the self, and for being particularly pertinent to Paul's self-portrayed *imitatio* in 1 Corinthians 9:1-11:1. Before we turn to Paul, however, we need a fuller concept of the kind of distortion of the self to which readers of Paul may be liable. The aspects just mentioned are readily perverted, and in diverse ways. Indeed, anything classified as a psychiatric condition would display symptoms of distortion of several of these categories. I shall offer just one example, chosen for its pertinence to the project of development of the self in religious systems.

The Development of a 'False Self'

Donald Winnicott made famous the language of the 'False Self' for a form of organisation of the self which has a 'defensive function … to hide and protect the True Self'. The person with the False Self feels 'that she had not started to exist'. She is trapped in the pattern of False Self organisation, and is looking for a way for the True Self to emerge (cf. Category 1, above). Her relations with others are compromised and feel artificial to her, and though she has individuality, she has no personality, for the personality through which she lives is falsely organised (cf. Category 2). If she is intelligent, then the false self may appear highly successful to an outside observer, as it is likely to depend primarily on the mind, without proper integration of affect or even of bodily function (cf. Category 3). Winnicott writes:

> A particular danger arises out of the not infrequent tie-up between the intellectual approach and the False Self. When a False Self becomes organised in an individual who has a high intellectual potential there is a very strong tendency for the mind to become the location of the False Self, and in this case there develops a dissociation between intellectual activity and psychosomatic existence (Winnicott 1960, 144)

Continuity of the False Self may be preserved outwardly, but inwardly there has been a massive rupture in the development of True Self, which continues to seek to emerge (cf. Category 4). This is an individual without integration or peace (cf. Category 5).

The concepts of the True and False Self have been both refined and challenged in subsequent psychiatric literature (e.g. Laing 1965, 94-105; Richards 1996a). Even Winnicott himself appears to have modified or abandoned them in some of his later work (Richards 1996b). Nonetheless they have proved useful in the exploration of the Christian quest for truth about the person.[23] Vasileios Thermos, in a little book *In Search of the Person: 'True' and 'False Self' according to Donald Winnicott and St Gregory of Palamas,* presents a number of case studies where devout individuals in their very devotion have developed organised False Self defences, from which they have come to suffer greatly (Thermos 2002). In the

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[22] My list of categories is my own, but it is informed by discussion of modern and ancient theories of the self, especially Berrios and Marková 2003; Burke 1997; Cook 2011; Gill 2006; James 1981 [1890], 279-379; Kierkegaard 1980 [1849]; Malina 2002; Maritain 1966 [1946]; Sorabji 2000; 2006; Taylor 1991; 1992; Tustin 1996. On Paul in particular: Altizer 1983; Engberg-Pedersen 2008; Griffith-Jones 2012; Harrill 2005; McMinn and McMinn 1983; Meech 2006; Bartsch and Wray 2009; Nicolet Anderson 2010; Øklund 2009; Rothschild and Thompson 2011. See also literature cited above, n. 13. The study of the 'self' has become a vast and richly interdisciplinary area in modern times; this is only a small sample of the literature, drawing on a cross-section of approaches, with a bias toward philosophy, psychology and theology.

[23] Without reference to Winnicott, and in other intellectual traditions, the true/false self terminology also appears in ways that are pertinent to Christianity: Thomas Merton frequently uses the language of True Self in his interpretation of the Christian contemplative tradition, see studies by Craig 1994; Robinette 2001; Reilly 2008; Haynes 2016; Richard Valantasis gives an account of asceticism that emphasises the theatricality and verisimilitude of the self that the ascetic stages, in conjunction with the ascetic's conviction that the new self is also more 'true': Valantasis 2008, 9-10.

attempt to realise and fulfil the expectations of a religious system, people use the intellect to control the emotional and physical impulses, thus losing freedom, and organising their behaviour in ways that are socially acceptable, but internally alienating and consequently ultimately distorting for relationships with others. While 'false self' behaviours are common in parts of all people's lives, there are some who develop fully formed 'false selves' through which they act out their existence, in a way that causes some of them great internal suffering. In this situation, there is internal division within the self, and there has been discontinuity in development of the self. The syndrome is similar to what Winnicott described, and Thermos emphasises that it is often cultivated in the name of God. Nor is he the only psychologist who has observed a frequent correlation between 'false self' development and religious devotion. Winnicott himself pointed out that the concept 'appears … notably in certain religious and philosophical systems' (Winnicott 1960, 140). Clergy have been deemed especially 'at risk' (Kleiger 1990), as have those who listen to them (Wright 1996).

These psychiatric observations about the true and false self are relevant to studying Paul's *imitatio Christi* and 'violence to the self' because they pertain not to a biological given but to a spiritual, social and psychological construction of the self, and its potential for violation and distortion into 'falsehood'. The language of the 'true' and 'false' self is a quasi religious discourse, articulating faith in a transcendent 'truth' that can be known immanently within, through, or as, 'self'. The absolute and dualistic character of the language enhances its rhetorical spiritual appeal. Furthermore, the value judgements that are made about what is 'true' and what is 'false' are rooted in experience that is at some level accessible to all, since although only some develop a full 'false self', aspects of 'false self' behaviour are common to all who share the human condition. The concept of the True Self resonates with Christian teaching on personal vocation (similar to fulfilling one's 'true' self) and the value and perfectibility of God's creation (affirming the ideal of the God-given 'true' self). The transformation that has been depicted and diagnosed as illness goes in the opposite direction from the goal of Christian catechesis, moving from 'true' to 'false', rather than the other way around. And yet, those who have studied the 'false self' experience have shown that it is particularly cultivated in the name of God, not least within Christianity (Thermos would say, especially *Western* Christianity: Thermos 2002, 28). Indeed, the clarion calls of the biblical scholars quoted at the start of this essay could easily be heard as invitations to the development of a 'false self': imitation of Christ comprises 'denial of the self itself' according to Ernst Best; union with Christ requires the 'negation of the natural self' according to Grant Macaskill.

The problem, and the challenge, is significant. Returning to St Paul, whose letters are the earliest extant writings from one committed to both preaching and practising *imitatio Christi,* Paul himself does not appear to have suffered from a 'false self' at all. So, why and how is it that he cultivates this in others? I shall begin by drawing a general comparison between Pauline theology and the language and concepts of the 'false self', and will then offer a close exegesis of 1 Corinthians 9-11, highlighting Paul's engagement with, and interpretation of, the categories listed above to define the healthy 'self'.

Paul's Theology of Transformation and the 'False Self'

The modern psychiatric jargon of 'true' and 'false' self is not the same as Paul's language for development or realisation of human life. Furthermore, notwithstanding the spiritual connotations of that jargon and its partial compatibility with some Christine doctrine, it is not at all clear that it articulates a similar vision to Paul's discourse about imitation and transformation.

Firstly, the language of the 'true' or a 'false' self focuses on a concept of 'me', whereas Paul's language of being 'in Adam' or 'in Christ' focuses on my participation in another, whether Adam or Christ, and in *his* relationship to God (Rom 6-8). Paul's emphasis on coming to be 'in Christ' has been interpreted in widely various ways, but it can suggest the notion of being absorbed into or united with

Christ, thus letting the self be consumed by or transformed into another.[24] This contrasts with the insistence in the true/false self language on development only into 'me', on individuation, individuality and personality. The language of the 'true' and 'false' self envisages that human beings start well, with the capacity simply to mature, remaining 'true' at every stage *unless* perverted through bad nurturing into something that is 'false'. Paul also envisages maturation in the human being and in the believer (1 Cor 13:11-13), but the Christian life he conceives as beginning with a radical break from the past. Whereas all begin in Adam, those who believe are a 'new creation' in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). This depiction of discontinuity with the past and 'creation' of a new persona has more in common with the category of the 'false' self than the true, the self that is adopted later and that is discontinuous with the first-formed, first-born self (cf. Foucault 2005, 214-18; Hampson 2001). Furthermore, the 'old man' to be crucified is characterised in relation to the 'body of sin' to be destroyed (Rom 6:6), the 'outer man' and 'earthly home' are closely connected with the perishing of the mortal flesh (2 Cor 4:16-5:10), whereas the new creation, the one who is in Christ, develops in the 'inner man', anticipating a 'heavenly habitation' in place of the body (2 Cor 4:16-5:10, cf. Rom 6-8). Thus again the Pauline language of transformation emphasises dissociation from the earthly body (cf. Finlan 2008; Øklund 2008). This recalls the way unhealthy, false self behaviour develops.

These examples of how Paul's theology of transformation could be seen to cultivate 'false self' behaviour could be multiplied. The interpretation of all these theological themes and passages is deeply contested in scholarship, and my aim in drawing this sketch has not been to give a definitive interpretation of Pauline theology of transformation, which would take several volumes, but only to indicate how readily Paul's language in this area lends itself to interpretation that urges behaviour that bears disconcerting resonances with the 'false self' depicted by Winnicott and others.

The task of responding to this from the perspective of Pauline theology as a whole must be postponed for a discussion rather lengthier than this essay allows, but I shall offer the beginnings of a response by exploring how these issues are played out in 1 Corinthians 9:1-11:1. As noted at the start of this essay, Paul warns the Corinthians off 'beating up' their neighbour's conscience as that would be to destroy Christ, yet he models 'bruising the body' as part of taking on the role of Christ to proclaim the gospel to others. His self-presentation culminates in a call to 'be imitators of me as I am of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). Paul's own robust sense of self is not in doubt, and yet he combines that with a rallying cry to treatment of the self that may seem destructive. In the next section, then, I will exegete his proffered example, focussing on the issues relating to the potential violation of the self that have been outlined above. By this study I hope better to understand better how he interprets and experiences the construction of the self in *imitatio Christi*.

Paul's Self-Construction and the Imitation of Christ in 1 Corinthians 9:1-11:1

After taking issue with the Corinthians concerning idol-meat, Paul develops a lengthy self-presentation, for the instruction and correction of the Corinthians. Most of the characteristics that were identified above as bearing on the construction of a healthy self, feature in his account. His account could easily be construed as depicting and condoning violence to the self in diverse ways, and one form that could take is the development of a 'false self'. Paul, after all, defines his role in proclaiming the gospel in terms of 'necessity' that lies upon him (1 Cor 9:16); he exercises his freedom through slavery to others (1 Cor 9:19); he is always adopting personae when facing other people (1 Cor 9:19-22); he practises rigorous self-

[24] On the history of interpretation of this phrase, as well as fresh contributions to the debate, see recently Campbell 2012; Litwa 2012; Macaskill 2013. The notion of total absorption into the deity has been resisted by most interpreters as 'pagan', but some have argued that it is to be found it in Paul, e.g. Windisch 1934.

control (ἐγκράτεια, 1 Cor 9:25), and indeed he says that he beats up his body and leads it about as a slave (1 Cor 9:25-27); he insists on not seeking what is one's own (1 Cor 10:24). This could sound like an account of a highly organised 'false self' that is developed under pressure (1 Cor 9:19), negotiates all relationships with others through a mask (1 Cor 9:19-23), while cultivating dissociation from personal physical and emotional needs (9:25-27) in favour of what concerns others (1 Cor 10:24). In the following discussion I will focus on those aspects of Paul's account that are potentially ambivalent in this way. By paying close attention to the nuance and shape of his argument, I hope to show how Paul's responsiveness to his understanding of his own apostolic vocation[25] makes it possible for him to preserve an integrated and flourishing self in the face of ways of life that could easily impair it.

In 1 Cor 9, Paul writes about his apostolic freedom, explaining its relation to God, others, and to the gospel. We have seen that freedom is one of the things that is characteristically associated with the flourishing of the self (cf. Category 1), but is experienced as significantly impaired in those who develop a 'false self'. Paul's freedom is unlike the modern concept of freedom of self-expression, and yet he still regards himself emphatically as 'free' (οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐλεύθερος; 1 Cor 9:1). His freedom, however, is compatible with the fact that necessity is laid upon him: 'If I proclaim the gospel, I have no boast, for necessity (ἀνάγκη) lies upon me, for woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward, but if unwillingly, I have fulfilled the trust of steward' (1 Cor 9:16-17). The 'necessity' upon Paul prevents him from having a reason to boast, but what is important for his *self*-development is that it does not hinder his capacity to appropriate or resist the persona that is incumbent upon him. He can act ἑκών or ἄκων – willingly or unwillingly – and it is in this act of will that he realises and constitutes himself as one with or without a boast, as one worthy of a 'reward' or one who has merely fulfilled the trust of a steward. The vocabulary of 'boast' (καύχημα) and 'reward' (μισθός) is self-involving and self-interested (1 Cor 9:15-17). It suggests that notwithstanding the fact that Paul is appropriating a persona and a task which are laid upon him by necessity, in his free exercise of will he 'makes this his own'. It is this that grounds his 'boast'. The choice of word draws attention to his sense of self-identity and corresponding self-esteem. Otherwise he would merely be working for God, as a steward does what his master tells him (οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι, 1 Cor 9:17).

Paul's language of 'boast' and 'reward' may sound self-seeking in an individualistic way, and thus ultimately destructive of relationships with others (cf. Category 2). Typically, boasts and rewards single out an individual apart from others, and indeed set them *over* others, inviting envy from onlookers and complacency from the one with the boast. In Paul's case, however, the boast and reward help to constitute his relation to others. His self-conception centres on his role in proclaiming the gospel. In this, he is free. It is a relational role, and thus a relational concept of the self.

The relationship implicit in Paul's language of boasting in willing apostleship is in the first place a relationship to God. The necessity that is laid upon him is laid by God, correspondingly the boast (καύχημα) is before God, and the reward (μισθός) is God-given. Paul's self-understanding as free coincides with his self-understanding as one who has been sent by another: he juxtaposes 'Am I not free?' with 'Am I not ἀπόστολος?' (1 Cor 9:1). Although he does not use the language of 'vocation' here, he is describing the intimacy with which he experiences divine surveillance and is conscious within himself of his own response to God's commission. The vitality of this conscious response to personal vocation is articulated in his language of 'boasting', which asserts his awareness of God's knowing, judging and favourable oversight.

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[25] This term is not used by Paul in this passage, but elsewhere κλῆσις is applied both to the calling in Christ that all Corinthians share with one another and with Paul (1 Cor 1:26), and to their individual callings understood in terms of station and role in life (1 Cor 7:20). He develops the concept of individual, complementary roles within the church in the language of God 'placing/setting' them 'in the church (ἐκκλησία)' in different ways, as different 'members' of the body of Christ, with different 'charisms' (1 Cor 12:12-31, esp. 27-31).

Nor does the relationality of Paul's apostolate end there. As an apostle, Paul is also sent *to* someone, and the act of preaching focuses Paul on others, in particular on the community at Corinth. His engagement with them too becomes self-involving. They are his work (τὸ ἔργον μου, 1 Cor 9:1), his seal (σφραγίς, 1 Cor 9:2). The σφραγίς is a distinctively *personal* mark, by which one identifies oneself and acknowledges one's own authorship in the eyes of a third party. The image was a powerful one for negotiating issues of identity in Paul's Greco-Roman context, where seals played a significant role in the material, social and symbolic world.[26] The images on seal-stones often highlight their role in representing the self by depicting Pscyhe (ψυχή), the 'soul' or 'self', either personified or in the form of a butterfly (fig. 1).

PLEASE INSERT IMAGE HERE

The idea of a seal-impression even played a role in the Stoics' theory of the self, and its relation to will and conscience (συνείδησις). Seals, however, were also problematic guarantees of authenticity, as they were easily falsifiable (cf. Lucian, *Alexander* 20-1). By interpreting the Corinthian community as his *sphragis,* Paul is making himself vulnerable to them for the authentication of his identity before the world. However, he is also emphasising the intimate relationship between himself and the Corinthians, inasmuch as his self-presentation and self-image are constituted through them, his work and seal. This personal involvement is constructive of his self-identity, rather than violating it, for his identity is that of ἀπόστολος and the significance of that cannot be fulfilled in private, without the 'seal' of those to whom the apostle is sent.

Paul's experience and construction of himself as an apostle, then, emphasises both freedom and relationality, although it interprets them in ways that may be foreign today. Furthermore, the relational dimension is integrated with his freedom: 'Being free, I *made myself a slave* (ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα) to all,' he writes (1 Cor 9:19). From his perspective, this slavery is an exercise of the very freedom by which he wills to fulfil the apostolic task laid upon him. The character his service takes, however, suggests radical destabilisation of his identity (cf. Category 3): 'I became to the Jews [as] a Jew… to those under law as under law… to those without law as without law … I became to the weak weak' (1 Cor 9:21-22). The discontinuity in the persona he adopts is something that one might expect to threaten the self. It is not that it initially threatens the continuity of the self from an internal perspective, for although he objectifies himself in 'making himself a slave', his sense of his own purpose remains constant throughout: the 'I' who make 'myself' a slave is the same 'I' who purposes through this action to 'gain' ('I made myself [ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα] a slave, in order that … I might gain [ἵνα ... κερδήσω]', 1 Cor 9:19). The more apparent threat to the self lies in the lack of stability in his self-presentation in social relationships. This could lead to alienation from others, and indeed Jews and Christians alike have often read this passage with disquiet, accusing Paul of behaving like a chameleon (Rudolph 2011). Psychologically, alienation from others usually leads to a sense of isolation and insecurity about oneself. Paul, however, retains a strong sense of his own agency here too, which is consistent throughout the shifts in his persona:

> τοῖς πᾶσιν γέγονα πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω. πάντα δὲ ποιῶ διὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, ἵνα συγκοινωνὸς αὐτοῦ γένωμαι
>
> To all people I have become all things, in order that in all ways I might save some people. All things I do on account of the gospel, in order that I might become its fellow-participant.
> (1 Cor 9:22-23)

[26] See the outstanding article by Platt 2006, to which I am also indebted for the archaeological, Stoic and Lucianic material cited here.

The 'I' who is the subject remains stable. Although Paul 'became all things', this is not a fundamental change, but rather it is qualified by being 'in the sight of all' or 'to all', it is the practical shift in his persona upon which depends his own, personally sustained purpose, 'that in all ways I may save (σώσω) some'. 'I have become all things' corresponds to 'I do all things' in the following sentence, thus underscoring Paul's agency throughout his shifting personal relationships. His ultimate purpose is 'on account of the gospel, that I might become its fellow-participant'. Thus although he 'becomes' all things to others while sustaining his own sense of self-continuity in 'saving' and intentional 'doing' on account of the gospel, his ultimate purpose *does* involve a change in himself, a becoming 'its fellow-participant'. This is a change within which he retains stability in his relationship with the gospel and with Christ.

Nor does Paul expect his multiple changes in persona to destabilise his relationship with the Corinthians, who are the 'work' of his gospel. Thus he apostrophises them after his depiction of his own 'becomings', with 'Don't you know…? (οὐκ οἴδατε, 1 Cor 9:24), involving them so that they may empathise with his train of thought. The image that he then elaborates continues to express a strong sense of self-identity, but pits this against the freedom of his body (Category 4):

> ἐγὼ τοίνυν οὕτως τρέχω ὡς οὐκ ἀδήλως, οὕτως πυκτεύω ὡς οὐκ ἀέρα δέρων. ἀλλὰ ὑπωπιάζω μου τὸ σῶμα καὶ δουλαγωγῶ, μή πως ἄλλοις κηρύξας αὐτὸς ἀδόκιμος γένωμαι.
> I therefore so run as for it not to be unclear, I so box as not to be beating air; but I bruise my body and lead it about as a slave, so that after proclaiming to others I should not somehow become myself disqualified.

Paul's imagery is physical. In the previous verse he has spoken of the self-mastery needed in competition, using vocabulary that is common in Stoic exercises of ascetic self-discipline (ἐγκρατεύεται). His strong sense of self continues, underscored through pronouns (ἐγώ ... αὐτός), for he emphasises his own intentional and goal-directed agency. He presents this as mastery of his body, indeed as physical violence to his body (ὑπωπιάζω ... δουλαγωγῶ).

Some scholars argue that with this imagery Paul really means the same as in 1 Cor 9:19, where he wrote ἐμαυτὸν ἐδούλωσα. They suggest that his language of the 'body' is governed by the imagery, but he means 'himself', and he is not referring to asceticism or physical self-harm, but to the hardships he endured both in working with his own hands and in going without (cf. 1 Cor 4:11-13, Fee 1987, 438). However, the broader context concerns *eating* habits, and Paul has been at pains to emphasise the inconsequentiality of eating or not: 'neither if we do not eat do we fall short, nor if we eat do we exceed' (1 Cor 8:8). Thus there is a physical dimension to his concerns, and he will develop the theme of eating and drinking in the next section. Moreover, he conceives wrongful use of food in violent terms: 'The weak man perishes on your knowledge, the brother on whose account Christ died; and so sinning against the brothers and beating/striking (τύπτοντες)[27] their weak conscience, you sin against Christ' (1 Cor 8:12). Eating and drinking becomes a matter of life and death, where the weak may perish, the brother at the table is a reminder of Christ's death, and the one who has knowledge 'beats up' the weak brother's conscience. A subsidiary theme in this section is Paul's renunciation of sexual appetite in proclaiming the gospel: he has no wife (1 Cor 9:5); the sins of the ancestors in the desert included not only inappropriate eating and drinking, but also fornication (1 Cor 10:7-8). Paul's argument in 1 Cor 9:25-26, then, *does* concern indifference to his physical body, insofar as he seeks the reward for his work in the gospel. His violent language for his discipline over his body intensifies this theme, and underscores a sharp differentiation between his self-consciousness in what he does and hopes for, and his body, which he merely disciplines.

To some modern readers this kind of sharp differentiation or detachment from the body may be thought to constitute violence to the self, for the self is conceived as a psychosomatic whole. Again, we

[27] Several modern versions translate this as 'wound', thus choosing a clichéed, dead metaphor in English, where the Greek is much more vivid! (NRSV, NAS).

have seen that one of the characteristics of a 'false self' is dissociation from the body. Paul's language objectifying his body, indeed almost personifying it as if it were a slave and he its master leading it about, could easily suggest dissociative thinking. To Paul, however, it is precisely in 'giving a black eye' to his body that he pursues his goal. His goal is achieved relationally, through being 'qualified' when tried in judgement and testing, and 'receiving' an imperishable crown from the one who bestows such rewards. One might expect Paul's scorn for his physical afflictions to be experienced as alienation from the self that he is in the body, but his confidence in God, and his expectation that his self-presentation will be intelligible, even imitable, for the Corinthians, prevents that kind of self-alienation. Paul's rhetorical 'I' is grounded in community with both God and the recipients of the letter.

The awareness of the self as community, and the participation of the community in Christ, is expressed vividly in blessing the cup and breaking the bread in the following chapter. These actions are both a participation in the body and blood of Christ, and grounds for interpreting the communal 'we' as one body. The individual's body is thus incorporated into the one shared body of the community, which itself participates in the body of Christ, made real in the sacrament. This strong sense of the communal body opens onto a fresh emphasis on putting the 'other' first. For within the body of the community there are indeed individuals, but each individual is to seek not his own, but the benefit of the 'other'. Paul emphasises preferential treatment of the other both at the beginning and at the end of his discussion of conscience: 'let him seek not his own, but the other's' (1 Cor 10:24), and 'just as I too please all in all things, not seeking my own advantage, but that of the many, that they may be saved' (1 Cor 10:33). This, he indicates, is an imitation of Christ. To seek the other's in preference to one's own could lead to a crushing of the self, and its needs or desires. Paul's teaching provides a way out of that through the self-involving concept of the conscience (συνείδησις). He is envisaging outsiders critical of one's own eating practices, when one is eating with a view to the neighbour's conscience. In respect of such harsh surveillance, the conscience 'knows with' the self, and refuses to be judged or blasphemed by another's conscience (1 Cor 10:29). Rather, the properly self-aware conscience enjoys a strong sense of personal justification,

> ἱνατί γὰρ ἡ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἄλλης συνειδήσεως;[30] εἰ ἐγὼ χάριτι μετέχω, τί βλασφημοῦμαι ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εὐχαριστῶ;
>
> Why is my freedom judged by another conscience? If I participate in grace, why am I blasphemed for that for which I give thanks? (1 Cor 10:29-30).

It is his awareness of participating in grace (χάριτι μετέχω) and of offering up gracious thanks (εὐχαριστῶ) that frees his conscience. His 'knowing with' himself is ultimately a self-knowing of his own relatedness to Christ.

In conclusion Paul urges the Corinthians, 'be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1 Cor 11:1). His discussion of eating idol-food has throughout been framed by an assumption that his self-presentation is also a presentation of Christ to the community, for their imitation. We have seen at several points that Paul's interpretation of central aspects of the construction of the self has the potential to develop painfully, in what from a modern perspective may be considered violation of the self and human flourishing. Paul, however, appears not to have experienced it that way. His *ego* has an exhilaration and confidence (cf. Category 5) that has made him unpopular among some of his readers, compelling to others.

Conclusion

This essay began with the stark challenge of the relationship between *imitatio Christi* and violence to the self both for Christians and for others living in a culture shaped by Christianity. After exploring the elusiveness of the concept of 'violence to the self', and problematising the role that pain plays in its

definition, we narrowed the focus by defining aspects of a healthy self. These were presented in a manner that required interpretation, such that what one society may regard as violation of the self, another may regard as its cultivation. As an example of how contemporary society may interpret violence to the self, we took the case of the 'false self', as defined by Winnicott in his article of 1960. We drew attention to the association that some psychiatrists have observed between false self behaviour and religious commitment, and then considered how Paul's letters could seem to encourage this kind of violence to the self. Often his vocabulary and concepts come close to those expressed in the psychoanalytical discussion of the 'false self'. But they are never quite the same. I argued that the fundamental difference, which prevents Paul from developing or suffering from a 'false self', lies in his sense of vocation. His 'I' is constituted both by the task laid upon him, and his awareness of his response to that task, through which his relationship to the Corinthians is also constructed.

This result may help us understand how Paul intended his audience to receive his depiction of his vocation. The words with which our extract closes, 'be imitators of me as I am of Christ' (11:1), have given rise to much discussion. Some scholars emphasise the power dynamics in Paul's call to *imitatio Pauli* (Castelli 1991, 111-15)*;* others underscore that Paul's fundamental category is *imitatio Christi,* which he interprets with humility (Clarke 1998; Jensen 2010; Ellington 2011). Hamerton-Kelly argues that Paul is eliciting 'the act of *self-effacement* which the Cross represents, the fact of the divine *self-emptying*' (Hamerton-Kelly 1985, 72, my italics). He argues that Paul's call to 'the right kind of mimesis' is intended to counteract the mimetic rivalry among the Corinthians, thereby exemplifying René Girard's theory of sacred violence. My discussion suggests that it is not so much self-effacement or self-emptying that Paul depicts, as the construction of the self through self-conscious, willing embrace of the task laid upon him. That task consists in the gospel, which Paul is called to perform and proclaim (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι). The imitation to which the Corinthians are invited is not a simple replication of Paul, for some aspects of his role are distinct: he is the father, they the children (1 Cor 4:15); he is the apostle, they his 'seal' (1 Cor 9:1-2); and they each have their own station and calling in the world (1 Cor 7:20; 12:1-31). But other aspects of the calling are similar for both apostle and community (cf. 1 Cor 1:26). Thus his self-presentation invites the Corinthians to a creatively mimetic construction of self, in a way that is conscientious in its response to God's work in Christ. This is not a construction of a 'false self', or a renunciation of 'the self itself', but a self-conscious enactment of the role bestowed on the Corinthians by God through Christ and Paul. The self so constituted is modelled not as tortured and effaced, but confident in pronouncing the first person pronoun before others and before God; this 'I' self-consciously shares in grace and renders gracious thanks (ἐγὼ χάριτι μετέχω ... ἐγὼ εὐχαριστῶ, 1 Cor 10:30).

Postscript on Galatians 2:19-20

Although I have tried to highlight why I think 1 Cor 9-11 can render readers vulnerable to a destructive exegesis of the apostolic model for the believer's sense of self, and to establish a method that can in principle be taken to the exegesis of other passages also, it is important for the sake of contemporary scholarly dialogue to comment explicitly on at least one of the texts that has been central to contemporary debates about the Pauline self. The most prominent passage in these debates has been Gal 2:19-20, therefore I shall focus on this, in the context of the wider epistle. This section does not introduce further new methods, but extends the discussion above in order to show how Galatians too *could* encourage a 'false self', but that Paul seems not to have experienced this, and neither should those who imitate him.

Galatians 2:19-20 is among Paul's most uncompromising presentations of loss of one form of self-identity in favour of another in Christ. I offer a translation that seeks to keep as close as possible to Paul's word order, in order to capture his characteristically teasing rhetoric; unfortunately it is not possible in English to differentiate between the places where Paul uses the first person singular pronoun emphatically (bold italics, here) and where the first person is grammatically necessary in English but conveyed in Greek only through verb form:

[19] ***ἐγὼ*** γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῷ ζήσω. Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι· [20] ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ***ἐγώ,*** ζῇ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός· ὃ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ

I, you see, by law to law have died, in order that to God I might live; together with Christ have I been co-crucified, and I live – no longer ***I***, but he lives in me – *Christ*. And what I now live in flesh, in faith I live, namely faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.

Some translators place the emphasis on the negative: 'It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me', and it is easy to see how Paul's words could encourage the cultivation of something like a 'false self'. His 'I' has in some sense definitively died, and lives no more, but Christ lives in him. He is *not free* to rebuild what he has destroyed (2:18); his sense of himself as an *individual* has been irrevocably replaced with the sense of an other through whom alone he lives, such that his own individual self has died and lives no longer (2:19-20); the past tenses, 'I died', 'I have been co-crucified' and the adverb 'no longer', contrasted with the present tenses, 'I live … he lives', underscores a radical break in continuity in the sense of self (2:19-20; cf. 6:15); the 'death' and 'co-crucifixion' are experienced in a self-involving, embodied way, for it is in the flesh (ἐν σαρκί) – the physical locus of identity – that Paul experiences the displacement of his I (ἐγώ) by a Christologically determined experience of his life 'in faith' (2:19-20; cf. 6:17); far from expressing an integrated sense of being at peace with himself, his rhetoric deliberately interweaves affirmations of life and personal identity with shocking rhetoric of violence to the self, first through his own destructive agency (ἃ κατέλυσα, *v. transitive 1st sg.*), then subjectively as the experience of death (ἀπέθανον, *v. intransitive 1st sg.*), and then as subject-object in the middle-passive voice with a prefix highlighting the sense of being *with* Christ in *co*-crucifixion (συνεσταύρωμαι) (2:18-19; cf. 6:14, 17). This comes across as psychologically complex and not obviously peaceful at all. It is a far cry from the הנני / ἰδοὺ ἐγώ ('Look, here I am!') of the classic response to the divine call throughout Israel's scriptures, where the prophet or devout Israelite presents himself unhesitatingly at God's service (e.g. Gen. 22:1, 11; Exod. 3:13; Isa. 6:8; cf. Luke 2:38). It is not difficult to see that a rhetoric like Paul's could encourage a person to cultivate a 'false self', rooted in an extrinsic identity 'in Christ' as they imagine him to be, and that this dependence on imagining and impersonating the Christ-other could lead to a sense of self-alienation, a divided self, or, conversely, a megalomaniacal delusions of grandeur (Eastman 2017, 152). How does Paul himself experience this form of selfhood?

Working with the criteria that I have proposed, I will approach this within the broader context of the epistle. This is not a complete study of Paul's selfhood in Galatians; it is merely an attempt to articulate how (or at least *that*) Paul retains a flourishing sense of self despite (and because) of his Christian self-identity.

Firstly, Paul's overwhelming emphasis in this epistle is on exultant *freedom* experienced through Christ (cf. Category 1). The freedom that he celebrates is not release from *himself* or from his sense of being Paul, which would likely be the basis for forming a false self, and which could be suggested by 2:19-20. Rather, the freedom that Paul emphasises throughout this epistle is freedom from being judged by other human beings (e.g. 1:10, 16-17; 2:6, etc.). It involves above all freedom from the law and judgement by law, but also freedom from religious devotion to those who are not gods (4:8-9; Valantasis 2008, 224). Such 'freedom' could be seen as a form of alienation from his own community, and indeed Galatians makes clear that it did involve him in rejecting some forms of relationships of trust, both with those who were apostles before him (1:17) and with those who remained committed to Jewish ideals of law-obedience (2:4) and table-fellowship (2:12-14) (cf. Category 2). But he expects his rejection of this kind of fellowship to be meaningful to those from whom he withdraws; it is an act within a shared semiotic system; from Paul's perspective, it communicates the gospel to them too (cf. 2:2-5, 14-22).

Meanwhile, his relationship to the Christian community is intimate, personal, self-involving, mutual, and profoundly meaningful. In Gal 4:12-20, he portrays this vividly in connection with his social experience of being 'as Christ' to them (4:14) and they 'as Christ' to him (4:19). On both sides, he uses

profoundly intimate, emotive imagery, recounting evocatively, 'you did not repudiate me nor spit me out, but as an angel of God you received me, *as Christ Jesus*' (4:14). He juxtaposes the intensity of their 'blessing' (μακαρισμός ὑμῶν) then with the intense pain they were willing to endure out of desire to give to him, even to the point of their own agony and loss ('had you been able, you would have dug out your eyes and given them to me,' Gal 4:15). Conversely he himself experiences a conjunction of pain and intimate love in his relation to them in Christ: he addresses them, 'My children, for whom I am again in the pangs of labour until Christ is formed within you' (4:19). There is certainly shocking imagery of violence to self here, conveying intense bodily pain on both sides, or willingness to endure it; but it is motivated by the love *for* one another which is constituted as recognition of Christ in the other – or rather, by recognition of the other as Christ or Christ-like (4:14), or potentially having Christ formed in them (4:19). That is, it is the outworking of love of Christ. On other occasions in the epistle, Paul emphasises the more general summons to use freedom in Christ to be 'slaves to one another, in love' (5:13), but 4:12-20 is the most emotionally intense expression of interpersonal love. It is an affective relationship that arises not through recognising Christ in self and loving the other because Christ does so (cf. 2:19-20), but by recognising Christ in the other and loving them in and as Christ (4:14, 19). Its basic grammar remains the relationship between 'I' and 'you' – the two pronouns are closely interwoven and mutually responsive throughout these verses. This love is experienced through the body but in such a way that the body is servant to this overwhelming love of Christ in the other (cf. Categories 2, 4). From Paul's perspective, *this* is what should provide continuity through the full range of emotions and encounters in his relationship with this community; his pain arises from the break in continuity on the Galatians' side.

Continuity is the element of the sense of self that is most radically challenged in the rhetoric of Gal 2:19-20, which is echoed in 6:14-16. In both passages, the break is a way of appropriating Christ's crucifixion as a personal experience of death to that which might enslave the self apart from Christ, be it law (2:19) or cosmos (6:14). But this is set alongside love that is personally experienced through Paul's own *I* in relation to God and Christ. The love that he has for Christ responds to the love that Christ had *for him* personally: 'what I now live in flesh, in faith I live – faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and handed *himself* over *for me*' (2:20). This is both similar to and different from the love that the Galatians had for him in Christ, and he for them (4:12-20). They would have dug out their eyes for him *inasmuch as they recognised him as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus*, not simply because they saw him *as Paul.* But *Christ* handed himself over for Paul *as Paul himself,* not as anyone else; Christ's relationship to him is structured through I-thou with no third term but God. It is a direct relationship, whereas his relationship to the Galatians is necessarily mediated through Christ. God it was who 'set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through his grace' (1:15), and this sense of a calling that reaches back to being in the mother's womb -intimately personal, wholly embodied, the very origin of human life – expresses a sense of deep continuity between his selfhood or personhood and being known by God through grace, until such a time as God should be pleased to 'reveal his Son in me' (1:16a), not as an end in itself for his private contemplation of himself as Christ (!), but as the middle term in constructing his relationship through Christ to others, 'that I might proclaim the good news of him among the gentiles' (1:16b). From *their* perspective, this marked discontinuity in the Paul they knew from his past actions (1:23-24); from *his* perspective, this revealed the deep continuity of God's grace ordering his life through Christ even from before he was born.

This personal, self-involving sense of continuity is, I think, significant for Paul's conviction that the gospel he proclaims in Christ is 'true' (cf. Category 3). The Hebraic prophets responded to God's call with הנני / ἰδοὺ ἐγώ; Paul's self-presentation is rooted in his integrity before God (ἃ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι, 1:20). The level of mutual understanding and respect in interpersonal human relationships is elusive in practice, both with 'false brothers' (2:4-6) and with the Galatians themselves (4:16). He experiences continuity as the 'truth' of the gospel that he presents to

them by embodying it, such that they can potentially be restored to it through him (ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου διαμείνῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, 2:6; ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν, 4:16). That truth is the truth of God's gift of Christ *for* the interpersonal relationships to which they are summoned through responsive love. Freedom *from* the law is complemented by this emphasis on freedom *for* actively serving one another as slaves by love (5:13, cf. 1 Cor 9:19). It is freedom *from* depending on the judgement and conviction of others about *him personally* (1:10, 17; 2:6; 6:12, etc.), *for* fulfilling depth of relationship through the integrity of love, which structures interpersonal relationships through God's gift (1:15), Christ's self-giving (2:20-3:1; 5:1-5), and the Spirit (3:2-4; 5:16-26; 6:9-10) (Category 4).

Although Galatians is known in scholarship as an 'angry epistle' and Paul's relationships not only with other apostles, with his persecutors, and with the Galatians themselves are all under strain, his own faith in the truth of this gospel holds out the prospect and promise of restored relationships of intimacy and active love. Rhetorically, his sense of integration and peace (Category 5) is conveyed by the way he rests steadfastly in that truth, expressing it in personally-involving ways that never depart from his foundational image of Christ crucified for him, for them, which is so personal to him that he experiences it in his body (most vividly in 6:17). For those who will walk by this rule, he is able to utter a blessing of peace (6:16). It is uttered through the pain of fractured relationships, but his conviction is that God's truth in Christ, which he bears in his own body, is the only ground on which those relationships can be restored. What he experiences 'in the flesh' is *life* – the life of Christ (2:19-20); what he sows in the Spirit holds out eschatological hope of harvest in life everlasting (6:8-9, cf. 3:3).

This interpretation of Galatians shares similar concerns to recent scholarship on Gal 2:19-20 (Eastman 2017, 151-75; Macaskill 2019, 50-57; Linebaugh 2020). My exegesis is especially similar to Eastman's; like her, I began from a concern to understand Paul's experience of self portrayed in Gal 2:19-20, given that it sounds psychologically unhealthy (Eastman 2017, 152). Like her, I think that these verses must be taken in the context of the epistle as a whole, and that Paul's language of life and death of self is portraying how 'a new relational system remaps the old' (Eastman 2017, 174). Like her, I have argued that the individually and socially embodied character of this sense of self is central, and that Paul's emphasis on the violence of the death he has died with Christ needs to be understood through the lens of the love that he shares with the community. Importantly, I share her perception that this new sense of self makes Paul vulnerable precisely because it is relational; in this so-called 'angry epistle', we encounter Paul's vulnerability in a crisis of relationships – what we hear as 'anger' is provoked by his pain. He holds onto his sense of true self for now, animated by the hope that the fractured relationships will be restored into the pattern of Christian love that he embodies before others, and the eschatological horizon of his hope shapes how he faces the challenge of relational breakdown or tension (Eastman 2017, 175; see also the well-aimed reservations in Gallagher 2019, who questions whether this is enough to avoid experiencing horror).

However, some of my emphases are distinctive. My reading of the wording of Gal 2:19-20 suggests the priority of Paul's emphasis on *life* rather than on 'no-longer I' or any other egocentric reflection. One of my concerns about Macaskill's discussion is that he is so keen to reject the idea that 'I' any longer have moral agency that Paul's emphasis on the positive – *life* – is swallowed up in the negative – *no longer I*. In his discussion of Gal 2:19-20, his affirmation that the believer is 'incorporated into Christ' sounds to me more like a negative doctrine of losing the self rather than a positive doctrine of being fully and forever alive with Christ's life (Macaskill 2019, 51-7). I have sought to read the 2:18-20 in close connection with 4:12-20. The former focuses on the apostle's relationship to God in Christ; the latter on the relationship between apostle and community in Christ. Both are emotionally intense high-points of the epistle; both express extreme pain in relation to Christ (co-crucifixion, digging out the eyes, labour pangs). But the posture of prayer offers a different configuration and emphasis from the posture of relationship in community, and the juxtaposition helps attune us to what is eclipsed in 2:18-20, and yet integrally related to it experientially and theologically: first, the profound, interpersonal, embodied love that is grounded in relationship to others through Christ; and secondly, the self-forgetfulness of this love,

whose eyes are on Christ in the *other*, not in the self and personal identity (cf. Macaskill 2019). Debates about continuity of the self are recurrent in exegeses of Gal 2:18-20; there is widespread agreement that Paul expresses both continuity and discontinuity, but that is diversely interpreted (Eastman 2017, 161-6, 174; Linebaugh 2020, 102-5). By framing the question in light of the overarching enquiry into the healthy/unhealthy, true/false self, our gaze has been trained to a vivid sense of the relational vibrancy and vulnerability of Paul's sense of self in Christ, and his conviction that he embodies what is 'true' before God for others, which he trusts as revealed (1:15-16) and experiential (2:18-20; 4:6; 6:17), and thinks through in many different ways, including in light of scripture (3:6-22; 4:21-31), history (4:4), and self-involving ethical imagination (5:24).

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