

One to Zero: What Will Inevitably Occur and What is Allowed

PREAMBLE: 믿음

There is neither _____ nor _____,
there is neither _____ nor _____,
there is neither _____ nor _____.



Episode One: "Apostle, Strikes", intertitle from the television series, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, 1995.

ONE TO ZERO: 소망

When he was on his way to Damascus to persecute those who accepted Jesus as the Messiah ('the anointed' in Hebrew), Paul was still known as Saul. The story goes that during this trip he was blinded by a light, fell to the ground, and heard the voice of Jesus. During the following three days, Saul was led to the house of Judas, where Ananias, the Jewish high priest who was also led there by the same divine voice, visited Saul, restored his vision and baptized him.

Through the series of events, Saul became – from a hounding lawman to an ardent believer in the death and resurrection of Jesus as Messiah – a member of the very community that he previously persecuted, and ultimately a faithful comrade to the revolutionary. As Paul.

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

New International Version, Galatians 1.13-14



Caravaggio, Conversion on the way to Damascus, 1601.

Paul was neither one of the twelve disciples nor a witness to Jesus. Paul was only a believer, who effused his conviction in the letters to his diasporic community dispersed between Jerusalem, Asia Minor and Rome. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, 13 are attributed to Paul, and are said to predate the primary sources of what we know about Jesus and his exploits, namely, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, together known as the Synoptic Gospels.¹ As recounts of Jesus, who spoke Aramaic, the Synoptic Gospels were essentially translations. Paul's letters on the other hand, according to the German classical philologist Wilamowitz-Möllendorf, "flow directly out of his heart in a clumsy fashion as an uncontrollable outburst, and the fact that Paul's Greek is not translated Aramaic, makes him a classic of Hellenism."²

For Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, however, to describe Paul as a "classic of Hellenism" would be "particularly infelicitous", as Paul's language was in fact neither Greek, nor Hebrew, nor secular idiom, nor *lashon ha-qodesh*; Paul, a Jew and a Roman citizen, belonged to a Jewish Diaspora, that thought, spoke, read and cited the Hebrew Bible in Judeo-Greek.³ Here, we are reminded that the foundation of Christianity rests on a Greek book that comprised two parts: a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible and a collection of new, radical Greek writings. In other words, what has become to be known as the Holy Bible was multilingual in origin. In that vein, Koran, the foundational text of another Abrahamic religion, Islam, sprang from the Hebrew Bible and its translation into the Arabic.

All three Abrahamic religions are open to conversion, together accounting for more than half of the world's population. The statistics convey varying degrees of their reach: at 31.5% of the world population, Christianity holds the largest following, Judaism the most exclusive at 0.2%, and Islam, claiming 23.2%, is the fastest growing.⁴

The popularity of Christianity may be attributed to the Pauline Letters' purchase on a certain universality, in spite of their seemingly specific address; though the very constituents of Paul's displaced community were homogenous by virtue of nonconformity, as they comprised dissenters and apostates specific to their time and place, the principal message of the letters concerned believers and non-believers alike, Jews and Gentiles, men and women, the native and the foreigner, and so on. The good news according to Paul was that *everybody* was a sinner, enslaved by the law and shaped inevitably

by tradition and established rules. Paul understood that the very instrument by which we are bound to death is that which can give us new form-of-life.

Death under the law, resurrection under another: this resonates with the narrative of Paul's conversion. Saul the Prosecutor died, as it were, to be born again as Paul the Apostle. No longer Saul or slave to the laws of his origin, Saul of Tarsus claimed himself to be Paul and 'slave' of Jesus the Messiah.

Paulos doulos christou Iēsou, klētos apostolos aphōrismenos eis euaggelion theou
Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland,
28th edition, 1963 – Transliterated

Paul, called as slave of Jesus the Messiah, separated as apostle (Agamben, 7)
for the Good News (World English Bible).

Preamble to the Letter to the Romans

To recapitulate, Paul believed the narrative of resurrection to be that of the messianic, that the execution of Jesus, who was deemed a major threat to the establishment by the powers that be, was necessary for the emergence of Christ (Greek for 'Messiah'), a new figure destructible neither by law nor by people.

To believe the unbelievable, unlikely narrative to be factual, as can be heard in the voice in the Letters, became a planetary well of inspiration and empowerment. Changing the course of humanity for the last two hellish millennia, it shaped the Western civilization, and by extension, the world; its reach unfathomable, but felt. Such is the power of faith.

If one shifts focus from institutional corruption to the text, Paul's hardcore capacity to *believe* can be found in the transformative power of *agape*, championed by the Apostle as the law of laws, the Law that put the rest to rest.

The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' (NIV) and any other commandment, (English Standard Version) are summed up in this one command: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (NIV) Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (ESV)

Romans 13.9-10

There are four types of love according to the New Testament: *eros*, *storge*, *philia*, and *agape*. *Eros*, of course, is the erotic love; *storge* is familial love; *philia* is comradely love; and *agape*: the Love of loves.

Agape is also a name for Paul's labor, or such as that practiced by him. It is "the messianic vocation, or the revocation of every vocation, which can be described as a movement of immanence, or, if one prefers, a zone of absolute indiscernibility between immanence and transcendence, between this world and the future world"⁵. As praxis, agape may be interpreted as that which acknowledges differences but turns them inside out, whereby the signs that divide, especially that of the body, are nullified. It may be perceived as a Truth procedure that tirelessly addresses itself and its supposed immateriality to all the others⁶: Arabs and Jews, men and women, freemen and slaves, colors and whites, blacks and colors, blacks and whites...

If one can be described by its function then agape is a consummate dismantling of one's identity construction. Pronounced differently, agape also signifies a state of wonder or surprise, of having been struck stupid — an openness. To speak, too, we open our mouths. And breath is Spirit.



Hooded sweatshirt by Forever 21.

- 1 Ed Parish Sanders, Saint Paul, the Apostle, Encyclopædia Britannica Online Academic Edition, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Paul-the-Apostle>, last accessed June 21, 2019.
- 2 Ulrich von Wilamovitz-Möllendorf, *Die griechische und lateinische Literatur und Sprache* (1905), published by P.G. Teubner, Berlin, Leipzig 2007, p. 159.
- 3 Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (2000), published by Stanford University Press, translated by Patricia Dailey, Stanford 2005, p. 5.
- 4 Pew Research Center, *The Global Religious Landscape*, The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, December 18, <https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>, 2012, last accessed July 1, 2019.
- 5 Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (2000), published by Stanford University Press, translated by Patricia Dailey, Stanford 2005, p. 25.
- 6 Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (1997), published by Stanford University Press, translated by Ray Brassier, Stanford 2003, p. 92.

If ^(NIV) I speak with the tongues of humans and of Angels ^(1599 Geneva Bible), but have not love ^(ESV), I am only a resounding gong ^(NIV) or a tinkling cymbal ^(King James Version). And if I have the gift of prophecy ^(NIV), and know all ^(New American Standard Bible) secrets and all knowledge, yea ^(GNV), if I have all faith ^(ESV) that can move mountains ^(NIV), but have not love, I am nothing ^(ESV). If I ^(NIV) feed the poor with all my goods ^(GNV) and surrender my body to the flames ^(NIV), but have not love, I gain nothing ^(ESV). Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away ^(NIV). For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is ^(GNV) complete comes ^(International Standard Version), what is in part disappears ^(NIV). When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child ^(KJ21): now that I have become an adult ^(New Heart English Bible), I have put the ways of childhood behind me ^(NIV). For now we see through a glass darkly: but then shall we see face to face. Now I know in part: but then shall I know even as I am known ^(GNV). And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love ^(NIV).”

1 Corinthians 13.1-13

SALIVATION: 사탕

My blood runs cold when I find myself smiling. For the smile would not be my own, but yours. You, my dearest fear, my comrade...

Is it not the lips (not the heart) that save? What good is a heart that only beats? It is also the lips that kill, as do the purveyors of u_truths, _ _ r_up_ion and _ies.

We will not be content with these.

I am nothing. And if without love one is nothing, then I am without love. Yes, this is unsound. And Love, too, is nothing. So why don't we just let the resounding gong and the clanging cymbal make some father-fucking noise...

Seoul, April 2019

Mitromatrix Medical: METTE-tation on Cracking the Codes of That Pumping Machinery to Extract the Last Reusable Tissue