

Slavoj Žižek. *The Fragile Absolute — or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* London/New York, Verso 2000.

For nobody and nothing

One of the most deplorable aspects of the postmodern era and its so-called 'thought' is the return of the religious dimension in all its different guises: from Christian and other fundamentalisms, through the multitude of New Age spiritualisms, up to the emerging religious sensitivity within deconstructionism itself (so-called 'post-secular' thought). How is a Marxist, by definition a 'fighting materialist' (Lenin), to counter this massive onslaught of obscurantism? The obvious answer seems to be not only ferociously to attack these tendencies, but mercilessly to denounce the remainders of the religious legacy within Marxism itself.

Against the old liberal slander which draws on the parallel between the Christian and Marxist 'Messianic' notion of history as the process of the final deliverance of the faithful (the notorious 'Communist-parties-are-secularized-religious-sects' theme), should one not emphasize how this holds only for ossified 'dogmatic' Marxism, not for its authentic liberating kernel? Following Alain Badiou's path-breaking book on Saint Paul,¹ our premiss here is exactly the opposite one: instead of adopting such a defensive stance, allowing the enemy to define the terrain of the struggle, what one should do is to reverse the strategy by *fully endorsing what one is accused of*: yes, there *is* a direct lineage from Christianity to Marxism; yes, Christianity and Marxism *should* fight on the same side of the barricade against the onslaught of new spiritualisms – the authentic Christian legacy is much too precious to be left to the fundamentalist freaks.

Even those who acknowledge this direct lineage from Christianity to Marxism, however, usually fetishize the early 'authentic' followers of Christ against the Church's 'institutionalization' epitomized by the name of Saint Paul: yes to Christ's 'original authentic message', no to its transformation into the body of teaching that legitimizes the Church as a social institution. What these followers of the maxim 'yes to Christ, no to Saint Paul' (who, as Nietzsche claimed, in effect invented Christianity) do is strictly parallel to the stance of those 'humanist Marxists' from the mid-twentieth century whose maxim was 'yes to the early authentic Marx, no to his Leninist ossification'. And in both cases, one should insist that such a 'defence of the authentic' is the most perfidious mode of its betrayal: *there is no Christ outside Saint Paul*; in exactly the same way, there is no 'authentic Marx' that can be approached directly, bypassing Lenin.