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IMITATIO CHRISTI AND THE HOLY FOLLY OF DIVINE VIOLENCE: THE CHURCH AS ULTIMATE CRIMINAL[1]

ABSTRACT

The calling of the church is to follow Christ (*imitatio Christi*). What does this calling entail? Following Žižek's and Derrida's interpretation of Benjamin's interpretation of law and violence, the paper will argue that the call to follow Christ is not to subvert the law, but as Paul argues - Christ came to destroy the law. In this article, Christ will be interpreted as one who did not counter this violence of the law (state-maintaining violence) with a counter violence of state-forming violence, but completely undermined the justification of both forms of violence (state-forming and state-maintaining) with a divine violence. If the Christ event is read as an exemplary narrative of the post-metaphysics in the linguistic turn in the work of Derrida, this opens up new possibilities for both theology as well as the role of the church within the context of a postmodern world, and these possibilities will be explored.

1. INTRODUCTION

Can postmodern theology live in the churches[2]? Can Atheism (Derrida's Atheism) live in the churches? Yes and no, in response to both questions.

1   This article is a reworked paper presented at the Subverting the Norm II conference held at Drury University, Springfield, Missouri, USA from 5-6 April 2013 with the theme: 'Can Postmodern Theology Live in the Churches?' This article is a response to the conference question. The article seeks to respond to this question by proposing a post-modern imatatio Christi – imitating Christ, but in a post-metaphysical sense by re-interpreting the divine violence of the crucifixion.

2   This question was the theme of the conference at which this article was presented as a paper. At this conference, postmodern theology was specifically understood as radical theology in the tradition of Thomas J.J. Altizer and John

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Yes, and I would even be bolder and argue that it cannot only live in the church, but that such atheism could be *the* theology or perhaps Christology of the church, following Ernst Bloch who said that only a Christian can be atheist and only an atheist can be a Christian (Bloch 1970:10). In this sense postmodern or radical theology can be the gift to the church, but gift in the dual sense, as both gift to the church and *Gift* (poison) (see Derrida 2008) of the church. It cannot live in the church without killing the church as the *Gift* of the church, but maybe the church needs to drink this hemlock as joyously as Socrates did so as to live in death. Yet also no, in response to the question, because postmodern theology should never find a home in the church as it is homeless, but even being homeless it cannot exist without a home from which it is homeless. It needs tradition and institutions so as to haunt these traditions and institutions by continually knocking on their doors seeking hospitality.

2. THE CHURCH CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST

The church is called to follow Christ as she is called to imitate Christ (*imitatio Christi*), to have the same mind as Christ (Philippians 2:5). If this having the same mind as Christ is taken seriously it would translate into what Jürgen Moltmann argued, that any statement concerning the church is a statement about Christ and any statement about Christ is a statement about the church[3].

This would then seem to be a simple solution as all that is expected of the church is to have the same mind as Christ, but: Which mind of whose Christ? In her obedience to her calling, which mind of Christ should the church imitate (*mimesis*)? The mind of Christ of the Gospel of Matthew or rather the mind of Christ as portrayed in the Gospel of John or the other two Gospels? Which Christ to follow in the contemporary debates that is dividing so many churches today? Is the mind of Christ pro-life and anti-homosexuality or is the mind of Christ pro-choice and for same sex marriages? The question of which Jesus to follow is a bit like asking the real

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D. Caputo. In other words, can a theology that declares God dead live in the churches? Caputo was one of the keynote speakers at the conference. It is therefore in this tradition that postmodern theology is understood in this article and thereby it does not seek to give the term *postmodern theology* a singular interpretation, but it is in response to the question of the conference.

3   "Every statement about the church will be a statement about Christ. Every statement Christ also implies a statement about the church; yet the statement about Christ is not exhausted by the statement about the church, because it also goes further, being directed toward the messianic kingdom which the church serves" (Moltmann 1992:6).

Jesus to please stand up? Yet, the search for the real or historical Jesus has already been attempted first by Albert Schweitzer and later by many others in the continuous quest for the historical Jesus. The idea behind this quest is that by discovering the historical Jesus this would provide the church with the real Jesus. But is the historical Jesus the real Jesus?

Andre P. Brink argues that there is no history, only the imaginations of history[4]. The best one will find in the search for the historical Jesus is the invention of metaphors and the imaginations of history, because events (historical events) are always emplotted in narrative via the dual process of *mimesis and muthos* (see Ricoeur 1984:31ff). In other words, the attempt to *mimic* or to give an exact copy of an event such as the "real" historical Jesus can only be done in a con*text* of *muthos*. That is to say, the attempt to make an exact copy (*mimesis*) of the event happens by placing the event (emplotting) into a narrative with a particular metaphor or myth, or as was discovered with the four gospels, a particular theology. Therefore the real, historical Jesus cannot stand up, because he does not exist outside the various fabrications of metaphors and imaginings of history. There is no Jesus outside text. Thereby I am not denying the existence of Jesus, just as little as Derrida denies the existence of a world beyond text, but what I am denying is that anyone has access to that existence beyond fabrications of metaphors and imaginations of history: there is no outside text (Derrida 1997:158).

Jesus only exists in the various imaginations of those who claim to know him. Therefore, what the church has is various fabricated metaphors and imaginations of the historical Jesus, which would explain why there are four gospels and such variations in the four gospels, because each gospel has its own fabrication and imagination, which is its own *mimesis* and *muthos*. It is therefore not possible to decide on who or what the real Jesus is. Every single Jesus that the church seeks to follow is a fabrication and an imagination and thus one can say an idol: something humanly constructed or fabricated that is then worshipped like the golden calf (see Exodus 32:1).

These fabrications (constructions) serve in Berger's terminology as the ultimate legitimisation of how things are or how things should be (Berger 1967:30). It is the Jesus that the church seeks to follow or seeks to imitate that will serve as the ultimate legitimisation with regards to the particular church's stand concerning how things are or how things should be, based on what is seen to be right and what wrong (good or evil). This fabricated metaphor or idol serves as the sacred canopy (Berger 1967) for not only

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4   "… the best we can do is to fabricate metaphors – that is, tell stories – in which, not history, but imaginings of history are invented" (Brink 1998:42).

the imaginations of history, but the imagination of the world[5]. This brings one to the role of religion or the role of idols or ultimate metaphors in the *poeisis* of the world, as Heidegger argues, the world is always created as a fourfold (*Geviert*): earth, sky, mortals and *divinities* (Heidegger 1971:179). A world that is carried out (*Austrag*) by the various things of the world just as the world grants those things a place in which they have meaning and make sense, and this is the silent speaking of language (Heidegger 1971:200). One is not aware of this silent speaking of language, but is convinced that this is the way the world really is. It is difficult to imagine that my God (ultimate defining and legitimising metaphor) is only my fabrication and imagination and not the real thing, because everything in me, my mind, body and heart (feelings and moods) tells me that this is the way it is and more importantly this is the way things have to be. In this fabricated world (*Geviert*), which is a fabrication (*poeisis*) of the local community's language, there is a sacred canopy (divinities), or in Crites terms a sacred story (1989:69) which holds this world together as its ultimate legitimisation and authority. Inside such a world, the letter will always arrive at its destination (Lacan 1972) as one will see "reality" through the lens of this sacred canopy and therefore one will see what one expect to see, or one could say it differently: one will see what one has been authorised to see or what is legitimate to see. Yet, Derrida (1975:107) challenged Lacan on his interpretation of Poe's *Purloined Letter* by arguing that the letter might not arrive at its destination.

Thus, the church will always follow her Jesus and thus the letter always arrives at its destination or might not arrive, in other words the church's views of the world will create the necessary Jesus and the necessary Jesus will legitimate and authenticate the church's particular views of reality and what is right and wrong. Yet, it might not arrive at its destination and that is the hope one has for the church.

The church's particular Jesus will determine both the world-view (*Weltanschauung*) and therefore the correct ethics or morality that would be appropriate to the ontology of such a *Weltanschauung*. What is forgotten is that the *Weltanschauung* is fabricated (*poeisis* via both *mimesis* and *muthos*) by the silent speaking of language, if one can bring Heidegger and Ricoeur together. Part of this fabricated *Weltanschauung* are the divinities or sacred canopy that give the world meaning, purpose and everything in that particular world a fixed ontological place. The divinities of the *Geviert*

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5   See how Geertz describes religion and how religion helps one understand and interpret one's view of the world as the real view: "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in humanity by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz 1993:90).

(sacred story) provide the world-creation with the necessary norms and laws of how things are (ontology) and how things should be (ethics or morality). In such a context those laws and norms provide those with authority the necessary legitimisation to enforce the laws and to ensure that nobody disturbs the peace (order) of the world that is perceived as natural or God-given because the silent speaking of language has been forgotten. In a certain *Weltanschauung* particular things are not granted an ontological place in the world because they are seen to be unnatural or against God's will. This is the violence that Benjamin speaks of that is legitimised and receives its authority from a particular founding myth (see Benjamin 1996 and Derrida 2002) – either the founding myth of a new state, which legitimises state-founding violence, or the violence that legitimises the violence to maintain a state, which is state-maintaining violence. This state-maintaining violence can be translated as world-maintaining violence. If somebody misbehaves within the order (norms) of the particular *Weltanschauung,* she or he needs to be corrected so as to protect the *Weltanschauung,* and such corrective violence is legitimate as it is authorised by either that natural law or by God or by some or other state-founding or world-creating myth. The silent speaking of language fabricates (*poiesis*) a world with its divinities, which then forgets that it is fabricated and *believes* that this is the way the world is in "reality".

Of course the world-creation can be challenged by other world-creations based on different myths or metaphors or paradigms that legitimise the alternative world-creation. Such challenges can lead to war between paradigms, or it can lead to separation or to conversion. In case of conversions, worlds and paradigms change because of the conviction that a new ultimate truth of reality has been discovered, thus replacing the old truth with the new one. This maybe explains why so little actually changes in history, except those in positions of power (see Žižek 2008). It is a matter of replacing one sacred canopy (ultimate legitimising myth) with another, or replacing eating from one particular fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil with another particular fruit of this knowledge. This knowledge gives one the power and legitimate authority to judge, condemn by enforcing the law so as to protect the world that has forgotten that it is fabricated by the silent speaking of language, or the power and legitimate authority to replace the "wrong" or "evil" world with a "right" and "good" world again forgetting that it is only a world-creation.

What is left in this ocean of relativity, where it remains a matter of my world-creation against your world-creation and thus for the church my Jesus against your Jesus? Perhaps Paul can be of assistance as he realised that there are all these different interpretations of Jesus and people are following different images of Jesus (see 1 Corinthians 1:12).

The solution that Paul comes to is not to seek to proclaim a particular image of Jesus, but rather to claim to know *nothing*, but Jesus Christ and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Thus Paul seems to focus not on who Jesus is, but rather on what Jesus did or on what happened to him: the event of the crucifixion. Thus the focus has shifted from the identity of Jesus, which is impossible to conclusively define as Jesus is always emplotted in a particular fabricated metaphor and an imagined history, to the event of Christ. Not that the event of Christ is not also emplotted via the process of *muthos* and *mimesis*, but there seems to be more agreement as to the three main moments of the event of Christ, namely: incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection-ascension. These three moments will be interpreted differently depending on the metaphors and imaginations of those describing the Christ event, yet there is general agreement as to the three moments.

The event of Christ can be summed up in the Carmen Christi (Philippians 2:5-11) and is made up of three moments, namely incarnation

> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:6-7).

The crucifixion

> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross (Philippians 2:8).

And resurrection-ascension

> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

3. THE INCARNATION

The only access one has to the incarnation is via the dual process of *mimesis* and *muthos*. All the church has are different texts concerning the incarnation. In this article one more text (*mimesis* and *muthos*) will be offered by interpreting (emplotting) the incarnation within a postmodern metaphor and imagination. God (the Other, the Transcendent) becomes flesh, becomes immanent in the history of the human world (being born in

the likeness of men). Jesus is thus the incarnation of God (the transcendent Other) that takes on human form. Is that not true of all that is other, as Derrida argues, every other is wholly other (Derrida 1995:76)? It is not only God who takes on human form, but "reality" as such – that which is beyond text takes on human form and is made in human likeness: is made text, via *mimesis* and *muthos*, as there is no outside text (Derrida 1997:158). Is Jesus revealing a truth about the Other, which is every other? Yes, indeed he is, as he says that if you want to know the Other you must know me (John 14:7). There is no way to the Other, but through me, Jesus says in John 14:6. Is Jesus a symbol or a sign that shows or reveals God, or is Jesus what Heidegger says of humans? Humans, as rational beings, are signs or pointers that point into the withdrawal[6]?

Can one perhaps interpret the incarnated Christ as a radical-hyle[7] taking Ray Brassier (2001:273) description of the radical hyle into consideration based on his interpretation of the non-philosophy of Laruelle (see Laruelle 2003)? A radical-hyle as a non-conceptual symbol and more specifically as an axiomatic heresy uttered and proclaimed without any philosophy of difference or correlation to prove it (see Brassier 2003). All one has is text as there is no outside text. There is no access to the outside (Other), but through text: Other made in human likeness. Can the story of Jesus' incarnation help in understanding something of the grammatology of world-creations? Can the story of Jesus reveal *a* truth concerning this pointing

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6   "To the extent that man is drawing that way, he points toward what withdraws. As he is pointing that way, man is the pointer. Man here is not first of all man, and then also occasionally someone who *points*. No: drawn into what withdraws, drawing toward it and thus pointing into the withdrawal, man first *is* man. His essential nature lies in being such a pointer. Something which in itself, by its essential nature, is pointing, we call a sign. As he draws toward what withdraws, man is a sign. But since points toward what draws *away*, it points, not so much at what draws away as into the withdrawal. The sign stays without interpretation" (Heidegger 1968:9-10).

7   "Thus, the radical hyle can be understood neither as a nomination of 'matter' *qua* transcendental signified, which is to say, transcendent metaphysical reality; nor as a conceptual materialisation, in the manner for instance in which the Deleuzoguattarian Concept counter-effectuated an intensively defined materiality. It is neither an empirical conceptualisation of matter nor a transcendental materialisation of the concept. It is a non-conceptual symbol for 'matter itself' in its Identity as already-manifested without-manifestation and foreclosed *a priori* to the materiological différance that tries to substitute an undecidable mixture of statement and utterance for the hyle's radically immanent Identity as that which is already –uttered or uttered-without-statement" (Brassier 2001:273). I find the concept of the radical-hyle useful to re-think the interpretation of the incarnation and the "dual-nature" of Christ.

function of humanity and the silent speaking of language? I believe it does. "I am the way and the truth", Jesus says (John 14:6), and to understand what this way is the focus should be on the event like the Carmen Christi invites us to do, rather than on the identity of Jesus.

Jesus' incarnational ministry in the gospels takes particular interest in the poor and the marginalised of society. His ministry focuses on what is other to the norm. It focuses on those who have no ontological place given to them in the world-creation of this particular social-cultural context. Those who are out of place, who disturb the natural or God-given order of the world-creation and because of their disturbance, are marginalised and ostracised.

He sided with the marginalised and ostracised of a particular *Weltanschauung*. Why did he side with those who were other to the norm and thus questioned the ontology and the authorising and legitimising norms of the particular *Weltanschauungen* of his time? Could it be that he was revealing the truth and thus the difference and deferment of all that is: différance? Could it be that he was revealing the truth (*aletheia*) of the *Ereignis* of language (see Heidegger 1984), in other words revealing the grammatology of what is? That his story becomes exemplary of the story of writing (signs) and thus world (see Meylahn 2013:289ff)? He revealed the truth or *aletheia* that is, the truth of world's unconcealment in the concealment of the silent speaking of language. He exposed the world-creation and the role that the divinities play in the *Geviert*.

Christ, through the incarnation, coming in human likeness as sign, reveals these signs as infinite chains of signifiers, pointing to other signifies into the withdrawal or the abyss of language: the desertification of language as Derrida calls it, which is a good name for saving the name of God (Derrida 1995:55-56). This sign points towards God as the endless desertification of language as it takes on the form of human likeness.

He sided with those who by their very *Dasein* (being-there) questioned the legitimacy of the norms of that particular *Weltanschauung*. By siding with them he challenged the norms. His actions blasphemed the gods of the various created-worlds. Jesus lived in the Roman created-world as well as the Pharisaic created-world, and in these worlds he challenged and contravened their norms, through his discussions with the law-experts of the day, he challenged the authority and legitimacy of these norms (Luke 10:25-37; see also Meylahn 2009a). He was not a rebel that identified what was wrong with the system that needed to be changed in order to make the system perfect. In other words, he did not seek to change the old system with a better one, but undermined the system's authority and founding myth, without necessarily offering an alternative myth, besides

himself. He questioned the very authority of the law. In Paul's terms he exposed the impotence of the law (Romans 8; 2 Corinthians 3:6). This was the reason why they were forced or compelled to kill him. He was not a criminal that could be found guilty of contravening x, y and z of the laws and be punished accordingly. He was a criminal that questioned the very founding authority of these laws and norms because he questioned the divinities that legitimised these laws as he proclaimed himself as the son of God (Matthew 11:27; Matthew 16:17; Luke 22:29) and placed himself above the authority of the law as its fulfilment (Matthew 5:17; Romans 10:4). By revealing the mythological foundations of the two dominant *Weltanschauungen* of his time, the Pharisaic world and the *Pax Romana*, he undermined their authority and legitimacy (see Colossians 2:15) and thus they had to kill him as an ultimate threat, or ultimate criminal (see Benjamin 1996) as he undermined their very authority and divine sanction.

He unchained the worlds from their suns and murdered their gods (see Nietzsche 1974:181-182). He murdered the divinities (gods) of Heidegger's *Geviert*. Because he challenged and blasphemed the gods he was seen as the ultimate criminal. The ultimate criminal act is to murder God, which means to destroy the sacred canopy of a world-creation and thereby you destroy the ultimate meaning and the sense of that world. Such an act would be would be excusable if this destruction was for revolutionary purposes in the name of another (alternative) ultimate meaning or sacred canopy. It would be excusable if it was motivated, as most political revolutions are, by a new founding myth and the belief in a better state, but the Christ event was without deontological or teleological justification (without founding or maintaining myth) and in that sense it was a true Lacanian ethical act[8] or an act of divine violence. It was an act of pure destruction without a new founding myth, only in the *name of God*, as the endless desertification of language.

4. THE CRUCIFIXION

These powers and authorities (divinities) of the created-worlds needed to destroy him as blasphemer so as to rid the world of this ultimate threat and therefore he was crucified. Yet, those who follow Christ into the incarnation and cross follow him into that absolutely God-forsaken space

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8   For Lacan the true ethical Act is motivated by love and not law (Hurst 2008:329) see also: "The domain of pure violence, the domain outside law or legal power, the domain of that violence which is neither law-founding nor law-sustaining, *is the domain of love*" (Žižek 2008:488).

(Matthew 27:45-46), into that atheist and even non-atheist space where the world is unchained from every possible sun[9], unchained from its sacred canopy, and has murdered its gods (divinities). The church follows Christ, in imitation of him, into that atheist space where God is murdered (see Moltmann 1974: 200-274). But that is impossible as the world cannot be liberated from its gods – there will always be divinities, ultimate references, or gods, as the world cannot be without sacred canopy as without it there is only an abyss. The Christian, and therefore the church, is liberated to acknowledge this need for idols, the fabrication of metaphors and imagined history with one or other ultimate reference or divinity: sacred story. The church acknowledges this inescapable need and state of being as the Latin says: *simul justus et peccator,* justified (liberated) and yet sinners. Liberated from the gods (divinities) from theism and yet impossible to live without. It knows it is "sinful" and that the church, like anybody else, will always eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil so as to be able to judge and condemn with justified legitimisation and authority and thereby construct for themselves a God (golden calf), whilst forgetting that the calf is self-constructed.

It is in this space that the church finds herself and therefore she is in need of constant grace and she lives by grace alone: *sola gratia*.

5. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

In Christ is revealed a truth about this world, a truth very similar to the truth (*aletheia*) that Heidegger discovered, or the truth of the sociologists of religion after Freud, Marx and Nietzsche. This truth sets the church free to embrace the other beyond the categories of good and evil, beyond the understanding of what is good and right, therefore beyond god, to embrace the other in their nudity (see Meylahn 2010) without the gods to clothe them, in a new community where there is no categorisation and thus no divisions according to norms of right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable (Galatians 3: 28). The church and humanity cannot live without religion, as humans are *homo religiosus*. Humans cannot live without religion nor can they live without philosophy as every attempt not

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9   I say every possible sun as in the incarnation God has already died as the transcendental other, but dies in the cross is not God, but the very ideas of gods, of truths, of founding and maintaining dominant myths. It is an absolute abyss even the abyss of the abyss. It is nothing even less than nothing as even nothing would be something. With that less than nothing nobody can live.

to philosophise is still to philosophise[10]. So, after all is destroyed, after one has left all that is precious to one, it will be returned hundredfold (see Mark 10:31). It is returned, but different – vulnerable, weak, fragile like treasures in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Religion is destroyed in the name of philosophy, or following Nietzsche, it is philosophy that creates the idols and is destroyed[11] maybe in the name of religion. Thus one is left with non-philosophy philosophy and a non-religion religion. One is left with Paul's utterance: I know *nothing*, but Christ and him Crucified: a Christology, where the logos (knowing) is crossed out and not erased as in Heidegger's ~~Being~~, but crossed out or crucified but still legible (see Derrida 1997:23). It is a truth that is revealed and that sets free (unchains from gods), yet free to be enslaved again the next moment. It is not a freedom from sin (idolatry), but a freedom to acknowledge one's inevitable idolatry and therefore a freedom that is always coming, like the second coming in the time that remains. The cross sets one free to be an idolator in the time that remains, but knowing that tonight I can confess my idolatry. Always becoming free because the church is none other than *simul justus et peccator*.

This is a knowledge (knowing nothing, but Christ crucified) that once one knows it one needs to throw it away, otherwise this knowledge (logos) will become the new idol, in other words before this Christology becomes an idol, a philosophy or a religion, it must be discarded: crossed-out. It is a bit like Wittgenstein argues in the *Tractatus*, that once you have read it and understood it, you must throw it away (Wittgenstein 1974:89). The church needs to be liberated from the crucified Christ as well before this Christology becomes an idol. As Nietzsche says, quoted in Heidegger: "After you had discovered me, it was no trick to find me: the difficulty now is to lose me…. [signed] The Crucified" (Heidegger 1968:53).You cannot do anything with this Christology, but read it as it is legible. It is legible (readable) and thus it is a seeing, but it is a seeing in blindness, not the blindness of others, but one's own blindness. If it was seeing the blindness of others one would have eaten of the fruit of knowledge, but it is seeing one's own blindness and the inevitable blindness of seeing and therefore a seeing in the blindness of tears (Derrida 1993) – tears mourning that we

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10   "It was a Greek who said, 'If one has to philosophize, one has to philosophize; if one does not have to philosophize, one still has to philosophize' (to say it and think it). One always has to philosophize" (Derrida 1978:152).

11   "All that philosophers have handled for thousands of years have been conceptmummies [*Begriffs-Mumien*]; nothing real escaped their grasp alive. When these honourable idolaters of concepts [*diese Herren Begriffs-Götzendiener*] worship something, they kill it and stuff it; they threaten the life of everything they worship" (Nietzsche 1982: 479).

will never see clearly, but always through the veil of one or other sacred canopy, even the canopy of a Christology.

The ancient holy fools known as *salos* (see Meylahn 2013:322ff) tried to find a way to live with this blinding seeing by being continuously called and addressed by the other and to be enucleated by the other (see Levinas 2000:181f). They realised that once they had followers (that once they were seen by others as ones that see the truth) they had to destroy the path that others sought to follow to prevent vainglory and idolatry. Theirs was a radical way to live by grace and faith alone (see Meylahn 2013:342f). These also deconstructed their own thoughts, deconstructed their own works so as not to allow vainglory and thus idolatry. Into that foolish madness, holy folly, the church is called to become church in the public space.

In the final paragraphs I will attempt to develop a working description of practical theology as public theology for the church where postmodern theology lives in the church and where Derrida's atheism gets on well in the church as the church is called to deconstruct the norms of society as the ultimate criminal. But also not live in the church as such Christology is homeless and at best can only haunt the theological traditions reforming them as the event within those traditions waiting to happen. It is the gift to and *Gift* of the church. Yet, to avoid this *Gift* would also be the death of the church as the task of the church is to follow Christ and in following Christ reach out to the least of the brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:34f). It is by this love that the world will know that the church is following Christ (John 13:35). This love is a radical love of the unlovable, namely to love enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27). The enemy is the other who can destroy the self and therefore to open one's heart and home to the enemy destroys the self and the home. To love the enemy is opening the self (home) to the other by offering hospitality. Yet to offer hospitality is to allow the other to be host and thereby the self becomes a hostage in his or her own home (see Derrida 2000). Is that the kind of love? Christ argues that it is easy to love those who love you (those who are the same), but to love the enemy, that is the true calling of the church. To love those who can destroy the home. To love is the active calling of the church, which translates into the opening of the home for the destruction of the norms of the house, *oikos-nomos* (*oikonomy*), by the other to whom hospitality is offered and who becomes host in the home. It is not necessarily the purposeful intention of the other to destroy, but it is an auto-deconstruction if hospitality is truly offered in love (see Meylahn 2009b).

In love the church witnesses the Christ-event, namely the crucifixion of the norms of its own house by the love and hospitality offered to the other (enemy), and thus receives (by grace) a space of hope for the impossible

possible of a new homeless community where there is neither Jew nor Greek, man or woman, free or slave, atheist or theist, etcetera. A homeless community where there are no defining and exclusive norms. That is impossible: the impossible possible of a community always arriving. If it were possible it would have arrived and it would always arrive with a new sacred canopy. Yet the call to love the other never ends as there is always another other to love in the time that remains and therefore the community is always arriving and can never arrive: impossible possible.

To end with a working description: *in love for the other, witness and in faith bear testimony to the grace of receiving the Christ Event (auto-deconstruction) as an inner and inter-textual event*[12] *in reading texts within their contexts and the opening of a space of hope for the impossible possible that such double reading creates so as to continue reading in the time that remains.*

This working description needs to be subverted by reading *it* within its con*text*.

Why can one translate the Christ-event into the postmodern metaphor and imagination? Has a new truth been found? No, I could not have done otherwise as the letter arrives at its destination. Can the West think beyond Athens and Jerusalem or will Athens and Jerusalem always be part of thinking from a Western perspective? The Bible, like the writings of the Greeks, are part of the West's mythology. They form part of the West's narrative resources and thus imaginings. Postmodernity developed out of this fertile ground and thus the imaginings of postmodernity are within the metaphors of both Athens and Jerusalem amongst others. There is no outside text and therefore there are no imaginations outside the texts of the West for somebody whose con*text* is influenced by the West. Could it have been otherwise that these two inter-texts translate into each other? Perhaps, as the letter does and possibly does not arrive at its destination as it is haunted by a Christology.

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12   I specifically speak of this love an inner and inter-textual event as it is about reading and receiving the other as text within a context particularly her or his context of their sacred canopy which challenges one's own sacred canopy and thus questioning and destroying one's canopy (home: *oikos-nomos*).

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