

Meylahn, J-A
University of Pretoria

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (Jn 14:6).” Fundamental postfoundational evangelism in a post-modern plural society.

ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt to respond to the need for responsible evangelism in a post-modern plural society. This is a tremendous challenge for evangelism to be responsible both to the Christian tradition and the social context. The article interprets the context as a text - an infinite text with continuous *différential* referring – and therefore this context obliges one to reread the texts of tradition with an acute awareness of *différence*. This awareness of *différence* opens a space not for strong truths of presence and absolutes, but for a messianic expectation or a messianic hope. This messianic hope creates space that is pregnant with expectation for justice and democracy to come through radical hospitality. The messianic way is a way of life that creates space for the other and in that way it is a way of being an evangelistic community.

1. INTRODUCTION

The theme of this conference¹ is: “Responsible evangelism in a post-modern society in the presence of God: locally contextual, socially constructed and interdisciplinary”.

Let us unpack this theme by way of introduction. To be responsible is always to be responsible to something or someone. I quote from the Oxford Dictionary: “liable to be called to account to person or thing” (Sykes 1982:887).

If we are responsible, to whom or to what are we called to account to? I understand that within our theme there is a double calling to responsibility. Firstly, we are called to be responsible to God (“in the presence of God”), in this case (a theological conference) the God of the Christian tradition therefore called to account to the Christian understanding of God within tradition. Secondly, we are called to be responsible to the context, namely a post-modern, locally contextual and social constructionist interpretation of society.

This is a tremendous challenge for evangelism to be responsible both to the Christian tradition and the social context. The question I understand this conference to be asking is: How to read

1 The essay is based on a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Practical Theology in South Africa from the 17th to the 19th of January 2007 in Wellington. The theme of the conference was: Responsible evangelism in a post-modern society in the presence of God: locally contextual, socially constructed and interdisciplinary.

evangelism in this double responsibility? I would like to propose that one responsibility necessitates the other responsibility. I will first unpack this statement and then apply this double responsibility to a reading of evangelism.

2. A DOUBLE RESPONSIBILITY

Let us begin with the responsibility towards the *context*. The theme already qualifies this *context* as a post-modern, locally contextual and socially constructed society. How do we understand and interpret this *context*? Derrida's understanding of "le texte en general" (Derrida 1967:14) can be translated into *context*. Derrida says:

"What I call 'text' implies all the structures called 'real', 'economic', 'historical', socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents. Another way of recalling once again that 'there is nothing outside the text.' That does not mean that all referents are suspended, denied, or enclosed in a book, as people have claimed, or have been naive enough to believe and to have accused me of believing. But it does mean that every referent and all reality has the structure of a *différential* trace, and that one cannot refer to this 'real' except in an interpretative experience. The latter neither yields meaning nor assumes it except in a movement of *différential* referring" (Derrida 1988:148).

In other words, the general text or *context*, as locally contextual and socially constructed reality, is "a limitless network of differentially ordered signs which is not preceded by any meaning, structure, or *eidōs*, but itself constitutes each of these" (Critchley 1999:38). The locally contextual and socially constructed *context* can be understood as *archi-writing*, as grammar (Derrida 1976). This grammar, *archi-writing*, is the *context* of our experiences and therefore the *context* of our reality. It is this *context* that constitutes the locally contextual and socially constructed reality. If the *context* of experience is a limitless text, does this not necessitate us to turn to the other texts with a difference or *différance*²?

It is on the surface of this general text or *context* that there 'is' deconstruction. It is on the surface of this *context* that a double reading can take place. It is in the context of this general text, this *archi-writing* and this limitless *context* that we can turn to the texts of tradition, re-read them and be responsible to them by faithfully repeating them in a limitless *context* and thus move beyond them to a postfoundationalism.

It is the grammar of the *context* or put differently, the context is grammar, namely *archi-writing*, which calls us to responsible reading of the texts of tradition. It is by being called to responsibility to this *archi-writing*, namely the *context*, which now allows us to turn to the texts of tradition. The post-modern society or *context* as a locally contextual, social constructionist *context* allows us to turn to the texts of tradition and reread these texts and repeat the texts of evangelism within the Christian tradition faithfully, within a limitless *context* of *archi-writing*. I would like to argue that evangelism is responsible if it heeds this double calling to account, namely to the *archi-writing* (limitless network of *différential* traces) as well as to the texts of tradition.

3. REPETITION OR REREADING

I would suggest that we turn to the texts and repeat them, both the text from the Gospel of John, as well as other texts of the Christian tradition. Repetition is not to discover their essence or their

2 *Différance* cannot be defined, as it defies definition, but if one would attempt to understand the concept one could bring the two ideas differ and defer together. In other words a spatial and a temporal difference (Critchley 1999:35)

“real truth” as that would be recollection according to Kierkegaard. Repetition is to faithfully repeat them, to re-read and thus to comment on them in the *context* of *différance*. Kierkegaard explains the importance of repetition. If repetition is at all possible, it is a movement forward as eternity is not something lost, but something to be seized. Kierkegaard contrasts repetition³ as a forward movement to recollection as non-movement (Kierkegaard 1983:149). In every attempt of fidelity to the text, in repeating the text or in commentary on the text, there is betrayal. “For commentary is never neutral; it employs a meta-language which always derives from a choice or a decision – in short, a critical judgement which focuses upon certain texts, themes, and authors to the exclusion of others” (Critchley 1999:60). In every reading of a text there is a double reading, namely a faithful attempt to repeat the text and an alterity – a heterogeneous reading. In this double reading a space is opened for choice and decision, and thus a space is opened for ethics and responsibility. “A dignity and an unbreachable duty of decision. An unbreachable responsibility” (Derrida 1978:80). It is a duty, a dignity and responsibility that cannot be breached yet it breaches, breaks, and interrupts the totality and the ontology of the text and the questions the text raises. It interrupts the metaphysical and ontological and thus onto-theological interpretations of totality that have inscribed themselves into the readings and repetitions of these texts and thus captured these texts within their sacred texts. It is only in repeating these texts and faithfully commenting on them that there is dehiscence and alterity. It is in the double reading that the heterogeneous, the alterity, appears and in the indecision between the two we are called to responsibility, to ethics.

In every faithful rereading of a text within the *context* there is ingratitude to the text and this ingratitude is no accidental evil in repetition, but it is fatally inscribed within the text in the ethical Saying of the Said of the text (Derrida 1980:56). It is in the hesitation or indecision of the two or more possibilities that we are called to ethics, to an ethical responsibility and ethical injunction. Ethics, as understood by Levinas, is a responsibility toward the other and thus a responsibility to alterity. Levinas describes ethics as a relation between terms that cannot be united by a synthesis of understanding or in terms of the subject/object opposition (Levinas 1987:116). Therefore one can also speak of ethical evangelism as evangelism that is responsible to the other, as both the wholly other⁴ as well as the other other. “From the standpoint of the self, the ethical relation is a relation with an absolutely singular other whom I can neither include nor exclude from psyche” (Critchley 1999:179). I will now turn to a double reading of the text to discover a possible interpretation of what responsibility toward the other means.

To discover the ethical in the text of evangelism, namely responsible evangelism, let us turn to a text of tradition that is often used as a basis for evangelism. In the title I have quoted John 14:6, but would it be responsible to read this verse without its context?

John 14:1 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.² There are many rooms in my Father’s house. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going away to prepare a place for you?³ And if I am going away to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will welcome you into my presence, so that you may be where I am.⁴ You know where I am going, and you know the way.”⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we

3 „The dialectics of repetition is easy, for that which is repeated has been – otherwise it could not be repeated – but the very fact that it has been makes the repetition into something new. When the Greeks said that all knowing is recollecting, they said that all existence, which is, has been; when one says that life is a repetition, one says: actuality, which has been, now comes into existence. If one does not have the category of recollection nor of repetition, all life dissolves into an empty, meaningless noise” (Kierkegaard 1983:149).

4 The wholly Other could be an understanding or interpretation of God.

don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you have known me, you will also know my Father. From now on you know him and have seen him" (International Standard Version).

What comes to mind when we think of evangelism? What comes to mind when one hears this verse: "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? Sadly an image that immediately comes to my mind are the images forced upon us by tele-evangelism and aggressive church growth movements, which in turn conjure up images of a highly exclusive understanding of evangelism based on the acceptance of a certain absolute truth which is held in the hands of the pastor or church growth methodology – a truth that can be captured in dogma and which can be defended and proclaimed. It is a truth that can form the basis of a methodological assimilation of the other in the same.

A dominant tradition of evangelism understands evangelism as openness to the world by reaching out to the un-enclosed (non-churched), but with the intent to enclose this world within an exclusivity based on a certain truth. This interpretation is based on varying degrees of fundamentalism, totality and exclusivity and this inevitably leads to violence. This very text (Jn 14:6) has often been used to support such an exclusive understanding of truth, namely that the only way to heaven is through acceptance of a pre-defined understanding of Jesus. Our world has seen enough of violence in the name of truth such as fundamental holy wars, war on terrorism as well as murders of doctors in the name of pro-life. Does evangelism need such a strong truth? Is this the only way to read or understand evangelism? Is this the only way to read this text? Does not our *context* oblige us and thus call us to a responsible reading of these texts? The *context*, understood as both the plural context with its numerous locally contextual social constructed realities as well as the *context* as archi-writing, calls us to a responsible reading.

4. STRONG TRUTHS

This understanding of evangelism is based on a strong truth. This interpretation of the text is possible because of a strong understanding of truth. Let me explain what I understand as strong truth. It is a truth, which is definable, which can be possessed and can be named. It is a truth that can be formulated into dogmas. If we take Heidegger's (Heidegger 1996:29) interpretation of the Greek understanding of truth as *aletheia* then a strong truth is an unconcealed truth. It is a truth, which has been revealed completely without any concealment. Or according to Derrida a strong truth would be a truth that *is*, therefore present and without *différance* or a truth without traces, but such a truth would be for Heidegger and Derrida death – namely the end. It would be the end of history itself. Is Jesus proclaiming himself as such a strong truth? Is His life and teaching such a clear un-concealment without any concealment? Or should we understand His life and teaching to be both concealment and un-concealment, to be hidden, just as God is hidden? If Jesus is such a strong truth, fully revealed without any concealment, why then did the people of the Book not accept him? The crib and the Cross conceal much more than they reveal and it is for that reason that the Cross is both a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the world as Paul writes 1 Corinthians 1:23⁵.

Strong truths are the truths of fundamentalism, truths of totality, of presence, metaphysics and ontology and thus onto-theology. Is this desire for a strong truth not one of the original sins

5 1Cor 1:23 "... but we preach Christ crucified. He is a stumbling block to Jews and nonsense to Gentiles".

expressed in Genesis 11? This story describes humanity's need to construct permanent signs and to capture traces in permanent signs, because of the unbearable lightness of living with differential traces. Derrida's interpretation of this story:

"The "tower of Babel" does not merely figure the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalizing, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, architectural construction, system and architectonics" (Derrida 2002a:104).

God's response to humanity's construction of the "tower of permanent presence" is repeated with a difference in 1 Corinthians 1:27-28: "But God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised [*ta agene*] in the world, things that are not [*ta me onta*], to reduce to nothing that is [*ta onta*]".

God chose what *is not* to reduce to nothing (to deconstruct) *what is*.

In the ontological tradition, evangelism has often been read as the propagation of a truth that *is*. This reading has forgotten or even refused the ethical paradoxical alterity and therefore the necessity to re-read these texts, to repeat these texts with a forward movement and not a non-movement of recollection. A repetition allows the blind spots and the margins of these texts to be heard in order to allow the ethical Saying, that which is not, of the texts to be heard. Let us hear the voice of one of the church fathers, Augustine, who did not have a strong interpretation of truth, but a different understanding, a little less strong, a little less Greek understanding of truth, namely *facere veritatem*⁶, truth as doing truth – "I am the way", Jesus says, could this lead us to an understanding of truth as a way of living or doing? A strong truth can only call to violence. A powerful truth that gives you access to an exclusive room in heavenly paradise needs its crusaders, its advocates and its defenders who defend its exclusivity.

Elie Wiesel (1987) in his book, "Der Prozeß von Schamgorod" tells the story of God being on trial in an inn in Schamgorod, after another attempt to exterminate the Jews. A father and his violated daughter are the only survivors of this violence in the name of holy truth. One night three travelling actors arrive to celebrate a Jewish festival. They are unaware of what has happened in this town. After hearing all that has happened they decide to dramatise a trial of God. They put God on trial, yet in their midst they find no one who is willing to be God's advocate. Eventually somebody enters, Sam, who is prepared to be God's advocate, but this advocate of God's truth brings the whole company to its doom in the very moment that he is revealed as Satan⁷.

Kierkegaard had similar feelings about those who believed it to be their task to defend truth, defend God and keep the absolute presence or the metaphysics of God protected from the flow and flux of history and time (Caputo 1987:11). Kierkegaard understands that this crusade to defend the presence or metaphysics of God has transformed Christianity into Christendom, which is influenced by the philosophical tradition beginning with Plato all the way to Hegel. Has a dominant interpretation of evangelism not for too long been understood as the expansion of Christendom?

6 The Confessions of Saint Augustine Book 10.

7 Sam: Und ihr habt mich für einen Heiligen gehalten? Einen Gerechten? Ich, ein Weiser, zur Verehrung geschaffen? Ich, ein Herold des Glaubens? Armselige Narren! Wie blind seid ihr doch! Wenn ihr nur wüßtet, wenn ihr nur wüßtet... (Satan hebt den Arm, als wolle er ein Zeichen geben. Im gleichen Augenblick erlischt die letzte Kerze, die Tür wird mit einem ohrenbetäubenden Getöse eingedrückt.) (Wiesel 1987:117-118).

5. REPEATING (REREADING) THE TEXT IN THE CONTEXT OF REPEATING (REREADING) THE TRADITION

Is such a form of evangelism in line with the protestant tradition? That is a question that I need to clarify, as the evangelical protestant tradition has been an accomplice in the development and maintenance of Christendom, its crusades and the defence of onto-theology. For example, Hegel had a tremendous influence on protestant and especially Lutheran theology in modernity. The responsibility towards the *context* obliges us to re-read this text, but re-read this text in the context of the four beacons of the protestant tradition (the four soli) if we are also called to account before this tradition.

The *context* calls us to responsibility by rereading or double reading these texts, namely the text from John as well as the four beacons of protestant faith. I choose the word beacons rather than foundations or pillars, because the image of a beacon is different from the images of foundations or pillars, as foundations conjure up an idea of a founding principle, an absolute basis, while beacons are things one gets glimpses of between the waves, as they give direction by pointing without necessarily being a solid universal absolute foundation. Maybe like David Tracy's (Tracy 2002-2004) fragments or traces of something to watch out for in the sea of life's turmoil. Do we have more than this if we dare take the socially constructed text or the archi-writing of our *context* absolutely seriously? If we take the text of our practical life-experiences seriously, do we have more than fragments, traces or beacons that we hope and pray are there, who call us and beckon us as we are battered about in the sea of life? Do we have more than narratives, liturgies and confessions that seek to give form to the fragments and traces of a hidden God and thus lead us into prayer and hope? Do we dare have more than that? "Fragments are our spiritual situation. And that is not so bad a place to be" (Tracy 1999:173).

Let us reread, let us repeat these beacons, fragments or traces of which we dare not have more. In every repetition there is a difference – a difference that cannot be read. Let us read that which cannot be read, and in doing so be responsible to the text of evangelism, the text of tradition (the beacons that call us) and to the *context*.

5.1 *Sola Scriptura*

Sola Scriptura (by scripture alone). Let us take this beacon of our tradition absolutely seriously. To know the truth of this beacon let us follow Augustine's understanding of truth, namely *facere veritatem*. Truth is known in doing the truth. Let us do the truth of *sola Scriptura* and turn to the text alone before us. Let us read slowly, even literally, for while I have no love for the literalism of the evangelicals and fundamentalists, I am a great lover of the literalism of a close literary reading, which gives us fragmentary access to the site of the events, the traces of elusive truths which summon us, as they are harboured by words (Caputo 2006:56). Let us place *sola Scriptura* within the *context* of archi-writing – there is no outside-text and there is nothing outside of the text (Derrida 1976:158 & 163) – alone the text. It is all we have so let us take this text absolutely seriously.

Let us turn to the text and to the commentary of the text in tradition, but in the context of Derrida's offering of *sola Scriptura*, namely deconstruction⁸. Derrida's understanding of

8 A deconstructive reading of text occupies a space between the writer's intentions and the text, between what the writer commands and fails to command in a language. It is into this space between intentions and text that Derrida inserts what he calls the 'signifying structure' of the reading (Critchley 1999:23/ Derrida 1976:158).

deconstruction cannot be defined as anything but as that which takes place when we read in the *context* of archi-writing. Deconstruction takes place in reading a text (Critchley 1999:22). This is what Derrida calls the “first task, the most elementary of tasks” (Derrida 1986:41). It is a double reading of the text that interlaces at least two motives or layers of reading, generally by repeating what Derrida understands as the dominant interpretation (Derrida 1988:143) “of a text in the guise of a commentary and second, within and through this repetition, leaving the order of commentary and opening a text up to the blind spots of ellipses within the dominant interpretation” (Critchley 1999:23). Let us turn to the reading of the text.

“In my Father’s house there are many rooms”. If we look at the textual or literary context of these words, we discover that Jesus is talking to a strange group of people who are not at all worthy of these prepared rooms. He has just told this group of strange outcasts (fishermen, sinners, tax-collectors, maybe even prostitutes) that one of them will betray him and another deny him. Jesus is preparing rooms for a group of people who had traditionally been excluded from the exclusive room kept only for the accepted as defined by a law of the same – the true heirs (the son who remained at home⁹). This room is for the holy, those who are identical to the law and the tradition. In this text the exclusive room prepared for the true heir, prepared by the past, is broken open for the incoming of the unaccepted, the unholy, the other, the different, just as they are all included in this upper room for the last supper. Our metaphysical and ontological thinking and our tradition tell us that it is impossible to have an open room where everyone is invited. An unconditional hospitality cannot be. It is impossible.

“It is as though hospitality were the impossible: as though the law of hospitality defined this very impossibility, as if it were only possible to transgress it, as though *the* law of absolute, unconditional, hyperbolic hospitality, as though the categorical imperative of hospitality commanded that we transgress all the laws (in the plural) of hospitality, namely, the conditions, the norms, the rights and the duties that are imposed on hosts and hostesses, on the men or women who give a welcome as well as the men or women who receive it” (Derrida 2000: 75-77).

Levinas describes Western tradition as that which seeks to enclose all phenomena within the closure of comprehension (*begreifen*, *begriff*, *greifen*) and thus reduce plurality to unity (Levinas 1969: 102-104). This has characterised the Western tradition since Plato to Hegel and therefore this tradition tells us that there must be something special about these outcasts for them to have room in the heavenly paradise and be assimilated into the same, into the holy. There must be something about them so that we can conceptualise (*begreifen*) why they were allowed into this exclusive room. There must be some condition that allows them to be assimilated into the community of the accepted, to inherit what is preserved alone for the true heirs. One dominant tradition that has helped us to conceptualise this (*begreifen*) is that their faith gives them access to the law of the same, the holy and the included. In a traditional reading of evangelism this special condition, which transforms the unacceptable into the acceptable, was to accept the truth in faith. Evangelism, in this tradition, can be understood as helping people to accept the truth in faith and thereby gain entrance into the exclusive room of heavenly paradise.

Remember our pillar, *sola Scriptura*, to do the truth and not disappear behind the text in wild speculation, but to remain in the letter of the text (there is nothing outside of the text – *sola Scriptura*). Jesus is opening rooms for these people who deny, betray, run away and doubt him

9 Luke 15: 11-32

(Thomas). Here there is a room for sinners, and a room for people who struggle to believe and therefore a room for doubters like Thomas. Room has been created for all, for outsiders and sinners and outcasts, unconditional hospitality. Is this true justice, namely space for all, especially for the excluded, the non-same and thus the unholy?

If all we have is the text (*sola Scriptura*) then this text speaks of a heterogeneity that is unheard of. It is not about homogeneity, exclusivity, strong truths, but heterogeneity, openness toward the other, the disinherited, the non-heir, the prodigal son. A paradise of justice where there is room for all. It is a vision of a place where there is room for the multitude of voices – where there is room for the plurality of singular locally contextual truths and where everything is not reduced to the same, where everything is not forced into the homogeneous acceptable. Can it be that this is what the text says? I do not know, but who does, as there is no outside the text – *sola Scriptura*. Could this be an alternative reading of evangelism as open evangelism that does not assimilate the other into the same, namely evangelism as justice to come or evangelism as democracy to come? Can we understand the *truth* of evangelism to be *a way* of creating room for the other as other, *to live* in freedom, unthreatened? Is this what “I am *the way* and *the truth* and *the life*” could mean?

This heterogeneity and this justice to come is not only found in this isolated text, but it is the biblical dream throughout the Gospels as the Gospels are filled with these strange images of the kingdom as a kingdom of all sorts, for example the parables of the banquets¹⁰ to which the excluded and marginalized (those without invitation) are invited, because those who had exclusive rights to come had other more important issues to take care of. This image of the heterogeneous community is consistent in the Gospels and it is probably this idea that got Jesus into trouble with the authorities because he refused to reduce the other to the same, but invites the other, places the other first and places the other before the same.

Where does this heterogeneity come from? What strange force opens the homogeneous for the other? What madness is this that has unchained the world from the metaphysical onto-theological God¹¹? We can add to Nietzsche’s concern: what madness has unchained the world from the same, from the present and from what is?

5.2 *Sola Gratia*

It is the madness of the gift, *sola Gratia* (by grace alone). “The gift, one might say, is *how* things “come,” how *the* impossible happens” (Caputo 1997:160). Grace, the gift, has the power to break open the economy of the law of the same for the incoming of the other. The law, as that which keeps the present protected, protects the given, protects that which is and closes it up by keeping things captive to the present and the past. The law keeps people captive to their sins, to their pasts, and to their present limited possibilities. The law keeps people prisoners to their debts, their debts to tradition and their debts to the ghosts of the past. Grace forgives sins, cancels debts and thus

10 Matthew 22:10, Luke 5: 29, Luke 14: 13, Luke 14: 21

11 The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. “Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. We have killed him—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying, as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. (Nietzsche 1974: 181)

liberates from the past, opening the present for a true future and not only a future present or a future past, but an absolute future. It redeems living time (of past, present and future present) as it breaks open this time for the absolute future which is a future liberated from the past and open for the wholly other, the unknown, the unpredictable, the indefinable, the absolute dawn of a new day. This absolute future can be described as resurrected new life and this is impossible according to the conditions of the possible. The time of grace is time of forgiveness. “The time of forgiveness is a kind of double time, involving as it does both the painful past, the time of the *skandalon*, the time of the offence or the sin (*amarte*), and the wiping away of the past” (Caputo 2006:146). “Forgiveness is not, it *should not be*, normal, normative, normalising. It *should* remain exceptional and extraordinary, in the face of the impossible: as if it interrupted the ordinary course of historical temporality” (Derrida 2002b:32). The impossible that can only be described as that which cannot be, as Nicodemus discovered¹², namely re-birth. Is evangelism not about being born again and therefore about the impossible?

5.3 Sola Fide

Grace breaks open the homogeneous room of the present and of the same for the other, for the heterogeneous, the impossible and for rebirth into a dawn liberated from the present and the past thus liberated from the conditions of the possible.

This is impossible according to the laws of the present, which are defined and constructed by the past. How does one respond to the impossible, the unpredictable, and the indefinable, that which escapes closure? One response is the response of Abraham and Moses: “Here I am”. The response is by faith alone (*sola fide*). It is with the story of Abraham that the theological narrative of the three faiths of the Book begins. It is here, with Abraham’s response, “Here I am¹³”, where theological thinking begins, where we have come to the limits of what we know and of what we can know and where we enter that which we can only think about with fear and trembling. Grace, the gift, opens the possibility of theological thinking. Heidegger made the distinction between thinking and philosophy (grasping) and Kant made the distinction between thinking and conceiving (determining) (Caputo 1997:163). For me fundamental theology, in other words the non-foundational foundation of theology, is thinking the impossible therefore it cannot be understood as conceiving or grasping. Grace means to begin thinking the impossible. The thought of grace, the gift, is “this impossible thinking, this impossible itself” (Derrida 1991:10). This, I believe, is to think theologically. To think that which we can only believe, hope for and pray for. This is what I understand as fundamentally theological thinking – to think the impossible.

How is this possible?

5.4 Sola Christus

Sola Christus (I am the way, the truth and the life), but maybe we need to translate this too Greek *Christus* into a little more Hebrew *Sola Messiah*. The unexpected expected One, the stranger, the Other and the impossible to come.

“For the other is not the possible. So it would be necessary to say that the only possible invention is the invention of the impossible.... An invention has to declare itself to be the invention of that which did not appear to be possible; otherwise it only makes explicit a program of possibilities within the economy of the same” (Derrida 1989:60).

12 John 3:4

13 Genesis 22:11

The invention or the coming of the Messiah is the coming of the impossible: God as human, a king in a stable, the virgin birth and God's death on the Cross. It is the call to be responsible to the impossible, non-present (the *ta me onta*), those described in Matthew 25 and the impossibility thereof. "When did we see you naked, sick and imprisoned?" is the question that will inevitably be asked. Alone through Christ is alone through the coming of the Messiah, the One that opened our lives for the impossible by the gift of unconditional grace, but the One who also always is the One to come.

Tracy argues: "For Christians, the Scriptures end with, "Come, Lord Jesus." I now add the apocalyptic to my developing Christology in ways that my earlier work did not. You see, Christ has come but quite importantly, he still has not come. We must remain messianic as Christians. We don't fully know what Christ will be, nor when his second coming will occur. So the second coming of Christ now becomes a symbol as important as the symbols of incarnation, cross and resurrection" (Tracy 2002).

We cannot think Christology without the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and second coming therefore we cannot think Christology without the Messianic. Christology in this *context* would be thinking messianic which is thinking the impossible. Christology as messianic is thinking the impossible, namely the impossibility of the incarnation, the impossibility of the death of God on the Cross, the impossibility of the resurrection and the awaiting for the coming of the impossible. Jesus, the Messiah, says: "I am the way and the truth and the life."

6. A VISION OF RESPONSIBLE EVANGELISM

The vision for responsible evangelism is a universalism of singularity, a kingdom of singularity and a kingdom of many rooms, or as Caputo says, a kingdom without walls and borders.

"The kingdom of God is a community without community, a city without walls, a nation without borders, unconditional hospitality without sovereign power, where the decision procedure for admission is based on a holy undecidability between insider and outsider. For the world, it looks like all hell is broken out, the holy hell that we have been insisting all along is the stuff of a sacred anarchy" (Caputo 2006:278).

It is a post-foundational theology, and the road to get there according to *sola Scriptura* is the way of Messiah, the truth of Messiah. Truth as *facere veritatem*, living the freedom of grace whilst hoping, praying, longing, for the Messiah as the book of Revelation ends: come, Lord Jesus, come.

Postfoundational theology is a concept first coined by Professor Wentzel van Huyssteen and he describes postfoundationalism as making two moves:

"First, it fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God's presence in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation" (Van Huyssteen 1997:4).

Postfoundational theology is theology that has moved both beyond the restrictions and insular comfort of theological foundationalism and beyond the relativism and arbitrariness of antifoundationalism (Van Huyssteen 1997:43). In the essay *Postfoundationalism, deconstruction and the hope that motivates research in Practical Theology*, I describe the relationship between deconstruction and postfoundationalism and how the two can complement each other.

“Postfoundationalism searches for truth in the multi-disciplinary dialogue between the root metaphors of the different disciplines, whereas deconstruction searches for the other. It is not motivated by truth, but by justice, hospitality and democracy as it searches in the cracks, tensions and heterogeneity of these root metaphors, thereby keeping tradition alive, keeping foundations open to that which is to come: the incoming of the other, the stranger, the one not yet heard” (Meylahn 2006:998).

What would evangelism entail in such a context of fundamental postfoundational theology? Could it be this kingdom of singularities, the universalism of singularity, this kingdom of others? But this needs to be proclaimed and more than proclaimed, it needs to be lived – I am the way and the life. It is as Augustine said, “*facere veritatem*” – a truth not known as in epistemology, not a fundamental truth, not an absolute truth, not a universal founding principle, but a fundamentally theological truth, namely a way of living the truth. A way of beginning to think theologically or maybe even better a way of beginning to be thought by the Other, a way of being called by the Other to a way of life. It is, maybe, a way of being responsible to the Other – an unconditional responsibility towards the other. Evangelism is a response to this being thought, to this calling, and our response like the fathers of faith before us, Abraham and Moses, can only be: “here I am”. Evangelism is a way of life – “I am the way, the truth, and the life”. It is maybe a way of life that believes and hopes for the justice of heterogeneity. It is maybe a way of life that dreams of democracy to come, a radical hospitality for the other and thus a way of shalom – world peace. Maybe evangelism is that impossible possibility, who knows? God knows!

Can we dare not be evangelists in a world threatened by the violence of homogeneous communities that *have* the truth and therefore a right to the limited space on our planet? We are called to responsibility both to the text of the Word as well as the text of our world. In being responsible to the *context* we turn to the text of tradition and in rereading these texts alterity is opened and calls us to the ethical. Responsible evangelism is ethical evangelism toward the singularity of the other and Other, expressed in a messianic way of life. The messianic is an open way of life hoping and praying for the impossible and the justice to come. Would it be responsible not to be an evangelist?

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KEY WORDS

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TREFWOORDE

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KONTAKBESONDERHEDE

Dr Johann-Albrecht Meylahn
 Research Associate: Department of Practical Theology
 Faculty of Theology
 University of Pretoria
 0002 PRETORIA
 Sel: 072 241 2368
 E-pos: meylahn@lantic.net