
The Logic of the Name of Jesus: Derridian Nomination and the Radical Alterity of Theology

Nathan R. Kerr
Vanderbilt University

In the famous kenosis passage of Philippians 2, St. Paul quotes an ancient hymn in order to express eloquently what I here call the logic of the name of Jesus. The hymn's procedure is this: God gives Jesus "the name that is above (*hyper*) every name, so that at (*en*) the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (2:9-11). As such, Paul renders the name of Jesus radically different—wholly other—from every other name, and yet in solidarity with every human name, the name outside of which the human vocation of praise cannot happen. Furthermore, such naming is placed within a liturgical context; Paul has just hymnically re-narrated the humility of Jesus' incarnation as a paradigm for how the people at the church of Philippi should relate to one another (2:1-8).

In an attempt to understand something of the "logic" of the name of Jesus that lies behind this ancient hymn, this essay unfolds as an exploration into the naming of God, and the appellation of "wholly other" that this name suggests and evokes. From beginning to end, I assume a kind of obsession with alterity: the name of God *is* the name of the wholly other, and what is ultimately at stake in this name is the preservation of the radical alterity of the Other. One recent attempt at such preservation, that of Jacques Derrida, whose philosophy in many

ways could be said to be obsessed with alterity, and whose recent interactions with theological thought have led him to translate the name of God in terms of this obsession, will be shown to be inadequate. Alternatively, I shall argue for a new account of the naming of God in terms of both narrative and liturgy as they are epitomized in the name of Jesus.

Jacques Derrida

The Name of God: *tout autre est tout autre*

"God is wholly other." So goes Jacques Derrida's reading of the name of God: "God is the name of the absolute other as other and as unique" (Derrida 1995a, 68). As John Caputo understands it, "God" is for Derrida "a hypernym for the Most High," the wholly other, that which cannot be brought within the "textual concatenation" of signs, the rational "law of textuality," the horizon of finitude (1998, 190-91). "God" thus names the trace of that which is so radically other that it always "slips away" from every name we give it, an alterity so radical that even the textualization of its name bears witness to its "nameless" and "unpronounceable" condition (Derrida 1995a, 67). On this account, one can no longer situate "wholly other" as a category or predicate of God; rather, "God" is only a case of the wholly other, an exemplary presentation, and hence oblivion, of an alterity *so* radical that it overruns every name, the name of God included (see Derrida 1992b, 107-108). As such, the anonymous undecidability of alterity even overruns one's hypernymic effort to say "God is wholly other" (Caputo 1998, 190-205).

And yet Derrida remains concerned to save the name of God, to keep it safe (*sauf*). Insofar as naming God remains an expression of one's obsession with alterity, it expresses one's desire to give oneself wholly over to all of the undecidability and open-endedness that radical alterity itself entails. Naming God implies a commitment to the "absolute singularity of the other as other" (Derrida 1995a, 68), and insofar as *no* name can contain the unnameableness of alterity itself, this commitment binds me to the singularity of any Other, every Other—*God*, for example. It thus becomes necessary, in order to avoid the perils of all determinative appellation, to *translate* the name of

God. Everything that Derrida says about alterity turns on this translation, namely, that “every other is wholly other:” “The other is God or no matter whom, more precisely, no matter what singularity, as soon as any other is totally other [*tout autre est tout autre*]” (Derrida 1995b, 74). According to Derrida’s “logic of alterity,” *tout autre est tout autre* simply means “that every other, without and before any determination, any specification...is absolutely other” (Derrida 1999, 135). In essence, what one is saying about God when one says “God is wholly other” can now be said about *any* Other, and about every Other (*autrui*) in her singularity as other (*autre*)¹ (Caputo 1997, 48-54).

Here Derrida is attempting, in a move that is *stricto sensu* and by his own admission impossible, to save the particularity of *every* Other by saving the name “God.” At the same time, by translating this name according to the tautological maxim *tout autre est tout autre* he is unequivocally asserting that no singularity can contain the flux of alterity itself; rather, this flux “overruns” every singularity. But is this not to risk exposing the utter alterity of every singularity to the obfuscation and perturbation of *différance*, the quasi-transcendental condition of alterity? Does this not submit each particular Other to the conditions of endless deferral, where singularity and uniqueness are themselves omitted in the appearance of the name as linguistic sign (Schalkwyk 2000, 170-74; see Derrida 1976, 89-91)? Are we not led to a point of endless substitutability—Derrida’s “exemplarism”—where every name is a formalized example of every other name, and where translatability becomes so restlessly endless that there is no particularity at all (Derrida 1995b, 76)? And without particularity can there really be radical alterity?

In seeking to explicate what is at stake in these highly nuanced questions, it will be the contention of this article that radical alterity demands the radical particularity of *every* human being, and that the *theological* condition for this particularity is the determinate yet radically open-ended naming of God that occurs in the name “Jesus.” However, before making this more “proper start,” it bears upon us to ask why one should regard sheer indeterminacy as a problem, and why

Derrida's notion of the endless translatability of the name "God" ultimately omits (despite all appearances) radical alterity.

Derrida's Name of God: A Critique

The first problem with the Derridean theory of the name of God is that when alterity is cast in such absolutely undifferentiated terms, each assertion of singularity concerning the Other is identically "pure," and attains to what Catherine Pickstock has called "homogenous heterogeneity" (1999, 161). Indeed, the universality of alterity inherent in the phrase *tout autre est tout autre* reduces the Derridean name to the ideality of a recurrently available otherness that ultimately precludes such concretizations as "name" or "historicity." According to Derrida, "One should say of no matter what or no matter whom what one says of God or some other thing: the thought of whomever or whatever, *it doesn't matter* [*n'importe*]" (1995b, 73). Hence, for all its emphasis on otherness, Derrida's translation of the name of God sounds as much like a logic of inclusion as it does a logic of alterity.

In fairness, we should note that Derrida is painfully concerned at many places to pay scrupulous attention to the singularity of each Other as other. And yet, as Richard Kearney has pointed out, at the same time that he rightly resists reducing the alterity of every other to a pattern of mere formalization, or to the identifiable features of one single, nameable being, Derrida omits the very "criteria" by which we distinguish the Other as *this* Other (1999, 125). The very idea that one can always make any name whatsoever—God, for example—the exemplar of any other name, such that *any* other is the exemplar of *every* other (see Caputo 1997, 52), suggests that there is nothing about deconstruction that can determine the question of *who* calls under the name of God, nothing that specifies *who* the Other is that demands my response (see Caputo 1993, 457-63). The issue here has to do with how far we are obliged to follow deconstruction employing "indeterminacy" as a hermeneutical key: is determination itself an inherently violent notion; does it serve at all points to obscure alterity? As it is, it seems rather that this is a risk run by deconstruction itself: the alterity of the Other is confounded with everyone and everything that is not *this* Other, which in turn compromises the particular transcendence of *every* Other. Herein lies the problem, as I see it: for de-

construction, there is no particularity mediating between the alterity of *différance* and the singularity that presents itself as its exemplar. On at least one reading, then, it seems that the very immediacy of Derrida's "pure" alterity² undergoes a paradoxical transmutation into yet another mode of sameness: each other is *identically* different (Pickstock 1999, 161).

Secondly, in linking the name of God with the notion of desire, Derrida locates the desire of God within the "desert" of "radical atheism" (1995b, 80), and thus fails to think of desire in terms of divine excess. To investigate the intricate nuances of this claim, it might be helpful to undertake a brief foray into the Levinasian notion of desire, as a backdrop against which Derrida's own account can be clarified.³ In attempting to overcome the onto-theological paradigm of desire as lack, Levinas speaks of a desire that is no mere deficiency or privation, but that which flows out of the Infinite as a surplus—a kind of divine superabundance of grace (not a particularly Levinasian phrase, I know).⁴ The source of this desire, for Levinas, is not something within me, but rather is the excess that is God. This implies that God is not simply the hyper-ousiological "first other," nor least of all one other among others, "but other than the other (*autre qu'autrui*)" (Levinas 1989a, 179). It is only by locating oneself *in* the excess that is God—in *the name of God* (1989a, 184)—that one can substitute oneself for the Other as one whose *face* demands my responsibility (1989a, 179–86). As Levinas implies elsewhere, to desire God is to "go toward the others who stand in the trace of illeity" (1986, 359)—the excess that is the trace of God. Only this excess allows us to escape the anonymous rumblings of the *il y a*—the immanent "there is"—by responding with saying "here I am" to all of the particularity that the in-breaking face of the Other demands.

Here is where Derrida's "atheistic" statement concerning the "desire of God" differs most notably from the position of Levinas. Of course, this atheism does not entail a straightaway denunciation of "God," but it does, as Kearney has sufficiently shown, situate the "desire of God" within a context of such "indeterminate and undefined alterity" that this "God" is only always to be "in-vented," always "to-come" (1999, 122–23; cf. Caputo 1997, 71–76).⁵ In situating the de-

sire of God beyond the “desire of the proper” (Derrida 1991, 21-22), Derrida puts forth the alterity that “God” exemplary names as a saturation of desire, overflowing desire with a maximum of indeterminacy. But, and everything turns on this, Derrida’s indeterminable alterity is *so* indeterminable that the saturation of desire empties desire of itself: this autonomous otherness is immeasurable precisely because it is without any determinate specificity (1991, 29). At the same time, the particularity of the Other is *ipso facto* precluded, for this particularity is always prior to and thus quite properly the source of the specificity of one’s desire. Thus, in the name of an otherness beyond desire, a quasi-transcendental “desire beyond desire” (1991, 29-30), Derrida heralds not only a God beyond desire, but also “an utterly faceless other” (Derrida 1998, 21). And insofar as *tout autre est tout autre*, there is no longer *any* particularity, *any* face before which I stand in my desirous response of “here I am” to the Other’s in-breaking. Thus, the saturation of desire by the plentitude of God gets overrun by a second saturation, namely, a “saturation of anonymity,” whereby desire is once again subjected to the “anonymous rumble” of the *il y a* and the “arid abandonment” of absence set over-against presence.⁶

Thirdly, by failing to take account of divine plentitude as *transcendent* plentitude, but rather construing the saturation of alterity as a quasi-*transcendental* “desire beyond desire,” Derrida’s naming of God remains, ironically, within the play of immanence. The endlessly demurring tone of Derrida’s discourse may very well overcome the self-identical presence that attaches itself to the Cartesian ego, but it does so by subjugating the naming self and the named Other to the flux of *différance* in such a way that both are rendered absolutely indeterminate. As such, particularity can no longer be accorded to the call of alterity, and no means of distinguishing the Other from myself within the play of anonymity exists. Such anonymity suggests that Derrida is still working within a reduced sphere of immanence: everything (and nothing) is just “immediately there” (see Levinas 1989b, 29-36). What I mean by this is that Derrida’s logic of alterity pretends to comprehend *all* of language by conscripting all language in advance within *différance*, which appears to have only *one* effect: the univocal deferral of a sign’s positive content.⁷ In attempting to locate the

“ground” of immanence-transcendence in *différance*, Derrida actually appeals to an instituted alterity, whereby particular signs do not *actually* differentiate, via their revealed content, but rather efface themselves in the perpetual postponement of this content. As such, it becomes terribly difficult to distinguish the alterity-obsessed naming of an Other as other from an equally obsessive narcissism by which I merely name myself, inscribe myself within the immanent play of alterity, or rather, inscribe alterity within the immanence that is my self-enclosed self.

In order to retrieve transcendence, one need not appeal once again to a strict metaphysical opposition of outside and inside, but rather stress more positively the excess of language itself. The Other as sign is not other on the basis of its inscription within the “limitlessness of play” (Derrida 2001b, 251) that language always already “is,” but rather in its signification of a qualitatively infinite content, which signifies ecstatically; meaning that now the indeterminable potentiality of language is not a *given* condition to which all particular others are submitted, but is rather an incomprehensible excess of relations that we receive from and are opened out to be *by* this (and every) specifiable Other. Primordial indeterminacy is not now the condition of possibility for all determination, but rather vice versa: we only have access to the true infinity of language through a determinate Other, which means that the Other is not no longer ossified according to an assumed semiotic logic, but is a gift whose determinate signification is a condition of its openness to the infinite. The suggestion here, for the purposes of this article, is that without a *particular* name whose revealed plenitude becomes the inhabitable domain by which every Other is particularized in her otherness, there can be no real transcendence, no genuine ecstasis, thereby resulting in the inscription of all alterity within the realm of immanence (as the repristinization of a spatialized “outside” via the univocity of deferral).⁸

The foregoing critical analysis of Derrida’s naming of God in no way claims to be exhaustive;⁹ it does, however, suggest that if difference is to be celebrated in all of its particularity, we must seek for some other account of the name of God than that which Derrida prescribes. For despite his exaltation of the indeterminacy of the name

within the flux of *différance*, Derrida fails to outwit the dichotomy of universality and particularity, and remains within its paradigm, thereby heralding the play of immanence after all. On the contrary, it is only when we succeed in rendering an account of the name that renegotiates this dichotomy in a way that perfectly integrates particularity and universality, that radical alterity can truly be celebrated.

The Name of Jesus

A Narrativity of Naming

The task at this point is to ask whether the particular name “Jesus” allows theology to contribute anything to a semiotics of alterity surplus to that of a strictly philosophical affirmation of this name’s indeterminacy as a linguistic sign. Here theological discourse must be concerned to illustrate how it is that particularity and universality are integrated in the name of Jesus in such a way that the name is always particular, even as it is universally “repeatable.” In other words, it must show that “Jesus” at once names God as a particular Other, while at the same time orienting us to every Other in all of his or her particularity.

However, one might here entertain a word of caution: the significance of the name “Jesus” for moving beyond the aporia that we have sketched above is *not* “christological” in the sense of asserting cognitive claims about the incarnation along purely propositional doctrinal lines. Neither can it be culled, as it is by John Milbank, from a reading of the texts of the Gospels solely on the level of metanarrative, driven by the metaphors concerning Jesus’ transcendental significance, and abandoning the “temporal and horizontal” structures of narrative in favour of the abstraction of the “spatial and vertical” (1997, 145-68). Such a reading empties the name “Jesus” of all “specifiable content” by yoking this name to an abstract theoretical reality—the assumption of humanity into divinity—that is independent of the narration of this name’s “person” (1997, 149-50). It makes little difference whether we retain the notion of narrative at a universal level (as Milbank does) or simply base our Christology upon a propositional identification of Jesus with God, whereby in Jesus’ name humanity is universally and

generally “saved” (as many dogmatic “high” Christologies do). For in each case, we are led to the same kind of impasse that I have suggested we come to in the Derridian account of naming God, viz., a wholly otherness that defines all humanity without particularity.

On the contrary, what makes the name of Jesus particular, or any name for that matter, is the inimitable history of the person to whom that name refers. Thus, I would rather suggest, following Hans Frei (1975) and Stanley Hauerwas (1983, 72-95), that we begin our approach to the significance of the name Jesus for all of humanity by looking to the Gospel narratives to find out precisely who this *person* Jesus is and why, if at all, this person should norm our characterizations of divine and human alterity. In this way, I am suggesting that an approach to the naming of God through the narrative of Jesus will afford a more complete assessment of the “classical” (i.e., Chalcedonian) christological formula, revealing the indispensability of the christological name Jesus for naming both *God* and the *human* Other.

When our point of departure is the particular life history that the Gospel texts narrate, we give to the name “Jesus” a meaning that has universal significance *only in* its particularity. If it is true, as Paul Ricoeur has aptly suggested, that the naming of God is first of all a matter of narrative confession (Ricoeur 1995, 225), then the naming of Jesus in the Gospels does not stop short with his birth as a doctrinal assessment of the “incarnation,” nor with his death as a doctrinal assessment of the “atonement,” but rather extends to the significance of the whole of his life as it can be said to inaugurate and manifest the kingdom of God (Hauerwas 1983, 81-87). And the kingdom, for Jesus, is not simply announced as a general means of salvation, but rather, as witnessed to in Luke 4, as a new way of being human, a new human community that is to be defined precisely by the specifiable content and actions of this particular human being Jesus Christ. “Jesus” is now the name of a kingdom that we inhabit; we are *in* the name of Jesus not in the sense of an empty spatial category, a desertification of names in which all are “saved,” but rather in the sense that, as part of this new human community, we are oriented to every particular human being. Jesus Christ is the nominal condition for naming every Other, and in this naming we most effectively re-narrate the “content”

of the name of Jesus which we inhabit. It is, then, the unique particularity of this history, which inaugurates the kingdom of God, that makes it “repeatable” as the name in which *every* name is iterated and narrated in all of its particularity.¹⁰

The logic of naming that this narratival approach to the name of Jesus suggests now opens up a more complete reading of the *assumptio carnis* that is said to occur in the christological doctrine of the incarnation. Since Chalcedon, orthodox theology has stated that in Jesus Christ the *Logos* of God “hypostatized human nature into His own hypostasis” (Meyendorff 1975, 74). The significance of this “enhypos-tatization,” as Leontius of Jerusalem understood it, is that Christ’s person is not particularly his own singular property (*idike*), but is in fellowship with every human being and with all of humanity (*koine*) (1975, 74). In other words, what Christ makes possible, *in his person*, is the uniting of all of humankind to God. Thus, Christ is not simply the paradigmatic openness of one human being to God, but is the openness of God to every human being, and is this precisely *as* the perfect openness of humanity to God. Here, one’s turning to face God in Christ is a turning to face all of humanity, insofar as all that humanity is can be said to be enhypostatically located *in* Jesus Christ. And yet, as pure doctrinal speculation, Leontius’ formulation still remains problematic; without the *historicity* of his person, Christ’s humanity becomes merely a foil for “humanity in general.” It was St. John of Damascus who rethought the enhypostatic union in terms that bring us closer to what we are trying to say happens in a narratival reading of Jesus’ history. For the Damascene, Jesus’ person is defined by its “particularities” (*idiomata*), and yet as this particular individual he is the new Adam, the paradigm for a new human existence (1975, 157-61). The enhypostatization of humanity by the *Logos* thus gives Jesus a properly individual history as a human being who is born to a human mother, grows up, and dies. Concomitantly, it is this very particular history that narrates a new kind of humanity, in which every history is particularized in him.

This enhypostatization can *only* happen as an expression of divine plentitude. Christ’s life is first narrated as a human life utterly given over to God—the perfect human offering as the Son’s perfect obedi-

ence of the Father. But because God, lacking nothing, but rather overflowing as a transcendent plentitude, does not *need* this offering, Christ's openness flows out from God as the inexhaustible openness of God to every human being.¹¹ It is this radical openness of Jesus to every human being that provides the content of the second narrativel strand of the Gospels: the kingdom of God. Jesus embodies and proclaims the kingdom as a way of life that is made possible by the first, more properly metanarrativel strand and yet is only rendered universally significant for humanity on the level of this second, more specifically *historical* narrative (*contra* Milbank, for whom the latter is collapsed into the former). And it is this narrative that allows us to locate all of humanity in Jesus, and to narrate the name of every human being as a particularity that is such only *in* the name of Jesus.

This is what makes the name of Jesus irreplaceable as a naming of God, and as the inhabitable space of naming every human Other, for Jesus is not merely an exemplary name whose wholly otherness can be submitted to univocal imitation in each distinct event of naming. Rather, his is a name that is non-identically repeated in every event of naming, in such a way that, contrary to Derrida, for whom naming *any* Other requires turning away from *every other* Other,¹² naming Christ requires and relies upon turning to and naming each particular Other. Moreover, such naming is simultaneously a turning to and naming Jesus Christ (see Ford 1999, 175-76). Our naming of each particular individual therefore situates us always within the community of the kingdom that the particular history of Jesus Christ inaugurates and embodies, and this because our facing of the Other is now situated in and depends upon the utter particularity of this face's (Jesus') relating to each human face. It is in such naming that the church is gathered, established, as a community of naming, a community built upon the celebration of differences, upon the particularity of each difference.¹³ This celebration of differences, I should like to suggest, receives its fullest flourishing in the form of worship, thereby allowing the logic of naming that we have sketched above to take shape as a *liturgical* naming.

Liturgical Naming

To inhabit the name of Jesus narratively is to inhabit this particular history as the context and condition for narrating every particular human subject. But to inhabit this name is to inhabit a history in which worship is already underway, a history in which the doxological offering of humanity to God is already perfected. As such, it is ultimately a liturgical account of the name of Jesus that finally opens up the possibility of naming each and every human Other as one who is in Christ.

The inhabitation of the name of Jesus can only be achieved in what Jean-Luc Marion calls “the finally liturgical function of all theological discourse” (Marion 1999, 38). The hymn of Philippians 2 makes clear that it is “*in (en)* the name of Jesus” that true worship happens (2:10). This liturgical inhabitation of the name, moreover, depends upon the naming of Jesus with “the name that is above (*hyper*) every name” (2:9). Here the preposition *hyper* with the accusative *pan* signifies “over and above, beyond; more than.” This *hyper* thus names Jesus as the excess, the plenitude that is Godself. In being thus named, Jesus is exalted as one who is to be worshipped: every knee bends not only *in* but also *at* the name of Jesus, and every tongue confesses “that Jesus Christ is Lord” (2:10-11). The idea of Jesus “exalted at the right hand of God” (Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Eph 1:20-21) is here paradigmatic: worship addressed to God is, without remainder, addressed to Jesus as well (Ford 1999, 214).

However, the foregoing christological re-narration that occurs in verses 6-8 points us towards a reading of this *hyper* that is not defined by a kind of untouchable hyper-essentiality of God. Rather, this plenitude, this *hyper*, is the kenotic outgoing of God to humanity, an outgoing that is the life-history of Jesus Christ himself, a life that is defined by solidarity with humanity even as it is a life of radical obedience to the Father. Thus it is that the hypernymity of Jesus coincides with the kenosis of God in Christ, which culminates in his “death on a cross” (2:8). Hence, it is not enough simply to name Christ with “the name that is above [wholly other than, exceeding, beyond] every name,” for such would be a crudely idolized form of naming which construes God as a banal, undifferentiated, yet wholly

other “object.” On the other hand, if we read the hypernymity of verses 9-11 as the graced outflow of the Christ-event narrated in verses 6-8, then to ask what it means that Christ is given the name *above* (*huper*) every name is simultaneously to ask what the cross of Christ means, what it means that “while we were still sinners Christ died *for* (*huper*) us” (Rom 5:8).

It is at this point that another use of the word *huper* finds its way into the liturgical movement, one that suggests that our naming of God is now only doxological as also eucharistic. In Mark’s account of the Lord’s Supper, Jesus, after taking the bread and saying, “this is my body” (14:22), takes the cup and says, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for (*huper*) many” (14:24). Here the preposition *huper*, used in this case with the genitive, has traditionally been rendered as “for” in the sense of “in behalf of” or “instead of.” In such a reading, as C. S. Song has pointed out, Jesus stands over-against us as human beings; his dying for us is dependent upon his being altogether different from us, his alterity, his otherness (1990, 215). But as Song avers, this eucharistic *huper* spoken by Christ does not connote “for” merely in the sense of “in behalf of” or “instead of,” but also and more importantly “in solidarity with”; the preposition *huper* with the genitive can also mean “to be on someone’s side” (215-16). That Jesus’ lifeblood is given *for* people means that he is “found in their company, on their side, in solidarity *with* them” (216; emphasis added). Moreover, this *huper* is to be construed narratively: Jesus died for people only insofar as he lived his life with them, touched and allowed himself to be touched by them, grew up with them and incorporated the particularities of their lives into his story. It is in this sense that Song claims that Jesus *is* the people:

Jesus...is the crucified people! ...We cannot know Jesus without knowing people at the same time....By people I mean those women, men, and children whose company Jesus enjoyed, with whom Jesus liked to eat and drink... (216)¹⁴

To worship in the name of Jesus, this name that is above (*huper*) every name, is thus to worship in a name that is for (*huper*) Others in pre-

cisely this sense. In short, Christ is the name above every other name only as the name that is in solidarity with every other name.

What makes Jesus the worshipped one as God is that he is first and foremost worshipper—the *huper* of his hypernymity is dependent upon and coextensive with the *huper* of his being in solidarity with every human being. In other words, as David Ford has cogently illustrated, in his life and death—his kenotic history—“Jesus is God in a way which tells us how to worship God” (1999, 214; see 213-15). As worshipper, he embodies a perfect facing of God. Thus, “there is facing, otherness, within God,” and as such there is “worship within God” (1999, 214). In Christ, perfect humanity is already being offered to God as the epitome of worship. But this offering doubles back as the incarnational bodying forth of God, the God who is to be worshipped and named. His turning to face God in worship *is* his turning to face humanity (see Pickstock 1998, 176-92), which is to say, in a parallel way, that the nominal context for our own worship of God conditions our regard for the face of our human neighbour.

There occurs here a “christological conversion” (Song), which suggests that we turn to and name every particular Other precisely by inhabiting the particular history that is named in Jesus Christ. Paul in Philippians 2 profoundly illustrates this. If we read Philippians 2:3-5 as an indispensable corollary to the hymn in verses 6-11, then the hymn is sounded as an ethical injunction, viz., to relate to one another as Jesus related to God. Furthermore, if we include verses 1-2 in the pericope, then the reader is also enjoined to relate to her neighbour as God relates to her. These two movements—Christ’s relating to God and God’s relating to us—are two movements that occur in *one person, one history*, viz., that of Jesus Christ. Subsequently, we only perfectly relate to one another in Christ, which is simultaneously the condition for perfectly relating to God. One could add that the eucharist is both these aspects at once: the double movement of the ethical and the theological, which is quite properly the *one movement* of worship. It is at this point that the full import of the logic of the name of Jesus can be seen: now to name Jesus with the name that is above every name is to name every Other in Christ. Far from the Derridian notion of naming God, where *tout autre est tout autre* means to name “an

utterly faceless other,” to name the Other is, in a profound reversal, to name Jesus. But each event of naming means that *this particular face* of the Other comes to the fore as the face that is being named, a face that, for all its insistence on particularity and discontinuity, still testifies to the face of Christ, while re-defining and re-narrating this face through a specific kind of non-identical repetition engendered by the eucharistic death of Christ rather than submitting it to some formal category of identically repeated undifferentiated alterity.

Conclusion

To inhabit the name of Jesus as the “space” of all naming is to inhabit his story, his person. But this, as we have seen above, is to inhabit the kingdom with which his person is coextensive. Thus, to inhabit the name of Jesus is to inhabit a community of naming, wherein all naming preserves difference and alterity through the particularization of what Catherine Pickstock has called a liturgical “narrativity of naming” (1998, 182). Unlike the univocal nominalizations of immanentist alterity, this liturgical naming bespeaks otherness with the utmost of particularity. It recognizes that to name an Other is to find oneself “distanced” from that Other (1998, 182), acknowledging the address from that Other as an interruption of one’s own self-enclosed economy of naming. At the same time, I acknowledge my own response to the Other’s call as a being named that is given (as *gift*) from an elsewhere, a beyond of *infinite* real difference, *in* whose name I myself am paradoxically always already situated—the name of Jesus. This being situated and named in the name of Jesus renders my naming of every Other at once both an event of affirmation of the Other’s wholly otherness from me, as well as a self-dispossessing act of solidarity with that Other that is itself the doxological naming of Jesus Christ.

This renders the name of Jesus indispensable as that name which must always be doxologically inhabited and re-narrated, taken up again and again, with difference, in every event of naming as it occurs in the face of each particular Other.

Notes

¹ *Autrui*, in French, refers to the personal Other, the other person, while *autre* refers to otherness in general, to the universal notion of alterity. Since much of what follows relies upon this linguistic distinction, I will render “*autrui*” by “Other,” and “*autre*” by “other.”

² For an incisive critique of the Derridian thematic of purity, see Smith 1998, 197-212.

³ For some key insights upon this relation between Derrida and Levinas on desire, as well as for an awareness of some crucial passages in each, I am indebted to Kearney 1999, 115-23.

⁴ In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas understands desire as “a relationship with a *surplus always exterior to the totality*, as though the objective totality did not fill out the true measure of being, as though another concept, the concept of *infinity*, were needed to express this transcendence with regard to totality, non-encompassable within a totality” (1991a, 23).

⁵ This notion of openness to an Other that is always to-come (*à-venir*) is what Derrida terms the “Messianic,” a “messianism in general” or “abstract messianicity,” which reduces to a “messianicity” *sans* a Messiah, a “messianicity” *sans* any particular “messianism,” a “messianicity” *sans* a God of any revealed religion (Derrida 1994, 167-70; 1998, 17-19; 1992a, 54-67 and *passim*; see Caputo 1997, 134-51).

⁶ For an alternatively positive assessment of this move of “double saturation” in Derrida, see Caputo 1998, 201-204.

⁷ The rigor of argumentation that this point requires unfortunately lies beyond the scope of this paper. I would direct the reader to Derrida’s seminal essay “Différance” in Derrida 2001a, 279-304, as well as to the sinuous but excellent critique of Derrida in Cunningham 2002, 155-65. Cunningham’s analysis represents a laudable attempt to show that Derrida’s attempt to think what precedes all binary oppositions in language (of which immanence-transcendence is a prime example) can only proceed on the basis of just such an opposition (even if more primordial). If interpretations of Derrida’s work which read him as providing an “alternative” to binary thinking are specious, readings of his work which herald deconstruction as a proper means of negotiating these binaries appear to be (if Cunningham and others are at least half right) no less suspect.

⁸ Of course, deconstruction as a hermeneutical strategy would appear *de facto* to preclude this move, insofar as Derridian intertextuality omits the privileging at any point of one single text or textual world, thus reducing deconstruction to a strategy for reading all texts as a single whole. It might be averred that we are here making the move from deconstruction to dogmatics, and that this is to make a fatal category mistake. I would rather suggest that it is to question the move that Derrida makes when he proposes faith as that which belongs to the pre-original play of writing as *différance*. Faith, for Derrida, is “the ether of the address and relation to the utterly other (*tout autre*)” (1988, 64), an address made possible only within “a certain desert,” the *an-khoral* region of *différance*, “which makes possible, opens, hollows or infinitizes the other” (16). The claim here is that it is only by way of a dogmatic appeal to particularity that the terrain of alterity can properly be negotiated—the problem is precisely that there can be no “religion without religion.” Put another way, theology is best able to recapitulate a true (and even Derridian) logic of alterity precisely on the basis of its appeal to a particular dogmatic faith-tradition.

⁹ Nor is it meant to preclude the notion that Derrida’s philosophical discourse on alterity may very well prove important for theology’s desire to ascertain the true import of the radical otherness of God. In fact, an interesting and fruitful experiment would be to reread Derrida’s translation of the name of God through the lens of the name of Jesus as it is developed in the second half of this article. This would, quite properly, be a reading of Derrida *after* theology. While such an exercise is tempting (and much needed!), it lies beyond the scope of this project.

¹⁰ I am, of course, following Milbank rather closely here (see esp. 1997, 150, 157-58). And yet it is precisely at this point that Milbank makes his most problematic move. Milbank is certainly right to situate christological reflection within the Gospels’ narration of the kingdom. However, by making the church virtually synonymous with the kingdom, his ecclesial representation of Jesus becomes a kind of “incarnation” of the Spirit (162), which commits the double error of collapsing Christology into ecclesiology as well as allowing pneumatology to overrun the second person of the Trinity. As a result, the particularity of Jesus is in some sense lost even as it is heralded. By allowing ecclesiology to be the cipher for Christology in this way, the church itself becomes the only condition for alterity, and as such the condition for radical particularity—Jesus Christ—is dispensable. Thus, “every human difference is itself elevated to universality” (156), and radical alterity is once again lost. What I am attempting to do in this essay is to follow Milbank’s narrational reading of the Gospels in terms of the kingdom itself as the proper christological context. But here I am suggesting that it is *Jesus* himself who is synonymous with the kingdom, not the church. Thus, to inhabit the kingdom is not so much to inhabit a community of universalized alterity, as it is to inhabit a particularity; the church inhabits the kingdom insofar as the church happens *in Christ*. This reading is

itself in some sense “Milbankian,” and could perhaps be read as a Milbankian corrective to Milbank.

¹¹ On the notion of a human offering that is made possible as the overflow of the offering of God in Christ to humanity, see Pickstock 1998, 190-92. Moreover, this double movement of Christ as “overflow” is quite properly a work of the Holy Spirit, thereby rendering what happens in the event of the name of Jesus distinctively trinitarian.

¹² “I am responsible to the other as other, I answer to him and I answer for what I do before him. But of course, what binds me thus in my singularity to the absolute singularity of the other, immediately propels me into the space or risk of absolute sacrifice. There are also others, an infinite number of them, the innumerable generality of others to whom I should be bound by the same responsibility, a general and universal responsibility.... I cannot respond to the call, the request, the obligation, or even the love of another without sacrificing the other other, the other others. *Every other (one) is every (bit) other* [*tout autre est tout autre*], everyone else is completely or wholly other” (Derrida 1995a, 68). Cf. the account of Emmanuel Levinas, for whom the peace of the community is not sacrificed in such turning to face the particular Other, but rather is dependent upon remaining open to the mystery of the *Others* revealed in the face of that one: “here I am for the *others*” (Levinas 1991b, 185; cf. 1991a, 212-14).

¹³ I am here following a suggestion made to me by Jean-Luc Marion in a private correspondence: “The more you make a distinction between each Other, the more communion becomes possible.”

¹⁴ “People” here is not a generality, an “otherness without face.” Rather, as Song says, “By ‘people’ I do not mean people in general.... In fact I do not know what people in general means. It is an abstraction; but people are not an abstraction. It is not a common noun; people with flesh and blood are a proper noun, a noun with a particular name and a special identity” (1990, 216).

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