

# WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A PROPHETIC CALL, A CRITIC, AND AN ACTION AGAINST HUMAN SUFFERING USING JOHN CAPUTO'S DECONSTRUCTION

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## ABSTRACT

*Philosophical hermeneutics disregards the meaning of the text and the What would Jesus do? This question serves as a pressing challenge to the prevailing attitude of Christianity over public domain. Contemporary thinkers explore the role of religion in addressing global trends and challenges, such as global injustices, poverty, war, refugee crisis, and climate change. Hermeneutical philosophical-theological thinking wants to carry on with these issues, however, the relevant question is, what would your faith tradition do? John D. Caputo, an American continental philosopher, offers an alternative hermeneutical theory to deal with this problem. Caputo suggests that the derridean deconstruction gives us key to fully understanding our prophetic role in the twilight of modernity. This propulsion necessitates us to deconstruct our faith traditions that marginalizes other sectors and re-affirmed the prophetic spirit of what the gospel aims to convey - semper reformanda est --forced to reform and reconfigure. This article is divided into three parts. The first part, provides an overview of Caputo's award winning book entitled What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church (2007). The second part, I argued that Caputo's notion of deconstruction as a hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God can be divided into three challenges: deconstructing oneself, deconstructing the church, and deconstructing society. In the last part, I provide a short conclusion.*

## Keywords

Deconstruction, Good News, Hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God, Poetics of the Impossible, Social Gospel

## INTRODUCTION

Critics claim that Christianity as white man's religion, always existed throughout the centuries. For them, Christianity as a white colonialist's religion must be called to account for the condition of the world. Likewise, Malcolm X, an American human rights activist, echoed this sentiment--putting it bluntly, "Christianity is the white man's religion." According to Malcolm X, the Holy Bible in the white man's hands and his interpretations of it has been the greatest single ideological weapon for enslaving millions of non-white human beings. Malcolm further argues, "Every country the white man has conquered with his guns, he has always paved the way, and saved his conscience, by carrying the Bible and interpreting it to call the people "heathens" and "pagans"; then he sends his guns, then his missionaries behind the guns to mop up." This version of Christianity, for Malcolm, has failed the world. Since Christian missionary efforts frequently went hand-in-hand with colonialism, as Malcolm contends, it produces a world full of misery, injustice, and suffering.

Today, it is clear that we still facing the similar problem such as global inequality, Western military intervention, sheer poverty, human rights violations, climate change, and global warming. Thus, the persistence of these challenges, contemporary thinkers bring rich and stimulating new insights into ways religion can contribute to address the global trends. For instance, Caputo, uses postmodern lens to Christian thought by providing a critical response to contemporary social issues. Following Derridean philosophy, however, Caputo takes the risky task to deconstruct Christian beliefs, moral teachings, and practices.

## JOHN D. CAPUTO: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Over the last decade, Caputo's thought is still regarded as hugely influential to the development of 20th century Christian philosophical-theological thought. For example, Caputo has made a comprehensive case against Christian Right or conservative Christians. He contends that postmodern thinking is necessary for the church, especially Derrida's deconstruction. To be faithful and relevant, Caputo argues, Christian communities must commit themselves to the practice of deconstructing oneselfs and deconstructing church, particularly Christian public witnessing in today's world. But Caputo also argues that public witness is necessary for the academy for the theologians, philosophers, and others involved in the intellectual reflection about the world we live in its postmodern condition. For this reason, Stefan Stofanik claims, Caputo is the most influential brokers of Derrida's deconstruction. Stofanik writes, "Should there be a list of the most influential brokers of Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism in America, Professor John D. Caputo would rightly score close to the top." Stofanik further writes, "Indeed, Caputo especially deserves credit for his contribution to the field of Continental philosophy of religion in the English language: According to Kevin Hart, he gave this discipline a high profile in American academic of all although as Hart once quipped"perhaps not all analytic philosophers or all Catholic philosopher would thank him for expanding the field, rendering it more impure, and making it a good deal more lively." Unquestionably, Caputo is the one of the leading American philosophers today.

Caputo attempted to address a broader audience, he cannot always assume the same shared convictions of his audience that philosophers and Christian theologians do. The type of philosophical and theological writing that Caputo produces should not be confused with Christian theological belief systems that many of his Christian and non-Christian readers are more familiar with. For these reasons, Caputo is worth careful attention by both philosophers and theologians. Caputo's earliest works, *Radical Hermeneutics* (1987), *The Prayers of Tears of Jacques Derrida* (1997), and *What would Jesus Deconstruct?* (2007), made Caputo become one of the most popular and famous American philosopher. Caputo later published other books, including *The Insistence of God* (2013), *The Truth* (2014), *The Folly of God: A Theology of the Unconditional* (2015), *Hoping against Hope* (2015), and *Hermeneutics: Facts and Interpretation in the Age of Information* (2018). There were books and written articles about Caputo's philosophical and theological thinking. For example, *Religion With/Out Religion: The Prayers and Tears of John D. Caputo* (2002), edited by James Olthuis. According to Olthuis, this book is a collection of critical essay in response to "The Prayer and Tears" by a mix of Canadian and American contributors who take up the key themes in the work of French philosophers Jacques Derrida as seen through the prism of leading American Continental philosophers. So, this book is a good introduction to Caputo's complex thought.

In *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, (1997), Caputo refutes the notion that Derridean deconstruction as nihilistic, relativistic, subjectivistic, and anti-religious. Like Derrida, Caputo was falsely accused as a nihilistic philosopher. However, as Mark Dooley contends, "It would, therefore, be serious mistake to accuse Caputo of celebrating nothingness or nihilism." Dooley further describes, "Quite to the contrary, his aim is to expose tradition to the voiceless and nameless that lie buried beneath its constructed foundations, and to show that even the most ostensibly determined structures have a hidden history." Furthermore, Caputo's deconstruction is practically the same as Derridean deconstruction. However, Caputo suggests that an in-depth philosophical and theological interpretation of that concept is therefore urgently needed. Caputo writes:

"Deconstruction is a passion and a prayer for the impossible, a defense of the impossible against its critics, a plea for / to the experience of the impossible, which is the only real experience, stirring with religious passion. By religion I mean a pact with the impossible, a covenant with the unrepresentable, a promise made by the *tout autre* with its people, where we are all the people of the *tout autre*, the people of the promise, promised over to the promise. Hear, O Israel (Deut. 6:4), you are the people of a call, constituted from the start by a call, a solicitation. Deconstruction is a child of the promise, of the covenant, of the alliance with the *tout autre*, of the deal cut between the *tout autre* and its faithless, inconstant, self-seeking followers who are in regular need of prophets to keep them on the straight and narrow and to remind them of the cut in their flesh, to recall them to the call that they no longer heed."

Deconstruction is an important philosophical concept that was established in the intellectual life of the Western academe at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries. Both

philosophers and theologians have to find the roots of contemporary disputes between deconstruction and religion. In its most profound meaning, however, Caputo argues that religion is never been annihilated in Derridean deconstruction. Caputo strongly argues that Derrida's deconstruction is a good news that "...helps get at the prophetic spirit of Jesus." Also, Caputo believes, deconstruction is a rejection of religious absolutism and dogmatism. Instead, Caputo argues that deconstruction never intended to destroy but forced to reform and to reconfigure the Christian faith which is risky business. It is truly risky but redemptive. Also, Caputo claims, is a good news for Christian churches. It is a religion of love that welcomed the unwelcomed and forgive the unforgivable, seek and save the lost. Thus, Caputo embraced Derrida's religion (Caputo's religion), an alliance that he called a Jacques's, Jackie's.

## THE GOOD NEWS OF POSTMODERNISM FOR THE GLOBAL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

1. *What would jesus deconstruct?: the good news of postmodernism for the church* (2007)

As the title suggests, I will focus on Caputo's book entitled, *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?: The Good News of Postmodernism for the Church* (2007). Certainly, this book has made Caputo famous and controversial contemporary American philosopher, especially among Christian academic circles. This book considered to be Caputo's monumental work, widely reviewed and discussed, invokes divergent reception in the extreme. In 2007, the book was awarded by *Foreword Magazine* as the best philosophy book. True enough, the book is consistently seen as undeniably important to 21st century philosophical-theological discourse, particularly the way he uses postmodern thinking as a lens to interpret Christian thought.

The book is divided into six chapters, excluding foreword and the brief introduction by James K. A. Smith. Smith explains the background of Caputo's philosophical - theological project. According to Smith, "It is a sign of the vitality of the book that Caputo leaves us with a question that's still alive when we finish: it is a haunting, prophetic question." He adds, "And he convinces us that we will best serve Jesus's coming kingdom by never ceasing to ask the question." An understanding of Caputo's philosophical - theological project as a whole in this book relies on solid grasp of his Derridean view on Charles Monroe Sheldon classical novel. Later, Caputo reintroduces Sheldon's classical novel as an important postmodern text. In the first chapter, Carl Raschke points out, "Caputo begins *What Would Jesus Deconstruct?* By setting the postmodern theological or "deconstructionist" agenda (i.e. "taking it to church") in the context of small-town, mid-Western Protestant evangelicalism at the turn of the nineteenth century." Raschke further explains, "His exemplar is the American preacher Charles Sheldon, author of the best-selling novel *In His Steps* that epitomized the well-known slogan "What Would Jesus Do?" or commonly known as WWJD? Caputo discusses the importance of Sheldon legendary religious fiction novel entitled, "*In His Steps*" (1896). Caputo criticises contemporary American Christian community that shrunk Sheldon's novel to a matter of

personal, private salvation---leaving out its socio-political dimensions of Christ's gospel. Caputo writes:

"I commend the reading of this book to Christians, left, right, and center, not all of whom may realize today where this famous question comes from. It will be an eye opener to the Christian Right, who, having tried to blackmail us with this question, will discover that the slogan they have been wearing on their T-shirts and pasting on their automobile bumpers all these years is a call for radical social justice! That may precipitate a spate of garage sales all over suburban Christendom, where well-scrubbed Bible thumpers will seek to rid themselves of such subversive paraphernalia or, at the very least, to keep them away from the children. (The Left, by contrast, would stand to pick up some bargains were it not so terrified of religion.) So even if, as I concede, Charles Sheldon is no Charles Dickens—or Reinhold Niebuhr or Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for that matter—he is the author of a question that has captured the minds and hearts of millions of Americans today, and he is worth another look.

What would Jesus do? or WWJD is concrete expression of the public ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, however, such phrase have been placed into question by Caputo. For instance, Christian Right misuses and abuses of Sheldon's WWJD popular phrase. Putting into historical context of Sheldon's WWJD, according to Caputo, it will confront Christian Right that distorts the use of WWJD. It would help Christian Right to realise that WWJD is a subversive phrase derives from public ministry of Jesus Christ. Caputo believes, it will be an eye opener to the Christian Right that offered simple answers to complicated socio-political issues. It is time, for Caputo, to re-introduce the WWJD as a deconstructive force that liberate the poor; oppressed, exploited, and marginalized groups. But, Caputo rephrases or radicalized it in a postmodern fashion. Instead, what would Jesus do, Caputo replaced the last word "do" with "deconstruction." Concluding this chapter, Caputo suggests, rediscovering Sheldon's theological view through his novel, which roots go back to Walter Rauschenbusch, provides a greater asset in a more comprehensive and relevant approach to contemporary social problems.

In Chapter 2, "Spiritual Journey, Postmodern Paths," Caputo devotes how Christian spiritual or religious journey should looks like. According to Caputo, "Religious people are the people of the "why not?" the people of the promise, of the hope against hope." For Caputo, religious people will never satisfied and contented with the present. They keep searching as part of their spiritual journey. Caputo adds, "They restlessly search for something, for a certain sort of "transcendence," which means to be on the go, making a crossing, trying to get somewhere else." Caputo believes, religious people have unstoppable appetite for spirituality even everything falls apart. They keep searching even everything is so uncertain. Even when they feel lost, alone and abandon. Caputo further describes, "So what I mean by being "lost" is not wandering aimlessly but recognizing the contingency of the network of steps, tracks, and traces within which we find ourselves, conceding the contingency of what we call "here" and the multiplicity of other "heres" that are over "there." However, Caputo argues, "That requires the ability to imagine ourselves otherwise and hence to concede that while we firmly embrace the idea of the rock of ages,

different ages rest on different rocks." For Caputo, whatever may pass and whatever lie before them they will keep believing. In the context of Christian spirituality, Caputo strongly argues:

"In Christianity, Jesus is the way, and being a Christian cannot be more felicitously described than as following "in his steps." The religious heart or frame of mind is not "realist," because it is not satisfied with the reality that is all around it. Nor is it antirealist, because it is not trying to substitute fabrications for reality; rather, it is what I would call "hyper-realist," in search of the real beyond the real, the hyper, the über or au-déla, the beyond, in search of the event that stirs within things that will exceed our present horizon. In this sense, religion is, in the very best and deepest sense, so much "hype."

Christian spirituality, Caputo suggests, is therefore not reducible to hyper-faith spirituality that denies the earthly affairs and individual superiority. First, Christian spirituality, Caputo claims, is always based on reality. However, it keeps searching for the real beyond real. Caputo calls this, "hyper-realist" spirituality. It is not a form of scapegoat and irrational spirituality. It is not passive and escapist but active and worldly that opens to the possibility beyond earthly affairs. Second, it confronts spiritual individualism. To a greater degree, hyper-realist spirituality challenges the individualistic culture or the "I" culture. It helps to overcome self-centeredness and self-righteousness.

In Chapter 3, *A Prayer for Impossible: A Catechumen's Guide to Deconstruction*, Caputo advances his notion of theopoetics over theo-logic. Caputo writes, "I am presenting the New Testament as a "poetics" of the kingdom of God, a theopoetics—as opposed to a "theo-logic," an ethics, or a church dogmatics—as a complex of narratives, parables, and paradoxes of which Jesus is the centerpiece." To establish his philosophical-theological view, Caputo contends, "...a text or a tradition is that it keeps "happening" (arriving) without ever quite "arriving" at a final, fixed, and finished destination." Caputo argues, "We cannot simply "derive" (dériver) direct instruction from it, but we must instead allow it a certain drift or free play (dérive), which allows that tradition to be creative and reinvent itself so that it can be, as Augustine said of God, ever ancient yet ever new." Furthermore, Caputo explores his deconstructive concept of Christian spiritual journey. Christian spiritual journey, as Caputo argues, is not always a smooth and easy journey. Certainly, it is no bed of roses. In fact, through our journeys, as Caputo describes, commonly encountered many challenges that descent us into hopelessness. Caputo called this, "aporetic condition" that initiates us to pray for impossible. Caputo argues, authentic prayer is neither something about to happen, but, Christians pray because they pray for impossible.

Furthermore, Caputo differentiates justice from law. Like Derrida, Caputo views "justice" as undeconstructible, however, laws are deconstructible. Caputo writes, "There is no better "example," if that is all it is, of why the word "deconstruction" does not signify something destructive (although it is always risky)." Caputo adds, "If laws were not deconstructible they would soon become monsters that menace justice." Obviously, for Caputo, laws do not guarantee justice. Oftentimes, laws serves the interests of the upper class. Although justice is an ideal, the world fails to

live up to it, Caputo strongly argues:

"Justice in itself does not exist but it is something we demand and something that is demanded of us. Justice is what we call for and something that calls on us, something we solicit and something by which we are solicited, a matter of prayer and solicitation. In the deconstruction of the law, the law is exposed to the call of justice in order to provoke the reinvention of the law, thus offsetting the tendency the law has to close down around itself. Justice aerates the law, turns its soil, keeping it just."

For Caputo, praying for justice is praying for the impossible. But, Caputo insists that our prayer should be accompanied with justice or doing social justice. Following the footsteps of the ancient prophets of Israel, Caputo contends, it is our vocation to do justice as the Lord requires us. Caputo writes, "On this point the voice of deconstruction is not far from the voice of the prophets, which calls for justice to flow like water over the land."

In this regard, Caputo criticises the Christian Right who supports the law that criminalizes undocumented immigrants in US. Caputo writes, "The Christian Right is all for the force of law, for rigorously enforcing laws against illegal immigrants, for keeping order in the streets, and they applaud wooden formulas like "three strikes and you're out" while slandering jurists who value discernment and adjudication as merely pandering to criminals." Caputo adds, "But it makes little mention of the biblical demands for social justice and it does little to address the injustice suffered by people who are forced to leave their homes and native lands to try to squeeze out a meager living in a foreign land." For Caputo, it is hypocrisy of the Christian Right at its finest. This reminder is a challenge to those who fail to understand that welcoming the stranger and protecting migrant people are an integral part of the Kingdom of God. In Deuteronomy 10: 17-18, stipulates that "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing (New Revised Standard Version)."

Next, Caputo explores the concept of gift against economy (reciprocity economy) via Derrida. He view gift as the second undeconstructible. According to Caputo:

"Economies are what exist but the gift calls to us from beyond the order of existence and being, soliciting us to go beyond what is, which here means to give, to make an expenditure without reserve, to go where you cannot go. The gift, if there is such a thing, is the event, the impossible, the undeconstructible. The gift is what we love and desire with a desire beyond desire, in which we hope with a hope against hope. The gift is given with love, even if we are not loved in return."

For Caputo, gift operates outside of economic logic. A gift, Caputo explains, is not a gift if you expect anything in return. Gift-giving as a way of life is ultimately a selfish act. A gift is a powerful expression of poetry. It is a way to express emotions, creativities, and imaginations.

Working within the framework of Derridean analysis, Caputo suggests that the gift has several important implications for Christianity. First, it implies practicing radical forgiveness. For Caputo, the only way we have been able to forgive the unforgivable. Although, it is easier than

done. It is extremely difficult to give forgiveness, especially when you have been seriously hurt and wounded by someone. For instance, Caputo writes:

"Normally the news is filled with stories of violence, rancor, and revenge, but occasionally we read in the newspapers or see on television stories of people who have forgiven someone who has murdered their child or spouse or parent, and we wonder how that is possible. It is beyond understanding, beyond reason, beyond all accounting, all cost accounting. It is a gift, bearing witness to the possibility of the impossible."

Nonetheless, Caputo argues, God demand us to forgive the unforgivable or the impossible to forgive. Thus, Christians truly understand the message of the Kingdom of God and embody God's forgiveness. Caputo observes "Now the theological traditions, both Christian and Jewish, have tended to behave like bankers when it comes to forgiveness." They envisaged God as a kind of banker and God's forgiveness as an investment. But, Caputo contends, "the only thing that can be truly forgiven is the unforgivable; the only condition under which true forgiveness is possible is when forgiveness is impossible."

Second, the Christian concept of hospitality, Caputo claims, is governed by principles of economics. Traditionally speaking, according to Caputo, "there is a good deal of inhospitality built into our hospitality." Caputo writes:

"What hospitality means seems simple enough: welcoming the other, welcoming the coming of the other into the same, into my house, for example." But when in fact we actually offer hospitality, whom do we typically invite? Our friends, of course, those whose company we enjoy and from whom we can expect reciprocity (the circle of exchange), or else people whose favor we are currying. Either way, we welcome only those who serve our pleasure or our interests, which means tightening the circle of the same, not welcoming the other."

Hospitality is not a new Christian idea. In fact, the culture of hospitality has been practiced in variety of contexts among Ancient Greeks and Romans. Hospitality is a timeless virtue. However, hospitality is central to Christian virtue. Contemporary philosophers emphasize the importance of hospitality in pursuit of virtue, for instance, Jacques Derrida's notion on the ethics of hospitality. Derrida's thoughts on hospitality, Caputo believes, can be adopted into the Christian tradition, as he considered it as the ideal Christian ethical act. Like gift, Caputo argues, authentic hospitality operates outside of economic logic. Caputo is very clear on the fact that radical form of hospitality is risky, but, he insists that Christians must welcome the unwelcomed and uninvited. Take for example, Caputo argues that the madness of hospitality or radical form of hospitality can be seen in Sheldon's fictional novel *In His Steps*. For Caputo, global Christian communities should not turn their backs on refugees. Furthermore, Western Christian churches should show hospitality to strangers, particularly to refugees and immigrants. Nonetheless, Caputo writes, "Christianity would be well advised to consider itself under the permanent promise/threat of just such a visitation—quite uninvited—by Jesus, who may at any time show up at the doors of our churches, requiring of us an accounting of what we have made of his memory or asking for a cup of cold water—or

perhaps an increase in the minimum wage and basic health insurance.”

Lastly, Caputo argues we can know the authentic of someone’s love if they sacrifice and surrender themselves to the impossible. Even though they might not understand it, they will still love it. Here, Caputo suggests, authentic love is sacrificial love, an unconditional love, and a self-giving to the impossible. Caputo writes:

All along, whether we have been talking about justice or the gift, forgiveness or hospitality, the topic will have been love. Derrida once said, “Deconstruction is not negative, even though it has often been interpreted as such despite all sorts of warnings. For me, it always accompanies an affirmative exigency, I would even say that it never proceeds without love.” Deconstruction does not take a single step without love; it always follows “in the steps” of love, following love’s call. What does it love? The impossible, the underconstructible, what is coming, the event. Deconstruction is affirmation, the affirmation of the impossible, of the coming of the event. That is what I called in the preceding chapter the “real beyond the real,” the hyper-real, which participates in the structure of the step/not beyond. Every time a “deconstructive critique” is undertaken, every time something is criticized as a fiction or an unjustifiable assumption, such critiques are always advanced in the name of the real, of the irreducible reality of the real, not of the real as the objective, present, perceptible or intelligible thing (*res*), but of the real as the coming or the event of the other.”

Caputo argues, deconstruction does not take a single step without love; it always follows “in His (Christ) steps” of love, follows a call to love the impossible or underserving people. To put it differently, deconstruction has unconditional love towards enemies, strangers, foreigners, and guests. It is loving someone regardless of their ethnic group, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, and race.

Chapter 4, Jesus, the Theo-Poetics of the Kingdom, and Praxis, Caputo discusses the following concepts: first, his notion of the weakness of God, second, the logic of the Cross. For Caputo, there is a link between the weakness of God and the logic of the Cross. This chapter is in one sense a continuation of previous themes and formal introduction of deconstruction as the hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God. Chiefly, the weakness of God have nothing to do with passive spirit of human being and the notion of God’s negligence. Essentially, it forces us to rethink our view of God. According to Caputo, “But the weakness of God has nothing to do with a timid and fearful man and everything to do with the courage of prophetic impatience.” He continues, “The God of forgiveness, mercy, and compassion shines like a white light on the hypocrisy of those who, under the cover of God, oppress the most defenseless people in society.” Instead of viewing God as passive and uncaring, for Caputo, the weakness of God denounces social evils, oppose state atrocities, and unmask religious hypocrisies. It is the reversal of the Kingdom of God and the power of the powerless. Also, Caputo points out that the suffering and death of Christ is the concrete example of the weakness of God. Caputo further writes, “The divinity that shows through Jesus consists not in a demonstration of might but in a complete reversal of our expectations culminating in the most stunning

reversal of all.” Taking this cue, Caputo makes his point on how to realize the Kingdom of God. Caputo writes:

“The key to the kingdom is to love those who do not love you, who hate you, and whom you, by worldly standards, should also hate. That is exactly the madness that a deconstructive analysis of love would predict. Loving the lovable is entirely possible, but loving the unlovable, those who are impossible to love, that is when the kingdom reigns. Loving the unlovable, the possibility of the impossible, that is the central symmetry that leads me to treat deconstruction as the hermeneutics of the kingdom of God.”

Caputo reiterates his Derridean concept of love that leads him to view that deconstruction is a form of doing hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God. Caputo promotes the effort of justice, yet he urges that Christians should orient their actions towards what is prescribed by love. For Caputo, “The kingdom provides a politico, negativa, a critical voice rather like the voice of a prophet against the king, like Amos railing against Jeroboam, calling for the invention of justice, which in turn requires, in addition to prophets, the hard work of concrete political invention, the cleverness of inventive political structures.”

For Caputo, the prophetic call to socio-political engagement is not secondary to global Christian communities but should be at the front of it. According to him, “A politics of the kingdom would be marked by madness of forgiveness, generosity, mercy, and hospitality.” In many ways, Caputo’s view of the Kingdom of God leads to a problem of how Christian communities actually understand the Kingdom of God. But, Caputo implies, invoking the idea of the Kingdom of God is a demand for Christian communities to build a different social order. Thus, Caputo recognizes that the social justice engagement of Christian communities could not be achieved without broadening their views of the Kingdom of God.

Caputo further suggests, “The dangerous memory of the crucified body of Jesus poses a threat to a world organized around the disastrous concept of power, something that is reflected today in the widespread critique of the concept of “sovereignty”—of the sovereignty of autonomous subjects and the sovereignty of nations powerful enough to get away with acting unilaterally and in their own self-interests.” At the same time, Caputo negates the traditional view of God as omnipotence. Caputo writes, “The crucified body of Jesus proposes not that we keep theology out of politics but that we think theology otherwise, by way of another paradigm, another theology, requiring us to think of God otherwise, as a power of powerlessness, as opposed to the theology of omnipotence that underlies sovereignty.” Caputo continues, “The call that issues from the crucified body of Jesus solicits our response, for it is we who have mountains to move by our faith and we who have enemies to move by our love.” Thus, Caputo concludes, “It is we who have to make the weakness of God stronger than the power of the world.”

In Chapter 5, Caputo continues to ask, “What would Jesus Deconstruct?” Caputo investigates this basic question from a variety of angles and perspectives. However, the key to answer this provocative question lies in the follow-up questions: Whatever happened to the Sermon of the Mount? What if Jesus appeared today? Why not? Also, Caputo addresses several social problems to make his point clearly

and practical.

To give a sensible answer, Caputo deals with the question, "What if Jesus appeared today?" Caputo invites his readers to imagine Jesus appeared today or what would happen if Jesus appeared physically today? Are we prepared? Caputo writes:

"Imagine another one of those scenarios in which Jesus appears, wholly uninvited, not in fifteenth-century Seville or turn-of-the-century Topeka, but today. Imagine him suddenly showing up, say, in the middle of an American political campaign or in an affluent American shopping mall (preferably at the height of the "Christmas" shopping season, which would certainly get his attention) or maybe even at an annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion (where, unless he was prepared to use his power to pass through walls, he would still need a badge to get into the book display) or even on the Oprah Winfrey show. Why not? Have we not described religious people as the ones who dream of things that have never been and ask, "Why not?"

Obviously, for Caputo, Jesus would be on the side of the poor, defenceless, marginalized, the ignored, and the exploited. In the same vein, Archbishop Justine Welby expressed the same view, but, he able to express clearly and succinctly Caputo's concern. Welby writes:

"The trouble is that's not what Jesus Christ did. He was never party political. No wing of politics – left or right – can claim God as being on its side. But Jesus was highly political. He told the rich that, unlike the poor who were blessed, they would face woes. He criticised the King as a fox. He spoke harsh words to leaders of the nations when they were uncaring of the needy. He did this because God cares for those in need and expects those who claim to act in his name to do the same. That means action - and words".

Caputo and Welby contend that the Jesus's public ministry was predominantly serving others, and serving them in very practical ways. While privileged people fight with one another, the underprivileged people are the ones who suffer. Similarly, Jesus practiced profound concern for the poor, weak, vulnerable, and marginalized groups. Like the poor, (Luke 7:11-17), Canaanite woman (Mat. 15: 21-28), the sick (Mat. 26: 6-11), and feeding the hungry (John 9: 1-7, 35-41). For Caputo, these are the signs of the coming Kingdom of God. Jesus revolted against cultural norms that stigmatized the poor and embraced people that society had pushed to the margins. As a matter of fact, Jesus equated serving or neglecting the poor and marginalized people with serving or neglecting God.

Caputo argues, for instance, Bob Riley, a governor of Alabama, USA, who embodied the principles of Christ public ministry. According to Caputo, Riley nearly killed his political career because of his political and social priorities that are based on the Scripture. Caputo further claims:

"Governor Riley wanted (in effect) to make that year what the Bible calls a year of the Lord's favor on the poor. A long-time fiscal and social conservative, Riley abruptly reached the conclusion that the political and social priorities of the Alabama Republican party did not reflect the New Testament, which shows a preferential option for the poor and a special affirmation of children. The poorest children in his state attend one of the nation's most poorly funded public school systems—effectively one of the few ways out of ignorance, poverty, and crime for most black children—while wealthier

and mostly white children go to private schools."

When we speak about Jesus' public ministry, Caputo views governor Riley's political and social priorities as the most vivid manifestation of the Kingdom of God today. Riley, Caputo observes, refuted the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by many politicians, saying that he rather keep following Jesus' footsteps even if it would jeopardize his own political career and put his own life in danger. Caputo writes, "This turnabout was risky business for Riley, but he thought he had the New Testament on his side, where this is known as metanoia, being of a new heart, the madness of and for the kingdom of God (which has a counterpart in Paris, where it goes under the name of the madness of the gift, of the impossible)." Thus, Caputo suggests, Riley's political career is a concrete example of how to translate the Kingdom of God in contemporary public spheres. It is metanoia or a transformative change of heart that promotes decentring the self and becoming attentive to the needs of others.

Caputo also deals with Christian engagement in charitable practice. Caputo criticized the hypocrisy among Christian NGOs. Some Christian NGOs are driven by motives of profits, instead of Christ's passion with underprivileged people. Caputo contends that Christians should truly glean inspiration from the public ministry of Christ with poor people (Luke 4: 16-21). Caputo writes:

"I may be forgiven (I depend a lot on that Christian virtue) if I have concluded that the private-charity argument is a cynical cover for greed, which has a way of working things out so that I get to keep as much money as I can for myself and let the poorest of the poor go to the devil. I have the idea that this is precisely the sort of hypocrisy that made Jesus flash with anger, so that if Jesus showed up one day uninvited and caught me holding forth on that point, the "revelation" I would experience would be of his meaner side. The more Jesus-inspired thing to do today, in my opinion, is to translate the gospel's commitment to the poor into an effective public policy that would actually implement an evangelical imperative, to come to the aid of the weakest and most defenseless people in society, above all the children. On this point, it is not (only) the government that has its hands in my pockets, but Jesus, and rightly so."

Ultimately, the "Jesus-inspired thing," for Caputo, is the philosophical-theological basis for Christian charitable work. At the practical level, Christian politicians and Christian faith-based organisations should join forces to translate moral beliefs into laws and public policies. For Caputo, Christian organisations should have full rights to participate in public policy debates. However, most Christians are not engaged and involved in politics. When it comes to politics, they think it is a dirty game. As such, Caputo argues that this should be changed. For him, Christians must understand that Jesus did not act as political thinker or reformer, but he simply and bluntly a proclamation of the Kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, "Jesus was too much a pure prophetic voice of protest against the compromises of the world to fit inside a particular political frame." Caputo adds, "He was too much a poetic voice for the impossible to be translated easily into a particular political order, which is inevitably the art of the possible." To illustrate this point, Caputo starts to distinguish between "politics of Jesus" and "poetics of the kingdom." According to Caputo:

"I have all along been speaking of the "poetics of the kingdom," or the "theo-poetics of Jesus" and I have avoided speaking of "the politics of Jesus," an expression that I think is inherently ambiguous and too easy to abuse. It can be invoked by everyone from John Howard Yoder, who is a pacifist, to George W. Bush, who used it to launch a preemptive war against Iraq. There is every good reason to believe that Jesus did not act or regard himself as a political thinker or reformer and that he regarded the kingdom of God as a word spoken to the Jews that asked them to be of a new heart and to prepare for God's coming."

Caputo suggests, Christ's central message that formed the foundation for his entire public ministry and teachings is the Kingdom of God. Caputo insists, the Kingdom of God is not an abstract principle, but a subversive concept that challenges the power and privilege of the governing class. At the same time, the Kingdom of God is a redemptive rule of God that celebrate the liberation of the poor and marginalized. Caputo further argues that Christ gives a practical elaboration of the Kingdom of God. According to Caputo, the Sermon on the Mount is the practical application of Jesus' precepts. Again, however, Caputo contends that our primary responsibility for this, is to translate (even infuse) the gospel principles in social realities or public spheres. Caputo writes:

"That is why we require hermeneutics. It is our responsibility to breathe with the spirit of Jesus, to implement, to invent, to convert this poetics into a praxis, which means to make the political order resonate with the radicality of someone whose vision was not precisely political. We need hermeneutics, which means understanding linked to historical context, and deconstruction, which means an interpretive theory that is mad about justice, in order to make this translation."

Here, the importance of hermeneutics, as Caputo suggests, comes into play. Caputo starts and ends with hermeneutics which is a central characteristic of postmodern philosophy. Also, Caputo insists that Christian interpreters must able to understand the historical context that linked to seek justice, to defend the weak, oppressed, and marginalized.

In Chapter 5, Caputo advanced his own philosophical-theological criticism towards American Evangelicalism (Christian Right), the dangerous distortions of just war theory by Bush administration, American imperialism and its aggressive foreign policies, patriarchy in the Church, and the Church overtly focuses on individual morality (ex. abortion and homosexuality) over social issues (ex. structural evil and environmental issues).

First, Caputo argues that the Christian Right, both Catholic and Protestant, preaches a spiritual type of narcissism. Caputo believes that this spiritual type of narcissism emerged from a capitalistic culture. Caputo writes, "Instead of shouting this from the mountain tops, the get-me-to-heaven-and-the-rest-be-damned Christianity the Christian Right preaches is itself a version of selfish spiritual capitalism aimed at netting major and eternal dividends, and it fits hand in glove with American materialism and greed." Caputo claims, American religious right is a twisted distortion of Christian spirituality that promotes greed and hyper individualistic culture. Caputo further argues, Christians are called to pass beyond spiritual type of narcissism. Caputo advices, "But I heartily recommend to my friends on the

Christian Right—both Protestant and Catholic—a summer spent reading the Vatican's social encyclicals, in which they will find a good deal more of the spirit of the New Testament than presently parades around today on bumper stickers, bracelets, and T-shirts emblazoned with the name of Jesus." Caputo believes, both Catholic and Protestant, must learn from the Catholic social encyclicals that provide wider theological perspective on evangelization. Caputo suggests, "As a primer, start with Jacques Maritain's Integral Humanism if you want to learn a thing or two about how to get Christian faith and a concern for the common good inside the same head." Like Maritain, Caputo suggests that the Christian thought must be grounded in philosophical pluralism.

Second, Caputo rejects George W. Bush's view about Jesus and the just-war theory. Caputo writes, "Here I will take my point of departure from the claim made by Bush that his favorite political philosopher is Jesus." Caputo criticises Bush when he invoked the image of Christ and claims that he was commissioned by God to lead the war. Caputo says, "In this resolve I must not allow myself to falter, since the messianic delusion in the Bush administration that Bush is God's appointed one suggests that the man is sincere, and that has put the entire globe in danger." Not impugned entirely, however, Caputo argues that the just-war theory must be the last resort.

Third, Caputo argues that the just-war doctrine promoted by American politicians is an anti-Sermon of the Mount. Also, it weakens St. Paul's view of the cross that is actually against the teaching of the Scripture. Caputo writes:

"Just-war doctrine makes sense, but it weakens and attenuates what St. Paul called the folly (moria) of the cross. It adopts the views not of Jesus but of Cicero, not of the kingdom of God but of the Roman Empire. Just-war doctrine—the very expression, as Daniel Maguire says, is oxymoronic—is a worldly concession, not an evangelical counsel. If the theory is meant to keep one eye on Jesus, a very squinting eye indeed since Jesus called for unconditional peace, it keeps another and much larger wide-open eye on the motto of a Roman general, *si vis pacem, para bellum* (if you want peace, get ready for war)."

Taken as a whole, Caputo insists that the just-war theory is against justice itself. Caputo writes, "At most, just-war theory offers justification without justice." For Caputo, most Western countries misused and abused the notion of just war theory. However, Caputo never rejected just-war theory, instead, it should be used only as a last resort. Caputo says, "For any political view inspired by the vision of Jesus, war must be a nightmare, a last extreme measure resorted to because every other way has been cut off, because our backs are pinned to the wall, our very skin has become too tight and, God help us, there is no other way out." Caputo concludes, "I do not want to reject just-war theory but I do want to hold it up against the white light of the New Testament and the call for unconditional peace announced there by Jesus." Fourth, Caputo criticises American aggression and imperialistic policies that are supported by Christian Right. Caputo contends, "Instead of denouncing such policies in no uncertain terms, in the classic prophetic tradition of the Bible, the Christian Right cheers them on." He continues, "Instead of serving as the prophetic voice of Amos

giving President Jeroboam holy hell, instead of being the voice of Jesus and of the gospel in an act of unilateral American military aggression, the Christian Right dreams of a Christian Empire.” Fifth, Caputo questioned the prevailing patriarchy or male-dominated leadership of the contemporary Church. Caputo writes:

“Jesus appears to have acted as if the kingdom of God bestows a certain freedom on us that the church, instituted in his name, proved quick to shut down. So if the church would make itself transparent to the kingdom that it is called to proclaim, it would renounce its patriarchy and proclaim that, as a part of the panoply of reversals brought about in the poetics of the kingdom, God chose women to shame the vainglory of men. Secularist feminists, by contrast, would do well to follow the example of Luce Irigaray, who recognized the overlapping concerns of her work with feminist theologians like Elizabeth Schiissler Fiorenza. The church should joyfully embrace the discipleship of equals, the discipleship of women, who are no less called (*kletos*) to proclaim the kingdom than men, no less admissible to teach and instruct and baptize and lead in worship than the boys!”

For Caputo, it is time for the global Christian communities to face the huge challenges, both patriarchy and power-relations within Christian leadership. Caputo contends, “The subsequent failure of the church to ordain women is an insult to and a contradiction of the ministry of Jesus, violating not only its spirit but also its early history.”

Finally, Caputo addresses the church with a strong emphasis on individual morality (ex. abortion and homosexuality) over social issues (ex. structural evil and environmental issues). Many Christian communities, Caputo observes, have a strong focus on individual issues like abortion and sexuality, however, failed to speak out against social issues and causes. For example, war on Iraq, massive poverty, climate change, structural evil, to name a few. Thus, Caputo writes:

“The ethical and political voice of the church has been distorted and drained by issues surrounding sexuality and marriage while violence and poverty are left to fester like unattended diseases in the body of the church. It is argued, for example, that there are about 1.3 million induced abortions each, 32 year in the United States, 32 which is therefore a proportionately graver issue than the war in Iraq where, even granting the highest estimates made by opponents of the war, some 250,000 people have been killed. But if you want to play such a gruesome numbers game, reflect for a moment on the unthinkable catastrophe that awaits us if nuclear weapons get into this act.”

The global Christian communities, as Caputo points out, must speak out against Western imperialistic and destructive foreign policy. The global Christian communities must promote social justice and common good. For Caputo, the global Christian communities must denounce all forms of injustice. But, when it comes to social justice, some Christians pick and choose what they want to fight for. Christian communities, as Caputo insists, must avoid to be selective of social issues. Therefore, Christians must condemn all forms of dehumanization.

Next, Caputo argues to stop proof texting against homosexuality. Caputo contends that the Christian Right should stop using the Scripture to condemn homosexuality.

He also adds, stop idolizing the Scripture. Caputo writes:

“Of homosexuality itself, apart from prooftexting the New Testament, I think the independent ethical arguments against it fail. Those arguments tend to boil down to an essentialist idea of “human nature” that usually turns out to be the historically contingent idea of human beings held by those with the power to define what being human means. Here Derrida’s earlier work in *Of Grammatology*, which dealt with the constructedness and hence the deconstructibility of the distinction between culture and nature, and Foucault’s notion of “power/knowledge” are particularly pertinent. The most famous, or infamous, example of the fragility of the case for natural law is the defense of the “natural slave” that goes back to Aristotle and Plato, who liked to think of human beings as graded metals: gold, silver, and brass.”

Caputo adds,

“To protect myself against the idolatry of the book, I embrace the distinction made by Elizabeth Schiissler Fiorenza, which is very congenial to Derrida’s distinction between arche and archive, between the Bible as a “timeless archetype” and the Bible as an historical “prototype.” The former views the Bible as something that can be directly and decontextually copied and pasted into the present, while the latter understands the Bible to be something that must be hermeneutically interpreted, inserted with hermeneutic sensitivity into a contemporary context, similar to what Aristotle called the “schema” that stands in need of application in the concrete.”

Caputo believes that we should read the Scripture by the event of love not by strict dogmas, creed, hate, and judgement. Caputo writes, “The task is not to reproduce literally what Jesus said and did—I have never even seen an olive garden or a fig tree—but to repeat the love with which he said and did them, on the bet that those are the practices in which he would recognize himself today.” Thus, all Scriptural interpretations must be motivated by love.

Lastly, Caputo turned to the issue of abortion. Caputo says, “Abortion at any stage offends a sensitive conscience; it is always a difficult, bad, and traumatic choice.” Generally speaking, Caputo believes that abortion is never a good choice. However, Caputo contends, “But then, when all that is said and done, above all in a democratic and pluralistic society, they need to respect the freedom of the other, which is irreducible, and to avoid religious imperialism.”

In Chapter 6, *The Working Church: Notes on the Future*, Caputo offers a comparative case study to elucidate his entire philosophical-theological project. Caputo compare and contrast the “Big church” and “the working church.” According to Caputo, the working church demonstrated what the Kingdom of God is like, however, the Big church is busy with their many responsibilities. The Big church is visible with “bishops, buildings, power, and the photocopying machines,” the latter exists on the margins and “is left on its own to face a brutal world.” Caputo further describes, the working church is committed to the poor and to transform the world, while the Big church is committed to protect their own interests and power structures. Thus, Caputo writes:

“The gospel is not a set of doctrines but a way of life, what McNamee calls the working church, the one where truth means *facere veritatem*, making the truth happen. If the New Testament is a “theory,” Kierkegaard said, then it is absurd,

and the way not to be scandalized and repelled by the absurdity is what Kierkegaard called "faith," which takes the leap and translates the gospel into existence. Where love is implemented, there is the church. *Ubi caritas, ibi ecclesia.* Those who love—the text makes no special mention of Catholics—are born of God (1 John 4:7). Anyone, period! Where it is not translated into blood and prayers and tears, into "works of love," no amount of theology, candles, vestments, incense, or polished black hearses can make up the difference (more Kierkegaard)."

The global Christian communities as working church therefore are called to do social ministry because they are called to do it with love. To put it simply, social ministries are a believer's labor of love.

Christian communities, Caputo reiterates, seek to help someone without expecting in return. According to Caputo, "That is almost exactly what Derrida means by the gift: giving in a moment of madness, without the expectation of return, whether or not there is one, even if economies are inescapable." For Caputo, giving without expectation is a concrete and evidenced of authentic love. He adds, "Life is a gift that one gives." Although the world is ruled by economy of exchange, Caputo suggests, Christian communities should find a way of doing things that will interrupt the economy of exchange. Thus, the Christian communities become demonstration project of what the Kingdom of God will look like.

Furthermore, Caputo makes an example of giving without expectation. The life and ministry of Father John McNamee that epitome what Caputo wanted to describe. Father McNamee is a priest at St. Malachy, Philadelphia, USA. Despite of financial crisis, Father McNamee fought untiringly for its survival by ministering to unemployed and underprivileged children. Despite Father McNamee' lack of financial support, he encouraged them to stay in school. Thus, according to Caputo, "McNamee is on a spiritual journey that looks a lot like the one we were describing in chapter 2, one without a very clear idea of where one is going or whether one is making progress, a journey in which, for the most part, one is constantly asked to go where one just cannot go!" Whether they are Catholic or non-Catholic, Father McNamee, however, continued to ministering with children without financial assurance. Caputo writes:

"Here we meet the unemployed children whom the Right deserts as soon as they are actually born—into families where the father is in jail (if the father is known), abandoned by their mother, and raised (if they are lucky) by a destitute grandmother, who cannot raise them. These children cut beneath the distinction between Catholics and non-Catholics, between who is inside and who is outside the church. They cry out to us with all the power of powerlessness, with all the power of the gospel—for such as these is the kingdom of God, Jesus said. What does it matter whether they are Catholics if they are the kingdom of God?"

For Caputo, Father McNamee' ministry is an exemplar of a working church and a concrete manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Against all odds, Father McNamee shows that the Kingdom of God is larger and greater than the institutional church. Father McNamee's ministry challenged the traditional ways of doing ministry. He gives his life and ministry without expecting anything in return. Father

McNamee's top priority is reaching the lost, weak, and underprivileged. He realized that he cannot comprehend all that happens to his own life journey ministry. For Father McNamee, as Caputo describes, trust has a great role in Christian spiritual journey emphasis, however, on trusting God by serving people in need. Father McNamee's main agenda is to do God's business with love. It challenge convention and the institutional church. Without doubt, as Caputo describes, Father McNamee's ministry is a form of deconstructive force a hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God.

## 2. Deconstructing oneself, the church, and society

Caputo's notion of deconstruction as hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God is doubtless not born of malice. Like Derrida, Caputo's ultimate intent is to re-affirm the authentic spirit of what the gospel aims to convey - *semper reformanda est*-forced to reform and reconfigure. However, instead of asking "What would Jesus do?" Caputo asked, "What would Jesus deconstruct?" But, this is not simply as wilful or playful ingenuity on Caputo's part. To explore this tough question at depth, Caputo argues, Christians must struggle against injustices of our current society in the name of higher goal--justice. With this in mind, I believe that there are three phases which lead to the deconstruction as hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God: deconstructing oneself; deconstructing the church; deconstructing society. Through the three movements, envisioning through Caputo's deconstruction, Christians may discern how to follow "His steps." Let me now summarize the three phases and implications of Caputo's (via Derrida) deconstruction as a hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God.

## DECONSTRUCTING ONESELF

Taken this challenge down to a personal level, in chapter 1, Caputo starts with distorted understanding of "What would Jesus do?" or WWJD, especially among Christian Right. In response, Caputo addressed several issues that he think to be considered problematic. First, Caputo's thought implies that the starting point for deconstruction is shifting the focus away from the self. It is a prophetic call to take care about the needs of people around you, especially the weak, poor, oppressed, and marginalized groups. Deconstruction demands to shift one's focus away from being (de-centering the self) and start by serving others. Second, Caputo argues that Christians must seek to expand their views of Christian spirituality, holiness, ministry, and the Kingdom of God. This is the main reason why Caputo insisted that rediscovering Sheldon's theological view through his novel, *In His Steps*, provides a comprehensive theological framework that can be used to challenge individualistic view of the Christian right. Caputo believes, if we want to prevent the Christian individualistic view, Christians must start with critical self-reflection in order to understand their prophetic calling. They must stop the uncritical acceptance of various outdated, fanatical, literalist bigoted, and self-contradictory religious beliefs. Hence, Christians must rethink their theology and reread their Scripture with new eyes and open hearts.

Lastly, Caputo discussed the tendency of most Christians to be mediocre, having this fixation with heaven, and oftentimes, having the tendency to have an absolute certainty about God. Instead, Caputo suggests, it all requires critical

thinking, interrogation, and evaluation-deconstructive approach (*semper reformanda est* -forced to reform and reconfigure.). Caputo writes, "To "deconstruct" is on the one hand to analyze and criticize but also, on the other hand, and more importantly, to feel about for what is living and stirring within a thing, that is, feeling for the event that stirs within the deconstructible structure in order to release it, to set it free, to give it a new life, a new being, a future." For Caputo, Christians must keep asking and searching even everything is so uncertain. Nonetheless, Caputo argues, it does not imply aimless wandering but to keep walking in "His steps" or "Jesus' footsteps." They must embrace both joy and pain, embrace doubt as part of radical faith, embrace chaos rather than constrained, celebrate success and embrace failure. Christians have to be prepared, whatever may pass and whatever lies before them, keep their faith in spite of difficulties, believing, and trusting God. Christians, however, must stop thinking of the traditional conception about God: omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. It is a form of idolatry or social construct that limit our ideas about God. Surprisingly, this challenge can be seen in the Hebrew Bible, particularly in the book of Habakkuk. Congruent with prophet Habakkuk's struggle, God demands the prophet to cultivate his trust in the midst of danger, doubt, confusion, hopelessness, and perplexity. As prophet Habakkuk boldly confesses:

"Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails; and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights. To the leader: with stringed instruments (Habakkuk 3: 17-19, [New Revised Standard Version])."

Often, Caputo observes, most Christians follow God when everything goes right in their lives. As Caputo claims, as certainty increases, simultaneously, doubt increases. But, Caputo insists, Christians must keep believing in God even everything falls apart or when everything does not happen as expected. They must view the future to be open, exciting, and promising. Likewise, Christian must be willing to get out of their comfort zone. They must serve others marked by generosity and self-sacrificing dedication. In addition, Caputo contends, Christians must stop giving too much reverence to the Bible rather than on the person, redemptive message, and public ministry of Jesus Christ. Using deconstruction, Caputo writes, "Deconstruction saves us from idolatry, while scriptural literalism succumbs to the idolatry of a book." Caputo argues, this behaviour leads to biblio-idolatry, violence, and other inappropriate activities. Hence, Caputo insists, Christians must stop condemning the LGBT community using the Scripture. Caputo believes, it is a poor hermeneutics. They needed to be reminded that interpretation is a human activity and thus prone to biased and arbitrary meanings. Rather, they must read the Scripture for love and in community. Caputo further contends, Christians must love the unlovable, forgive the unforgivable. The gospel of Luke, in fact, contains a wealth of insights into this radical love. In Luke 6: 27-34:

"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for

those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the check, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same."

Embrace the vulnerable strangers, uninvited, and marginalized groups. For Caputo, accept them as they are even they are not like us. It is a form of madness that reject the economy of exchange. It is an authentic demonstration of love rather than mere ritual. A love without the expectation of return. Like Jesus, Christians are called to experience some forms of crucifixion. It is a radical commitment and obedient to the point of death. As the gospel of John 13: 16, plainly states, "Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them (New Revised Standard Version)." Thus, Christians have to be willing to take the risky business of the Kingdom of God.

## DECONSTRUCTING THE CHURCH

One of the contemporary challenges to Christianity, is constantly in need of renewal and reform in the church. Caputo observes, it seems that the church is becoming disconnected to the growing changes that are taking shape in the evolving social trends. Caputo believes, the church's true mission is getting derailed. Contemporary Christian churches necessitates the need to be reinvented and to redefine its prophetic role in public spheres. But, redefining our Christian dogma and challenging the established church is not a new undertaking. For instance, the 16th century Protestant reformation provided us an exemplary stance on how to redefine Christian theology and challenge the established religious institution. As a matter of fact, it resulted in lasting impacts upon the political, social, economic, and cultural fabric of Western civilization, including arts and natural sciences. It is the dangerous idea that every individual Christian may go back to the original (Christ and the Bible) and reformulate, revise, and adapt the historic faith to fit his own culture and setting, to his own understanding. Alister McGrath in his book entitled, "Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution—A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First" (2007), provides an assessment of the wider impacts of 16th century Protestantism.

Moreover, Caputo insists Christian communities must go beyond their walls and then actively engaged in the outside world. According to Caputo, "To implement the kingdom of God, to translate this poetics into praxis, into a working institution, requires affirmation and reaffirmation, imagination and reimagining, a willingness to go ahead in impossible situations, a willingness to reinvent itself in an ongoing self-renewal of itself." He adds, "The church, charged with the realization of the kingdom, requires a repetition with a difference, lest it freeze over into infidelity to itself and immunize itself against itself, suppressing the very event of the kingdom of God that is its mission, its mission impossible, to express." Like Jesus, Caputo suggests,

the church's sole aims should establish and promote the Kingdom of God. However, the established church become the obstacle that impede the eventual realization of the Kingdom of God---the event. Caputo writes, "Institutions tend to become the enemy of the very event they are supposed to embody, intent on preserving their own existence, even at the cost of the very purpose of their existence." For example, most churches, as Caputo describes, are guilty of patriarchy. Caputo argues, this problem that the church must address. Caputo writes, "The church is a bastion of patriarchy but it also harbors the kingdom of God, which undermines patriarchy." He continues, "Patriarchy is contradicted by what Alain Badiou and others today call the "universalism" of St. Paul, who said in Galatians that there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, free man nor slave." Since all people are created equal, Caputo believes, the church must encourage the practice of egalitarianism. Caputo further contends:

"Jesus appears to have acted as if the kingdom of God bestows a certain freedom on us that the church, instituted in his name, proved quick to shut down. So if the church would make itself transparent to the kingdom that it is called to proclaim, it would renounce its patriarchy and proclaim that, as a part of the panoply of reversals brought about in the poetics of the kingdom, God chose women to shame the vainglory of men. Secularist feminists, by contrast, would do well to follow the example of Luce Irigaray, who recognized the overlapping concerns of her work with feminist theologians like Elizabeth Schlosser Fiorenza. The church should joyfully embrace the discipleship of equals, the discipleship of women, who are no less called (*kletos*) to proclaim the kingdom than men, no less admissible to teach and instruct and baptize and lead in worship than the boys!"

Convincingly, Caputo believes, patriarchy is against the Kingdom of God. In fact, patriarchy, as Caputo argues, is derived from pagan household model. For him, patriarchy promotes loyalty to men rather than God. It is not based on the Scripture. In addition, for Caputo, patriarchy is the main cause of domestic violence against women and gender inequality in the church. He writes, "The sexual scandal besetting the Catholic Church in America is another good example." Caputo adds, "First the sexual molestation of children entrusted to its care, then the institutional cover-up, which means the institution immunizing itself against what it stands for—"for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (Mark 10:14)." Thus, patriarchy in the church plays an important role in sexual abuse.

Dealing with these challenges, Caputo insists, the church must be deconstructed in order to renew, reinvent, and to reform it. In this way, Caputo succinctly summed up:

"The good news deconstruction bears to the church is to provide the hermeneutics of the kingdom of God. The deconstruction of Christianity is not an attack on the church but a critique of the idols to which it is vulnerable—the literalism and authoritarianism, the sexism and racism, the militarism and imperialism, and the love of unrestrained capitalism with which the church in its various forms has today and for too long been entangled, any one of which is toxic to the kingdom of God. The deconstruction of Christianity is nothing new. It is the ageless task imposed on the church and its way to the future, the way to be faithful to

its once and future task, to express the uncontrollable event from which the church is forged. To engage the gears of deconstructive thought and practice is not to reduce our beliefs and practices to ruins, which is the popular distortion, but to entrust oneself to the uncontrollable event they contain, breaking down their resistance to their own inner tendencies and aspirations, exposing them to the call by which they have been called into being, which here, in the case of the church, is the kingdom that we call for, the kingdom that calls on us."

A fuller analysis, Caputo believes, deconstructing the church is the only way to redeem the church derailed mission or sidetracked from its main thrust. For Caputo, it is time to get back to Jesus' steps that is rooted in simplicity and humility. Caputo writes, "To implement the kingdom of God, to translate this poetics into praxis, into a working institution, requires affirmation and reaffirmation, imagination and reimagining, a willingness to go ahead in impossible situations, a willingness to reinvent itself in an ongoing self-renewal of itself." For him, it is time for the Christian churches to walk in solidarity with the poor, weak, and marginalized groups. Finally, Caputo concludes, "The church, charged with the realization of the kingdom, requires a repetition with a difference, lest it freeze over into infidelity to itself and immunize itself against itself, suppressing the very event of the kingdom of God that is its mission, its mission impossible, to express."

## DECONSTRUCTING SOCIETY

Caputo finds Derridean deconstruction to be true to his experience as Christian thinker in postmodern condition. Caputo perceives deconstruction as similar with Christ's prophetic ministry, particularly Christ's unconditional love for poor, weak, and marginalized groups. Deconstruction echoes the main principle of Catholic social teaching, namely, preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. For Caputo, deconstruction as a hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God is a subversive critique of structural conditions which generates social inequality. Obviously, Caputo's philosophical-theological project, challenge the privatization and dualistic thinking of religion in the modern discourse. The rejection of split thinking between sacred and secular, for Caputo, the Christian communities must engage in meaningful dialogue in the public arena. Caputo believes that the Christians must reaffirmed their role in public life. Nonetheless, Caputo argues, to stay relevant in our postmodern age, Christian communities need to be connected with grassroots lived experience and the very struggles they engage in.

Now, the question is, how Christian churches should engage with the world today? First of all, the active involvement of Christians in a wider struggle needs to use multidisciplinary analysis. For example, social analysis is important for Christian communities when seeking to examine various social trends. But, the most compelling reason to take social analysis is for its intrinsic value to help Christians to engage with public issues and to translate the Christian values into public policy. Although it is not always easy, but, the Christian communities strive to be a beacon of love, hope and social justice. Caputo's deconstruction illuminates the problems facing the local and global communities with the light of Christian message to

understand root causes and discern how Christian churches are called to act. Like Derrida, Caputo's deconstruction is inseparably with social justice issues. With this in mind, Caputo's deconstruction is strongly inclusivistic in its orientation that welcome insights from various human and social sciences, such as philosophy, anthropology, history, psychology, sociology, political science, and international relations. It provides Christian thinkers the ability to understand profoundly various social problems out there. Since, the global Christian community also experiences what is happening in the society today. Caputo believes that the global Christian community is not only a spiritual community that confined to the service of spiritual needs of God's people, but as well, to engage the world. Caputo's work also reveals itself to have important philosophical-theological-pastoral implications for a Christian faith which can lead to stronger dialogue to other peoples, other cultures, and other religious tradition in this multiculturalist world today.

### ISLAMIC REFORMS UNDER THE THUMP OF HINDUISM IN INDIA

Since independence, India has been the birthplace of large number radical forces in forms of reforms, amendments, social purification and cast hierarchy to protect the Majoritarian State. Hundreds of social reforms, school of thoughts and political organizations like Muslim League, Hindu Mahasabha, Hindu Sena, Ram Sena, Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swamyasevak Sangh, etc, gradually became the decisive forces. During the freedom movement, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of Nation strongly favoured to unite all Indians to end socio-religious differences. When Gandhi launched Quit India Movement (9 August 1942), in one of the public speeches, he said: "Free India will be no Hindu Raj based on majority of any religious sect and community, but on the representation of whole people without distinction of religion". Creation of Pak (1947), Bangladesh (1971) and the narrow approach of 'Constituent Assembly' left millions of nationalist Muslims insecure at the cost of hostility and contempt of separatism. Muslim dominated Jammu & Kashmir became the bone of contention while Muslims scattered in different parts of India remained hungry for want of administrative justice. Paradoxically, even the intelligentsia and elite Muslims were least preferred in administrative services and other top ranking organizations. Sentiments of Muslims brethrens to promote socio-cultural unity continue to suffer for want of identity crisis, despite deep rooted interest with Indian soil.

### CONCLUSION

For Caputo, no discussion of hermeneutics of the Kingdom of God is complete without reference to Derrida's notion of deconstruction. Caputo not only uses Derridean deconstructive and phenomenological languages, he also argues that the postmodern thinking is necessary to rethink our Christian Doctrine (for example, Ecclesiology, Eschatology) to address contemporary social problems. Caputo insists that Derrida's deconstruction is not in opposition to Christian Theology. In fact, it is inspired by a prophetic spirit of Jesus against oppressive system that

abused, exploited, and marginalized people. It addresses theologies of welcoming not as a complex theological description but rather as a calling for faith communities to engage with all humanity as they would engage with the Event---salvific encountered with Christ. It confronted traditional beliefs systems, authorities, practices, and social realities. As a form of metanoia (Greek μετάνοια), it encourages Christians to critically reflect on their everyday lives, to trace the history of human thoughts, to deconstruct our ways of thinking, to reform, and reconfigure our worldviews. Caputo further contends, Deconstruction is a good news because it deliver the shock of the other to the forces of the same, the shock of the good (the "ought") to the forces of being ("what is"), which he believed that it bears a good news to the church and marginalized groups. It is good news to marginalized or 'most at risk' groups. Accordingly, the United Nations Human Rights describes marginalized groups or 'most at risk' such as, LGBT, individuals with disabilities, Lumad or indigenous communities, members of minority groups, refugees, immigrants, internally displaced persons, Atheists, etc., Thus, Jesus' public ministry serves as précis of the unsettling force of Caputo's deconstruction (as demonstration of the Kingdom of God). It is prophetic conveyed by poetry---the poetics of the Kingdom of God. It challenges religious communities, specifically the Christian community for being passive in the face of gross injustices of our contemporary times or postmodern world. It is a prophetic call for the rule of God. As Caputo writes:

"The poetics of the kingdom is prophetic – a diction of contradiction and interdiction– that "calls for" (prophetein) the rule of God, calls for things to happen in God's way, not the world's. The discourse of the kingdom gets in the world's face, which is a costly business, for the world keeps strict accounts and knows how to make its critics pay. If anyone comes into the world and puts it to the world, the world will receive them not, which usually means it will cost them dearly, maybe everything, which is not a good investment. It is this prophetic passion, which contradicts the world, that explains why the discourse of the kingdom takes such a contrarian form, why it is so unyielding, so full of poetic perversity. The poetics of the kingdom moves about in the distance between logic and passion, truth and justice, concepts and desire, strategizing and praying, astute points and mad stories, for it can never be merely the one or the other, can never occupy a spot that is simply exterior to one or the other. The whole idea is to speak out in the name of justice, in the name of God, and to call for the coming of the kingdom, to pray and weep for the coming of justice. For the kingdom comes to interrupt the business as usual of the world, to put the world in question, to bring the world up short. To proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God is to deny that the world is all in all, to resist enclosure by the horizon of the world, to refuse the totalizing grip of the world, and to insist that the merciless calculations that obtain in the world are not the last word. For the horizon of the world is set by the calculable, the sensible, the possible, the reasonable, the sound investment. In the world, we are made to pay for everything. The world is nobody's fool."

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