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Editorial

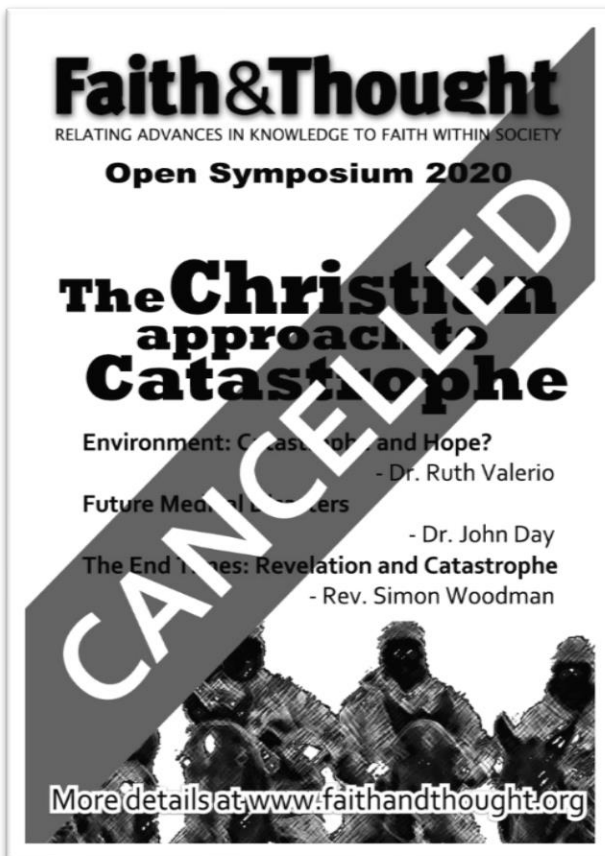
Preparing this edition in the run-up to Easter, the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ, the central event of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15: 3, 4), we are delighted to start with a defence of that truth by Prof. John Warwick Montgomery. At a time when the secular media is full of fear of the future, under threat of the Covid-19 Coronavirus, it is also good to be reminded that we have ‘a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1:3).

The extensive main article, by Dana R. Wright, a committed advocate of James E. Loder’s practical theology, provides us with an introduction to the thought of that leading Christian educationalist. It seemed appropriate to also include an article relating to RE by my co-editor, as it links nicely to both those articles in parts. It also links with the article by Colin Hull, as it has a reference to Richard Rohr, who is, like him, a Franciscan.

Alan Kerry

2020 Symposium Cancelled

Due to government guidance regarding the Covid-19 Coronavirus pandemic, we are sorry to announce that the planned Symposium at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church on 16th May 2020 is now CANCELLED. We are hopeful that we might be able to put out some material in May related to the very timely theme of 'The Christian Approach to Catastrophe' – please check the website for details and if you are not subscribing to our emails then consider signing up. The sign-up form is on the front page of the website. www.faithandthought.org



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The poster features a large, diagonal 'CANCELLED' watermark across the center. At the bottom, there is a black and white photograph of three people in full-body protective suits, likely medical or emergency responders, standing in a line.

Did Jesus Physically Rise from the Dead?

Prof. John Warwick Montgomery¹

Unbelievers claim that Jesus did not really come to life again after dying on the cross. Let's see if that's so or not—and why the right answer to the question is of utmost importance.

Objections to a Physical Resurrection

Typical of those objecting to Jesus' physical resurrection was a German theologian, Karl Venturini, who, early in the 19th century, said that Jesus had not really died on the cross, but had "swooned." According to this "swoon theory," the disciples thought that Jesus had been resurrected, but, really, he had just fainted and later woke up.

What do you think? My view is that if you can believe *that*, you shouldn't have any problem believing in Jesus' resurrection from the dead, since such a "swoon" would have been more miraculous than the resurrection!

Why? Here are just a few reasons:

1. The Roman soldiers crucifying Jesus knew their business: they had conducted many, many crucifixions in that cruel time of history.
2. According to the accounts, the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a sword after taking the body down from the cross - to make sure that he was dead - and out came blood and water showing that he was no longer living.

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3. Would the disciples not have known the difference between a gloriously risen Christ and someone who had been subjected to torture for hours and nailed to a cross?
4. What would have happened to Jesus afterwards? Would he have hid himself away somewhere? Gone into retirement? In fact, Jesus was the last person to lie about himself or deceive others about himself. (By the way, you might like to read the most careful medical study of Jesus' death, as published some years ago in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, where the authors conclude that "Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross" [*JAMA*, Vol. 255, pp. 1455-63 (1986)].)

Let the Historical Records Make the Decision

Venturini is a very good (or very bad!) example of what happens when people do not pay attention to the first-hand, historical reports of Jesus' life, ministry, and death. Almost everything we know about Jesus comes from those New Testament records, and if a person ignores them, he or she no longer does history. One substitutes speculation for history and the results are of no value whatsoever.

Suppose we were to do the same thing with other historical figures. A fine biblical theologian of the 19th century, Richard Whately—who had a great sense of humour—wrote a book titled, *Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Buonaparte*. Skeptics had said that you couldn't believe the New Testament accounts of Jesus because everyone was prejudiced—either they loved Jesus or they hated him. Whately used their own argument to show (as a joke) that Napoleon had never existed—since everyone writing about him either loved him or hated him! This shows that if you use bad reasoning about Jesus, you'll mess up history in general!

But How Good Are the Gospel Records?

Suppose we compare the New Testament books with other writings of the ancient world. What do we find?

In the case of the New Testament, the existing manuscripts are far closer in time to their authors than in the case of *any other books of the Greco-Roman world*. Two among numerous examples: Caesar's *Gallic Wars* and Tacitus' *Annals*. 1,000 years between their composition and our first complete copies. When I was at university, I spent a semester studying the Latin poetry of Catullus. We have that poetry in only three manuscripts, and they are *1,600 years later than the original writings!* But for the New Testament, we have thousands of manuscripts, including ones that go back to less than a century after the events described. Two virtually complete texts of the Gospels exist from as early as the 4th century (*Codex Sinaiticus* and *Codex Vaticanus*). There is a fragment of the Gospel of John that must be dated before John's death--around A.D. 95. Because the biblical books were regarded as sacred, they were copied with the greatest of care and we can be sure that what we have today is substantially what the Apostolic writers or their associates actually wrote.

When some years ago I successfully debated a philosophy professor on the subject at the University of British Columbia, I showed that if you throw out the New Testament, you must at the same time discard virtually your entire knowledge of the classical world. My opponent then said (but no one believed him): "All right. I shall throw out my knowledge of the classical world." A classics professor in the audience jumped up and cried, "Good Lord! Not *that*."

And How Reliable Are the Gospel Witnesses?

Of course, good documents could convey bad testimony. How good are the witnesses to the life, death, and resurrection of Christ?

As a lawyer, I am to assume that witnesses, just like the person or persons on trial, are innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, the "burden of proof"—the responsibility for proving that the testimony is unreliable and the witnesses are not to be trusted--must fall on the critic. Can critics of the life of Christ show that the witnesses—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, etc.—should not be trusted? Absolutely not.

One technique employed by lawyers to see if a witness is reliable or not is to look first at the witness and then at what he or she says. The witness and what the witness says are considered from the standpoint of their basic nature and in terms of what might have influenced them.

If we do this with the Gospel writers, what do we find? In terms of character, they had no criminal records or psychological problems, and so cannot be dismissed as unreliable. They were clearly not influenced by their Jewish society to present Jesus as the Son of God (since the Jewish leadership did not believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah).

As for their writings, they have, as translator J. B. Phillips nicely put it, “the ring of truth.” A New Testament Gospel does not always present the same information as another Gospel, but they do not contradict, but instead complement, each other. A lawyer just loves to have two opposing witnesses say *exactly* the same thing: he knows that they have “colluded” with each other and cannot be trusted.

Not so with the New Testament materials.

And archeology backs up what the Gospel witnesses declare. For example, we have an inscription dated about A.D. 30 that confirms what the Gospels say about Pontius Pilate—that he was prefect (governor) of Judaea at the time of Jesus’ trial and death.

I am also a certified International Fraud Examiner. Fraud examination generally tried to determine whether the three standard characteristics of alleged fraud are present: opportunity, motive, and low moral character.

The Gospel writers and the authors of the other New Testament books did not display those marks of fraud.

They had no motive to lie about Jesus—quite the opposite--since the religious leadership of the country was dead set against the idea that Jesus was the God of the Old Testament, come to earth as Messiah and King of the Jews. Indeed, most of them died for their beliefs in Jesus' divinity.

They had been taught by Jesus that lying was of the devil (John 8: 44-45), so they would not have lied even on his behalf.

And, had they attempted to do so, they would not have been able to get away with it anyway, since hostile witnesses were present throughout Jesus' ministry—the Jewish religious leaders—and they would have blown the whistle had the Gospel witnesses given false testimony concerning him. If they were willing to crucify Jesus, they certainly would have had the means, the motive, and the opportunity to show that the New Testament writers were presenting false testimony. They did not do so—because they could not.

The Miracles Issue

But what is the real source of arguments against the resurrection of Jesus? How can the critics ignore his appearances to a host of people--and not just believers--over a forty-day period before he publicly ascended to heaven? How can anyone deny this, when we know that over 500 people saw the risen Christ (I Corinthians 15)? The answer is that many people simply refuse to believe that miracles ever happen.

How, logically, could anyone maintain that miracles never occur? You would have to look under every rock in the universe—past, present, and future—to make sure there wasn't a miracle going on there! No one can do that.

If we want to be scientific, we need to check out the evidence for or against any miracle claim. Of course, there will be "miracles" for which the evidence is so poor or non-existent that we shall reject the supposed event. But if the evidence is good, we have no choice but to go with it. We don't know the universe so well that we can say that this or that event is impossible.

However, isn't a resurrection so strange that we would need to have an infinite amount of evidence in favor of it? Hardly. A celebrated 18th-century pastor to lawyers in England (Thomas Sherlock) pointed out that a resurrection is simply someone dead now and alive later. We have plenty of information about the reverse: people alive now, and dead later. But the evidence needed in both instances is *exactly the same*: being able to distinguish dead people from live people! Those living at the time of Christ were just as able to do this as we are. If they (or we) couldn't tell the difference between the live ones and the dead ones, we would be burying the wrong people!

Go into a funeral parlor and offer someone present a MacDonald's fish burger. If he eats it, he is alive. After the resurrection, Jesus ate with his disciples (Luke 24).

Can't We Just Substitute a "Spiritual" Resurrection?

But why not avoid all this by believing in a "spiritual" resurrection of Jesus, not a physical, bodily one? Wouldn't that keep us from having to defend a real miracle? Maybe, but at much too high a cost.

There is no evidence for a "spiritual" resurrection. Remember: after Easter morning, Jesus eats with the disciples. And doubting Thomas touches the nail prints in the resurrected Jesus' hands and thrusts his hand into the wound in his side made by the soldiers who crucified him (John 20). And if Jesus had risen only "spiritually," there would be no assurance that believers in him would (as he promised) be raised physically at the Last Judgment.

In this regard, a wee philosophical point is worth mentioning. Evidence is possible for a physical event—but what evidence could ever exist for something purely "spiritual"? The people who go for naked spirituality are talking about things that no one could ever show to be true. Look at all the cults and isms that maintain (mutually contradictory) "spiritual truths." Christianity must not fall into that pit.

Christian faith begins with a physical virgin birth, attests to physical—historical—fulfillments of prophecies and actual miracles, and sees its Lord physically ascend into heaven with the promise of returning in the same manner at the end of time (Acts 1:11). Let's not change Christianity from fact to some kind of unprovable mysticism.

A Final Word About the Importance of All This

But why is all this important? Answer: because salvation depends on it. Jesus himself said: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). And the Apostle Paul, writing under divine inspiration, told us specifically the nature of the saving gospel (1 Corinthians 15):

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also.

Thus, the physical resurrection of our Lord is essential to eternal life. It is the foundation of our life after death with Christ and a central pillar of Christian faith. To deny it is to deny the truth of Christianity—and to cut us off personally from the wondrous gift that that resurrection provides to everyone who believes in the One whom God raised from the dead for our salvation.

Duns Scotus and the Virgin Mary

Colin Hull

Synopsis

Colin Hull is Reader (Lay Minister) in the Church of England. Here he makes a personal review and assessment of the writings of Duns Scotus on the Virgin Mary about her "Immaculate Conception" and "Perpetual Virginity" and suggest some potential meanings of her significance for Non-Catholics today. We may acknowledge the special significance she has in being the mother of the Saviour and the first recipient of the New Being to be given to all of us.

Introduction

I wrote on a previous occasion about my interest in the writings of John Duns Scotus¹ because of my membership of the Anglican Third Order of the Society of St Francis. In the article I wrote about Scotus' view that Christ was predestined before humanity sinned. In continuing examination of Scotus' contribution to Franciscan and Catholic theology and doctrines one can't go far in examining Scotus on the Incarnation without coming across his fundamental attachment as a medieval Catholic to traditions related to the Virgin Mary. Indeed his writings further helped to shape subsequent Marian devotions that culminated in the Catholic Dogma of the Immaculate Conception proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1854.

The traditional extension to the doctrine of the Incarnation in Catholic and Orthodox theology has been to declare that the life of Mary was specially prepared for her role as bearer of the Incarnate Word in her womb and that she was a supreme example of discipleship. For Catholic and Orthodox this includes a tradition that after the birth of Jesus she and Joseph continued in sexual abstinence and she remained Virgin all of her life. Mention of "brothers" and "sisters" in the gospels are said to be because Joseph was an elderly widow and that they were his children from his previous marriage. Scotus defends both the "perpetual virgin" tradition and the specialness of the grace given to her to prepare her for her role in the Incarnation.

The Special Grace given to Mary

There had long been a tension in Catholic theology that agreed that she was spoken of in the gospel of Luke as “*full of grace*” and this was interpreted to mean that she was lacking in sin and tendency to sin. But conversely she was a descendent of Adam and Eve and was therefore needing redemption by her Son as all others are and could not be exceptional in this regard. Therefore at some point in her life she must have been specially blessed and graced in a way that delivered her from sin prior to becoming the mother of Jesus, with the grace of God that flowed from His Crucifixion. Scotus argues that because of her special role, there was a special grace given to Mary that absolved her of all sin from Adam and Eve and prevented her from being a sinner thereafter, and that God did this for her at the very point of conception in her mother’s womb. It was something special for someone who was going to do a special thing for the salvation of the world.

As usual with Scotus, his exploration and elaboration of her sinless state is a long one.

He asks the question: *Whether the Blessed Virgin was Conceived in Original Sin*² In answering it he argues that her redemption from sin was special and at the time of her conception in her mother’s womb. He attempts to prove it in three ways. 1) In comparison to God to whom He reconciles Mary and others. 2) The comparison of the evil from which He liberates her. 3) Comparison of the obligation to Mary whom He reconciles to God.

These all relate to Christ as the redeemer of all and indicate a prior grace from Christ given to Mary. The most perfect mediator (God in Christ) has the most perfect potential to be mediator between God and humanity. God could have acted most perfectly towards Mary in a most special way to reconcile her before all others in humanity on account of what she would be as Christ’s mother. Christ as most perfect mediator merits the removal of punishment from all whom He reconciles (including Mary). If Christ has most perfectly reconciled us, He merited to take away Mary’s guilt from original sin even more so because of her role in bringing Christ into the world.

Christ is the perfect mediator of Mary and preserved her also from actual sin as well as original sin.

Scotus counters arguments (such as from Anselm of Canterbury) that natural birth implies Mary's sinful nature in conception and says this is not conclusive for Mary. Scotus says that sinfulness is related to our individual lack of God's justice not something we inherit just from a matter of natural birth. We are not sinners because we have inherited it, but by our own sinful tendencies which we do not control. He rejects therefore the idea that we are stained by what Adam and Eve did, but we have tendencies to sin as they did. But in Mary's case, she was specially graced in that she was delivered of such tendencies and became fully obedient to God to do what was asked of her.

Scotus also argues that in the very first instance of her conception, God could have poured His grace into Mary as He does for any other person at their baptism. If God did so at the moment of her conception Mary would have no original sin or original guilt or infection that others may have. If God can do something and it is good God will do it. Therefore because God could have redeemed her at the beginning of her life in her mother's womb, and because this is good, God therefore did in fact give her such a state of grace before all others and preserved her in that state of grace thereafter.

It seems to me that Scotus, in upholding the Catholic tradition of a specially graced Mary, on account of what she would do as the Christ bearer and "God bearer" (*Thetokos*), wants to present a view of her that reaches right back to her conception so that the whole of her life will be a special preparation of her to be *Thetokos*. A biblical justification I can find for such is the call of Jeremiah (Jer 1:5 "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations*"...) plus Paul's general point about the preparation of all who are "in Christ" (Romans 8:30. "*And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified*").

The biblical texts cited really only speak of an intended calling and rendering Just and Acceptable for the divine purpose of their calling. They do not seem to apply the idea of a subsequent sinless existence. Of course Mary could have lived her life with some special inner sense of divine calling and self-dedication and intention of living a holy and dedicated life. But this cannot imply being sinless or incapable of sin. It is a view of her that goes far beyond the gospel accounts of her life and renders the message of Gabriel (Luke 1:30 *"you have found favour with God"*) into something Luke may never have intended. We cannot, just by the gospels, know anything about her inner life or status of obedience that would render her as being without sin. Rather, what we may have is a presumption that the *"favour"* is about unmerited love and God's own decision to Justify her before she bears Jesus in her womb.

Maybe we could possibly agree that she may have been given that special Justification even at the beginning of her life. If this is so, she is the first of the human race to be justified because of her own Son, whose merits and grace reach back to her in time. This act of God would then be a sign of God's grace that reaches back in time to all His beloved who had lived before because of the work of Christ. Therefore in this view Mary precedes others in being justified because of God's predestined choice of her as the means of the Incarnation. But she only has such blessed status because of it and not some special status apart from it on her own account.

The special self-dedication of Mary as Virgin

The gospel of Matthew mentions that Joseph did not have sexual intercourse with Mary until after the birth of Jesus (Mt 1:25) and the other gospels also include references to "brothers" and "sisters" of Jesus. Matthew wants to show the specialness of the birth of Christ in accordance with Old Testament prophecy, not anything specifically related to Mary herself.

Despite this, Catholic and Orthodox churches include a popular tradition written into the Gospel (or Proto-evangelion of St James) that after the birth of Jesus she remained Virgin all of her life.

Mention of “brothers” and “sisters” in the canonical gospels are therefore said to be because Joseph was an elderly widow and that they were his children from his previous marriage.

Scotus argues to uphold this tradition in two sets of questions:

- Whether she was and remained a virgin all her life³.
- Whether Christ should have been born of an espoused virgin and if there was true marriage between Mary and Joseph⁴

To the first question affirms the church’s creeds that she was most truly Virgin in giving birth. He then argues for the tradition that she also remained physically intact as virgin during the birth of Jesus by another special act of God rather like Jesus after His resurrection could pass into a locked room.

In answer to the second question Scotus recognises that Helvidius (whom he calls a heretic) had written that she bore other children. He says that this can be refuted from scripture. She had taken a vow of chastity and this was proved by Luke (1:34) *“I do not know a man”* (or “I am a virgin” etc). If it were the case that she had made a vow of virginity it had been revealed to her by the Holy Spirit that she should still marry Joseph but without the sexual element of the marriage. This Scotus says is the common teaching of the church, and as in many other instances of church teaching, therefore it is to be accepted. We could however argue that it is questionable that the Luke verse Scotus cites by itself can be used to show that she did not in the future intend to bear children, but only at that time she had not had any sexual relations because she was not at that point married to Joseph.

In answer to whether being married to Joseph would have meant they must have had sexual relations Scotus writes that Mary could have been married to Joseph but be under no obligation to have sexual relations and that Joseph probably agreed to this. If, according to tradition, he was quite old and just chosen to be a guardian this may seem a reasonable case, but Scotus does not specifically mention it.

There are many incidents in church history of people being married without the sexual element of marriage either because of incapacity or decision. Scotus points out that Mary was not compelled to have sex just because she was married and could be both married and also virgin by continued consent of the couple together. There was a potential objection that the law required procreation and that having children was a blessing. But Scotus countered this with some biblical examples of people like Elijah, Jeremiah and John who were not married and did not have children. To this we could also add St Paul and Jesus himself.

When evaluating this tradition today it is interesting to record that Luther and Calvin and other Protestants including Wesley upheld this received Catholic – Orthodox tradition. However other Protestant churches in recent times have rejected the necessity to believe it because the actual evidence for it is not sustained enough in the New Testament that is the main criteria for doctrine. Evidence for the Gospel of James and associated traditions being part of the original traditions related to the apostolic period is lacking and it seems to be a second generation addition in the Second Century or later that many see as unreliable. It can be asked whether it could possibly be true. Historical research into the Essenes shows that some groups valued celibacy. That is not to say Mary was an Essene, but only that some pious people did live a dedicated celibate life. We note too that St Paul was not married and urged this option for those who felt called to it. Therefore while it may have been unusual in Jewish society that does not prevent it being one of those extraordinary cases of a special person's self-dedication. Furthermore, the tradition of this special lifelong vow of virginity was very supportive of those in the church who valued celibacy as a way of life and hence made Mary a supreme role model. But whether it really was the case that Mary remained a virgin remains uncertain.

Conclusion

We can see that Scotus defended the two dogmas of Mary having a special grace that renders her free of sin and that also as part of her self-dedication to God, she had taken and kept a vow of continued virginity despite becoming married to Joseph and bearing Jesus into the world.

For a completely different way of looking at the issue of the Immaculate Conception I draw upon a principle of the theology of Paul Tillich about the coming of New Being (New Creation) in Christ, written about extensively in his three volume *Systematic Theology* and other works. From his existential theology of the human predicament of estrangement from God and the world, he cites the need to overcome this and receive New Being that is brought to the world by Christ who is the bearer of the New Being. From this point of view it could be said that Mary in being the Christ-bearer (and Thetokos) could include the prior and special case of being pre-justified even at the time of her conception in the womb of her mother. In this way, in Mary we see the first signs of the New Being given to someone, in anticipation of all others who may also receive it. Christ is the bearer of New Being for us and Mary is blessed with being the first recipient. We can give also this an evolutionary twist in respect of the whole evolution and development of humanity. In receiving the New Being from her Son at her conception she becomes the New Eve and first recipient and exemplar of a New Being and a new stage of humanity that is brought by her Son.

Secondly although Mary's life many have been shaped by a special inward grace that in some way guided her life, with regard to the tradition of the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, the case for its actual historicity is not proven. It probably belongs to a second stage of tradition after the gospels and is not yet open to verification. There may of course have been particular circumstances and reasons for formation of the tradition to show a specific calling of self-renunciation and dedication on her part. Perhaps the best we can sympathetically say is that the tradition of continued virginity is a symbol of special self-dedication, a symbol of special self-surrender to God and special fidelity. It is not required by all but can help people think about how

they surrender themselves to Christ in their own circumstances of life. She is in that case a sign and model of self-giving discipleship that foreshows the life of other believers. Again what happens in her is a sign for all believers.

In respect of two other considerations of the Virgin Mary from a Non-Catholic point of view I cite two other sources of interest.

- 1) The Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission: Mary in Hope and Grace. Final Statement 2006⁵
- 2) Evangelicals and the Mother of God Timothy George. 2007⁶.

In the ARCIC statements Mary is still to be viewed as type of church and New Eve. It recognises the reticence in thinking of Mary as sinner but this is in contrast to the special uniqueness of Christ as sinless, and so her need for redemption, that Scotus does not deny. The Church of England Thirty Nine Articles of Religion (IX and XV) neither affirmed nor denied the possibility of Mary having been preserved by grace from participation in the general human condition of having original sin. In view of the tradition of her Perpetual Virginity there is agreement that Anglicans may continue to hold to it.

The article by Timothy George shows a need for Evangelicals (and other Protestants) to recover a fully biblical appreciation of Mary. She is not just mother of the redeemer, she is the first recipient of the new revelation. Mary is a daughter of Israel, virgin mother of Jesus, Theotokos, handmaiden of the Word, and the mother of the Church. There are indications she did not always get things right in respect of her Son and was therefore both faithful and slightly faithless. She therefore prefigures the Church, not perfect but justified as spotless by unmerited grace.

1 Faith and Thought Oct 2016

2 Scotus, Ordinatio 3. Distinction 3.ed Simpson <http://www.aristotelophile.com>

3 Scotus Ordinatio 3 distinction 4 q.2. as above

4 Scotus Ordinatio 3 distinction 4 q.2. as above

5 https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/105263/mary-grace-and-hope-in-christ_english.pdf

6 <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2007/02/evangelicals-and-the-mother-of-god>

‘Restoring the Alleluia! in the Eureka!’

James E. Loder’s Prophetic Practical Theological Vision for Human Participation in the Holy Spirit’s Witness to Christ within a Scientific Context¹

Dr. Dana R. Wright

How could we sing the LORD’S song in a foreign land? Psalm 137:4

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed you suffer with him so that we may be glorified with him Romans 8:14–17

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God ... For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength. 1 Corinthians 1:18, 25

I -The Purpose of This Essay

The purpose of this essay is to offer readers of *Faith and Thought* my take on the significance for the church’s postmodern, and perhaps post-Christian witness, of the practical theological vision of James E. Loder, Jr., the former Mary Synnott Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary, and so inspire persons to read Loder whole.² He developed his critical confessional yet scientific approach to practical theology at the seminary from 1962 until his untimely death in 2001. Loder’s major work in Christian education, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, was released posthumously in 2018. I believe this work alone, which operationalizes³ what I have called his neo-Chalcedonian practical theological science⁴ for the educational ministry of the church, deserves a place on the top shelf of any practical theologian or Christian educator who is concerned

about the church's credible, even prophetic witness to Christ in a postmodern scientific world.⁵

I suspect, then, that Loder's project holds particular significance for any reader concerned about the integrity of the relation of Christian faithfulness to scientific thoughtfulness—faith and thought—in the real world we inhabit. But let the reader beware: his work is scandalous and requires accepting considerable risk—risk associated directly with sustaining rigorous attentiveness (thought) intimately wedded to the foolishness of the spiritual and intellectual cost of discipleship (faith).⁶ I will try to articulate how I understand Loder's theoretical science to interact with and challenge the historical efforts of serious practical theologians to develop their academic and interdisciplinary constructive discipline, focusing on the task of developing an inclusive theory of human action as a way to "continue the Reformation"⁷ with integrity in a scientific cultural context.⁸

I will argue that Loder's extensive efforts to *indwell*⁹ this emerging field ultimately led to his creative effort to realign practical theology with what Paul Lehman called "the God-man structure of reality" revealed through the power of *Spiritus Creator*. Loder wanted to "continue the Reformation" by means of his extraordinarily comprehensive inclusive theory of divine and human action—directed at provoking human participation in the Holy Spirit's witness to Christ. Loder indwelt the hidden intelligibility of the Reformed Christian tradition and the modern and postmodern scientific tradition to discern and explicate an inclusive theory of action that gave full play to both divine and human agency and therefore full play to theology and the human and natural sciences and their reciprocal power to explicate that relationality.

Let me begin by citing Loder's own confession concerning his firm and longstanding commitment to his intellectual and spiritual vocation in the academic field of practical theology. In a 2001 interview he confessed:

I had a restlessness about [theoretical coherence and completeness in practical theology] ... I just wanted to see [practical theology] have

structure. You see, practical theology has really been for me a genuine interest. It's not like I had an interest in something else and tried to work it into practical theology. It is really to try to see as clearly and substantially and systematically as I could the way in which theology came into [human] action, and the way in which action shaped theological thinking. That area of search was always for me of genuine interest and passion. And I think this is really because of Kierkegaard. That is what Kierkegaard was after. To see how the theological construction of ... the God-Man, the Chalcedonian understanding was actually in some ways inherently bound to the way in which we are made and therefore capable of reversing it, like in a conversion. So I think my being driven so much by Kierkegaardian understanding was leading me into practical theology. And the gracious thing was that when I came [to Princeton Seminary in] Christian education ... the whole arena of the foundational disciplines was wide open so that I could move right into it in a way that I could just create in that area anything at all I felt was relevant ... I wanted [Christian education and practical theology] bigger. I wanted it more like what [Seward] Hiltner envisioned but really didn't work out very well. The drive toward practical theology was in my soul.¹⁰

Because Loder argued for, and demonstrated in all of his work, that the nature of the knower inevitably determines the substance and meaning of what is known scientifically, his own experiences of redemptive transformation become crucial generative sources for discerning what he envisioned for the field of practical theology.¹¹ Thus, we need to appreciate Loder's own faith journey of intensification seeking deeper understanding in order to grasp the meaning of his work.¹² I therefore will sketch out a brief biography of this Christian thinker, educator/teacher, counselor, practical theologian, and disciple, whose experiences of redemptive transformation, like Luther and Kierkegaard before him, "fired him into the world with a velocity not his own."

II - On Being Fired into the World with a Velocity Not His Own: A Short Biographical and Bibliographical Sketch

James Edwin Loder, Jr. was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on December 5, 1931, the oldest child and only son of Edwin and Frances Loder. He spent most of his childhood in Lincoln until the family moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where young Jim attended high school. Upon graduation Loder matriculated at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, majoring in philosophy (he entered as a physics major but his professors soon acknowledged that he asked too many "Why?" questions for a physicist, and suggested he take up *metaphysics*, which he did!). Loder graduated from Carleton in 1953 and entered Princeton Theological Seminary in 1954, completing his B.D. degree there in 1957. While at Princeton, two significant events shaped his emerging sense of himself and his vocation. In his senior year he and several other students resisted the approach D. Campbell Wyckoff had taken in his Christian education course because to them it lacked the philosophical depth and theoretical breadth they craved. So Wyckoff in his wisdom gave them permission to re-design the course in a way that satisfied both their intellectual curiosity and the course requirements.¹³ This event ironically foreshadowed Loder's life-long critique of the conceptual coordinates of Christian education in particular and practical theology in general.¹⁴ However, the impetus underlying and sustaining this vocational interest arose out of another, even more significant event in Loder's life. During his first year of seminary his father was stricken with brain cancer and died. At home, and in despair over his father's untimely death, Loder himself became seriously ill and was confined to bed. From there he searched in vain for consolation and comfort in the midst of this meaningless tragedy.

Finally, in desperation, he called out for God to "Do something!" As Loder recalled it, God did indeed "Do something," something quite unexpected for a budding philosopher. Crying out, the young seminarian was met from the "other side" by a warming Presence that enveloped his body (he likened it to being immersed in "liquid heat"), and awakened his spirit in joy and assurance that all was well. Arising from his bed he (quite uncharacteristically) broke out

in song—"Blessed Assurance Jesus is Mine"—and then (more characteristically) he picked up one of his seminary texts—Emil Brunner's *The Scandal of Christianity*—and literally "recognized" or "intuited" its truthfulness as a testimony to the power of God he had just experienced.¹⁵

Through this event of transformation Loder insisted that his despair had been "scandalized" by the Presence of Christ, that gracious new life had been bestowed upon him "from above," and that the deeper dimensions of life's hidden intelligibility had been revealed to him. Thus, knowing intuitively that what he had experienced of Christ could not be reduced to psychological or social dimensions alone, he returned to Princeton to seek understanding of his proleptic experience.¹⁶

When he told his story to Hans Hofmann, a Swiss theologian who had studied with Brunner and Carl Jung, Hofmann knew of the Reality of which Loder spoke, and agreed with Loder the experience could not be reduced to psychological adaptation dynamics alone. Hofmann put the young prodigy on to Kierkegaard as one who might offer him a way to make sense of this transformative experience theologically and psychologically. Loder responded enthusiastically to Kierkegaard's work (he called it "language for my head") and to Hofmann's tutelage. And after graduation, Loder accompanied Hofmann to Harvard as a graduate research assistant, where the elder theologian had been given a grant by the federal government to conduct interdisciplinary research on the relation of religious experience to mental health.¹⁷

Over the next half decade Loder earned his Th.M. from the Divinity School at Harvard (1958) and his Ph.D. in the History and Philosophy of Religion from Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1962). He wrote his dissertation on the power of criterional imagination for reality-restoring events common to both Freudian therapy and in Kierkegaard's description of conversion (he called this pattern of imaginative transformation the "hypnogogic paradigm," borrowed from the work of Herbert Silberer).¹⁸ He finished this dissertation while a Danforth scholar at the Menninger

Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. During these five critical years Loder engaged some of the greatest minds of the day in theology and the human sciences—Talcott Parsons, David McClelland, Paul Tillich, James Luther Adams, Seward Hiltner, Paul Pruyser, etc., along with able young scholars like Robert Bellah, Donald Miller, and Harvey Cox—all of whom Loder interpreted in relation to the ever-present Kierkegaard, in order to forge the conceptual contours of his scientific understanding of transformative religious experiences.

In 1962 Loder, who was now married to his beloved Arlene, was ironically called back to Princeton Theological Seminary as an instructor in Christian education, with a charge to focus on teaching the foundational disciplines that shape Christian education as a sub-field of practical theology. When he informed Hofmann of this position, Hofmann replied, “Maybe you can do something for that field.” Though (or perhaps because) he had no experience in the field of Christian education (except for his redesign of D. Campbell Wyckoff’s course!) Loder proved to be not only a keen scholar but also a compelling and original teacher who made the often staid subject of Christian education come alive for the many students who flocked to his classes.¹⁹ He also counseled many of his students, providing the seminary with a rich counseling resource it lacked in those days.²⁰

By the later part of the 1960s Loder began to attract a high caliber of doctoral students to the seminary to help him revitalize the academic integrity of a field continually in need of reconsidering the theoretical and interdisciplinary methodologies that would drive the field forward. He offered these students an interdisciplinary and constructive approach to practical theology he had learned at Harvard. By the end of the decade, Loder continued to advance in his chosen field, helping to redefine his discipline with dynamic insights into the nature and power of conflict learning to transform human action. His academic future seemed to know no limits. He and Arlene were raising two adorable daughters, Kim and Tami, and Loder himself traveled the world as a *bona fide* expert in Christian education. And then ...

In the late summer of 1970, as the Loder family headed toward Toronto on the New York thruway to enjoy the fruits of their labor, they stopped their camper by the side of the road to give aid to a woman standing by her car. While Dr. Loder secured the jack to change a tire on the women's sedan, a truck driver fell asleep and crashed his vehicle into the car, flipping it over and dragging the helpless Loder underneath it some three hundred yards over gravel. This horrific experience, which is recorded in detail in his book *The Transforming Moment*, and which was re-narrated for all of his students from the early 1970s onward, threw Loder again into an existential crisis so powerful that it forced him to radically reconsider the very core of his self-understanding and the very meaning of his life's vocation. As Loder recalled,

This episode ... raised countless new questions [for me], disturbed several personal relationships, and forced me to re-envision the spiritual center of my vocation—not an easy matter when one is already teaching in a theological seminary. It undoubtedly presented me with the reality to which I have had to be true and from which I have departed only with a keen sense of having violated my own soul.²¹

That is, this experience reactivated in Loder the convicting force that he had experienced several years earlier at the death of his father that brought him into practical theology as his life's vocation, and in effect intensified his life's journey in a new key.²² In the 2001 interview Loder responded to the question "What changed in your academic work after the accident?" in the following way:

That's a good question, because before 1970 I was doing all of my teaching within a basic psychoanalytic model, that conflict learning is basic to psychoanalysis. So I was upgrading psychoanalysis a little bit. But that was the basic shape of my understanding. After 1970 I realized it was the Spirit of God who creates the problem and guides us into truth. And the whole convictional picture in four dimensions began to become a way for me to talk about what I know had

*happened, and what could happen. And so, it was still conflictual, but now it had shifted into a much bigger perspective. And the dynamics involved were not just limited to the human spirit but also to the divine redemption in action.*²³

As was mentioned earlier, this realization of new life and vocation did not come easy. Indeed, some two years after the accident, fighting his own internal struggles and facing considerable skepticism from some of his colleagues who regarded his "turn to the Spirit" to be an unforgivable lapse into uncritical mysticism unfit for Reformed theological consumption, Loder nonetheless concluded that his life and academic ministry only made sense "in the Spirit." But "in the Spirit" also had to make intellectual sense to him as well, and the dynamics involved needed to be brought to articulation in a way that held integrity with both the human sciences and with the best insights of the church, especially the Reformed tradition.

In the next years Loder reaffirmed, from his convictional standpoint, that the pattern of the creative human spirit that he had been investigating since his days at Harvard bore an analogical relationship to the Christomorphic pattern of the Holy Spirit that he had experienced at the death of his father, recognized in Kierkegaard, and later experienced again through the accident that had threatened his own life. Loder realized through this convictional experience that the scientific *ethos* of Harvard had indeed suppressed his previously awakened spirit to fully understand and explicate theologically the redemptive dynamism of *Spiritus Creator* in relation to the creative action of the human spirit.

With his convictional courage restored, he pored over the catholic Christian tradition for its teachings on the work of the Holy Spirit in relation to the human spirit. He found particular help from Regin Prenter's study of Luther's doctrine of the Spirit, *Spiritus Creator*, and from Reformed theologian George Hendry's study *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology*.²⁴ Loder discerned in this intense study of the church's confession of the Holy Spirit that our human participation in the work of the Spirit is actualized through the

conviction-generating power of the Spirit, and not from the autonomous transformational capacities of the human spirit alone. Christian experience consists of the divine transformation of human transformation by the Holy Spirit, generating the convictional courage to live in the world in the power of the Spirit.

After several years of wrestling with these convictional and vocational matters Loder successfully articulated the theological meaning of the relational dynamics of convictional experience in scientific terms in a groundbreaking book entitled, *The Transforming Moment*.²⁵ This carefully crafted book laid out Loder's theological reconstruction of his earlier emphasis on the transformational and imaginative dynamics of therapeutic creativity and gave conceptual clarity to how Reformed theologians might understand the Holy Spirit's convictional interaction with the human spirit in redemptive experience to transform two-dimensional human transformations by placing them in the four-dimensional context of *Spiritus Creator*. Loder sought in this book to forge "a new [scientific] understanding of knowing commensurate with the nature of convictional experience" (21).

He argued that convictional experiences of the Presence of Christ initiated in and through the Holy Spirit, transfigured knowing itself to become "a four-dimensional knowing event" generated out of "a patterned process by which the Holy Spirit transforms all transformations of the human spirit ... " (93). Convictional experiences place persons "inside" their convictions and deeper inside every social construction of reality at the same time, so to speak, so as to behold the inner intelligibility underlying human experience with theological and scientific integrity. In relation to "inside" their convictions, Loder wrote, speaking of the Eucharist:

The four-dimensional transformation of the Eucharist requires that one be inside what is believed in order to "see" whatever is out there, in here, and everywhere in terms of Christ's intention for all creation, from the commonest bread crumbs to the Kingdom of God. Everyday Christian experience badly needs what the transforming moment

does to place people inside their convictions, just as the transforming moment needs everyday Christian experience as its substantive content (119).

Convictional experiences, then, open up for the believer the theological meaning and Christo-morphic dimensions of normal human development redemptively transformed. Loder advocated a "figureground reversal" for human development that (1) made the dynamic creativity of the human spirit itself conceptually and existentially prior to the "products" created by the spirit, like ego, or the stages of development, or social roles; and that (2) allowed *homo religious* to be understood as the normative expression of being human, whose "very nature was constructed around intrinsically and inextricably religious matters [so that] his personal identity as a member of his society was taken over and shaped by the question of his existential identity as a human being before God" (140). Citing Luther's experience of convictional transformation Loder meant that

the final stage in the ordinary course of human development, namely confronting one's own death and the ultimate meaning of life in light of that death, is inextricably tied to the ongoing sense of void at every stage in one's life. Thus, the final crisis in normal people is the lifelong crisis for the religious personality, and the scale of normal development cannot contain, much less explain, a person who brings his or her solution to life's final stage into every intervening stage. In effect, this is to reverse development from a standpoint implicitly outside it (140).

Convictional experiences therefore testify to the Holy Spirit's initiative to awaken the human spirit to the existential depth of human experience in the void, through which the person's generative resourcefulness of the autonomous human spirit, under the aegis of ego and culture, become shipwrecked and call out for a theological resolution not grounded in the social construction of reality or the powers of the human spirit, yet nonetheless fully involving them. In essence through the convicting work of

the Spirit Christ becomes “the ground of the self without absorbing the self, the living center of the personality displacing but not destroying the ego” (144). “ In biblical terms, convictional identity is the Pauline dialectical identity “*I yet not I but Christ*” made real in human experience.

Spiritus Creator acts from outside the stage sequence frame of human development” while at the same time She “follows the pattern of transformational logic that is so deeply ingrained in the dynamics of human development” (145). From this convictional standpoint Loder argued that normal human development under the “triumph of negation” (“negation incorporated”) is redemptively transformed by and through the Spirit of Christ, freeing human beings and communities to take up the way of love (see below).

The Transforming Moment appeared virtually simultaneously with two other important treatises in practical theology that gained considerably more attention over the years—(1) James Fowler’s *Stages of Faith* and (2) Thomas Groome’s *Christian Religious Education*.²⁶ In relation to the first book, Loder’s *Moment* posed a considerable challenge to the near normative status that Fowler’s work enjoyed at that time. Fowler and Loder in fact participated in a debate sponsored by the Religious Education Association in Lansing, Michigan in 1982, in which each one had a chance to affirm and critique the other’s work.²⁷ Loder applauded Fowler’s research model but argued that Fowler’s focus on the constructive powers of human ego to form ever-increasingly complex structures of faith through the life span failed to adequately account for the spiritual nature of human beings nor for the redemptive transformational work of the Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture, tradition, and convictional experiences. Fowler affirmed the profundity of Loder’s vision but criticized Loder for his lack of empirical research and for overstating his emphasis on “crisis” experiences. Fowler’s work has attracted much more critical attention in the intervening years since this rather notorious debate. Perhaps part of the reason for this is that Loder’s fuller articulation of his alternative understanding of human development in the Spirit came some seventeen years later with the 1998 release of, *The Logic of*

the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective—long after Fowler’s work had received its closest scrutiny.²⁸

Nonetheless, *Logic of the Spirit* offers a compelling alternative to Fowler’s developmental paradigm of the whole human life span and its struggle to make meaning and to find hope in this kind of world in the context of the Holy Spirit’s redemptively transformational initiative. Loder argued that the “logic of transformation” intrinsic to the human spirit’s native capacities to create and compose the world, actually unfolds “normally” under the power of negation (he argued that human development is “the triumph of negation” from a theological vantage). Our profound longing to understand what human life means and why human beings hope to live gets buried under this unfolding triumph of negation in human development.

But, fortunately, the “secret secretes” as we move through epigenetic signposts where human identity and significance comes up for renegotiation, and time after time the Holy Spirit may awaken human beings to their existential situation so that they might recognize the Living Ground of human existence beyond the social construction of reality and live in relation to that Living Ground.

Using insights from the human sciences (Freud, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Fowler) and theological insights from the Patristics, Kierkegaard, Luther, Barth, Pannenberg, and others, Loder constructed a practical theology of human developmental experience that reconsidered the question of “normal” human development in Christological and Trinitarian dimensions with the power to negate the triumph of negation and restore hope. Loder wrote: “the larger aim of my inquiry is to demonstrate the overall context that a Christian theology of the Spirit provides for the study of human nature, and especially for issues of purpose and meaning implicit in and often insufficiently articulated through the facts and theories of human development” (xiii). Loder argued that his focus on the dynamics and inadequacies of the human spirit was crucial.

What is at stake in this study is the integrity, the hidden wisdom, and the frequent genius of the human spirit alongside its groundlessness, contaminations, and frequent perversities.

To understand the human spirit is to gain entree to the central driving force in human development that separates humanity from the rest of nature ... it is vitally important to study human uniqueness; otherwise the act of studying itself, a uniquely human enterprise, would not make sense. This quest for human uniqueness leads us into a study of the human spirit (4).

The self-transcending human spirit generates and inspires human intelligence, adaptation, and the symbolic "worlds" necessary for human survival. The human spirit orders experience, participates in the inevitable disordering of that experience, and reconstructs new order out of the disorder, and in some sense discerns hidden orders of meaning in the process. Yet the human spirit remains "a loose canon [sic] of creativity" that is finally "unintelligible even to itself" until it finds its proper grounding beyond itself in the "self-knowledge of God." Thus, "the human spirit makes all acts of human intelligence self-transcendent and self-relational," but "when God acts, Spirit-to-spirit, then human intelligence is transformed into a 'faith seeking understanding' of God's self-revelation—that is, the disclosure of God's mind in the Face of God in Jesus Christ" (12).

In *The Logic of the Spirit* Loder took the *analogia spiritus* he developed in *The Transforming Moment* and the Chalcedonian framework he developed in another study, *The Knight's Move* (see below) to re-envision human development according to the New Creation in Christ, the ontological center of "life in the Spirit." He carefully delineated how the Holy Spirit (1) *affirms* the human spirit's ability to reconstruct itself through the life span, (2) *crucifies* the human spirit's futile efforts to order and re-order ultimate meaning and purpose according to its constructive capacities alone by revealing to the spirit its destiny in death, so as to (3) *liberate (resurrect)* the spirit to live kinetically in relation to the transformational structural dynamism

of the divine life acting to redeem all of creation (Christomorphic relationality). This work of the Spirit is nothing less than the restoration of the *imago Dei* in human experience—human beings fully alive and flourishing—which, as Irenaeus proclaimed, is the Glory of God—*Gloria Dei est vivens homo*.

That it took Loder seventeen years to develop and articulate what might be considered his full response to Fowler's *Stages of Faith* is understandable given (1) Loder's (and Fowler's) general disinterest in professional or academic gamesmanship, and (2) Loder's overriding concern to work out a comprehensive theo-anthropological framework for his *analogia spiritus* grounded in the reality of Chalcedon. Though Chalcedon is implicit in all of Loder's early work on Kierkegaard (from 1957—1970) and in his working out the *analogia spiritus* developed in *The Transforming Moment* (1970—1981), much of his effort after 1982 until the release of his next book *The Knight's Move: Relational Logic in Theology and Science* (1992) was devoted to spelling out the Chalcedonian dimensions of the Spirit's transformational initiative humanward. In dialogue with theologians like Kierkegaard, T.F. Torrance and Pannenberg, and drawing insights from the human and natural sciences (in particular through his six year collaboration with physicist Jim Neidhardt, they co-authored *The Knight's Move*), Loder explains this "turn to Chalcedon" as follows:

[T]he underlying theological premise of this entire study [is] ... that relationality is revealed to us definitively in the inner nature of Jesus Christ. In Christ's nature as fully God and fully human, we have the definition of relationship through which all other expressions of personal, social, and cultural relatedness are to be viewed. This applies as well to the model we are using in the methodology of this study; the inner nature of Jesus Christ ultimately defines the scope and limits of the relational model; not the reverse. Our use of the model is intended to reveal the illuminative and explanatory significance of viewing all creation through the eyes of faith in Jesus Christ.²⁹

Loder and Neidhardt spelled out in exhausting detail this effort “to reveal the illuminative and explanatory significance of viewing all reality through the eyes of faith in Jesus Christ.”³⁰ They constructed a comprehensive Christological conceptual framework within which Loder’s *analogia spiritus* made sense—an epistemological lens with extraordinary generative power to connect scientific culture to its tacit grounding in the reality of Christ. Loder and Neidhardt drew upon the work of the “hard” sciences represented by the likes of James Clerk Maxwell, Michael Polanyi, Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg and Illya Prigogine; and from the “soft” sciences represented by Sigmund Freud and Jean Piaget; and from theological sciences represented by Torrance, K. Barth, Wolfhart Pannenberg, the early Church Fathers, and the ubiquitous Kierkegaard, to make their case that Christianity possessed the conceptual resources to revolutionize postmodern ecclesial and cultural meaning-constructive capacities.

The Knight’s Move bore testimony to Loder’s conviction that the two-fold crisis of late or post modernity—the crisis of science (essentially the nature and limits of human knowing) and the crisis of spirit (essentially the nature of human participation in scientific knowing)—were profoundly addressed in the Reality of Jesus Christ. This work recapitulated the staggering breadth of Loder’s theoretical vision beyond the usual concerns of Christian education and practical theology, and supported his conviction that the Reformed and catholic Christian tradition offered postmodern culture extraordinary generative conceptual resources for imagining a more humane personal, social and cultural order.

Loder is not alone in this concern to recapture the Chalcedonian dimensions of practical theology. Missiologist Andrew Walls argued similarly for the necessity of considering “the bewildering paradox at the heart of the Christian confession” as the clue to our knowing of reality.

The bewildering paradox at the heart of the Christian confession is not just the obvious one of the divine humanity; it is the twofold affirmation of the utter Jewishness of Jesus and of the boundless

universality of the Divine Son. The paradox is necessary to the business of making sense of the history of the Christian faith. On the one hand it is a seemingly infinite series of cultural specifications—each in principle as locally specific as utterly Jewish Jesus. On the other hand, in a historical view, the different specificities belong together. They have a certain coherence and interdependence in the coherence and interdependence of total humanity in the One who made humanity his own.³¹

After *The Logic of the Spirit* came out in 1998, Loder wrote two published articles and a final (posthumously published book) which, taken together, outline Loder's vision for a critical confessional practical theological science that testifies to the intention of all of this previous work.

I consider these later writings as Loder's own charge to the guild of practical theologian to "continue the Reformation" with integrity and conviction born of the Holy Spirit of Christ. In his 1999 essay "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: The 'Interdisciplinary Issue,'" Loder argued that the methodological dimension of practical theology, the integrative key to all other dimensions (historical, contextual, ecclesial, and operational), must always fundamentally respond to and engage the "core generative problematic" of the discipline, or "why any discipline is a problem."³² Since practical theology inquires about the nature of the relation of divine to human action, the core generative problematic requires a *theological* answer commensurate with the nature of this relation *as an ongoing problem* in order to have integrity. This theological answer, for Loder, was the Actuality of the *hypostatic union* revealed in Christ through the Holy Spirit to the church. Loder argued that "the relationality that pertains between theology and the human sciences only becomes what it is through the transforming action of Christ's Spirit in and through the human spirit," revealing that relationality to be Christomorphic as it was discerned in the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Thus "the Christomorphic relationality at stake in interdisciplinary studies calls forth a [redemptively] transformational dynamic which is repeatedly awakening us to contradictions between theology and

the human sciences, intensifying oppositions until there is a new insight, finally bringing about a re-appropriation of the original situation as parabolic of the relationality in Christ."³³

Loder outlined the difference it makes to the other dimensions of practical theology to envision this Christological Actuality at the generative center of the discipline. Then, in 2000, Loder wrote another challenging essay entitled, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor."³⁴ In this essay he began by explicitly defining the core generative problematic for practical theology:

*The core generative problematic is that [all issues related to practical theology] require that two ontologically distinct realities, the divine and the human, be brought together in a unified form of action that preserves the integrity of both and yet gives rise to coherent behavior."*³⁵

He then proceeded to demonstrate from an extended discussion of the nature of true science, why the practical theologian herself must be self-involved in engaging this theological problematic if she is to allow "deepening coherences [to] gradually emerge from the interaction between [herself] and the known and eventually lay bare the internal structure of the reality being investigated." When this self-involved knowing becomes the passion of faith (faith seeking understanding), the insight that emerges is indeed startling and definitively transformative.

*God is irreducibly Subject; the presumed object of the inquiry turns out to be its origin and its destiny making the investigator the object of grace and the inquiry of faith a response to God's initiative. Indwelling the inner life of God is to come to the remarkable realization that such an indwelling is derivative, a human mirror of the indwelling presence of God's Spirit in the investigator."*³⁶

Through this Christological transformation of the knower, the practical theologian learns to know every domain of human experience according to

Christ's knowing of her, so that "by the universal replication of this Christomorphic pattern ... we address the core of practical theology where theology and science converge in the person of Jesus Christ to shape the interplay and coherence of Divine and human action."³⁷

As Loder neared his retirement, his desire to continue honing his neo-Chalcedonian theory of practical theology witnessed to in the Gospel continued unabated right up until his untimely death in November, 2001. Days before he died he essentially finished his only book on Christian education, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, developed over decades from his ever-popular course at Princeton, ED 105. This work, which "operationalizes" his neo-Chalcedonian practical theological science for education, was only recently published in 2018.

We may consider this book to be Loder's alternative vision for practical theology of Christian education to Thomas Groomes' influential *shared praxis* approach.³⁸ One difference between Loder's work and Groomes' own influential work, *Christian Religious Education*, is that the latter has almost nothing explicitly theological to say about the transformative work of the Holy Spirit transforming the knower. Loder's work on Christian education, on the other hand, is crucial for understanding the Christological, pneumatological, and anthropological dimensions of divine-human relationality that constitute "life in the Spirit" and that generate insights into the nature of the Spirit's transforming initiative in every dimension of human action.³⁹

Loder structured *EMLOS* by modifying Talcott Parson's inclusive theory of human action in organic, psychic, social and cultural dimensions isometrically related. The "hidden intelligibility" that governed this comprehensive field of human action existed as a reciprocity of two powerful forces—(1) the dominant power of *socialization* (a "tension-reduction, pattern maintenance" entropic movement) and (2) the generally subordinate power of *transformation* (i.e. ,the dynamics governing the emergence of hidden orders of intelligibility generating paradigmatic reconstructions of human life). Loder

argued that the pedagogical work of the Holy Spirit was to affirm these forces but then to negate the negation riven into every dimension of human action through socialization and then to release the transformative capacities of the human spirit (personal and corporate) from their bondage to socialization so that the transformation of transformation becomes the dominant dynamic for constructing the ordering of human agency "in the Spirit." In brief, this action of the Spirit acts in all four dimensions to restore spiritual integrity of relations in human beings and communities

- *Organic*: Under the impact of the Spirit, organic life-unto-death becomes the bearer of divine life and love even in the face of death.
- *Psychic*. Defensive ego boundaries soften under the Spirit's work to make room for the otherness of the other.
- *Social*. In the Spirit, social role structures become reversible so that intimacy becomes possible across sexual, cultural, racial and class boundaries.
- *Cultural*. In terms of culture, images, narratives, values or artifacts are rendered transparent in the service of living in and through the power of the divine Presence, to which they tacitly or explicitly refer.

III - Conclusion

Let me conclude this essay by citing two passages from *EMLOS*, in which Loder asserted what I think can be understood as the true substance and the true aim of all of his academic output. The first passage refers to one of his most important Gospel texts, Luke's account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), in particular when Jesus "broke bread" before the disciples he encountered. Loder asks: "What's the epistemological effect of this encounter? Luke says, "*Their eyes are opened and they recognized him!*" But as soon as they recognized him, Luke notes, Jesus "*vanished from their sight!*" Now we must ask, says Loder; "Why when their eyes were opened did they see less?" Here is his lengthy response to this question.

Here we have a marvelous arrangement, nothing less than the twist that makes the transformational experience redemptive. They see less

when their eyes are opened because when you truly recognize the presence of Jesus, you realize that you cannot compose him as an object in your world. You don't compose him into your world. He composes you into his world. He becomes the lens through which you now see everything and compose reality. He cannot be an object out there. You are the object in what he is doing. Here is the figure-ground shift that shakes the foundations of the world to reveal the kingdom. Of course, he had to vanish. As soon as you see who he really is, he has to disappear in order that you can be composed into his world.

This narrative reveals the highest meaning of having a vision of Christ. A vision of Christ is not something out there, but something that comes into one's socialized world and then heightens your capacity to see what is really going on in terms of the four-dimensional reality that is in his person. To have faith in him means then that he becomes the one who represents the four-dimensional reality in whom and by whom we reside in the fourth dimension while these other three dimensions are transformed. He is the one who holds us together because he is the one who holds all things together.⁴⁰

Loder's neo-Chalcedonian practical theological science sought to enable and empower the church to participate in the Spirit's witness to Christ in a fallen world. A second passage in *EMLOS* is wish to cite speaks to the hoped-for impact on God's people living in and through the vision of Christ revealed in the Spirit. In the last chapter, "Theory: Climax in Worship," Loder begins:

The Book of Hebrews portrays Jesus' life as an act of worship in which he is both priest and the sacrificial lamb. Accordingly, the aim of Christian education is for every human life to become an act of worship through the Spirit of Christ working in and beyond us. But

between our present life and this aim falls the shadow of uncertainty. How do we come to participate in Christ's Spirit and follow the pattern of his life as an act of worship? Whatever means we find to this end must be in keeping with the nature of Spirit.⁴¹

The Loderian vision for a prophetic practical theological science placed an enormously important challenge in front of religious educators and practical theologians to take more seriously both the work of the Holy Spirit toward Alleluia! and the dynamics of the human spirit toward Eureka!—and their reciprocal inter-relationality at every level of human action in order to enable human participation in the Holy Spirit's witness to the One who holds the whole world in his hands—and thus *to restore the Alleluia! in the Eureka!*

While Loder's total academic output was rather small by some standards, the depth and breadth of his *oeuvres* taken as a whole cannot be understood in any sense to be small. I believe that James Loder was "fired on the world with a velocity not his own" and he lived and died to witness to that "alien velocity" and therefore to inspire us to "*sing the Lord's song in a foreign land.*"

¹ This essay is a reworking and shortening of my introduction to the Loder Festschrift: "Are You There? Comedic Interrogation in the Life and Witness of James E. Loder." In *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004): 1-43.

² It is perhaps worth saying at the outset of this essay that Loder's practical theological vision was characteristically communicated with exhaustively dense academic rigor for explanation, something that he associated with "good science." I believe he saw himself as a theoretical scientist of the relationality of divine and human action.. Most of his published work was directed to the academic guild and not to more popular audiences. Summarizing this dense body of work and its academic purposefulness in a short essay is daunting to say the least. But many people connected to Loder and his work because of their personal experience of the Holy, even when they couldn't quite grasp the astonishing intellectual grasp he displays of the disciplines that inform his practical theological science.

³ In his 2001 essay, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: The Interdisciplinary Issue," Loder described the five dimensions that constitute the academic field of practical theology—(1) historical, (2) systematic, (3) ecclesial, (4) operational, and (5) contextual. His own primary contribution to the field focused mainly on the second, *systematic*, dimension in which the interdisciplinary methodology of practical theology is developed for integrating and

interrelating all the other dimensions that constitute this scholarly and constructive field of endeavor.

⁴ The designation of Loder's project as 'a neo-Chalcedonian practical theological science' is my own, the significance of which will become apparent in this survey of his thought in its historical context. Just by way of introduction, "neo-Chalcedonian" refers to Loder's commitment to what I think of as a neo-Barthian practical theology that shares Barth's insight into the methodological significance of the doctrine of the Incarnation discerned in the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Neo-Barthian suggests that Loder took Barth's commitment to a Chalcedonian Christology further into a dialogue with science than Barth was willing to go. Loder's dialogue with one of Barth's most significant translators and interpreters, Thomas F. Torrance, helped Loder to develop the scientific relevance of Chalcedon to practical theological science. Loder was influenced significantly by Torrance's essay, "The Natural Theology of Karl Barth," in Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in a Frame of Reference*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984): 285–302. Loder's neo-Chalcedonian, neo-Barthian framework was worked out in exhaustive detail in his collaboration with physicist Jim Neidhardt in *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992).

⁵ James Loder, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, (Dana Wright, Ed.), (Eugene, OR: Cascade Publications, 2018). Henceforth designated *EMLOS*.

⁶ For a similar assessment of Loder's "scandalous" vision—see Ken Kovacs, who wrote perhaps the most thorough study of Loder's work to date—his published dissertation, *The Relational Theology of James E. Loder: Encounter and Conviction* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2011)—Kovacs noted on page 6: "I detect a radical even subversive element within Loder's thought. It is consistently provocative and challenges ecclesiastical restrictions that appear to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit"... [who] is continuing the work of the incarnation by enfleshing human life with the Spirit of God ... Trusting in the movement of the Holy Spirit thus frees the church to be as revolutionary and as radical as the gospel itself."

⁷ This phrase, "continue the Reformation," risks drastic misunderstanding unless it is carefully explained. I'm following renowned historical theologian Brian Gerrish's contention that just as the Reformation was a revision of medieval Catholic tradition, so modern liberal theology sought a dynamic revision of the Reformation. Gerrish characterized the revising character of liberal theology as "a shift of interest from static dogmas to the phenomenon of believing." *Continuing the Reformation: Essays on Modern Religious Thought* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993). The key figure is Friedrich Schleiermacher. Loder accepted this "shift of emphasis" in a qualified sense because he wanted to articulate a fuller accounting for divine action transforming the believing person that he recognized was crucial to the Reformation witness to the Gospel. Loder thus understood the core generative problematic of the Reformation to be more explicitly and dialectically theological, as in the work of Karl Barth.

⁸ I am referring specifically to the body of work by academic practical theologians that continues to inspire what I believe to be "the renaissance" of practical theology in the West since about 1950, with precursors stretching back to the nineteenth century. See, Wright, Research Report, "The Contemporary Renaissance in Practical Theology in the United States: The Past, Present, and Future of a Discipline in Creative Ferment," *International Journal of Practical Theology* 6, 2 (2001): 288–319. Three events signify the claim that a "renaissance" in practical theology in the United States is taking place: (1) the 1981 conference sponsored by

the University of Chicago's Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion, entitled "Theology and Practice: Ecumenical Perspectives on Practical Theology," published as edited by Don Browning, *Practical Theology*, (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), which set something of the agenda for reconceiving the scholarly and constructive nature of the emerging discipline; (2) the founding of The International Academy of Practical Theology that grew out of the Chicago event; and (3) the emergence of a series of taxonomies that attempt to provide heuristic maps of the development and articulation of different ways to construct interdisciplinary methodologies. Loder's theoretical work developed in the context of this renaissance. Indeed I would argue that he was one important theorist working at the ground floor of this effort and became something of a "Kierkegaardian" provocateur within the guild.⁹ The word "indwell" is a crucial "shorthand" term from the scientific epistemology of Michael Polanyi, articulated most fully in his postmodern theory of science developed in his magnum opus *Personal Knowing*. Loder drew on Polanyi extensively to develop his practical theological science. See my effort to describe Loder's appropriation of Polanyi in the Michael Polanyi journal: "Personal Knowledge Transformed: James E. Loder's Neo-Chalcedonian Science of Practical Theology," *Tradition and Discovery XLII 2* (2015–2016), 34–51.

¹⁰ Interview with Dana Wright, April 20th, 2001.

¹¹ He makes this case explicitly in an essay written at the end of his life, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor." *International Journal of Practical Theology 4* (2000): 22–41.

¹² A more complete biographical account of Loder's life and work can be found in Dana R. Wright, "James E. Loder, Jr.," entry for *The Christian Educators of the Twentieth Century Project*, (Kevin Lawson, Gen. Ed.), (La Mirada, CA: Talbot School of Theology, 2003). The website for this project is www2.talbot.edu/ce20/educators.

¹³ Both Loder and Wyckoff confirmed this episode in separate interviews with Dana Wright.

¹⁴ Cam Wyckoff was so impressed by Loder's extraordinary conceptual abilities, demonstrated when Loder refused to take his course and redesigned it with more intellectual rigor, that even though Loder had virtually no experience in the practice of Christian education of congregations, Wyckoff regarded Loder as the right person to serve with him as his colleague in the Christian education department, as the resident philosopher of Christian education, the emphasis of which Wyckoff was most glad to delegate.

¹⁵ This episode is recorded by Loder in *The Transforming Moment*, 87–88.

¹⁶ Loder argued that good science requires "fiduciary passion" that depends upon what Polanyi called *prolepsis*, "an anticipatory glimpse, a proleptic conception...and implicit apprehension that is imprinted upon the informed mind because the internal structure of the phenomenon bears a kinship to our knowing and what we can know as we allow ourselves to indwell the phenomenon." Perhaps Loder's experience can be understood as a *prolepsis*, anticipating all that was to come. See Loder, op cit, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor": 28-29.

¹⁷ On Hofmann's appointment, see. Anonymous, "Hofmann to Conduct Theological Program," *The Harvard Crimson* (Jan. 23, 1957). "Rev. Dr. Hans Hofmann ... of Princeton Theological Seminary, has been appointed associate professor of Theology at the Divinity School, and will direct a five-year study to develop mental health training for student ministers." Similar studies were also established in a Catholic setting (Loyola University) and in a Jewish setting

(Yeshiva University), all of which were funded by the U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

¹⁸ Loder's dissertation integrated the insights of Freud and Kierkegaard concerning "reality-restoring" religious experience and the therapeutic power of imagination in religious experience. This dissertation, "The Nature of Religious Consciousness in the Writings of Sigmund Freud and Soren Kierkegaard: A Theoretical Study of the Correlation of Religious and Psychiatric Concepts" (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University, 1962)), was later written up and published as *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966). On Loder's connection to Silberer and the "hypnagogic paradigm" see Ken Kovacs: *The Relational Theology of James E. Loder: Encounter and Conviction* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2011): 20–22.

¹⁹ Both D. Campbell Wyckoff and J. Randall Nichols confirmed in private interviews Loder's profound effect on Christian education at Princeton. One student likened his teaching to that portrayal of Mr. Keating by Robin Williams in the film, *Dead Poet's Society*.

²⁰ The stories that illuminate Loder's insights into the work of the Spirit, that are recorded throughout his writings and that were spoken about in his classes, came largely from Loder's almost forty-year counseling ministry at the seminary.

²¹ Loder, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989): 13.

²² Loder made the connection between these two transforming events in this way: "This manifestation [of the Spirit at the death of his father] was very similar to that of the accident episode [on the NY thruway] ... Indeed, the seminary experience may well have been the basis for the recognition of God's Spirit in that accident which occurred exactly sixteen years to the day after my father's death. In both crises, the Holy brought to me a sense of self anchored on the Rock ... separate, beyond the reach of the void, yet thoroughly redemptive, the immanent sense of the Holy constituted the fourth dimension of my being."

²³ Interview with Dana Wright, April 13th 2001.

²⁴ Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator* (Philadelphia: Mulenberg, 1953, especially the Introduction and chapters 1 & 3; and George Hendry, "The Holy Spirit and the Human Spirit," in Hendry, *The Holy Spirit in Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1961):96–117.

²⁵ Loder, *The Transforming Moment* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

²⁶ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1981); Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education* (San Francisco.: Harper & Row, 1981).

²⁷ The substance of the debate is written up in James E. Loder & James W. Fowler, "Conversations on Fowler's *Stages of Faith* and Loder's *The Transforming Moment*." In *Religious Education*, Vol. 77 (2) 1982, pp. 133–148.

²⁸ Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998). One perceptive but brief analysis of Loder's work in relation to Fowler is James Nelson's review of Loder in his massive survey of religion and psychology: "Loder's theory is based on the idea that human development is shaped by spiritual transformation, while the more psychological theories like Fowler's argue that spiritual transformation is embedded in human development, a view that tends to privilege psychological concerns over theological or spiritual ones." Nelson, *Psychology, Religion and Spirituality* (New York, NY: Springer, 2009): 241–243.

²⁹ Loder and Neidhardt, *Knight's Move*, 7 and 13. The authors developed what they called, "the strange loop model," a generic, asymmetrical version of complementarity (as in Bohr) they hoped would enrich the theology/science dialogue and testify to the nature of reality as relational, according to the definitive revelation of relationality in Jesus Christ.

³⁰ *The Knight's Move*, 13.

³¹ Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), xvi.

³² Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: "The Interdisciplinary Problem," in F. Schweitzer & J. A. van der Ven, eds. *Practical Theology—International Perspectives*, vol. 34 of *Erfahrung Und Theologie: Schriften zur Praktischen Theologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1999), pp. 359-382.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 366-67 (emphasis in the text).

³⁴ Loder, "The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor," in *International Journal of Practical Theology*, Vol. 4 (1), pp. 22-41.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 23 (emphasis in the text).

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 29.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 39.

³⁸ Loder himself makes this comparison with Groome in *EMLOS*, p. 298. He writes; "In the literature, [Groome's] approach, fully explicated in his *Christian Religious Education*, most clearly parallels the approach I am suggesting in this book." Loder also notes that Groome originally wanted to title his book *Til the Break of Dawn*, (suggesting to Loder, I think, something like *The Transforming Moment*)

³⁹ The importance of *EMLOS* for understanding Loder's whole project cannot be underestimated. This book helps dispel certain myths that surround Loder's work—i.e., that he was only interested in "crisis" experiences and individual transformations or conversion experiences, and that his main contribution may be limited to the function of the imagination in learning and teaching situations. Loder's concern was to witness to, and to empower human participation in, the God-human structure of reality in human history and experience.

⁴⁰ Loder, *EMLOS*, 163–64.

⁴¹ *EMLOS*, 306.

'Invisible' Tensions in Combatting Racism – a focus on Africa

Dr Jim Harries

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Some years ago many serious scholars in the West considered Africans to be genetically an inferior sub-species of humanity. This history continues to haunt us today. Western people's determination not to give biological-racism any credit is these days used as an excuse to ignore cultural differences: someone pointing out cultural differences, can easily be condemned as a biological-racist.

The prevailing cultural hegemony in the Western world today is secularism, a rejection of religious belief or the exercise of power by religious groups within society.

How does secularism provide a moral framework for denouncing racism? Are there invisible tensions present?

Anti-racism attempts to normalise the assumption that secularism is universal to humankind (the racist regards people of non-Western ethnicity as lacking secular capability). This has at least two impacts:

Firstly, legislation to combat racist discrimination makes it illegal (in the West) to reward different people differently for the same job. One consequence of this is that immigrants to the West may receive considerably higher pay than they did in the country they came from. This makes the West appear like a heavenly utopia to aspire to. This higher pay could almost be seen as a 'bribe' or 'payment to conform' or to shut up. What is less obvious is the 'cost' of joining Western society, i.e. the need to have officially denied one's own cultural heritage in order to comply with Western secularism.

Secondly, the assumption of secular normality that is designed to avoid the West being openly biased in favour of Western (i.e. Protestant or once-Protestant) people (i.e. anti-racism, when the 'norm' is Western people), when extended globally, results in the assumption that people in the majority world are also secular.¹ This precludes people from compensating for other-than-secular contexts outside of the West. People in the non-West are forced, by the global system of rewards, to live the lie that they are secular: to pretend that they are secular, to devise policies as-if they are secular.² In turn this perpetuates dependency and hinders development in Africa.³ (It is worth noting that cultural integration nearly always works in one direction – integrating Africans into the West (into secularism), and almost never the other way around, integrating Westerners into African ways of life.)

Occlusions of the truth will usually cause problems one way or another. An important impact of the lies underlying the supposed universality of secularism is its effect on occluding the Gospel. Many people in the 'secular' West these days rarely question how it can be that their thinking precludes any role for the church and the Gospel in their lives. It is as if previous generations of openly Christian Europeans were all stupid and naively misled. Contemporary Europeans hold this position in the face of massive contrary

¹ The West is trying to avoid privileging Christianity.

² It is difficult to point to specific examples of this, because of the major efforts constantly being made to conceal them. It does underly the consistently high valuation of Western education. Westerners do not send their children to be educated by supposedly-secular education as taught throughout African schools. Africans also realise that 'good' education internationally is that given by Westerners. (The fact that this arises from Westerners' peculiar Christian history is less widely known or acknowledged.)

³ Because anything that is found in Africa that is absent in the West is not addressed by the extant education. This includes 'external' conditions, such as peculiarities of climate, but especially aspects of culture, such as African people's proclivity to belief in witchcraft. Similarly, much that is presupposed in Western education may not exist in Africa, e.g. secularism.

evidence. It continues despite their awareness, to different degrees, that in the past the Gospel was almost universally accepted and considered profoundly foundational to life in Europe. By extension, Europeans consider the Gospel to have at best marginal relevance in Africa and the majority world. This perception is belied by African reality, where, in my experience, the Gospel of Jesus is massively and pivotally influential in almost all communities not totally and violently dominated by Islam.⁴ (Violently, i.e. a domination that includes taking strict, often violent, measures to counter conversion to Christianity.)

The above mentioned 'payments' made to Africans in the West to encourage them to identify as 'secular' come in endless shapes and sizes. My contention is that there is dishonesty at play. So called 'scientific' research showing that people of African origin have lower IQ than others is dismissed as politically incorrect, rather than seen as evidence that questions whether our education system is biased towards a secular world-view that disadvantages people of non-Western origin. I have not yet seen any Africans breaking-rank on this situation, and conceding that they are 'not-secular'. Why? The reason seems clear: the rewards for continuing the pretence are enormous, and the cost (in financial and other terms) of honesty may be very high indeed.⁵

The cruellest aspect of anti-racism is probably its impact on the majority world, especially Africa. Enormous economic pressures force prominent African people to toe the line and to pretend to be secular. There may be many who do not toe the line – but of course if they do not pretend to be

⁴ I make this claim on the basis of personal experience, having lived in East Africa since 1988.

⁵ The difference between the financial-levels at which African people often live in their homelands, and the amounts of money they use to live once they reach the West, is typically vast. One must also bear in mind, that Westerners' concern with being 'not-racist' may not be shared by Africans for whom 'biological racism' may make little sense. The category of 'secularism' is also an emic category (i.e. a self-description by the West) that may not make much sense outside of the West.

secular and use European languages (the learning of which usually carries a high financial cost), then powerful Westerners will not (cannot) listen to them. They certainly cannot participate in Western academia, which operates on the basis of the pretence that numerous particular epistemological assumptions that have accumulated over centuries in the West, are normal and universal. Massive loans, grants, aid, support, rescue efforts, relief and subsidies twist African economies so as to favour people who play the system in line with the wishes of the West, totally swamping (at least in the eyes of the media) alternative wisdom. Those who wish to stay true to their cultural roots in Africa are habitually silenced and sometimes thoroughly oppressed.

In summary, my contention based on considerable first-hand experience is that secular-government policy tries to expunge both the Gospel, and 'real' needs of Africa, from view. Of course, to counter the problems of politically-correct antiracism, does not require us to become 'racist'. The challenge is to recognise that cultural-differences cannot suddenly disappear into thin air. It is to recognise that important cultural differences do not have genetic origins. It is to come back to Christ, and to seek to reach African (and other) people in vulnerable ways – i.e. to use their languages and resources in our outreach activities⁶. It is to seek to relate to people on the basis of biblical love rather than on the back of secular notions of impartiality.

⁶ The latter practice is known as 'vulnerable mission' (see vulnerablemission.org).

Spirituality and Secularity in Religious / Worldview Education

Rev. Robert Allaway

As well as chairing Faith and Thought Council, the author is Chair of his local SACRE (responsible for the Religious Education syllabus in that local authority's schools). This article is adapted from a position paper circulated to the members of that body.

Amongst other things, OFSTED inspectors are supposed to investigate pupils' 'spiritual development' in a school. According to Rebecca Nye, the term 'spirituality' was, and is, obscure, and placed into the 1944 Education Act precisely because it was argued that no one knew what it meant!¹

Those drawing up that Act were working within the language of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, so whatever we mean by 'spirituality' must make sense within that tradition, even if we need to define it in a more general way for our times.

The Bible has nothing to say about 'spirituality'. It does speak of a human spirit. This is used in a way akin to the way 'soul' is used in popular (as opposed to Biblical) language. (Note that the adjective *psuchike*, 'soul-ish', is used in a negative sense in passages such as 1 Corinthians 15: 44 and James 3:15, where it could be translated 'animal', set over against 'spiritual'.) It is my spirit that makes me: me.

I find both James E. Loder (1931-2001), Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary² in his *The Logic of the*

1 D. Hay and R. Nye, *The Spirit of the Child* (London: Harper Collins, 1998, page 5).

2 Talbot School of Theology: Christian Educators (www.talbot.edu/ce20/educators/view.cfm?n=james_loder). Dana R. Wright, his biographer on this site, is a co-editor of the compendium of papers given at the conference on Loder at Princeton Theological Seminary in March 2012

*Spirit*³ and Richard Rohr, the Franciscan writer on spirituality, in his *Eager to Love*⁴ point me to what the Apostle Paul has to say in 1 Corinthians 1:17 - 3:3 (especially 2: 10-16), along with Romans 8: 16. Paul seems to see a parallel between the way the human spirit functions in the human being and the way the Holy Spirit functions in God. This analogy of function enables God's Spirit to communicate with our spirit. (Note that this does not commit us to a 'ghost in a machine' view of the human being. Christian ethicist Nancy Murphy states, "[W]e are our bodies - there is no additional metaphysical element such as mind or soul or spirit", yet still affirms, "[B]lown by the Breath of God's Spirit; we are Spirited bodies."⁵)

This analogy, between how our minds (as a pattern of neurons?) can function and how the Holy Spirit functions, leads Dr Keith White, a 'disciple' of Loder and respected Christian minister to children and families, to ask if 'spirituality' has any meaning if we cannot speak of God having 'spirituality'.⁶

But maybe we can!

A Divine View-Point

We read in Genesis 2:2 "On the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day ..." (NRSV) Why does God rest? He does not grow tired (Isaiah 40:28) and need a break! It would appear that, having completed his creating, he pauses to contemplate the beauty of that work.

That pause for contemplation is the climax of God's work of creation, for it creates a day when the human beings he created 'in his image' the previous day can pause and share that contemplation of his work with him.

³ James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998)

⁴ paperback edition, Hodder and Stoughton: London, 2015, p67

⁵ Murphy, N. & Brown, W. S., *Did my neurons make me do it?* OUP: Oxford/New York, 2009, p.xi

⁶ *Faith and Thought*, April 2013 (No 54), p7

In the rest of this essay, I shall argue that this contemplation of things with God, from God's point of view, is of the essence of a spirituality that can be understood by all, and even those who do not believe God is there can seek to view things from God's perspective as a 'thought experiment'.

I will illustrate this with regard to three things highlighted in our local RE syllabus: Awareness, Value and Mystery.

Awareness

In the book of Job, chapters 38 to 41, God takes Job on a sort of conducted tour of the natural world. Job is invited to admire various animals, many of which are no use to human beings, and some positively hostile to them. Nevertheless, Job is shown that they have value in themselves, in the beautiful way they function in their own environments. In this age of increased environmental concern, that is surely a relevant message, and we can surely agree that it is good to view the natural world like that, even if we do not believe in Job's God.

We can have a similar sense of awe before great works of human creativity. For the Jew or Christian, they echo the creativity of God, who made us in God's image.

We can have such feelings also before human relationships, such as the elderly couple faithfully caring for one another 'in sickness and in health' or the rescue worker prepared to lay down his or her life to save others. This leads us to ...

Value

In Romans 2: 14, 15, the Apostle Paul speaks of how Gentiles (non-Jews) "who do not have the [Jewish] Law" can "do by nature things required by the Law ... They show that the requirements of the Law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness ..."

The early Christian theologian Origen (185-255) related this to the passage in 1 Corinthians 2 already mentioned, saying 'my opinion is that the conscience is the same as the spirit'.⁷

God's Spirit enables the human spirit to view human actions with God's independence from human self-interest.

Whether or not we attribute our conscience to God, we can surely agree that it is good to seek to view ourselves, not as others see us (for their view can be as distorted as our own view of ourselves) but as God would see us (whether or not you believe God is actually there).

Before I was a Christian, I was a Humanist, and belonged to the Campaign for Moral Education. At a time when moral teaching was still seen as an aspect of religious education, we argued that tying moral teaching to a particular religious viewpoint was setting it on a weak foundation, for how would the pupils guide their lives when they jettisoned their religion (as we expected them to do) and what happened when religious viewpoints clashed?

The irony is that in seeking a basis for morality that was independent of any religious particularity, we were actually seeking that 'thought experiment' divine viewpoint that I have previously suggested. We who act from our faith need to respect Humanists as seeking to construct what we believe we already have, which they cannot in good conscience share. Equally, the Humanists need to note that it was faithful Christians, standing with Jesus, like the Protestants Niemöller and Bonhoeffer and the Catholics Jägerstätter and the Scholls, who were most clearly able to see through Nazi propaganda to recognise and resist the evil of that regime, even at the cost of liberty and life.

Nearly a century ago, some research was conducted into the degree of conviction with which people agreed or disagreed with certain statements.⁸ It

⁷ Commentary on Epistle to the Romans quoted in Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers*, OUP, 1969, p199

⁸ R. H. Thouless, *British Journal of Psychology*, 26, 1935, pp 16-31

was found that, whether they agreed or disagreed with them, people generally responded with greater conviction to religious statements.

This is perhaps not surprising, as our world-views (whether religious or “secular”) enable us to make sense of our lives. We should seek to understand other people’s world-views as their response to this common human need, a ‘God instinct’ that Jung described as ‘a force as real as hunger and the fear of death’.⁹ This is why the study of such world-views (including secular ones) is important.

Unfortunately, those with malicious intentions can use that human need in order to manipulate and control people. It is such behaviour that puts people off ‘religion’, when they are only aware of authoritarian manifestations of such world views. However, as 20th century Communist regimes demonstrated, “secular” world views are just as capable of such misuse.

A vital function of Religious / World-View Education is to enable students to recognise when they are being so manipulated.

Mystery

This brings me to object to a statement I have seen attributed to Simone Weil¹⁰ (perhaps taken out of context): “attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer.” This is open to misunderstanding.

To a ‘simple’ believer this would seem self-evident nonsense, since such a person would see prayer as talking to God, and being attentive to the world is plainly something else. Those of us further along in our spiritual journey are aware that there can be contemplative prayer: a wordless being attentive to God. So we could certainly say “attention, taken to its highest degree, is *a bit like* contemplative prayer.” But to say it is “the same thing as prayer” commits, for an adherent of the Abrahamic religions, the sin of idolatry: putting creation in the place of Creator.

⁹ quoted in James W. Heisig, *Imago Dei*, Associated University Press, 1979

¹⁰ in personal correspondence to me from an expert in RE

If I might use a human analogy, if I were telling my wife how much she meant to me, while devoting all my attention to someone or something else, I doubt if she would be very impressed!

There is a respected stream in all theological traditions that stresses that God is 'other' than us, beyond anything comparable in creation. So Job is led to exclaim, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." (Job 42:3)

When we recognise this, it leads to a greater tolerance of those we disagree with, theologically, recognising that we all fall short in our understanding.

It will also help those holding religious world views to sympathise with the doubts and questioning of the secular. In fact, such doubts and questioning can be found on the lips of a believer such as Job, in the Bible.

It annoys me when a secular thinker such as Dawkins accuses religious believers of holding their faith 'without proof', 'without evidence'. I arrived at my faith through a thoughtful investigation of evidence for the resurrection of Christ, as have many others. To dismiss all religious believers as victims of indoctrination is to have as closed a mind as those who are indoctrinated. Some religious believers may have been indoctrinated, but so can secular believers be (as in former 'Communist' states). In Religious / World-View Education, we should be encouraging students to think for themselves, without dismissing out of hand those who come to different conclusions.

Another problem with the Weil quote is that not only might it seem to lose sight of the 'otherness' of God, but, as a consequence, it could paper over the profound philosophical difference between the 'theistic' world view underlying the Abrahamic religions and the 'pantheistic' one underlying many Eastern faiths, but that is not the concern of this essay.

I just point out that a consistent pantheist (one who identifies all that exists with God) is in the same position as a consistent atheist, such as Sartre, for

whom “everything is permissible”¹¹; nothing is inherently right or wrong, since there is nothing beyond what is by which to judge it.

PARTICLES OF FAITH

In this section we provide a selective summary of some recent articles and other pieces appearing in the media which address matters of Faith and Thought. If something like this catches your eye please email the editor for inclusion in the next issue of F&T. admin@faithandthought.org

Galileo Commission Report

Beyond a Materialist Worldview – Towards an Expanded Science

by Prof Dr Harald Walach

The Scientific and Medical Network differs from Faith and Thought in its emphasis on the interface between Science and Spirituality/Mysticism rather than exclusively Christian Theology. It has however, recently published a report which may well be of interest to our readers as it addresses issues of the adequacy of scientific materialism or scientism as an exclusive basis for knowledge and values. They write:

The Galileo Commission is represented by a distinguished group of over 90 scientific advisers affiliated to 30 universities worldwide. Many of these advisers were active contributors during our consultation process leading up the publication of the Galileo Commission Report, written by Professor Harald Walach.

The Commission fully supports scientific methodology but is highly critical of scientism. The Report is a rigorously argued challenge to the materialist and mechanistic assumptions widely prevalent and influential within the scientific

¹¹ in David Wilkinson, 'The New Atheism', *Challenging Religious Issues*, Summer 2018

community, whereby humans are just complex biological machines devoid of free will and living in a purposeless universe. It argues that these assumptions can only be maintained by refusing to 'look through the telescope' at evidence indicating that consciousness may be fundamental and go beyond the brain.

In a world dominated by science and its largely unexamined philosophical assumptions, the Galileo Commission Report seeks to open up public discourse and to find ways to expand the scope of science so that it is no longer constrained by an outmoded view of matter and physical reality, and can openly explore and accommodate significant human experiences.

The Report is available for free download at www.galileocommission.org, where you can also find links to order printed copies.

For further information please contact David Lorimer – dl@scimednet.org

Book Reviews

Sharon Dirckx. *Am I Just My Brain?* The Good Book Company 2019 Pb. 160pp. ISBN 978-1784982751

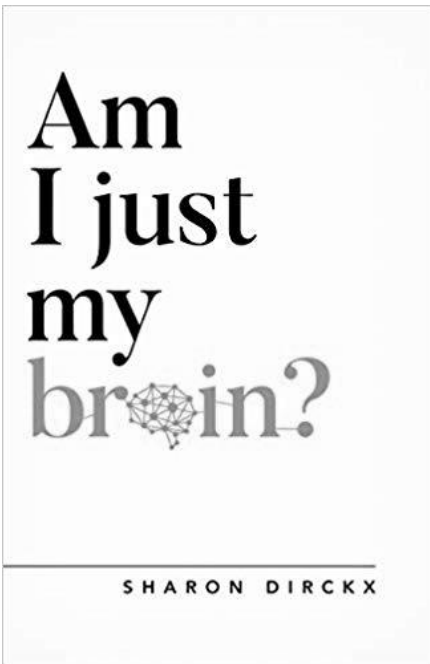
(This book was principally written as an argument for non-believers. In a break from our usual practice therefore, I have asked a non-Christian Clinical Psychologist friend of mine to review it - Ed)

Sharon Dirckx is a Senior Tutor at

the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics, and has a PhD in Brain Imaging from the University of Cambridge. As such she seems a perfectly qualified guide around some of the biggest questions in neuroscience today, addressing them from both a scientific and spiritual stand point.

In the introduction, Dirckx promises to help answer the question "Am I Just My Brain?" and the the possible implications on free will,

robotics, and religion if the answer is yes. Dirckx argues that neuroscience and psychology refute the claim that we are all just our brain, and subsequently argues that this more than is evidence of a spirit or soul likely bestowed upon us by God.



Dirckx takes us on a whistle-stop tour of the great and the good of philosophical questions from "Are we just machines?", "Is free will an illusion?", and "Is religious

experience just brain activity?". She addresses each question with remarkable simplicity, and ease of reading, although my ever curious mind would not have been disappointed had there been a bit more meat on some of the bones, so to speak.

In addressing "Are we just machines?" Dirckx uses the thought experiment of a woman who was born blind at birth. Dirckx claims that this woman, Mary, has an extensive knowledge and understanding of the mechanics of sight, but when Mary's sight is miraculously cured "no amount of knowledge of rods, cones, corneas...would get Mary any closer to the experience of what it is actually like to see". Dirckx goes on to argue that the existence of psychosomatic disorders further bolsters this claim, and dismisses Daniel Dennet's assertion that consciousness is an illusion, a misreading of how our brain has worked. Dirckx enlists help in this argument from a fellow neuroscientist who claimed that a "sophisticated argument to persuade me that pain is delusional

will not lessen the torment one iota". An interesting view, but one that, I would argue, stands challenged in the face of a growing evidence base of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as a treatment for chronic pain.

Dirckx's accessible brand of scientific writing was at its best when asking "Is free will an illusion?". She takes particular issues with Libet, who used electroencephalography (EEG) to measure brain activity of participants when they were asked to make a decision. He concluded that free will was an illusion, as his study found that the brain started firing before the participant had made a decision. Dirckx's response to this systematically targets the flaws of the study like a new home owner tightening all of the screws on a newly assembled Ikea bookshelf! From sample size, to replication studies, to the fact that decisions to move one's finger differ significantly from deciding where to live. As such, she concludes that neuroscience does not undermine free will.

Dirckx seems particularly troubled by free will. Possibly because it was, supposedly, given to us by God and to deny that it exists might be to deny the generous giver of it. Dirckx offers all of the usual issues with hard determinism from people not being morally responsible for their actions (heroic or despicable), to human rationality being undermined. Dirckx's poorest attempt to undermine hard determinism comes when she says, apropos of nothing, "Nietzsche held this view", a tantalising 'and you wouldn't agree with Hitler's favourite philosopher would you?'

Dirckx tries to argue that the existence of free will, consciousness and religious experiences all point to the existence of God. Dirckx does little to dissuade me from my belief that the existence of an omnipotent supernatural being is absurd. A Tim Minchin song posits that "we are just -- monkey's in shoes". I would add to this that the fact that we have language and are as socialised as we are, allows for the perpetuation of all kinds of nonsensical ideas in the pursuit of healing and meaning. One Reiki

healer in New York reportedly earned \$108,000 in 2019!

The back cover of this book claims that I will be neuro-signposted to

who I really am. I must confess that I did not feel any closer to having that question answered.

Luis Calabria

Proposed changes to our Constitution

As a registered UK charity The Victoria Institute (Faith & Thought) takes seriously its obligations under Charity Commission regulations and guidance. Our constitution has not been updated since 2008 and is not sufficiently clear about the role of Council members as charity trustees. We are therefore recommending some changes to the constitution. The new version is available on our website here www.faithandthought.org/about and the proposed changes have been highlighted in bold. We intend to vote on adopting the new constitution at our next AGM (details to be announced in light of the recent cancellation of the planned AGM due to Coronavirus). In the meantime if you have any objections, questions or comments to make about the proposed changes then please do get in touch admin@faithandthought.org

In addition we have drawn up a short 'Finance and Probity Policy' which is also on the website for your attention and comments www.faithandthought.org/about

We've tried to keep the changes as simple and brief as possible. If you are happy with the proposed changes it would be helpful if you could let us know as well.

Join Faith & Thought Council

We are looking for new Council Members to help direct the activities of Faith & Thought. We usually meet for Council Meetings in January, May and September, normally in London. We are particularly looking for women or men with an interest in biblical archaeology, but applications would be welcome from anyone. Our constitution requires that Council Members sign a short declaration of faith i.e.:

1. I declare my faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour, my Lord and my God, whose atoning sacrifice is the only and all-sufficient ground of my salvation.
2. I will seek, both in life and in thought, to be ruled by the clear teaching of the Bible, believing it to be the inspired word of God.

If you are interested in applying, or know of someone who might be please contact our administrator on admin@faithandthought.org

Instructions for Authors

We welcome contributions to the journal in the form of original papers, book reviews or short pieces for inclusion in 'Particles'. Please email any of these to admin@faithandthought.org

Do not worry too much about formatting, but the following points are helpful:

- We prefer footnotes to endnotes where possible
- A short note describing the author, in about 25 words, should be included

Faith & Thought Academic Grants

Are you engaged in or planning postgraduate study of some form into the area of Faith & Thought? Perhaps you're planning a sabbatical or enrolled on a course already. Maybe you work for an academic institution and would like to pursue your own study or research area? We are making available two grants per year of £1000 each to support such work. Maybe you know someone else who would benefit from this? At the 2018 AGM it was agreed that:

- a) Faith & Thought (The Victoria Institute) invites applications for up to two academic grants per year of £1000 each.
- b) Applicants should be undertaking post-graduate study of some form which addresses the interface between contemporary thought and the Christian Faith.
- c) Applicants are required to submit a brief proposal of up to 1000 words outlining the proposed study regarding aims, questions, methodology and impact of the potential insights gained from this work. This should include details of how the grant might assist the applicant in undertaking this work.
- d) Applications will be considered by Faith & Thought Council based on the following criteria:
 - a. the relevance of the proposed study to Faith & Thought's overall objectives
 - b. the clarity and coherence of the applicant's proposal
 - c. the impact the study will have on Faith & Thought's mission and the wider field of knowledge in this area
- e) Before awarding the grant, successful applicants will need to have a named supervisor in place willing to give a reference for the applicant (though the supervisor need not necessarily be from an academic institution, for example those undertaking sabbatical studies may identify a senior minister, or other person willing to affirm the application).
- f) Successful applicants should make available an article based on their research / studies to be published by Faith & Thought.

The Application Form is available on the website www.faithandthought.org We look forward to hearing from suitable applicants.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribing to Faith&Thought is now simpler than ever. To receive the journal anywhere in the world is just £10 per year for Faith & Thought or £20 per year to receive both Faith & Thought AND Science and Christian Belief. Both journals are usually published twice a year (April and October) and membership also entitles you to FREE admission to the Faith & Thought annual symposium. Join online today with the PayPal button.

<http://www.faithandthought.org/membership.html>

Alternatively, complete the form below and send it to the Treasurer at:

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Please let me have a *Banker's Standing Order form / Gift Aid Declaration

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*Cheques should be made payable to **'Victoria Institute (Faith & Thought)'** – please include both names as the bank require this.