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Submission Guidelines

Articles, meeting notices, and notes likely to be of interest to persons interested in the thought of Michael Polanyi are welcomed. Manuscripts normally will be sent out for blind review.

- Articles should be 5,000 words (including abstract, notes, and references) and be sent to Paul Lewis at lewis_pa@mercer.edu.
- Book reviews should be sent to Walter Gulick at wgulick@msubillings.edu.

All manuscripts should be submitted as a Microsoft Word file (.doc or .docx) attached to an email message and formatted as follows:

- double-spaced, with 1" margins
- in a reasonable typeface (Times New Roman 12 is preferred)
- with paragraphs indented 0.25"

As to other matters of style:

1. *Spelling*: We recognize that the journal serves English-speaking writers around the world and so do not require anyone's "standard" English spelling. We do, however, require all writers to be consistent in whatever convention they follow.

2. *Citations*: We recognize that Polanyi's work connects with scholars who work in diverse disciplines and typically use different style guides such that we are "fluent" in different conventions for citations, capitalization of titles, and so forth.

- Our preference is for Chicago's parenthetical/reference style in which citations are given in the text as (last name of author year, page number), combined with bibliographical information at the end of the article.
- Endnotes should be used sparingly and be placed before the reference section.
- To the extent that our software allows, we will, however, accept other styles (e.g., APA or MLA) so long as the author is consistent and careful in following it. The main point, of course, is to give the reader enough information to locate and engage your sources.
- We do encourage one exception to this practice: Polanyi's major works may be cited parenthetically. For example, Polanyi argues that (TD, 56). Full bibliographical information should still be supplied in the references section since many of us may work with different editions of his works. If you take this option, please use the following abbreviations (note that abbreviations are italicized):

<i>CF</i>	<i>Contempt of Freedom</i>	<i>SFS</i>	<i>Science, Faith, and Society</i>
<i>KB</i>	<i>Knowing and Being</i>	<i>SM</i>	<i>Study of Man</i>
<i>LL</i>	<i>Logic of Liberty</i>	<i>STSR</i>	<i>Scientific Thought and Social Reality</i>
<i>M</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>TD</i>	<i>Tacit Dimension</i>
<i>PK</i>	<i>Personal Knowledge</i>	<i>SEP</i>	<i>Society, Economics, and Philosophy</i>

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PREFACE

This issue of *TAD* embodies the ambiguity of Polanyi's own religious convictions and the fertile ground that such ambiguity provides, as it features essays about authors who appropriate Polanyi's work to develop quite different theologies. On one end of the theological spectrum is the work of Donald Crosby, a former Presbyterian minister, who makes use of Polanyi's ideas to argue that nature is an appropriate object for religious devotion. This is hardly an orthodox (or Reformed) view, notwithstanding Calvin's statement, "...it can be said reverently, provided that it proceeds from a reverent mind, that nature is God" (*Institutes* I. V. 5.). Walter Gulick introduces readers to Crosby's work by reviewing six of Crosby's books and suggesting some ways that a religion of nature could gain more widespread traction. Crosby responds to Gulick's review essay by clarifying some points and taking issue with others. Finally, Andrew Grosso responds to Gulick by raising questions about the adequacy of both a religion of nature and Gulick's modifications to Crosby's project.

The next set of essays moves to the other end of the theological spectrum as they discuss the work of the late James Loder, who appropriated Polanyi's thought to develop a theology that is much more orthodox than Crosby's. Dana Wright, a church educator and former student of Loder's, focuses on how Loder appropriates Polanyi in ways that contribute to the dialog between theology and science. He also supplies an annotated bibliography of relevant works by Loder. David Rutledge adds to the discussion with a review of an edited collection of Loder's essays. Esther Meek then reviews a collection of essays that shows how Loder's work is being appropriated and extended by a new generation of theologians.

This issue also contains the usual complement of book reviews and news. Here I want to highlight the June conference at Nashotah House. In particular, note that author Matt Crawford will be a plenary speaker and that there is an early-bird registration that closes on 15 March. See News and Notes and the full-page notice for more information on the conference and various needs associated with it.

Finally, I appreciate the kind words I have received about the new look *TAD*. All credit should go, however, to the people at Faithlab. Feel free to send notes to David Cassady (david@thefaithlab.com) and/or Jean Trotter (jean@thefaithlab.com) to let them know how much you like the new format. I trust that folks have been able to access the e-reader versions easily and find them useful even though they do not preserve the formatting and pagination of the print copy.

Paul Lewis

P.S. Although this issue of *TAD* usually contains reports from the Society's annual meeting, the new production deadlines mean that we cannot do that this issue. The reports are available at www.polanyisociety.org and will be included in the July issue of *TAD*.



NEWS AND NOTES

Matthew B. Crawford to Speak at June Conference

Matthew B. Crawford, author of *Shop Class as Soulcraft* and *The World Beyond Your Head*, will speak at one of the plenary sessions for our upcoming conference that celebrates 50 years of *The Tacit Dimension*, “Polanyi Studies: Past, Present, and Future.” Crawford makes frequent mention of Polanyi in these books and credits *TD* as one of the works that has most influenced him.

Crawford holds the Ph.D. in Political Philosophy from the University of Chicago and is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. He also runs the Advanced Vehicle Fabrication Laboratory in Richmond, VA, which grew out of Shockoe Moto, his motorcycle repair shop.

Learn more about him and his work at <http://www.mathewbcrawford.com> and <http://www.reclaimed-fabrication.com/products/>

Norman Sheppard (1921-2015)

Professor Norman Sheppard (1921-2015) was a benefactor of the Polanyi Society and a dedicated participant in the English Polanyian discussion groups. He was a physical chemist who trained in spectroscopy at Cambridge in the 1940s.

After working at Trinity, he was appointed Chair of Chemical Physics at the new University of East Anglia in 1963. Elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1966, he used spectroscopy to study the nature of adsorption and the associated catalytic processes made possible by adsorption.

Besides being heavily involved in research that reflected Michael Polanyi's own work in physical chemistry, Sheppard also shared Polanyi's concern to provide a more accurate account of how science actually works. Sheppard, a committed Christian, believed—like Polanyi—that a sound philosophy of science made room for faith.

I am personally indebted to Professor Sheppard for the four single-spaced pages of detailed corrections and suggestions that he made about the scientific content of the Polanyi biography. His generous attention to detail gave me blessed assurance that there would be no major embarrassments in the text. In personal correspondence of 24 May 1999, he provided an authoritative assessment of Polanyi's scientific excellence: “It is true that he did not dominate one particular field in physical chemistry but, as listed in the citation to the Royal Society, he made seminal contributions to a wide number of different ones and left it to others to develop them. I know of no other physical

chemist, except Michael Faraday, who has made such wide contributions.”

— Martin X. Moleski, S.J.

Travel Fund Donations Still Needed

The Travel Fund is actively soliciting donations in anticipation that there will be a significant number of requests for travel and registration support for the upcoming 8-11 June 2016 Polanyi Society-sponsored conference at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Nashotah, WI. There will be a one-day workshop on Wednesday 8 June at the beginning of the conference for younger scholars and anyone interested in learning more about Polanyi’s philosophical work. Society members generously supported the program for travel and scholarships at the previous Loyola conferences in 2001, 2008, and 2012.

Those planning the Nashotah House conference hope to again promote the active involvement in the conference of graduate students and others with very limited professional travel funding. The Society has recently received pledges to match the first \$1500 of donations to the Travel Fund.

Inquiries about donations as well as questions about travel or registration support should be directed to Phil Mullins (mullins@missouriwestern.edu).

Donations to the Travel Fund can be made with PayPal (<http://polanyisociety.org/paypal/donate.html>) on the Polanyi Society web site or by check made to the Polanyi Society. Please include an e-mail address on checks and PayPal

donations. Please send your tax-deductible contribution to The Polanyi Society c/o Paul Lewis, Roberts Department of Christianity, Mercer University, 1501 Mercer University Drive, Macon, GA 31204. Checks should be made out to the Polanyi Society and earmarked for the Travel Fund.

Keep Current with Dues in Order to Keep *TAD* Coming to Your Mailbox

With the new arrangements for *TAD*, we must be good stewards of our resources and so we will mail print copies only to those whose dues are current.

Rates remain the same as always: \$35 regular, \$25 library, and \$15 student.

A payment form and return envelope are contained in this issue. Payments received between now and Sept. 1, 2016 will, unless noted otherwise, count toward the 2016-2017 year.

Residents of the United States can also use a credit card using PayPal (<http://polanyisociety.org/register/join-renew.php>). Those living outside the U.S. must use PayPal.

***TAD* in the Electronic Age**

TAD now comes with access to e-reader versions for iPad, Kindle, and Nook. In order to download your e-reader version see the instructions on p. 74 of this issue (they can also be found on [www.polanyisociety.org](http://polanyisociety.org))

TAD is also now on Facebook. If you are Facebook user, search for *Tradition & Discovery*, like us, and invite your friends to join. If you are not a Facebook user, become one!

Recent Work of Interest

Walter Gulick's article, "Relating Polanyi's Tacit Dimension to Social Epistemology: Three Recent Interpretations," has been published on Taylor and Francis's Social Epistemology web site (tandfonline.com) with the print version forthcoming. Gulick engages the work of Harry Collins, Tacit and Explicit Knowledge, Neil Gascoigne and Tim Thornton, Tacit Knowledge, and Stephen Turner, Understanding the Tacit.

Peter M. Hopsicker's essay, "The Importance of Imagination in Aesthetic Experience: Polanyian Thoughts on Elcombe," has been published in the *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 42, No. 2 (2015):209-218. According to the abstract, Hopsicker make use of "Polanyi's distinctions among technical, scientific, and artistic problems" to argue that "sport is not art," but "contributes in its own way to human flourishing."

Phil Mullins taught two short-term graduate classes in the month of September, 2015 in the Department of Philosophy and History of Science at Budapest University of Technology and Economics. One class was an introduction to the thought of Charles Taylor and the other was on Michael Polanyi and the Philosophy of Biology.

The Department of Philosophy and History of Science of Budapest University of Technology and Economics and the Michael Polanyi Liberal Philosophical Association co-sponsored a workshop on September 4, 2015. The event focused on "Michael Polanyi's 'Unemployment

and Money' at 75" and included a partial showing of Polanyi's 1940 film. Eduardo Beira presented, "Polanyi's Film and the Program of Enlightenment." Other comments on the film, Beira's presentation, and Polanyi's work in economics were given by the art/film historian Márton Orosz, Gábor István Bíró (a graduate student working on Polanyi's economics writing), and Phil Mullins.

Now on You Tube: a lecture by Philip Kitcher, the John Dewey Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, titled "Dissent: The Role of Scientists and Dissenters in Public Debates," presented at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill on February 28, 2012. His talk was part of the Michael Polanyi Lecture in the History and Philosophy of Natural Science series, a lecture series endowed in 1981. The lecture can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/PhilipKitcherLecture>.



Marking 50 Years of The Tacit Dimension

POLANYI STUDIES: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

**Nashotah House Theological Seminary
Nashota, WI
June 8-11, 2016**

In June 2016, the Polanyi Society will sponsor a conference to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Michael Polanyi's *The Tacit Dimension* and to assess the legacy of Polanyi's philosophical work. The conference will also be an opportunity for those just beginning their study of Polanyi to interact with experienced Polanyi scholars about the many themes in Polanyi's writings.

The conference will also feature a keynote address by Matthew Crawford, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia and the author of *The World Beyond Your Head* (2015) and *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (2009).

The conference will meet 8-11 June 2016 (Wed-Sat) at Nashotah House Theological Seminary in Nashotah, WI (west of Milwaukee, just off of I-94). The nearest international airport is General Mitchell International Airport (MKE) in Milwaukee (about 45 minutes away).

There will be a one-day workshop on Wed, 8 June, for those interested in an introduction to Polanyi's philosophy. Senior Polanyi scholars will facilitate various sessions on Polanyi's life and the principal ideas in his major works. Graduate students and those new to Polanyi studies are especially encouraged to participate in this one-day workshop.

The Society invited proposals for papers that examine Polanyi's contributions to the areas of epistemology (including tacit knowing), moral philosophy, intellectual history, aesthetics, religious and theological studies, embodiment, semiotics, economics, and socio-political orders. The deadline for submissions was 31 December 2015, but late proposals may still be accepted if the schedule can easily accommodate them. Contact Andrew Grosso at the email below.

Early-bird registration is \$225 and is available until Tuesday, 15 March 2016; thereafter, registration will be \$275. Registration fees include access to all conference sessions (including the workshop on Wed.) and all meals.

Registration does not include lodging. A limited number of guest accommodations will be available on the campus of Nashotah House, and a block of rooms has been reserved at both the nearby AmericInn of Delafield (4.5 miles from Nashotah House) and Holiday Inn Express (4.7 miles from Nashotah House); there are other hotels in the vicinity as well.

A limited amount of financial aid is available for those unable to meet the cost of registration, accommodations, and travel; for more information about financial assistance, please contact Phil Mullins at mullins@missouriwestern.edu.

Additional information regarding the schedule for the conference, lodging, and other details will be available on the website for the Polanyi Society (www.polanyisociety.org). Those interested can also contact Andrew Grosso at atgrossos@icloud.com.

OUTLINING A RELIGION OF NATURE: THE WORK OF DONALD CROSBY



Walter Gulick

Donald A. Crosby, *A Religion of Nature*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2002. Pp. 200 + xi. ISBN 0-7914-5454-1. \$31.95. Cited as *RN*.

_____, *Living with Ambiguity: Religious Naturalism and the Menace of Evil*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2008. ISBN 0-7914-7520-1. \$21.95. Cited as *LA*.

_____, *Faith and Reason: Their Roles in Religious and Secular Life*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2011. ISBN 1-4384-3614-2. \$25.95. Cited as *FR*.

_____, *The Thou of Nature: Religious Naturalism and Reverence for Sentient Life*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2013. ISBN 1-14384-4670-7. \$25.95. Cited as *TN*.

_____, *More Than Discourse: Symbolic Expressions of Naturalistic Faith*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2015. ISBN 1-4384-5374-4. \$24.95. Cited as *MD*.

Keywords: Donald Crosby, religious naturalism, existential faith, religious symbol, ambiguous nature, religious rightness, moral rightness, perspectival epistemology, relational metaphysics

ABSTRACT

In five books, Donald Crosby has sketched out in some detail how nature, both as process and structure, can function as the ultimate religious object. He understands nature to unfold in morally ambiguous ways, but argues accepting the necessary truth of ambiguity is no obstacle to existential religious faith. Such faith is given particular content through sensuous religious symbols. He distinguishes the religious rightness of ambiguous nature from moral rightness. Although the purposes of living things establish relational values in nature, moral rightness for humans must largely be established on grounds other than nature. My assessment of Crosby's accomplishment in these books is generally appreciative, but I

raise questions about his notion of religious symbols and suggest that for his Religion of Nature to become a live option, grounds of morality need to be more clearly folded into his metaphysical and religious framework.

Introduction

In recent years, movements appreciative of both the significance of religious sensibility and the integrity of scientific discernment have been emerging. One expression of this broad movement typically goes by the name of religious naturalism. “Religious naturalists,” Michael Hogue writes, “interpret nature in whole or some aspect of nature, rather than the supernatural, as having maximal religious importance.”¹ In the books listed above, Donald Crosby develops perhaps the most fully elaborated version of religious naturalism yet presented. He distinguishes his version of religious naturalism from three other types:

Religion of nature is one of at least four general categories of religious naturalism. A second is naturalistic theism, which rests belief in God on reflections about experience rather than on special revelations and usually regards God as a wholly immanent being. Another is religious humanism, where humanity, rather than nature or God, is the principal focus of religious concern. The fourth is the “minimalist” form of religious naturalism set forth by Jerome A. Stone. Here no distinct ontological reality called “God” is affirmed, but Stone argues that we do experience “situationally transcendent” resources and ideals productive of good, and that these can properly be called “divine” (*RN* 172, n. 14).

Crosby’s comprehensive worldview has many affinities with Michael Polanyi’s thought. Indeed, Crosby relies more upon the philosophy of Polanyi than any other philosopher in *Faith and Reason*. He makes extensive use of Polanyian personal knowledge in describing existential faith, a notion which is crucial to his elaboration of a religion of nature. Existential faith “underlies, shapes, and supports the distinctive quality of a person’s existence or life, its fundamental sense of purpose and direction, aim and orientation” (*FR* 1). As indicated by this quotation, Crosby does not limit faith to religious belief. Rather it is an expression of Polanyi’s “fiduciary programme,” which may be religious or secular in nature. Existential faith describes the deepest values one indwells—the tacit acceptances that shape explicit belief and behavior. Faith and reason are interrelated for Crosby. He quotes Polanyi to the effect that existential faith is the personal pole inextricably bound to the universal pole we seek to truthfully discern

(*FR* 56, referring to *PK* 303 and 312). As is the case for Polanyi, so Crosby places the committed search for truth among the highest of values.

Crosby differs from Polanyi in the way he addresses the question of ultimacy in existence, although the difference between the two may not be as great as it first appears. Crosby sees nature itself as that which is ultimate; Polanyi refers to God. But it would be simplistic to see their different languages as representing a conflict between an atheist and a theist. Each thinker affirms the importance of religious sensibility and each has at times seen himself as a professed Christian. Indeed, when growing up in the South, attending Princeton Theological Seminary, and then serving as a Presbyterian minister for three years, Crosby was a more orthodox Christian than Polanyi ever seemed to be. For what reasons, then, did Crosby leave Christian ministry behind and come to advocate his current Religion of Nature?

Evolution of Crosby's Thought

At the beginning of *A Religion of Nature* and in the concluding chapter of *Faith and Reason* Crosby tells the story of his personal journey of existential faith. He states that the primary emphasis for his change was “intellectual, but it also has had an important emotional or motivational aspect” (*FR* 132). What initially most seemed to raise intellectual questions for him was learning about “Biblical Criticism and its exposure of the all-too-human character of the Bible” (*FR* 135). Then when serving as a minister, he realized that his faith, nurtured among like-minded persons, had not prepared him well to answer the searching questions of his parishioners and the public at large. He felt called to seek out a teaching position where he could more honestly and openly explore religion. Work on his Ph.D. dissertation on the 19th century American theologian Horace Bushnell increased his appreciation of the role of metaphor and symbol in literature in general and religion in particular. The challenge of seeking adequate reasons for beliefs excited him and invited him to wider inquiry. “The study of Western philosophy and world religions opened up numerous fresh options for reflection, impelling me first to reassess my belief in the Incarnation and Trinity and later my belief in God” (*RN*7).

Philosophically, Crosby's thought is reliant upon and extends the American traditions of pragmatism and process thought. James, Dewey, and Whitehead are often cited influences.² But perhaps Spinoza most succinctly formulates the thesis about the nature of cosmological process that Crosby has come to adopt. “Spinoza's notion of *natura naturans* or 'nature naturing' can be conceived as the ultimate dynamic and creative principle or power implicit in nature itself and not residing in some transcendent divine Being” (*FR* 141). *Natura naturans* is to be contrasted with *natura naturata*, the natural structures that exist at any period of time. However, the former, which can

be linked to creativity in Whitehead's thought, is primordial. "At its most fundamental level, nature is process, not pattern" (*LA* 7).

Upon what does Crosby think natural processes are reliant? Does he refer to some Tillichian ground of being? Although he appreciates much that Tillich wrote, for Crosby nature itself is ultimate. "Whatever is real is either the whole, dynamic, ever-changing system of nature itself or some particular aspect or manifestation of that system. There is nothing beyond, behind, above, or below the powers of nature."³ Because he understands nature to be ontologically ultimate, he rejects any references to God such as are found in pantheism, panentheism, or some varieties of religious naturalism. That being said, however, apart from avoiding any reference to God, Crosby's existential faith could be seen as a variety of pantheism, although not of the deterministic sort characteristic of Spinoza's version. Nature, not God, is the sacred whole.

Now it might seem that in replacing God with nature in his existential faith, Crosby has closed the door on any sort of *religious* faith. However, of course there are religious traditions that are not primarily theistic in nature, Theravada Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism among them. The Religion of Nature is an attempt to extend that list, and extend it in a way that is not simply an intellectual exercise, but in a way that attends to the emotion-evoking dimension of religious traditions as well.

Crosby appreciates many of the attributes of his youthful experience of religion: the warmth of church community, the felt relation to a providential God that cares, confidence in a life after death, and the like. He experienced the loss of his Christian faith as painful and anxiety producing, although also rather liberating.⁴ So a natural question that loomed for him was whether he could recapture some of these earlier emotion-laden religious feelings in a way that he felt had intellectual integrity. That is, again, can a true *religion* of nature be formulated? There are some formidable obstacles.

Ambiguous Nature

Perhaps the greatest obstacle is that nature seems not only uncaring, but often violent and destructive. How can that which produces earthquake, tornado, and wildfire—that which allows for a Hitler and Stalin as well as a Gandhi and Martin Luther King—be the legitimate object of religious devotion? One of the merits of Crosby's thought is that he does not flinch from engaging such questions. Indeed, the major objective of *Living with Ambiguity* is to confront them head on. Here are several ways he attempts to meet the challenge.

First, Crosby emphasizes the need to distinguish religious rightness from moral rightness.

My category of [religious] "rightness" does not require unambiguous moral goodness in nature. For one thing, nature is not a moral actor

in the sense that the theistic God is considered to be a moral actor, with conscious freedom of deliberation, intention, and action. So it makes no sense to hold nature morally responsible for its character or events. Nature can invite moral response and action from us as one of its species, as is shown in the concept of environmental ethics. But nature is not itself a moral being.⁵

In what sense, then, is nature a religiously right object? “What is right is for us to affirm our humble place in the whole scheme of things and to be thankful that we can be participants in this scheme, with the inestimable gifts of sentience and conscious awareness.”⁶ Thankfulness in the Religion of Nature is a religiously apt state of mind, a reflection on the gift of existence, rather than an address to any entity. In some cases, religious and moral rightness overlap: “We should reverence all creatures of earth and the whole of nature as holy ground, even as we give due recognition to the reality of nature’s predations, disruptions, destructions, tragedies, and dangers” (*TN*139).

That a Hitler or Stalin can come into power and perform heinous acts is not best construed as a failure of nature. Rather it is an unfortunate possibility given human freedom. It is a failure of moral and political rightness, not religious rightness.

Indeed, an implication of the distinction between religious and moral rightness is that in “a religion of nature, there is no directive to emulate the ways of nature in one’s moral life...Nature as the object of faith can provide context and support for moral living but should not be expected to supply its specific precepts” (*LA* 85). Moral ideals arise out of reflection upon what actions and principles provide the best policies for living together harmoniously. Morality deals with actions under human control, while religion deals with the larger contexts of living, providing a “vision of what everything adds up to, what is its ultimate significance and worth...The religious search is a search for values and modes of awareness that can provide basis, orientation, and direction for the whole course of our lives” (*LA* 82).

Second, Crosby claims that nature is entitled to be regarded as religiously good not merely in spite of the ambiguities that occur within nature, but because these ambiguities are a necessary part of any life worth living. His quite ingenious approach to justify his position is to suggest that no more perfect world can be realistically imagined than the one we inhabit. What would a “world without risk or danger and devoid of any sort of ambiguity” (*LA* 24) look like?

The allegedly perfect natural world would need to be static and unchanging, or at least not exhibit any unexpected changes, in order to be entirely free of danger...If the changes were not always benign, they would have to be not only knowable but known in advance to the last detail, so that living beings could anticipate them at all

times and avoid being injured by them. Hence, there could be no such thing as novelty, unpredictability, or surprise in such a world. It would have to be causally determined in every detail and run with the smooth precision of a fine machine...There could be no such thing as death in this imagined perfect world. Some very basic things about the world would have to be fundamentally different from what they are now in order for it either to accommodate or avoid an exponentially increasing number of newborn creatures that would otherwise exceed its supply of natural resources and even its spatial dimensions (*LA* 24-25).

In sum, then, Crosby holds that in order to experience such goods as freedom, beauty, and creativity, there must be contrasting experiences devoid of goodness. “Love, compassion, and justice would merit no praise were there no contending impulses toward indifference, selfishness, bigotry, or hate” (*TA* 32). In a finite world, the creation of new species requires the extinction of old species; the birth of the young requires the death of the old. Any appreciation of goodness requires knowledge of its contrary.

Crosby’s demonstration that a “perfect” world would be sterile and uninviting involves taking a systemic, holistic view of why such a world is flawed. But another possible vision of perfection can also be conceived in which the sort of systemic problems Crosby chronicles are set aside. People sometimes dream of a world that is perfect *for them*, that grants their every desire, including the desires for challenge and novelty as well as pleasure. Indeed, such a vision has religious substance; it underlies many an offering and prayer. In this vision, Crosby’s view that nature must be ambiguous is denied.

If religion is to be understood as entailing recognition and honoring of that which is ultimate, then clearly the alternative vision just described must be seen as idolatrous—as a false version of religion.⁷ For it exalts one’s own ego’s desires above the wishes of any other egos, or indeed over any other factors in the world. In prioritizing the desires of the self above all else, it fails morally as well as religiously. Crosby states that “religious symbols which focus primarily or exclusively on the wellbeing of oneself or only on that of those close to oneself are narcissistic rather than genuinely religious” (*MD* 127). Moreover, the systemic view Crosby offers of recognizing and dealing with reality in all its ambiguity is ontologically far more truthful than the egocentric monomania of the alternative vision, common though it may be.

A third argument Crosby employs to demonstrate the appropriateness of honoring ambiguous nature is that it does not fall subject to all the problems inherent in theodicy—in explaining how an all-good and all-powerful God allows so much evil and destruction in the world (*RN* 147). Crosby regards the book of Job as

a lame attempt to find some convincing explanations for why Yahweh would permit such a horrendous amount of pain and misfortune to afflict innocent persons. In Job's case, Yahweh brushes his anxious interrogator aside with the response that there is such an enormous distance and difference between Yahweh and a puny mortal like Job that Job could never hope to understand Yahweh's reasons or purposes (*LA* 53; see also *FR* 154).

By adopting this quite common interpretation of Job, Crosby disregards the section of the Bible that perhaps best supports his own Religion of Nature. For it is not the personal giver of laws that speaks to Job in Job 38-41, but rather a whirlwind, a force of nature. The many images that are offered in these three chapters are, again, images of nature and the processes of creation (Crosby's nature naturing) that bring things into being. Yes, the cosmology and cosmogony are archaic: God/nature is personified as one "who shut in the sea with doors, when it burst forth from the womb" (Job 38:8)—but ironically the womb is precisely the master cosmogonic and cosmological symbol for nature that Crosby suggests is most appropriate (see *MD* 91ff). I believe the poetic sections of Job were written out of recognition that the moral cause and effect view evident in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible is an illusion. One cannot control the divine by being good, and evil acts are not always punished. The vastness of creation, in which Behemoth and Leviathan dwell, where the ostrich deals cruelly with her young (Job 39:16), is an ambiguous natural order demanding respect, not a moral order.⁸

William James and some process theologians are among those who attempt to solve the problem of theodicy by postulating a limited God who honors goodness but who lacks the power to bring it about. Yet is it not weak and overly anthropocentric to try to manufacture a god that fits our yearning for moral leadership and ignores or at least leaves unexplained the vast and sometimes chaotic mystery of the universe?⁹ "Such a God would be hopelessly small, limited, and abstract, in contrast with the vastness, complexity, and concreteness of the dynamic world of our experience" (*LA* 63). Henry Nelson Wieman attempts to escape ambiguity in religion by identifying God with those aspects of nature that are productive of goodness. But Crosby reiterates that goodness and evil go necessarily together in ways that are sometimes difficult to unscramble. He also notes that it "would be strange, if not incoherent, to affirm as religiously ultimate something that is not thought to be metaphysically ultimate" (*LA* 48). Again, religious wholeness should not be conflated with moral rightness.

How Is Nature Best Understood?

Besides the ambiguity of natural occurrences, another potential obstacle to regarding nature as the religious ultimate is the very concept of nature itself.¹⁰ Does the term “nature” have any determinate content or meaning? If nature is everything there is, then isn’t this term so impossibly broad and vague as to be useless as a religious object? Crosby recognizes that continually referring to nature as if it were a whole obscures the insight that nature has an uncountable number of facets which complement and oppose each other. Nature is both an “it” and a “they.” “Traditional notions of divine simplicity and unity, to say nothing of immutability, do not carry over into nature as I conceive it” (*LA* 114, n. 1). In contrast to such abstract theological attempts to characterize God, Crosby shies away from attributing any properties to nature as a whole. He does think that nature satisfies the six role-functions listed in footnote 7. Identifying functions, however, is different than naming attributes.

However, it is evident that a shift from regarding nature as a whole to a pluralistic conception of nature raises new issues with which the Religion of Nature must deal. If the onus is upon individuals to see as paradigmatically sacred those particular aspects of nature that speak to them, doesn’t that introduce a subjectivity into the Religion of Nature that is seriously in tension with any hoped for communal aspect of this existential faith? And isn’t there the threat of idolatry in emphasizing particular aspects of nature rather than the whole?

As at least a partial counter to such a threat, Crosby helpfully introduces the importance of synecdoches as tools for holding together parts and whole in a respectful unity. He argues that natural objects which are meaningful to one can stand as symbols of the whole of which they are a part. “Each part of nature, properly regarded, is a symbol of the whole and as such can evoke a sense of the sublimity and mystery of the whole. Each proclaims the glory of nature and our privilege as humans to be conscious participants in the processes of nature” (*MD* 141). The symbolic objects Crosby mentions from time to time—the pelican and the hummingbird, the setting sun and rising moon, a newborn child and the goods in one’s apartment—are affirmed because they are seen to be positive components of an examined life.¹¹ They conform to the emotionally meaningful aspects of living. Do these examples, however, contradict his claim that goodness should not be separated out from the ambiguity of nature as the focus of religiosity? Intellectually he argues that the destructive and painful aspects of living are a necessary part of the natural whole, but the Religion of Nature seems to have few emotionally significant resources for dealing with deep suffering. Yes, the death of a loved one may be compared to a leaf falling from a tree in autumn to enrich the soil (*MD* 145-147), but such an analogy offers little solace to a person whose child has died of cancer, or to the child of a parent who has committed suicide, or to any number of tragic events that occur.¹² Christianity and Buddhism provide responses to

suffering and tragedy that seem lacking in the Religion of Nature. To put the point slightly differently, the Religion of Nature seems suited to healthy-minded persons but offers little to the sick soul.

Crosby has a powerful response to the sort of concern I have just articulated. In reacting against theological positions that seem constructed to assure believers that their discontents register with a caring divinity, he notes that “*wanting* something to be a certain way is by no means an argument for its *being* that way” (*RN* 146). This again is the response of a healthy-minded individual who honors truth as perhaps the highest of values. With respect to the age-old controversy about whether to prioritize the loving illusion or the hard truth, Crosby is firmly on the side of the latter.

Perspectival Truth and Relational Values

To be sure, Crosby understands that truth is often not easily secured. In fact, knowledge of the natural world as it is in itself is held to be impossible for epistemological reasons. Any human experience of the incredibly complex natural world is necessarily limited. “Experience is ineluctably partial and perspectival, and the many possible perspectives on any thing that is experienced, no matter how trivial it might seem to be, are inexhaustible” (*RN* 19). Crosby refers to Nietzsche as one who properly extends the notion of perspectivalism beyond human beings to the metaphysical structure of the world itself. Everything that exists, exists in relationship. “There are no isolated, entirely self-sufficient beings of any kind. What a thing is or becomes depends crucially on its contexts of relation” (*LA* 68). Perspectival epistemology is seamlessly linked to a relational metaphysics.

The relational metaphysics Crosby develops functions as an important vehicle for showing why the objective factuality of nature as interpreted in traditional epistemology is an abstraction blind to the actual qualities of their interactions with nature. “We can be powerfully stirred with feelings of awe and reverence as we behold a vista of rugged, snow-draped mountains stretching to the horizon, a soon-to-be mother bird’s patient, almost fastidious building of her nest, or the face and figure of a newborn child. The facts are taken into account in such experiences, but overtones of value surround these facts” (*RN* 65). In critiquing any strict fact-value dichotomy, here again Crosby and Polanyi share common ground. Developing his relational metaphysics, Crosby convincingly shows that “values are present in the *interactions* of subjects and objects rather than located in either aspect by itself” (*RN* 74). Humans are not the lone valuers; all sentient beings are purposeful sense-makers that can “identify, adapt to, and in many cases alter their environments by actively drawing upon resources within themselves” (*TN* 23). Throughout his writing, Crosby is sensitive to the philosophical and religious significance of tacit factors in animal life that typically come to expression as felt and emotional aspects of experience. Because of this, he argues that

“many life-forms in nature are richly deserving of carefully nurtured, resolutely practiced moral considerability and religious regard” (*TN* 25).

The Thou of Nature contains Crosby’s most fully developed perspective concerning some practical ethical implications of the Religion of Nature. Sentient beings are entitled, he argues, to the three ethical Rs of recognition, respect, and (human) responsibility. He adds a fourth R, one saturated with religious significance: reverence (*TN* 39-48). Based upon Schweitzerian reverence for life, Crosby lists six rights that accrue to conscious forms of life. These begin with the right to life and to a habitat that sustains life and end with the right to be free of needless suffering (*TN* 45-46). While he champions careful stewardship of all of nature, Crosby retains his awareness of the ambiguity of nature and distances himself from nature romanticism and sentimentality. Nevertheless, he argues that rodeos, circuses, zoos and aquariums impose harms that violate animal rights and should for the most part be abandoned (*TN* 136-137).

In *The Thou of Nature*, Crosby’s development of animal rights and environmental ethics is an example of responding to what he terms the “demand” side of the Religion of Nature. Besides a *demand* side, he also describes *assurance* and *empowerment* as experiential consequences that can and should follow from adopting an existential faith in the Religion of Nature. “The assurance aspect lies basically in the idea of our being at home in nature” (*FR* 150).¹³ Assurance of our acceptance as creatures of nature leads to the demand that we “act in accordance with that assurance and...weave it ever more tightly into the fabric of our being” (*FR* 152). When we experience being at home in nature, knowing we are part of the drama of birth and death, we recognize not only the imperative to use the gift of life and our limited time wisely, but also experience how nature has provided us with the instincts, abilities, and resources to live well. That is, nature has empowered us individually and in community to develop and enjoy, with proper restrictions, our existence in this fascinating world.

I find myself wondering about the extent to which Crosby imports Christian concepts into his Religion of Nature without naming them as such. The demand dimension seems to correspond to the ethical and prophetic dimension; the assurance aspect to the Christian affirmation of God’s gracious love of all persons; empowerment to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But of course what is important is not where concepts come from, but whether they truly illuminate the human situation and nurture human flourishing. This is not an issue that can be decided by argument, but only checked out existentially in life experience.

The question I am left with after immersing myself in Crosby’s writings is whether he has truly offered a *religion of nature*. *More Than Discourse* is his most sustained attempt to date to show how respect for nature can evolve into and take on forms of religious spirituality and practice. Let us examine this book to see how well it imbues ambiguous nature with religious qualities. Let us see how well it responds to a critique

offered some years ago by theologian Del Brown: “The objects of religious commitment and concern have a trait Crosby fails to note—they have social efficacy, they have the power to galvanize and move the social mind, to inspire collective loyalty and influence collective action.”¹⁴ It is hard to see how ambiguous nature itself can motivate persons to form communities and undertake collective action, but can Crosby’s reconfigured Religion of Nature as a whole accomplish this?

Religious Symbols

Crosby calls upon religious symbols (including synecdoches) as the key device needed to connect people existentially to nature understood religiously. Religious outlooks on life “crucially depend on symbolic modes of thought and conviction which frame vital meanings and truths that cannot be simply stated in literal terms” (*MD* xii). The term “symbol” is used in different ways. What does Crosby mean by the term? “I want to reserve the term symbol in this book for expressions of nondiscursive, nonpropositional, nonassertive types of meaning” (*MD* 4). In short, for Crosby symbols represent meanings evoked by sensuous experience. They seem to be what Susanne Langer called presentational symbols, as opposed to discursive consciousness reliant upon language. Langer describes what Crosby seems to mean by religious symbols in his initial description of them as non-discursive. “The symbolism furnished by our purely sensory appreciation of forms is a non-discursive symbolism, peculiarly well suited to the expression of ideas that defy linguistic ‘projection.’ Its primary function, that of conceptualizing the flux of sensations, and giving us concrete things in place of kaleidoscopic colors or noises, is itself an office that no language-born thought can replace.”¹⁵ Let us look at some specific examples to better understand Crosby’s usage.

The opening passage in *More Than Discourse* describes a brown pelican spiraling in thermal updrafts far from shore just for the pleasure of it. The pelican’s flight functions for Crosby as “a compelling symbol of the numinous powers, presences, and wonders of the natural order to which we both miraculously belong” (*MD* 3). Crosby’s evocative response seems at first glance comparable to Kant’s understanding of how humans respond to the sublime. Kant did not reason from awe-inspiring experiences to the divine as did Rudolf Otto in *The Idea of the Holy*; rather Kant’s project of grounding the moral law provided him an indirect route to argue for the existence of God. Moreover, Kant understood experiences of the sublime to be merely subjective. More akin to Crosby’s religious symbols are Kant’s aesthetical ideas: “And by an aesthetical idea I understand that representation of the imagination which occasions much thought, without having any definite thought, i.e., any *concept*, being capable of being adequate to it; it consequently cannot be completely compassed and made intelligible by language.”¹⁶ Thus Crosby’s imagination is stimulated by the beauty and glory of the pelican flying, and this evokes a state of reverence *for it as a symbol of creative nature*

(e.g., his state of mind has cognitive content and is thus more than a subjective feeling) without attaching that state to any definite concepts of nature and its processes. Nature in general is appreciated, but multidimensional nature is not coalesced into an object the way God is often thought of as some sort of transcendent object.

Crosby claims there are many types of religious symbols. They can be aspects or events of nature, historical settings or ways of life, imagined heroic quests, historical events, the ordeals and triumphs of persons, books or writings, sacred places, creation stories, parables, paradoxical expressions, rituals, buildings, gardens, paintings, and so on (*MD* 7-15). The multiplicity, diversity, and nature of these possible religious symbols suggest they are normally part of the mundane world, and there is nothing inherently religious about them. They function as religious symbols only when interpreted as such. Furthermore, in providing such a broad menu of possible religious symbols, Crosby shifts from a strict consideration of sensate material to include stories, historical events, sacred texts, and all sorts of discursive materials. The point he should be making, I believe, is that materials having religious significance, whether presentational or discursive, have felt tacit roots that resist full articulation in language and point beyond a literal understanding to issues of ultimate (or near-ultimate) significance.

Indeed, I do not find Crosby's privileging of imagery over discursive thought persuasive as a means of legitimating religion. Words can have diffuse but meaningful connotations as much as sensuous material. As Polanyi would emphasize, there are tacit factors equally operative in the formation of discursive and presentational thought.¹⁷ What needs to be attacked on behalf of religious sensibility is overemphasis on the authority of logic and linear modes of thinking as the standards of cognitive reliability. Crosby's perspectival epistemology and relational metaphysics protect against the objectivism characteristic of much thought in the analytic tradition of philosophy as well as in scientism and its cognate forms. However, the earlier noted six role-functional categories Crosby thinks putative religious objects should have (Uniqueness, Primacy, Pervasiveness, Rightness, Permanence, and Hiddleness) might be an example of overly restrictive linear thinking if they were used inflexibly and exclusively to define true religious objects (see *RN* 118).¹⁸

As Kant's term *aesthetical* ideas suggests, religious symbols are similar in many respects to artistic symbols. They each rely on sensuous imagery, they cannot be fully captured in prosaic form, they cannot be substituted one for another since each is unique in meaning, and each has a holistic, non-reducible meaning (*MD* 31). However, a religious symbol is seen as different from an artistic symbol in two ways. It is "not self-referring, self-contained, or exclusively self-related... The distinctive value and meaning of the religious symbol lie solely in the source or basis of ultimate meaning and value to which it refers" (*MD* 31-32). Secondly, "a religious symbol is embedded within and

makes tacit, if not explicit, reference to many other religious symbols that help to give it its own character and import. Unlike a work of art, it is not self-sufficient or exclusively self-referring in this second regard" (*MD* 33).

The two ways Crosby thinks religious symbols are different from artistic symbols makes little or no sense to me. One could take Da Vinci's "Mona Lisa," Picasso's "Guernica," or Mondrian's "Broadway Boogie-Woogie" as self-contained and subject it to a purely aesthetic analysis in terms of its forms, textures, and colors. But one could do the same to an Eastern Orthodox icon, a medieval altarpiece, or Chagall's "White Crucifixion" as described by Crosby (*MD* 34-35). Likewise, an icon gains its capacity to function as a religious symbol by a network of traditional, theological, and topological influences, but the symbolic significance of, say, "Guernica" is also a situated meaning insofar as knowledge of the Spanish Civil War, the artistic genre of cubism, and placement in a museum is concerned. What is crucial in determining what functions as an artistic or religious symbol is the framework of intention one brings to the perception and interpretation of the object's meaning.¹⁹ To be sure, crucifixes, mandalas, and prayer rugs have conventional religious functions, but unless a religious adherent makes use of them with a religiously informed disposition, they do not function as religious symbols. Reliance upon properly focused *personal* religious intentionality is particularly acute for the Religion of Nature, because it has established no socially established conventional religious symbols that evoke religious thought and practice.

One of Crosby's purposes in *More Than Discourse* is to suggest specific objects and events that might most forcefully function as religious symbols for those with an existential faith in the Religion of Nature. It should be noted that while he lists a vast number of things and events that might function as religious symbols, in the process of focusing on the relation of religious symbols to artistic ones he swerves from further consideration of the multiplicity of potential symbols and the role of intentionality in regarding them as symbolic. He reverts to a rather objectivist view of symbols. In this respect he deviates from Polanyi's understanding of meaning. For Polanyi, words and objects may have conventional meanings, but only through the personal act of sense-giving does this potential meaning become actualized.

Water is Crosby's candidate for functioning as the master symbol of the religious ultimacy of nature. Here the Religion of Nature seems to appropriate a notion central to Daoism. The cosmogonic and cosmological master symbol he selects, as mentioned previously, is the womb, "a symbol that can allude to the origins of the cosmos, its evolutionary developments, and its present character" (*MD* 91). For symbolizing the saving path that the Religion of Nature advocates, he offers first a historical narrative concerning how humans have wandered from an ecologically sound relation to nature by favoring instrumental reasoning, a mechanistic worldview, and resource

depleting technology. This is followed by a restorative ecological view featuring assurance, demand, and empowering love. Daniel Quinn's novel *Ishmael* is cited as providing a thought provoking literary expression of the needed pathway (MD 155-159). Crosby also recognizes that religions flourish best when models of righteous behavior are evident to those of the faith. His exemplar of the saving path of the Religion of Nature is John Muir (MD 112-116).

What must happen if these religious symbols are to take hold? They must evoke emotional responses attuned to questions of ultimacy. They must manifest existential truth, that is, "truths to be lived in the wholeness of one's life, not just truths to be believed or to warrant only intellectual assent" (MD 121). Crosby also thinks they must be supported by embodied practices. Somewhat surprisingly, he maintains that prayer is an important spiritual practice, although of course it is not meaningful to address prayer *to* nature, but only on its behalf. The power of rituals, stories, and music is also affirmed, although it is not Crosby's intention to flesh out such material.

Conclusion: A Christian Religion of Nature?

Does this summary offer convincing evidence that Del Brown's criticism of Crosby's Religion of Nature is unwarranted? Alas, I think his honest portrayal of the ambiguity of nature as the religious ultimate continues to be an obstacle to the formation of any religious community or ongoing institution. Despite Crosby's attempts to dress nature in emotionally powerful symbolic clothing, ambiguous nature still seems to be a lonely intellectual at the party of world religions. Philosophical concepts, not religious symbols, are the soul of his Religion of Nature. This is not a criticism of what Crosby has written, for I admire what he achieves philosophically and for what he attempts religiously. But without some adjustments, it seems the Religion of Nature will not come to fruition as a religion, and instead Donald Crosby's name will be inscribed in the long list of prominent Americans who as individuals praise and emulate nature in a manner that is more philosophical than religious. That list includes Emerson, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, John Muir, and Annie Dillard.²⁰

But Crosby's hope for religious vitality, and thus perhaps broader influence, need not be abandoned. What is first needed is considering how religious communities generally come into being. Almost without exception, they arise out of a critique or expansion of an existing religious tradition. I believe that with minor adjustments, the Religion of Nature can thrive in a similar role. What is needed is to bring moral considerations more directly into the fold of the Religion of Nature than Crosby does. Ambiguous nature needs to be complemented by a life-giving model of how to flourish in spite of injustices, different sorts of suffering, and life's culmination in death. I will briefly suggest one way this might be done within the Christian tradition,

acknowledging that there are many other possible ways in Christianity and other religious traditions.²¹

The concept of the Trinity can be used as a template for bringing into a kind of unity ambiguous nature, moral vision, and transformed spirituality. In place of the traditional God the Father (the Creator), ambiguous creative nature, especially in the form of *natura naturans*, nature naturing, has a position of ultimacy. Within a Christian Religion of Nature, the Son (Jesus the Christ) would be regarded as a sacred but not supernatural revealer of moral spirituality. And those who indwell and practice the loving spirit revealed by Jesus and further developed in the tradition by Paul, Saint Francis, and innumerable others would experience transformation from egocentricity into what could be called a Holy Spirit of compassionate ecological sensitivity.

The sort of transfiguration of orthodox theology called for in this new version of the Trinity seems no more radical than the transformation of Judaic legalism Jesus inaugurated. It has the merit of incorporating and integrating a scientific understanding of the world with moral vision and existential potency. Through Crosby's diligent exposition, the ambiguity of nature can be validated and shown to have necessary but not sufficient religious implications. I applaud him for his unflinching honesty, his persistent exploration of the possibilities resident in religious naturalism, and the rigor of his thought. I look forward to seeing what he develops in his next book, *Nature as Sacred Ground: A Metaphysics for Religious Naturalism*, which should be published by the time this review article appears.

ENDNOTES

¹Michael S. Hogue, *The Promise of Religious Naturalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), xx. In this work Hogue carries out a quite thorough comparison and contrast between the theories of religious naturalism developed by Crosby, Jerome Stone, Ursula Goodenough, and Loyal Rue. For summaries of Hogue's findings, see my review of his book in *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 32:3 (September 2011), 271-276 and Diane Yeager's review with a helpful table of comparison in *Tradition and Discovery* 39:2 (2012-2013), 61-64.

²Crosby is the author of *The Philosophy of William James: Radical Empiricism and Radical Materialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). In harmony with the notion of radical empiricism, he cites James, Dewey, and Whitehead as being appropriately open to "a wide range of modes of experience" in addressing and assessing theological and philosophical theories and in constructing his own thought (see *RN* 49-50).

³Donald A. Crosby, "Naturism as a Form of Religious Naturalism," *Zygon* 38:1 (March 2003), 117.

⁴In *The Specter of the Absurd: Sources & Criticisms of Modern Nihilism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988), Crosby elaborates on the many sources of nihilism that have emerged in Western culture, perhaps including some aspects of which he may have experienced in the process of leaving behind his Christian faith.

⁵Donald A. Crosby, “The Distinctiveness of Religion and Religious Value,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 26:3 (September 2005), 200.

⁶Ibid., 201.

⁷Crosby declares that there are six basic role-functional categories that determine whether a putative religious object is authentically religious. The six categories are uniqueness, primacy, pervasiveness, rightness, permanence, and hiddenness (RN 118). They can be seen as jointly contributing to a vision of ultimacy. The version of perfection involving a god that satisfies an individual's desires obviously fails to satisfy these criteria taken as a whole.

⁸This interpretation of Job depends upon distinguishing the prosaic account at the beginning and end of the book—the story in which God allows Satan to test Job and righteous actions are rewarded—from the poetic content in which Job's complaints about justice and Yahweh's answer as ambiguous nature appears. For a more detailed account, see Walter B. Gulick, “The Bible and Ecological Spirituality,” *Theology Today* 48:2 (July 1991): 182-194, especially 189-190.

⁹Crosby argues convincingly that the assumption that the universe needs explaining does not stand up to careful reflection. “The assumption, often unrecognized and unanalyzed, is that nothingness is a more natural state of things than somethingness...But sheer nothingness is unintelligible. Why should we assume that it is a more natural state than somethingness?” (LA 97).

¹⁰Jerome Stone's reflections on the adequacy of Nature to serve as the religious ultimate seem to the point here. “Is Nature enough? Hardly! Nature is not self-explanatory. Nature is not completely meaningful. Nature does not provide for complete and final fulfillment of our deepest desires and longings. Nature does not provide answers to our moral queries...But it's all we have, and it will have to do” See his “Is Nature Enough? Yes,” *Zygon* 38:4 (December 2003): 783.

¹¹There is a challenge that Crosby has not yet fully addressed concerning how to make the Religion of Nature's conceptuality relevant to the worldview of city dwellers. In our culture it is more natural for urbanites to credit their everyday amenities to the creative work of scientists, engineers, economists, city planners, and human activities in general than it is to credit nature.

¹²Crosby recognizes that he has mostly led a happy and healthy life, and he respects the complaints of those who have been less fortunate than he. They may well feel he has “no business proclaiming the rightness of nature or its fitness as a focus of religious faith” (LA 65). Were his experience of life different, his perspective on nature would also likely be different, but he has to be true to the insights his experience has granted him.

¹³The phrase “at home in the universe” has in recent years been used to counter the existentialist notion that we live as alienated being in a meaningless world—a notion that follows naturally from the ontological dualisms that prevailed in positivism and other schools of thought featuring a fact-value dichotomy. It was the title of a book by Stuart Kauffman on emergent (and value creating) self-organization published twenty years ago, a cosmological view that Crosby affirms.

¹⁴Delwin Brown, “Religion and Reverence for Nature: Donald A. Crosby's *Religion of Nature*,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 26:3 (September 2005), 175.

¹⁵Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 93; see also 98 and 145.

¹⁶Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1966), paragraph 49 (157).

¹⁷To offset the confusing slipperiness of Crosby's understanding of religious symbols, some terminological adjustment may be useful. I have argued that religious symbols are best seen as a type of existential symbol, by which I mean "words, objects, images, or events that represent something of personal significance beyond what they literally seem to mean in everyday existence." See my "The Thousand and First Face," in Daniel C. Noel, ed., *Paths to the Power of Myth: Joseph Campbell and the Study of Religion* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 38. A religious symbol, then, is a type of existential symbol, one that has been shaped by a religious tradition. It is a vehicle for creating religious meaning.

¹⁸Crosby worked out these role-functional categories he thinks religions possess in his *Interpretive Theories of Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981).

¹⁹Polanyi helpfully emphasizes what objects are taken to mean rather than focusing on the objects themselves. "Appreciation of a work of art requires belief in what it *means*." See Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, *Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 92. What Polanyi says about meaning in art applies even more to his thought about religious meaning.

²⁰For an interpretation of how nature has been viewed throughout Christian history, a good source is H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). Catherine L Albanese gives an account of the strong undercurrent of personal nature worship as it has unfolded in American history. See her *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

²¹See Walter B. Gulick, "Religious Naturalism: A Framework of Interpretation and a Christian Version," *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 34:2 (May 2013), 154-174.

RESPONSE TO WALTER GULICK'S OBSERVATIONS ON MY WRITINGS ABOUT RELIGION OF NATURE



Donald A. Crosby

Keywords: Walter Gulick, Michael Polanyi, nature, God, ambiguity, Book of Job, Religion of Nature, pantheism, synecdoches, sick-minded and healthy-minded souls, discursive and non-discursive expressions, aesthetic and religious symbols, Christian Trinity

ABSTRACT

In responding to Walter Gulick's discussion of my writings on Religion of Nature, I stress the pervasive moral ambiguity of nature as a focus of religious commitment and point to a similar ambiguity in all of the religious ultimates known to me. I take issue with one aspect of Gulick's interpretation of the Book of Job. I insist on a balance between discursive and non-discursive modes of expression in religion and warn against excessive and misleading literalism. I explain my views on the natures and relations of aesthetic and religious symbols, and welcome Gulick's comments on how the symbolism of the Trinity in Christianity can be related to Religion of Nature. I endorse his statements about the close relation of aspects of my work to some key ideas of Michael Polanyi.

Walter Gulick has done a splendid job of describing and explaining central themes of the version of religious naturalism I call "Religion of Nature." He has carefully investigated five of my books concerning this topic, with occasional references to others, and I am deeply grateful to him for the thoughtful attention he has devoted to this task. He has shown a patient willingness, not only accurately to *present* some central claims of my writings and their relations to one another, but also to *delve* into the *logic* of these

claims, often in fresh, interesting, and clarifying ways. In saying this, I do not mean to detract from the force and relevance of his critical questions and arguments. These are well worth pondering, and I shall devote the rest of this essay to reflecting on them. By doing so, I may be able to remedy some unclarities in my presentations and perhaps even to bolster the cogency—or at least the further considerability—of the claims and arguments in question. I hope not so much to resolve our disagreements into consensus as to add further clarity to the character of these disagreements and their underlying arguments, as a stimulus to further thought about matters of great importance.

Before addressing the stated disagreements or concerns, however, I want to note a passing comment that Gulick makes about the categorization of Religion of Nature. He sees it as a variety of pantheism. I do not view it in this way. Our Western mindset seems to incline us to think that all religion must have some sort of God or *Theos* at its heart. Religion of Nature emphatically does not. Nature may function religiously in ways similar to the function of God in Western theism, but so does Nirguna Brahman in Hinduism or the Dao in Daoism, and neither is a God. It is also a mistake, in my view, to speak of nature as *divine*, because this terminology again conjures up Western conceptions of God. For me, nature is an appropriate focus of religious commitment and concern in its own right, with no reference to *Theos* or God required. To call it a version of *pantheism* is thus a misnomer. New wine should not be poured into old bottles.

My first response to Gulick's critical comments relates to interpretation of the biblical Book of Job. I may have left the impression in my comments on this text that I view it as a kind of theodicy or attempt to justify the ways of God in the world, and especially in the affairs of human beings. It is not a theodicy. In fact, it is a refutation of attempts at theodicy. Gulick is right to distinguish the poetic corpus of Job from the introduction and conclusion tacked onto it by later pious priests. These later additions present the actions of God in a highly unfavorable light. Gulick is also right in his claim that the ambiguity of nature figures centrally in the Book of Job. But the personification underlying this ambiguity is not just an archaic artifact. I think it is the biblical God speaking, and speaking as the directing power behind the events of nature. It is the acts of God that are ambiguous, not just the forces of nature. This statement allows me to make again the observation I have made throughout my writings on Religion of Nature. There is no credible religious ultimate known to me in any of the religions of the world that is or can be devoid of moral ambiguity.

Such ultimates may be claimed to be so, but to the extent of their being relevant to or responsible for any aspect of the lived world, they must have some share in the ambiguities of the world. A God who is wholly and unambiguously good, for example, must be a God who has nothing to do with the world, either as creator, source, sustainer, or guide for the world. The reason is that the world is shot through with

moral ambiguities, and God must relate to, deal with, and adjudicate among those serious ambiguities in his or her actions. If the future is open and not totally controlled by God, then God can only weigh the probable effects of God's actions for the future. God's intentions may be good, but the future effects of those intentions cannot always be guaranteed to be good. And we continually have to ask, "Good for what or whom," especially in cases of the inevitable conflicts of good built into the world.

If, on the other hand, God completely controls everything that happens in the world, including human choices and actions, then God is by virtue of that fact responsible for all of the moral ambiguities of the world. If God created the world *ex nihilo*, God has created it with its character, limitations, and predictable conflicts of goods. It is obvious that in this world, creation and destruction go hand-in-hand. Similar analyses can be made for other putative religious ultimates in their relations to the world, whether these ultimates are regarded as personal or impersonal.

My second response to Gulick's critiques relates to his suggestion that my perspectival epistemology and metaphysics may at least sometimes incline me to a kind of selective subjectivism that emphasizes the salutary and creative aspects of nature as over against the daunting and destructive ones. He goes on to suggest that my examples of synecdoches can also leave this impression. He is right in implying that in my discussion of synecdoches I should have used examples of them that point in both directions. But I want strongly to emphasize here, as Gulick does elsewhere in his essay, that I hold that *the whole of nature* in all of its moral ambiguity is the focus of Religion of Nature. The sick-minded soul is right in regarding nature with reverent wariness, bewilderment, and terror, just as the healthy-minded one is right in regarding it with acceptance, love, and joy. Either aspect of the spectrum when taken by itself fails to do justice to the whole of nature in all of its aspects or to what it means to be religiously committed to the sacredness, wonder, and dread of nature. Nature is often not morally fair—at least from particular perspectives—and our challenge as humans is to live in the face of this palpable unfairness with full recognition of nature's metaphysical ultimacy and of our humble place within nature.

For Religion of Nature there is no human face behind nature. We humans are but one of about eight to ten million species of life on the face of the earth. The solar system in which our earth is contained is a little smudge in the Milky Way galaxy, and that galaxy is one of perhaps two hundred billions or more galaxies, each with its own billions of stars. Nature does not focus exclusively or even primarily on us. And yet, we are at home here. We can live lives of meaning, importance, and value here. We can relate to the human faces of one another as a species of life on earth and to other sentient beings as well. The positive gifts of nature are resident in its ambiguities and could not, as Gulick points out, be made available to us without its ambiguities.

Frank recognition and affirmation of this fact is integral to Religion of Nature. We should not cherry-pick the moral goods implicit in nature but must find ways to live in the face of the moral ambiguities of nature, with humble gratitude and respect. Metaphysical fact cannot be annulled by anthropocentric wishful thinking. The sick-minded soul is constant and urgent reminder of this inescapable fact, and the healthy-minded ones need to pay careful attention to this reminder. This point is central to my understanding of Religion of Nature.

To say, as Gulick does, that this understanding provides little solace to those in the grip of tragic events is to beg the question. The tragedy is real and irrevocable, and it can occasion irremediable grief. But that is as true in theistic religion as it is in a naturalistic one. A God who allows, despite all of his might and concern, the Holocaust or the wholesale carnage of the First and Second World Wars of the past century is no less ambiguous, in my mind, than a nature that makes it possible for these regrettable events to occur. In either case, human finitude and freedom enter crucially in, and the natures and lives of humans, whether as creatures of God or nature, are fraught with ambiguity. The stretch of even a few years of human history makes this fact abundantly clear.

Gulick also interprets my work, in the third place, as *privileging* non-discursive imagery over discursive thought. I do not mean to do so, but only to insist on not neglecting the essential role non-discursive symbols play in religion, including Religion of Nature, and on the constant interplay of the two modes of religious experience, thought, and practice. Gulick calls attention to the role of tacit factors in both discursive and non-discursive thought, and this fact needs to be kept in mind. But it is a mistake to confuse the two modes, to try to reduce one of them to the other, or to minimize the importance of the one in favor of the other. My emphasis in *More Than Discourse* was on the “more” that non-discursive thought, expression, and practice give to religion in addition to its necessary discursive affirmations. It was not intended to imply that *only* non-discursive thought or even *primarily* non-discursive thought is required in religion. The book is intended among other things to be a corrective to excessive and misleading literalism in interpretations of religious texts and traditions.

I think, in the fourth place, that Gulick misunderstands my remarks on the nature of art and the relations of art to religion when he thinks that I am not concerned with the role of intentionality in both spheres. What counts as a work of art for us is that in which we find or expect to find aesthetic meaning and value. What counts as religious articulation or expression is that in which we find or expect to find reference to some kind of religious ultimate and its relations to the world and to our lives in the world. The aesthetic quality of a work of art is found squarely within it, while the religious quality of any kind of articulation or expression lies in its ability to point beyond itself to some kind of religious ultimate and the gifts and demands of that ultimate for

our lives. A church icon can function in either way, for example, but its usual primary role is a religious one.

A single work can function in different ways, as I tried to explain with my example of Chagall's "White Crucifixion." How it functions or is intended to function is the key to whether it can be rightly regarded as a work of art or a work of religion, or in some cases, as both. Gulick makes a significant point when he calls attention to the fact that works of art are just as situated in larger contexts as are works of religion. But I continue to insist that the *aesthetic* meaning of the work of art, quite apart from such things as its place in art history, the biography of the artist, its resemblance to other art works, or the materials out of which it is fashioned, is focused on the work itself and on what is intrinsic to it as a work of art. The religious meaning of a work of religion, on the other hand, must invariably point beyond the work to a religious ultimate, and, in doing so, it situates the religious work in the context of the manifold symbolisms of a religious tradition or religious outlook on the world.

Fifth and finally, there are no doubt Christian religious and moral motifs in Religion of Nature as I have developed it. This would not be surprising, since I was formerly a Protestant Christian and have grown up in the context of a community and nation suffused with at least commonly avowed Christian outlooks and values. The religious motifs I may have carried into Religion of Nature are not exclusively Christian, I contend, and can lay just claim to having much more than parochial significance. None of us can entirely escape his or her upbringing or conditioned perspectives. But we can endeavor to critique and broaden them as much as possible. I have tried to do so in my development of Religion of Nature.

Gulick's suggestion of a kind of naturalistic Trinity has interesting symbolic possibilities. Nature, like the Father in Christianity, is certainly creator and sustainer of all there is. Nature, including our own nature as a species, also provides us with the means to find and develop appropriate moral principles and values, many of which might be similar to the moral teachings of Jesus. In chapter six of my most recent book, *Nature as Sacred Ground*, I have sought to develop more fully than in my earlier books a metaphysical basis for moral values. And nature's numinous presence and healing power could be compared to the work of the Holy Spirit. Viewed in this way, a kind of functional common ground between the two religious outlooks could be brought to light. I especially like the implication in Gulick's concluding comments that aspects of Christianity, appropriately critiqued and expanded beyond their sectarian basis, and connected with similar motifs in other religious (or secular) traditions, should be extended beyond solely human wants, needs, and concerns to encompass the whole of nature in all of its ecological dimensions and forms of life.

ON THE HAZARDS OF TURNING FROM THE CREATOR TO THE CREATION



Andrew Grosso

Keywords: Donald Crosby, Walter Gulick, religion of nature, naturalism

ABSTRACT

I respond to Gulick's review of Crosby's work and raise questions having to do with (1) the merits of abstract accounts of religious observance, (2) the viability of nature as an object of religious devotion, and (3) the correspondence between religious truth and moral truth. I also critically examine Gulick's efforts to supplement Crosby's work and suggest Gulick's appropriation of Christian concepts and imagery may require reconsideration.

Walter Gulick's survey of the work of Donald Crosby not only serves as a useful introduction to Crosby's thought but also raises a number of broader issues associated with contemporary accounts of the nature of religious observance. In what follows I identify some general questions about the possibility of articulating the kind of account of religion Crosby proffers, raise several more focused questions about particular aspects of Crosby's work (as Gulick presents it), and ask a few concluding questions about Gulick's proposals for supplementing Crosby's efforts. In the interests of full disclosure, I should clarify I have not read any of the books Gulick employs in his survey, and so am dependent entirely on Gulick for my understanding of Crosby.

Perhaps the most overarching question I have has to do with what exactly we mean when we talk about "religion." There has for some time now been a fairly robust scholarly conversation going on about the adequacy of modern accounts of religion, including the relationships between (on the one hand) religion and secularism and (on the other) different traditions we might identify as "religious." There is, too, always a

question about the correspondence between whatever generalized definition of religion we find acceptable and the content of particular traditions our definition may incline us to recognize as religious. I have doubts about our ability to define religion in a way that accommodates all those traditions we typically think of as religious, let alone efforts like Crosby's that seek to redefine what it means to be religious.

Crosby, though, seems to depend on just such a definition: religion involves "existential faith" (9), or the "search for values and modes of awareness that can provide basis, orientation, and direction for the whole course of our lives" (12). The key word here seems to be "whole." Absent this term, it's hard to see how Crosby's efforts might not just as easily be described as philosophical, or psychological, or aesthetic, or perhaps even socio-political. What Crosby is after is a vision capable of integrating disparate perspectives; his efforts thereby testify indirectly to the manifest fragmentation of contemporary life. Whether he has successfully articulated such a vision, let alone one that is truly "religious" in nature, is something even Gulick doubts (19, 21).

I raise these more general questions as a way of suggesting Crosby's decision to turn aside from Christianity was perhaps a bit over-hasty. More specifically, I wonder if what he has rejected is a deracinated form of Christianity, one made to conform to an abstract account of religious experience that nobody really observes. Likewise, I think he might make too much of (first) the consequences of the historical-critical study of the Bible and (second) the presumed conflict between "religious sensibility" and "scientific discernment" (9). The historical-critical study of the Bible may pose a threat to certain fundamentalist readings of the scriptures, but it has by no means ruled out other possible readings that are entirely consonant with the witness of traditional Christian faith and practice. Modern science may pose a threat to naïve or simplistic accounts of divine being and action, but it has by no means displaced the more sophisticated versions readily available in the Christian theological tradition.

I turn now to questions I have about Crosby's description of nature (*natura naturans*) as a legitimate and even ultimate object of religious devotion. First, I believe we should give further attention to the question of how we recognize nature as such, that is, as something more like a cosmos and less like chaos. The order or scheme or pattern we recognize in the world is by no means self-evident, and the articulation of any such order is itself an act of intellectual achievement (scientific, religious, or otherwise). Crosby seems to suggest we can indeed apprehend just such an order but also insists this order has no real conceptual content (15). Despite this, however, he believes this account of nature fulfills the "role-functional categories that determine whether a putative religious object is authentically religious" (23, n. 7). This seems to me to involve making the same kind of mistake Polanyi identified in the efforts of those who presume to analyze language all the while insisting their efforts do not entail a concomitant metaphysic (see *PK* 114; cf. 15-16, 145-150).

Second, it seems to me the identification of nature as an object of religious devotion is even more susceptible to the charge of anthropomorphic projection than are some monotheistic accounts of God. Christian theology has several well-developed strategies for self-critique explicitly designed to guard against anthropomorphism and projection, perhaps the chief of which is the articulation of a theology of perfect being. This kind of analysis provides philosophical ballast to dogmatic accounts of divine being and action. However, there is, as Crosby himself recognizes, no way of articulating what we might call a philosophy of perfect nature: owing to its contingency, nature is inherently and unavoidably ambiguous (conceptually, morally, and otherwise). Crosby seems to adopt (and thereby to adapt) Leibniz's dictum that "no more perfect world can be realistically imagined than the one we inhabit" (12). A religion of nature thus leaves us with the unattractive prospect of having to acknowledge what we think of as our highest and noblest religious ideals actually conceal our unspoken ambitions, fears, and even resentments.

The inherent ambiguity of nature makes it difficult to see why our experience of nature and apprehension of it as an object of religious devotion should necessarily incline us towards reverence, gratitude, and responsibility. Why might a religion of nature not just as readily (and with equal religious justification) incline us towards apathy, acquisitiveness, and violence? This question becomes even more pressing in light of Crosby's insistence that our experience of love, "compassion, and justice" require we also be subject to "selfishness, bigotry, [and] hate" (13). It seems Crosby's account of the "demand" side of the Religion of Nature" (17) owes more to distinctly human ways of knowing and being than to *natura naturans*. I believe, too, we need to distinguish between contingency and evil more carefully than it seems Crosby allows: we most certainly do not need a lie in order to recognize truth, brutality to appreciate beauty, or death to recognize life, but rather vice versa.

The inherent ambiguity of nature is the major reason Crosby is ultimately unable to reconcile "religious rightness" with "moral rightness" (11). It seems a rather strange form of thought that can provide a "context and support" for reflection even though it supplies no "specific precepts" (12). Indeed, the ambiguity of nature and consequent acknowledgement that the "creation of new species requires the extinction of old species" (13) seems to carry us rather close to the possibility of having to legitimate atrocities like genocide, eugenics, and the like. Gulick seems cognizant of the potential problems that arise from espousing a form of religious observance that is suitable for "healthy-minded persons" (16) but may appear rather more sinister to those we might deem less than "healthy-minded."

I will conclude with a few cursory observations about Gulick's proposals for supplementing Crosby's work and thereby moving it closer to something approximating a distinctly "Christian" religion of nature. He suggests we must be able to coordinate

moral truth and religious truth in a way that enables us to flourish in spite of injustice, suffering, and death (21). This may be philosophically adequate, but does not go far enough as a *religious* vision: a viable religious vision must not only enable us to bear up in the face of injustice, suffering, and death, it must demonstrate the means whereby injustice, suffering, and death are decisively overcome.

Gulick also proposes employing Christian trinitarian theology as a “template” (22) for reconfiguring our understanding of the correspondence between nature, moral truth, and spirituality. I see two problems here. First, characterizing the correspondence between religious truth (i.e., the ambiguous reality of *natura naturans*) and moral truth (exemplified by the teachings of Jesus) as comparable to the distinctly personal, perichoretic relationship between the Father and the Son involves making a rather precipitous move; we must first establish how and why a religion of nature yields the kind of moral vision both Crosby and Gulick want to affirm. Second, Gulick’s appropriation of the moral teachings of Jesus does not take adequate account of the historical and cultural context of the biblical witness and seems to owe more to Thomas Jefferson than to recent historical-critical scholarship. As C.S. Lewis once noted (in *Mere Christianity*), the one option we do not have is to see Jesus as a great moral teacher.

I appreciate Crosby’s and Gulick’s efforts to articulate a form of religious faith capable of addressing the challenges of contemporary life. I must, however, part company with them regarding the merits of a religion of nature and opt instead for the confession found in the 19th-century spiritual, “Give me that old-time religion, it’s good enough for me.”

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFORMED: JAMES LODER'S NEO-CHALCEDONIAN SCIENCE OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY



Dana R. Wright

Keywords: Michael Polanyi, James E. Loder Jr., personal knowledge, conviction, convictional experience, complementarity, post-critical epistemology, interdisciplinary, relationality, Chalcedon, indwelling, marginal control, prolepsis, tacit-explicit, *analogia spiritus*, Holy Spirit

ABSTRACT

Practical theologian James E. Loder engaged in a sustained 40+ year conversation with some of the most significant figures in science in the 20th century to construct a neo-Chalcedonian practical theology with enormous implications for both the science-theology dialogue and for the Church's witness to the Gospel in a scientific world. This essay focuses primarily on how Loder engaged and appropriated the post-critical epistemology of Michael Polanyi for his own critical and constructive proposals for use in the theology-science dialogue. Loder's proposal is based on the analogia spiritus—the relationality that governs and guides divine-human knowing and being. The essay encourages those working in the science-theology dialogue to engage Loder's work as a whole, in part by including an annotated bibliography of Loder's relevant works.

Fallen Man is equated to the historically given and subjective condition of our mind, from which we may be saved by the grace of the spirit... We undertake the task of attaining the universal in spite of our admitted infirmity, which should render the task hopeless, because we hope to be visited by powers for which we cannot account in terms of our specifiable capabilities. This hope is a clue to God.¹

—Michael Polanyi

Introduction: A Chance Encounter

James E. Loder Jr., the Mary D. Synnott Professor of the Philosophy of Christian Education at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1962 to 2001, once began a doctoral session on “Kierkegaard and Polanyi” for his “Philosophy of Christian Education” seminar with an anecdote. He spoke of his chance encounter with Nobel Laureate Eugene Wigner at a café in Hopewell, New Jersey. Wigner spied Loder reading a book on Einstein and seemed genuinely thrilled to talk with him about the relation of theology to psychology. At a subsequent meeting, Loder’s copy of Paul Davies’ book, *God and the New Physics*, prompted Wigner to exclaim: “Yes, God, that’s the question!”² Loder emphasized to his students how *alive* Wigner was in spirit to the possibilities and promise of science-theology dialogue. Subsequently, Loder proceeded to illuminate the interdependent relevance of Polanyi’s post-critical epistemology of science to the neo-Chalcedonian ruminations of Kierkegaard for Christian education theory—a rigorous academic exercise that pointed auditors to the sanctuary as much as to the library!

This encounter illuminates the significance for readers of *Tradition and Discovery* of Loder’s crucial engagement with the relation of science to theology. Polanyi became Loder’s key representative figure in postmodern science for discerning and explaining what it means to be personally alive in spirit in an open universe largely closed in on itself through the mythic power of the so-called Enlightenment ethos of detached reason. Polanyi’s open universe invites both scientists and theologians to indwell reality with self-implicating passion until aspects of its hidden intelligibility intuited through the body emerge in discoveries, letting questions of the meaning and purpose implicit in those discoveries implicate the knower (“Eureka” on the way to its ultimate destiny in “Alleluia”).³ And Kierkegaard, his most important life-long interlocutor, represented for Loder one who had experienced and explicated in extraordinary personal depth what it means to be alive in spirit to the Spiritual Presence of Christ and to live in, and testify to, that Personal Reality in the world conforming itself to spiritless pursuits of objectivity (“Alleluia” vivifying the ultimate meaning of every “Eureka”). This Wigner-Loder encounter dramatized Loder’s conviction that the embodied creativity of the human spirit generating “Eureka” in scientific discovery and praise in Christian worship bore an astounding, intimate, and complementary analogical relationship to the even-more powerful transformative impact of the Holy Spirit on human thought and action. Loder wanted his students to live in the awesomeness of this *analogia spiritus* so that it could inform and shape their vocations as provocateurs of the human spirit transformed by the Holy Spirit. The key for Loder is the relational nature of the self-relating human spirit and the Self-relating Holy Spirit.

In a recent essay for *TAD*, David James Stewart points to the lack of wholeness in the appropriation of Polanyi’s work by theologians who either fail to account adequately for the content of their own theological tradition or fail to grasp the full

extent of Polanyi's insights as a relevant dialogue partner that recognizes "the extent to which it is only *a theological mode of inquiry* that can bring to fruition the ambitions of Polanyi's philosophy."⁴ Loder took up precisely this challenge by focusing on the Christomorphic nature of spirit-to-Spirit relations. He argued that the full impact of Polanyi's insights into scientific inquiry and the full content of the Christian testimony to Christ is understood and expressed most fully when both scientific inquiry and Christian experience are indwelt and explicated through the *analogia spiritus* revealed in Christ. To capture the distinctiveness of Loder's project we will look first to how he came to this conviction and then look at how this conviction guided his indwelling of Polanyi's epistemology to surprising ends.

Convictional Encounters

We must first describe Loder's own personal experiences of transcendence in the context of death, since death signifies the end of knowing, personal and otherwise. In the first encounter, Loder, at the time enrolled in Princeton seminary, fell into despair and illness at the death of his beloved father. Crushed in spirit, he was met by a Spiritual Presence that impacted him bodily and generated a profound sense of spiritual renewal and hope.⁵ This experience awakened in him the passion to know what had happened to him in this encounter and subsequently to examine and explicate the generative dynamics discernable in experiences like his as a serious matter for academic inquiry. Returning to seminary, he began to read Kierkegaard seriously (of whom he testified "provided language for my head") and, after graduation, enrolled in Harvard through a grant to study the relation of religion to mental health.⁶ His dissertation described the surprising positive commensurability between the therapeutic, reality-restoring creative pattern in Freud's analytic psychotherapy and Kierkegaard's account of the pattern of reality-restoring transformation in Christian conversion.⁷ We might say that this correlation describing self-implicating knowing toward discovery in both therapy (science) and conversion (theology) formed Loder's early version of the *analogia spiritus*. After a residency at the Menninger Foundation, Loder was called back to Princeton Seminary as a tenure-track professor of the philosophy of Christian Education, a discipline in which he had virtually no experience.

Had Loder's academic efforts integrating science and religion in practical theology continued "uninterrupted" in this "Harvard trajectory" he no doubt would have made a significant contribution to heuristic interdisciplinary models of practical theology.⁸ But Loder confessed that his academic work before 1970 had largely suppressed—in the interest of academic rigor—the more crucial dynamic at work in redemptive human experience—the Holy Spirit.⁹ Ironically, the personal power of the Spiritual Presence of Christ that had awakened him and that motivated his vocation had been diminished in the academic culture of the seminary. But in August 1970, a second

existential interruption—an accident on a New York expressway that crushed his body and threatened his life—awakened Loder’s spirit again to the Divine Presence that had met him so powerfully at the death of his father. In his spoken and written testimony of this event he described his sense of being known and lived by Another Life pouring through him bringing personal order out of devastating chaos. Loder’s second encounter with this “alien” yet generative Presence permanently reconstituted the structure of his being in terms of a Convictor-convicted relationality, transformed his passion to know reality into “faith seeking understanding,” and altered the spiritual center of his vocation as witness, in a scientific culture, to human participation in the inner life of God through the Spirit.¹⁰ He wrote:

Speaking of conviction draws on judicial imagery and declares that one is thoroughly convinced; the case is incontestable; the conviction will stand as part of a permanent record. In this imagery three axes of conviction are evident: the Convictor, the convicted person, and the endurance through time of the convictional relationship between them. Speaking of “experience” in relation to conviction means that the convicted person is compelled to reopen the question of reality in light of the presumed nature of the Convictor and the convictional relationship... “convictional experience” discloses reality and calls for new interpretations [of reality].¹¹

The reference to the nature of the Convictor-convicted relation points to the transformation of the *analogical spiritus* in terms governed by the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit. Barth described this governance in terms of the “Chalcedonian” structure of the Spirit’s action.

The work of the Holy Spirit...is to bring and to hold together that which is different and therefore, as it would seem, necessarily and irresistibly disruptive in the relationship of Jesus Christ to His community, namely, the divine working, being, and action on the one side and the human on the other, the creative freedom and act on the one side and the human on the other, the eternal reality and possibility on the one side and the temporal on the other. His work is to bring and to hold them together, not to identify, intermingle nor confound them, not to change the one into the other nor to merge the one into the other, but to coordinate them, to make them parallel, to bring them into harmony and therefore to bind them into a true unity.¹²

We will have more to say about this connection between Loder's convictional experience and the "Chalcedonian" shape of the Spirit's action. But for now it is important to emphasize that Polanyi's concern for the knower's personal involvement in scientific inquiry and Loder's convictional experience both compel the question of human nature itself to become a "third-realm of discourse" in the theology-science dialogue. This concern for the nature of the knower becomes especially acute when the knower confronts the intrinsic limits of reason in both science and theology. Loder's indwelling of Polanyi's epistemology gave him the criteria for understanding and explaining, in scientific terms, the legitimacy of convictional experiences as sources of true knowledge about human nature. Polanyi also pushed him to indwell further the Christian tradition in terms of the Spirit's dynamic impact on the human spirit and to give account of this transformational action scientifically.

The Dynamics of Personal Knowing: The Logic of Transformation

Loder's indwelling of Polanyi's epistemology is evident in his groundbreaking book *The Transforming Moment* (1981) and virtually everything he wrote after that. While Polanyi is not quoted extensively in this book, his epistemology permeates the text. Polanyi informs Loder's argument that true observer-involved scientific inquiry, by overcoming the eclipse of the personal in the Enlightenment mythos, is the true dialogue partner with theology.¹³ Furthermore, Loder lays out his five-fold transformational logic or "grammar" of the knowing event and shows its relevance to diverse knowing contexts—scientific, aesthetic, therapeutic, etc.—in a way that resonates with Polanyi's paradigm. What follows is a short summary of Polanyi's insights infusing Loder's logic of transformation intrinsic to the human spirit's knowing.

1. *Fiduciary Stance*: Loder accepts Polanyi's "faith" in the intelligibility, order, and unity of reality that is the tacit basis of the human longing to know. Human beings have a bodily link to the universe such that all knowing draws upon this tacit dimension as it seeks to discover the hidden intelligibility of an open universe. Loder may have regarded Polanyi's "faith stance" as a prolepsis informing all knowing on the way to discovery.
2. *Scanning*: When the knower encounters conflict in knowing, the knower draws on the tacit dimension in a deep scanning process, Loder's term for Polanyi's indwelling. Anomalies revealed between object and frame draw on the tacit to intuit alternative orderings of reality in an effort to resolve the conflict and relate the knower to the enlarged frame of reference. Indwelling or scanning involves substantially the subconscious in Loder's epistemology.

Scanning is essentially kinetic, inherently moving toward an open future that cannot be contained in any system.

3. *Insight*: The knower counts on the tacit dimension to integrate inquiry in the interplay of indwelling. Inevitably, a hidden order emerges through imaginative bisociations to reconstruct the knowing context and one's place in it in surprising ways. Loder emphasized in particular the play of imagination in generating these insights and the central place of discovery, ala Polanyi, in the function of intelligibility. All true knowing has an "event" quality (Loder often rehearsed Polanyi's use of Einstein in this regard).
4. *Release*: Energy bound up in the conflict and the scanning process is released in a celebration of discovery (Eureka!). Loder accepts Polanyi's understanding that discovery of reality is not an end unto itself but an invitation to discover more in an open universe desiring to make itself known. He also taught that the process of knowing can be initiated by discoveries of the answer before one knows the conflict, which energizes passion toward discovery (as in Loder's own convictional experiences).
5. *Interpretation*: For Polanyi, discovery required processing a new construction of meaning as the knower learns to attend "from" the new context of meaning "to" one's own environment and application. Loder expounded a similar concern in his transformational grammar and the Polanyian concern that discovery is only complete when it inspires the knower to make his/her findings explainable in terms acceptable within a fiduciary community.

This correlation of personal knowing and the "logic of transformation" describes the dynamic movement of the human spirit indwelling reality with passion toward new discoveries of its hidden intelligibility central to Loder and Polanyi. Allusions to Polanyi leading to an explicit reference to him are noted in Loder's description of the transformation of subject-object relations.

What we call "object" is an emergent synthesis of so-called subjective and objective factors. Therefore what is known becomes knowledge because the knower has been addressed, struck, confronted, attacked, or attracted to an "object," and in response he or she has sensed, felt, or incorporated it on the basis of previous analogical experience. Whatever has violated the serenity of his or her senses, sensibilities, or good sense enough to become an "object" has also been embodied by the knower on the basis of some bodily, sensate, proprie—*in short, some subjective—basis*. In knowing anything, we respond

more subliminally and thus more totally than is fully recognized. “We know more than we can tell,” says Michael Polanyi. That is, “objects” impinge on our knowing in ways that we scarcely recognize and figure into the results of our presumably rational processes in ways that we do not readily acknowledge.¹⁴

Much more could be said about the epistemological commensurability between Loder’s “logic” and Polanyi’s “personal knowing” on the level of the human spirit’s generative capacities. But this last sentence about “objects impinging on our knowing” in surprising ways implies that we must attend to the radical limits to human knowing that we intuit bodily and existentially. These experiences may be the key to recognizing that the nature of the knower is fully revealed only when the knower faces her own demise. Polanyi’s epistemology infers this in two ways. First, it requires the human knower to take a stance of radical humility before the object of investigation, a stance that allows this object to inform how the knower is compelled to know it. For example, a tacit sense of death or negation may at times govern the “from-to” pattern of knowing shaping how everything is known. But second, this “marginal control” is especially apparent when the object of the knower is the Divine Presence who overcomes death. Existential acceptance of the sheer God-ness of God and the sheer creatureliness of mortal human beings who die requires a transformation in knowing and being that comes from beyond the capacity of the human creature herself. Polanyi’s famous comment about the “clue” to God in science implies that just such a transformation of the knower is requisite for knowing everything, including especially knowing ourselves.

Fallen Man is equated to the historically given and subjective condition of our mind, from which we may be saved by the grace of the spirit.... We undertake the task of attaining the universal in spite of our admitted infirmity, which should render the task hopeless, because we hope to be visited by powers for which we cannot account in terms of our specifiable capabilities. This hope is a clue to God.¹⁵

Polanyi here implies that in relation to human self-knowing, it is vital that we recognize the ontological limits of human being and knowing. The category “Fallen” and the metaphor of needing to be “visited by powers for which we cannot account in terms of our specifiable capacities” means that *revelation* must be considered a *scientific* category for personal knowing in theological terms. This knowing at the ontological limits transforming the knower bears analogy to knowing in other realms of science, like quantum worlds, in which the knower changes, and is changed by, the object of investigation. Loder’s work with Neidhardt in *The Knight’s Move: The Relational Logic*

of the Spirit in Theology and Science explored and explicated this epistemological relationship in exhaustive detail under the theme of complementarity. Complementarity is the unique form reason takes when, as in quantum investigation, a logical relation between two incommensurable or paradoxical descriptions or sets of concepts are required for a comprehensive understanding of that single phenomenon or object.¹⁶ But they argued that the epistemological analogy becomes ontologically established only through the Holy Spirit's transformation of the knower, transfiguring personal knowing into convictional knowing.¹⁷ We now touch on this ontological transformation of the knower in Loder's scientific description of revelation in convictional experience as required by Polanyi.

The Transformation of Personal Knowing and Being According to the *Analicia Spiritus*

In an important essay, “The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor,” Loder expounds (through T.F. Torrance) Polanyi’s notion of the relation of indwelling to prolepsis. Indwelling reality with integrity requires that “the phenomenon under investigation” must be permitted to disclose how it is to be known through a dynamic process that requires prolepsis or an “anticipatory glimpse” intuitively comprehensive enough to account for the reality being indwelt.

[W]hat is required of the scientist...is to “indwell” the phenomenon...the scientist must reach intuitively into the phenomenon and grasp at the tacit level the deep inner structure of the phenomenon. What Polanyi describes here is what the Greeks called *prolepsis*, an anticipatory glimpse, a proleptic conception; it is an implicit apprehension that is imprinted upon the informed mind because the inner structure of the phenomenon bears a kinship to our knowing and what we can know as we allow ourselves to indwell the phenomenon...Such foreknowledge is...generated out of indwelling and allowing the gap that stretches from experience to idea to be bridged by an intuitive surmise evoked by deepening coherences that gradually emerge from the interaction between the knower and the known and eventually lay bare the internal structure of the reality being investigated.

Loder continues: “The tacit dimension needs to be immersed in the phenomenon and thoroughly informed, but the explicit cognitive aspect of knowing cannot discover the truth of a given reality unless and until it is guided by a prolepsis of its inner structure or nature.”¹⁸

Loder argued, according to Polanyi's insights, that "the gap" that stretches between human being and knowing in the face of death brings any humanly generated "intuitive surmises" to "evoke coherence" to shipwreck. When prolepsis generated by the human spirit comes up against ontological limits of human experience an alternative prolepsis is required by science and can only be provided by revelation. Yet the prolepsis must be communicated in a medium that connects to the deepest core of human nature in order to be received. And the prolepsis must have the vital power or energy to establish compelling motivations to keep us "knowing more than we can tell" in the face of death. Loder's scientific answer to these Polanyian requirements is the relationality revealed in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and given "scientific" articulation in the Chalcedonian explication of that relationality. The human spirit's self-relating power requires grounding in the Holy Spirit's self-relating power if it is to experience the actuality of this Christomorphic relational coherence. Loder writes:

[I]nherent in any description of the Holy Spirit there is a perennial difficulty in bringing the self-relational quality of the Divine Spirit to bear on the self-relational quality of human experience. Nevertheless, precisely this difficulty is the decisive aspect of the concept of "spirit" to be addressed in our recovery of the coherence in Christ. In opposition to distorting dualistic assumptions and the consequent fragmentation of our current world views, we need to reengage and reinstate self-involvement in objective knowledge and objectivity in self-knowledge within the work of the human spirit; correlatively, we need to reclaim God's self-involvement within the created order and at the same time the contingent interdependence of that order within and upon God's grace by the power of God's Spirit. Thus, spiritual coherence in Christ may be envisioned as a Chalcedonian-like union of the Divine Spirit with the human spirit, giving evidence that the human is heir of the renewal by God of all creation (Rom. 8:16ff).¹⁹

Again, this reference to Chalcedon, recalling the quote from Barth above, reveals that the proleptic anticipation bestowed upon the believing spirit in convictional experience is a Christomorphic actualization of the *analogia spiritus* transfiguring human nature itself relationally.²⁰ This is true because "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."²¹ Most importantly, human nature itself becomes the bearer of this Christomorphic actuality through conviction, such that all relational dimensions of knowing—tacit-focal, from-to, figure-ground, prolepsis-indwelling—reflect the *analogia spiritus* (the Spirit of the Mind of Christ).

Christ becomes the pattern connecting the inner structures of human and divine realities, the Living Proleptic Presence that governs knowing and being for the convicted person and community.

Furthermore, convictional experience reveals that this Living Proleptic Presence is irreducibly Personal and takes the form of divine pedagogy, such as is depicted in the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31) and in the teachings of Paul, Augustine, Calvin and Barth.

[T]he passion of faith is the theological name for “indwelling”; the penetration and exploration of the inner life of God is the work of the “inner teacher” as Calvin and Augustine described the work of God’s Spirit in the faithful believer. The insight that comes is one that discloses that 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 indwelling is derivative, a human mirror of the indwelling presence of God’s Spirit in the investigator. The staggering vision of truth, the climax of the inquiry, is the vision of God and the response is worship.²²

The transformation of human nature convictionally and the proleptic mediation of the Personal Presence of Christ informing all knowing transforms Loder’s “transformational logic” and Polanyi’s personal knowing in profound ways.²³

1. *Fiduciary Stance*: Polanyi’s faith in the intelligibility of reality is transformed into Kierkegaard’s longing for blessedness (*Salighed*). The convicted person indwells Reality through the lens of the God-Man, the ontological prolepsis bestowed through the inner witness of the Spirit in convictional experience, who indwells the knower and manifests itself tacitly and explicitly in terms of the asymmetrical bipolar relational unity revealed in “Chalcedonian Reality.”
2. *Indwelling*: Polanyi’s “knowing more than we can tell” finds its goal and source in the God-Man structure of reality, so that human spirit’s indwelling becomes, through the Spirit’s proleptic Gift of being known, a deeper movement into the intelligibility revealed ultimately in Christ. The indwelling process is transformed as a radical revelation of our contingent relation to the Creator, so that all knowing retains the marks and humility of this ontological contingency in the act of indwelling.

3. *Insight*: Whereas Polanyi personal knowledge allows the universe to yield up its hidden intelligibility through the person of the scientist, who is an indispensable factor in the knowing event, Loder argues that when intelligibility seeks to indwell the Absolute Person, a figure-ground results such that Christ becomes the Knower and the [human] knower becomes the known. Now one is known through and through as part of the contingent order, proleptically embodying the consummation of Christ. The form of insight is human through and through, but in substance the human knower becomes him/herself the embodied insight—the one thoroughly known.
4. *Release*: Polanyi's notion of discovery in an open universe revealing and energizing further knowing of the universe becomes, in convictional terms, an act of worship and a celebration and empowerment to move deeper into divine-human relationality.
5. *Interpretation*: Polanyi's processing of new constructions of meaning allowing the knower to attend "from" the new context of meaning "to" one's own environment and applied becomes under conviction the inner witness of the Spirit bearing witness to the Christomorphic nature of reality and mediating "from" the eternal "to" the existential according to the logic of the Spirit. Christomorphic relationality now determines the form rational intelligence takes, both tacitly and explicitly.

Conclusion

Andrew Walls, the great missiologist, once wrote that Christ becomes more fully known in and through the Church's engagement with culture, grounded in the Gospel's "bewildering paradox" revealed in the Incarnation.

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 specificities—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.²⁴

Walls uses the metaphor *translation* (Loder's transformational logic transformed) to argue that the distinctive nature of Christ's impact on the society becomes manifest precisely wherever the church engages culture creatively to translate God's redemptive mission in cultural terms. In such engagements

a new conceptual vocabulary had to be constructed. Elements of vocabulary already existing in that world had to be commandeered and turned towards Christ... (so that) people began to see Christ in their own terms... the process was hugely enriching; *it proved to be a discovery of the Christ... as though Christ himself actually grows through the work of mission... the divine saving activity can be understood in terms of translation.* Divinity is translated into humanity, but into specific humanity, at home in specific segments of social reality. If the Incarnation of the Son represents a divine act of translation, it is a prelude to repeated acts of re-translation as Christ fills the Pleroma again—other aspects of social reality. And the proper response to such activity is conversion.²⁵

Both Michael Polanyi and James Loder took up Walls' apostolic vocation, calling persons enslaved to dehumanizing ways of knowing and being to the kind of conversion that would liberate their spirits and render them fully alive. My hope in this essay is to inspire readers of *Tradition and Discovery* to consider indwelling Loder's work in light of Polanyi and Polanyi's work in light of Loder on the chance that something surprising and life-changing might emerge—like the discovery of Alleluia in every Eureka.

ENDNOTES

¹The author wishes to thank Alan Beasley for introducing him to Phil Mullins at a coffee shop in Bremerton, WA in the summer of 2015. He also wants to thank Dr. Mullins for the conversation about James Loder's use of Polanyi that led to the opportunity to discuss this important topic with readers of *Tradition and Discovery*.

²Transcription of this course and others between 1991 and 1996 are housed in the Loder archive at Speer Library, Princeton Seminary.

³Loder considered Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (Hereafter *PK*) as a "landmark work on the philosophy of science" emphasizing the "irreducibility of the human factor in scientific discovery."

⁴See endnote 1 in Stewart's *TAD* essay "The Fulfillment of a Polanyian Vision of Heuristic Theology," 15. Stewart drew on Andrew Grosso's comments on a distinction Alister McGrath made between "foundational" and "illuminative" interactions with Polanyi by theologians. Grosso argued that theologians who interacted with Polanyi in illuminative ways often failed "to account for the full scope" of Polanyi's thought, while those who took a more foundational approach "often failed to

account adequately for the dogmatic content of the theological tradition and the responsibilities that inhere with its reception and perpetuation.” See Grosso, *Personal Being*, 114.

⁵Loder’s account of this experience and its impact on his life vocation was told to me in a taped interview (April, 2001). See Wright, “Are You There?” (13-14) and “*Homo Testans*,” (5-7). See also Kovacs, *Relational* (11-13).

⁶Professor Hans Hoffman, whom Loder consulted after his experience, put Loder onto Kierkegaard. Hoffmann also took Loder to Harvard after he received a grant to study the relation of religion and mental health. See Wright, “Are You There?” (14) and “*Homo Testans*” (7) as well as Kovacs, *Relational* (13).

⁷See Loder, “The Nature of Religious Consciousness in the Writings of Sigmund Freud and Soren Kierkegaard: A Theoretical Study in the Correlation of Religious and Psychiatric Concepts (PhD Diss. Harvard University, 1962) and the published version *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966).

⁸Loder worked on the ground floor of a renaissance in practical theology that continues today, signified by the 1992 establishment of the International Academy of Practical Theology and the *International Journal of Practical Theology*. See Wright, “Contemporary Renaissance.”

⁹Loder told the author he was “upgrading psychoanalysis a bit.” See “*Homo Testans*,” (9).

¹⁰Loder told the author that his return to academics after this experience placed him in an immense personal turmoil about his vocation and his relation to the academy.

¹¹*Transforming Moment*, 6 (1981 ed.), 14 (1986 ed.) Hereafter *TM*. One can detect Polanyi’s epistemology in this description, in terms of the fiduciary passion that drives inquiry toward discovery, the need for a proleptic anticipation to guide the “from-to” dynamics of indwelling, and the “soft hierarchy” or “marginal control” implied in the Convictor-convicted relationality.

¹²Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV 3 second half, 761, quoted in Loder & Neidhardt, *The Knight’s Move*, 52 (Hereafter *KM*).

¹³For Loder, Polanyi’s *Personal Knowledge* elaborated a relationally constitutive post-critical foundation for knowledge with enormous consequences in every realm of discourse. “Polanyi’s profound philosophical, scientific, and religious comprehension makes relationality the central and irreducible core of all intelligible acts of knowing” in the postmodern world. See *KM*, 42.

¹⁴*TM*, 1st ed., 24 (2nd ed., 30). Esther Meek has noted this correlation of Loder and Polanyi in her excellent treatment *Loving to Know*. Her discussions of Loder’s work in “Knowing as Transformation” (chapter 5) and “Knowing before the Face of the Holy” (chapter 10) provide one of the best discussions available of Loder’s understanding of transformational knowing in relation to convictional experience. What Meek does not discuss is Loder’s understanding of the Christomorphic nature of the relationality that connects divine and human action in the Spirit and that governs faith’s knowing of reality, including knowing that pertains to the theology-science dialogue.

¹⁵Quoted in *KM*, 19.

¹⁶*KM*, 73-77. Complementary as the form intelligence takes emerges under certain circumstances: (1) when the knower is included; (2) when the whole truth of a situation requires moving through two separate realms, only one of which yields to analytical and convergent reason (as in subatomic world), and (3) when the results of the inquiry require formulations that communicate the situation to a community of scholars. Here the truth is both baffling and necessitated by the evidence

and compels reason to reveal its intrinsic relational structure. In a later essay Loder commented: “Complementarity is the logical relation between two descriptions or sets of concepts applicable to a single phenomenon or object, which, though mutually exclusive, are nevertheless both necessary for a comprehensive description of the phenomenon or object.” In Bohr’s account, the [particle-wave] paradox “is forced upon understanding by ‘quantum weirdness’” such that “the data observed forces explanation into a paradox statement” in which “there is no possible resolution to the issue by some more advanced method of observation. It is an intrinsically irresolvable contradiction which is forced upon human understanding by the evidence.” The Bohr-Kierkegaard connection or “Copenhagen epistemology” is a unique form of personal knowing revealed at the boundaries of intelligibility. See “The Place of Science,” 31 (Hereafter PS).

¹⁷Loder notes “this ‘Copenhagen epistemology’ is what has prompted Chris Kaiser and others to recognize that the pattern of complementarity is a near replication of the paradox inherent in the Chalcedonian formulation of the person and nature of Jesus Christ.” See Loder, PS, 31; see also *KM* 78, 80, 84-85.

¹⁸PS, 28-29. Loder here draws on T. F. Torrance, *Transformation and Convergence in a Frame of Knowledge* Ch. 3, especially 113-115.

¹⁹*KM*, 32f.

²⁰In its own status Chalcedon reflects the ontological and epistemological linchpin of Christian theology (Torrance). In an essay “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology,” Loder wrote: “By implication … the interplay between theology and the human sciences properly reflect his nature when these are the characteristics of the relationality that establishes their differentiated unity … When the relationality is Christomorphic, then each part includes the whole, but the whole is properly understood only as the relationality which constitutes it is recognized as an asymmetrical, bipolar unity. As Torrance’s position suggests … 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” (368-369).

²¹*KM*, 13. Loder noted: “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.”

²²PS, 29f.

²³Loder wrote: “For example, statements of dialectical unity (e.g. one person, two natures; three persons, one essence; *creatio ex nihilo* of the natural order as simultaneously contingent and independent; human nature as both dead yet alive; God fully present yet coming; human relationships as mutual creation of each other in mutual coinherence) only genuinely illuminate creation, human existence, and the Divine nature if they are understood from within the inner life of God; that is, by God’s Spirit according to God’s self-knowledge.” See *KM*, 21.

²⁴Andrew Walls, xvi.

²⁵Walls, xvif. (Emphasis mine).

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Annotated Bibliography of Loder's Major Works for the Science-Theology Dialogue

"The Nature of Religious Consciousness in the Writings of Sigmund Freud and Soren Kierkegaard: A Theoretical Study in the Correlation of Religious and Psychiatric Concepts (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1962). Loder discerned and correlated the dynamic inner patterns of restorative consciousness in Freudian psychoanalysis and Kierkegaard's account of conversion experience in relation to Herbert Silberer's "hypnagogic paradigm."

Religious Pathology and Christian Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966). Loder's dissertation reworked for publication, showing his interest in "an epistemology that is both theologically and behaviorally sound but that at the same time has enough integrity of its own to give it critical and constructive power both for its parent disciplines and for other interdisciplinary studies."

"The Fashioning of Power: A Christian Perspective on the Life-style Phenomenon." In A. McKelway & E. D. Willis (Eds.), *The Context of Contemporary Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul Lehmann*. (Atlanta: John Knox, 1974) 187-208. Loder critiques the pervasive achievement style of life in America through the lens of convolutional transformation of the knower.

"Developmental Foundations for Christian Education." In M. Taylor, Ed., *Foundations for Christian Education in an Era of Change* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1976) 54-67. Loder's early plea for integrity in the way Christian education theory uses the sciences and theology faithfully and systematically.

"Creativity in and beyond Human Development." In G. Durka & J. Smith, Eds. *Aesthetic Dimensions of Religious Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979) 219-235. An interdisciplinary paradigm of creativity in which "the creative dynamics operative in human development may be seen from a theological standpoint as a human figure for

the person-creating, person-revealing work of God's Spirit," such that "the dynamics of creativity find their ultimate ground and explanation in the dynamics of revelation."

"Negation and Transformation: A Study in Theology and Human Development." In Christaine Brusselmans, et al., *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity* (Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Co., 1980) 166-190. An important discussion of a theme that is unique in Loder's theory, the problem of negation and its transformation revealed theologically in convictional experience.

"Transformation in Christian Education." Inaugural address published in *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, III (1) new series (Dec. 12, 1979), 11-25. Reprinted in *Religious Education*, 76 No. 2 (1980):204-221. Loder sets out his "logic of transformation."

"Conversations on Fowler's *Stages of Faith* and Loder's *The Transforming Moment*." In *Religious Education* 77 No. 2 (1982):133-148. Summarizes the debate between Fowler and Loder at Michigan State University in 1981. Illuminates the promise of a vital interchange between science and theology and what constitutes a truly theological approach to this integrative field.

The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982). This book should be considered as a groundbreaking treatise in the area of epistemology and theology and reveals Loder's theological and scientific development of the *analogia spiritus* that governs the relation of scientific discovery and Christian revelation. Loder argues that experiences of the Holy Spirit ("convictional experiences") transform personal knowing into convictional knowing generative of profound insights into the nature of reality and of our participation in reality, such that such experiences "need to be recognized as sources of new knowledge about God, self, and the world.

The Transforming Moment, 2nd Revised Ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1989). Revision includes a Glossary that helps make Polanyi's contribution to Loder's work more explicit.

With Jim Neidhardt. *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs, CO: Helmers & Howard, 1992). Loder and Neidhardt's exhaustive effort to establish a theological and relational basis for enabling integrity in the science-theology discussion based on the *analogia spiritus*.

"Incisions from a Two-edged Sword: The Incarnation and the Soul/Spirit Relationship." In B. Childs & D. Waanders, Eds. *The Treasure of Earthen Vessels: Explorations in Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 151-173. Loder makes a theological interpretation of Hebrews 4:15 and shows how

psychology's emphasis on "soul" and theology's emphasis on "spirit" should be considered in light of the *analogia spiritus* if the integrity of that relation is to be honored.

The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998). Loder reshapes human developmental theory through the lens of the *analogia spiritus*, showing how neo-Chalcedonian practical theology generates indwelling of the inner movement of the human spirit for meaning and purpose at a deeper level and calls for the redemptive transformation of human transformations.

"Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: The 'Interdisciplinary Issue'." In *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*, Schweitzer, F. & van der Ven, J. A., Eds. New York: Peter Lang, 1999) 359-381. Loder's most succinct account of practical theological science grounded and governed by the Spirit. His focus on methodology owes specific allegiance to Polanyi's epistemology.

"The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor." In the *International Journal of Practical Theology*, 4 (1), 2000, 22-44. Loder's discussion of significant developments in the physical sciences—relativity, complementarity, chaos theory—that highlight the irreducibility of "the human factor" in all knowing and that provide practical theology with a scientific warrant to consider the God-Man as the ultimate relationality revealed through the Spirit

Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit (Unpublished, available in the Loder Archive of Speer Library, Princeton Seminary). Loder shows how the *analogia spiritus* reshapes the formative dynamics of education described by comprehensive human action theory (Talcott Parsons) by revealing its inner structure as a dynamic relationality between socialization and transformation. When this dynamic relationality is itself transformed by the Holy Spirit, education becomes Christian as a reflection of the nature of Jesus Christ. Important for revealing the power of the *analogia spiritus* to illuminate the full range of human-divine action.

JAMES LODER'S REDEMPTIVE TRANSFORMATION IN PRACTICAL THEOLOGY



Dana R. Wright and John D. Kuentzel, eds. *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004. Pp. xiv+455, ISBN 0-8028-2689-X.

David Rutledge

James Loder's death in 2001 threatened to end his influence on theology and the Church, but the collection of essays in *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* is a sign that his work remains both studied and provocative. Consisting of sixteen essays written by former students and colleagues, *Redemptive Transformation* (*RT*), admirably edited by Dana Wright and John Kuentzel, elucidates Loder's thought and its implications, and applies that thought to concrete issues. The book is an excellent reminder of the depth of writing and teaching of a man who credited Michael Polanyi with providing many insights on which his own work was based. After a summary of Loder's theology, extracted from a fine "Introduction" by the editors, this review will comment on the essays, with occasional remarks about their import.

James Loder was educated at Carleton College and then Princeton Theological Seminary. Two crucial events of his seminary years were the death of his father, which occasioned despair and then a transforming experience of God's presence, and his discovery of Kierkegaard, who became a major influence on his thinking (*RT*, 14). At Harvard's Graduate School, Loder received a Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of religion, studying with some of the brightest stars in theology and the social sciences. His dissertation on the imagination in Freud and Kierkegaard began a life-long effort to connect these disciplines that culminated in his 1992 volume, written with physicist James Niedhardt, *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science* (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard).

In 1962 Loder returned to Princeton Seminary, where he would teach until his death almost forty years later, becoming known as a master of the Socratic method

in the classroom, with a personal, challenging teaching style. This style crystallized for Loder after 1970 because of a terrible life-threatening traffic accident that forced him “to radically reconsider the very core of his self-understanding and the meaning of his life’s vocation” (*RT*, 15). The accident was a genuine epiphany, leading him to re-cast his thinking about personal development from a psychoanalytic to a more theological perspective, even though this “turn to the Spirit” brought criticism from his academic colleagues for its “mystical, emotional” overtones (*RT*, 16). Loder summarized this experience by saying he had been “convicted,” and “the whole convictional picture...began to become a way for me to talk about what I know had happened” (quoted, *RT*, 15). The result of this event was a re-thinking of assumptions about reality undergirding his work in the social sciences at Harvard, which was dictated by critical philosophy’s reduction of human experience to physical phenomena that could be explicitly analyzed by science.

In a process somewhat parallel to Michael Polanyi’s re-examination of objectivism in the natural sciences, Loder saw that his earlier work had been undermined by the assumption of the modern worldview that religious experience was meaningless, even before examination of that experience. The reason for this judgment was that naturalistic science operates from assumptions about reality that cannot be examined scientifically. To Loder’s credit, he did not simply bask in the glow of his convictional experience of God’s presence, but spent a decade attempting to clarify the proper relationship of theological knowing to the social sciences and published his findings in his 1981 book, *The Transforming Moment*, 2nd ed., (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard). For many scholars, including this reviewer, James Loder was initially discovered through this book, which still seems to be his best known.

Loder described the purpose of *The Transforming Moment* (*TM*) several different ways in the opening chapters, the shortest being to find “a new understanding of knowing commensurate with the nature of convictional experience” (*TM*, 21). He sometimes called this effort “epistemological,” and he was aware of the need to situate this view of knowing in relation to science; in relation to postmodernism’s critique of modernity; and in relation to the kind of transformational moment he himself had experienced. Though the richness of Loder’s account is beyond the scope of this review, we do need to mention three features of his work assumed by the authors of *Redemptive Transformation*. First, Loder articulated a five-step “logic of transformation” underlying all moments of discovery or true insight: (1) a problem presents itself as *conflict-in-context*: a confusion, an incoherence that may be largely unconscious; (2) there is an *interlude for scanning*, in which the individual’s spirit tries to resolve this problem; (3) the person achieves an *insight felt with intuitive force*, that is, a surprising ‘key’ is found to unlock the phenomenon she was trying to open—a moment of discovery; (4) this discovery is made by investing great effort in the search, so that “when the constructive

resolution appears, there is a release of energy bound up with the conflict" (*TM*, 4). This *release and repatterning* redirects the flow of energy into finding the ways in which the new resolution "fits;" and (5) the human spirit's desire for completion moves the knower to *interpretation and verification* of the new insight, placing the discovery into a communal or public realm where it can be affirmed by others (*TM*, 3-4).

Though he referred to scientific discovery as one illustration of this logic of transformation at work, Loder's primary examples were from spiritual life: he first noted Kierkegaard's 1838 experience of overwhelming joy in "the Power that posits the self." Though he refers to this experience only briefly in his journals, it seems to have been a lifelong touchstone of Kierkegaard's faith. The second example was Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, in which conflicting forces were resolved by God's speaking to him in an especially powerful, transformative way. In addition to this *transformative* process, Loder argued that a new way of knowing will also be *four-dimensional*, and here his knowledge of psychotherapy becomes clear: "Being human," he wrote, "entails environment, selfhood, the possibility of not being, and the possibility of new being. All four dimensions are essential, and none of them can be ignored without decisive loss to our understanding of what is essentially human" (*TM*, 69). So in addition to an epistemological background, Loder also placed knowing within the psychological context of the individual's development, her effort to feel at home in the world.

And finally, a full account of human knowing will be not just transformative and four-dimensional, but also *Christocentric*, moving beyond the human sphere to its ultimate ground in God in Christ. True knowledge is knowledge of *reality*, not information, and as it is Christ who reveals to human beings what is finally real, human knowledge must be transfigured, that is, undergo "illumination and divination of an otherwise unenlightened or mundane phenomenon" (*TM*, 43). All knowledge follows the logic of transformation, but the deepest level of knowledge is the reality of Christ. Here then is the very rich understanding that Loder placed before his readers, particularly before those young seminarians who were studying with him. Traditionally, practical theology includes the sub-disciplines of pastoral theology, homiletics (preaching), and Christian education, and it is rare to find a teacher of practical theology establishing such a systematic foundation for the discipline in philosophy, psychology, and theology. In *Redemptive Transformation*, thinkers steeped in Loder's approach attempt to show the potential and pertinence of his work for the concrete practices of the Church, from baptism and the eucharist to prayer and preaching. Loder's vision was ambitious, and it is fitting that these essays are equally ambitious in applying it to revitalize Christian practice today.

The essays are organized into three divisions, "Redemptive Transformation *within* Ecclesial Praxis," "...*of* Practical Theology," and "...*beyond* Practical Theology," which

are helpful though not essential rubrics—some essays could fit into more than one category. After the introduction by the editors summarized above, the first division has six essays showing how Loder’s thought can enliven practices of baptism, the Eucharist, preaching, biblical study, leadership, and youth ministry—all of which can “powerfully challenge the domesticating forces at work in congregations today” (*RT*, 25). The essays vary in the degree of closeness to Loder’s thought, from closely in Russell Haitch’s discussion of baptism to quite distant in John Hastings’ treatment of religious language. I applaud these attempts to apply Loder’s vision to concrete practices of the Church, but doubt that most pastors and ministers of education could appreciate the sometimes dense, occasionally convoluted academic writing without a great deal of help. A brief description of the essays will give a sense of this division of the book.

Haitch’s essay on baptism, “‘Trampling Down Death by Death’: Double Negation in Developmental Theory and Baptismal Theology,” employs a central concept of Loder’s, that of “double negation” (*RT*, 43-68). An infant is totally focused on the mother who gives it nourishment, and particularly on her face, which is her loving presence for him. In time, however, he becomes aware that the mother is sometimes absent, and *“anxiety over absence* becomes the central feature and gripping conflict of the infant’s life.” The precariousness of this situation leads the child to search for a solution, which leads to his learning to say *No*—“no—not you, but me” (*RT*, 45). The child would like to say “Yes” to the mother, but the anxiety of absence is too intense, and so the child affirms itself over against the mother, beginning the process of creating an ego. Though this ego “is the most remarkable creation of the human spirit,” its foundation is negative, repressing the natural desire to love and to receive love, and this process continues for a lifetime. In order to be transformed into full human identity, this negation must itself be negated, which can only be accomplished in its fullest sense by the Holy Spirit: “As the Holy Spirit negates and reconstitutes the negation-based ego of the human spirit, so likewise are the ‘ego defenses’ transformed when the self is centered in Christ” (*RT*, 47). Or, in the language of Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2.19-20). The various negative strategies which the ego uses to protect itself—repression, projection, denial, fantasy formation, reaction formation—are overcome when the self is centered in Christ (*RT*, 47). Though Haitch occasionally becomes tangled in these concepts (“...the child learning to say ‘no’ would represent a negation of this double negation, and then the subsequent presence of the divine Face would be the ultimate double negation of the child’s negation of the mother’s double negation” [*RT*, 49]), he does creatively relate the immersion of baptism to the (symbolic) death of the sinner. Thus baptism represents a “double negation” in which separation from God, the spiritual death which stalks all humans aware of their mortality, is overcome by the death of Christ, which brings about a restoration of a relationality with God, that is, a new life.

Marilyn McCord Adams' essay on the Eucharist, "Biting and Chomping our Salvation: Holy Eucharist, Radically Understood," is philosophically sophisticated, as we would expect, though less directly related to Loder's work, with which she disagrees in places. She tries to recover the ancient theory sometimes called *impanation*—the "embreadment," one might say—of the Divine Word in the bread of the Eucharist, in parallel to *incarnation*. Her larger goal is to affirm that the real physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a natural result of God's salvific intent in creation to 'mix it up' with matter, leading to a new emphasis on *embodiment* within theology and in Christian practice. "Like the incarnation, literal location where the bread and wine seem to be, is a concession to our condition: in the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ come to meet us literally where we are" (*RT*, 87). With a new approach to our embodied nature, "biting and chomping" the 'bread nature' of Christ in communion puts believers into a relationship with Christ that may be flawed as to etiquette, but is much more real.

John McClure, in "The Way of Love: Loder, Levinas, and Ethical Transformation through Preaching," attempts an interweaving of ethics, homiletics and hermeneutics through the work of Loder, Emmanuel Levinas, Walter Brueggemann, Jacques Derrida, and Rebecca Chopp. It is not an essay for the faint-hearted, as it uses the idiosyncratic vocabulary of each of these thinkers to probe a special transforming moment, "the moment when preaching begins to move both preacher and hearers onto the holy ground of love" (*RT*, 97). McClure moves from Brueggemann's view of preaching as *testimony*, to the work of Levinas in which testimony becomes an ethical act of justice allowing the other to be. He then employs Chopp's theology of the Word of God as "a perfectly open sign" that requires even our most radical commitment to the freedom of the other, transforming our ego obsessions into other-directedness, to be "crucified (i.e., torn up) by the Word, by its perfect openness," just as Loder argues that even our human transformations must be transformed by the Spirit of Christ (*RT*, 108-110).

The fourth essay in this section, "Transforming Encounter in the Borderlands: A Study of Matthew 15:21-28" by Daniel Schipani, takes up a suggestion by Loder to apply transformational logic to the reading of scripture, specifically the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew. Schipani's reading employs Latin American liberationist approaches that focus on *seeing, judging, and acting*, and therefore has a clear pastoral purpose. He shows the usefulness of the five stages of Loder's transformational logic, and how the marginal, vulnerable Canaanite woman negates the negativity of Jewish stereotypes that Jesus initially greets her with (*RT*, 131).

Robert Martin's essay, "Leadership and Serendipitous Discipleship: A Case Study of Congregational Transformation," moves beyond the application of Loder's transformational logic to individuals, which dominates most essays, and applies it to community, showing that group dynamics can also be illuminated by his thought.¹ Against the

“corporate model” of church leadership, Martin introduces the model of “serendipitous discipleship” as it emerged in a church in Auburn, Nebraska, though this model remains somewhat amorphous in the essay. After telling the story of the church’s struggle to work through a pastor’s illness, he applies Loder’s five stages (conflict-in-context, interlude for scanning, etc.) to analyze it, ending with lessons about leadership drawn from the case study.

The last essay in this section of the book is by Dana Wright, using a book by Kenda Creasy Dean, and it examines “Youth, Passion, and Intimacy in the Context of Koinonia.” Here Jim Loder’s passionate personality and his concern for the ego development of individuals combine in a new treatment of ‘youth culture.’ Loder’s response to young people is to affirm their passion, and to critique the “dispassionate dishonesty and lack of integrity that passes for ‘maturity’ in our culture....” Using Talcott Parsons, Loder criticizes the Church for following society’s “tension-reduction, pattern-maintenance” prescription for social order, “thus domesticating the church’s potential for prophetic witness to society” (*RT*, 155). Teenagers have a powerful ability to detect dishonesty: “One way they fight social conformity to the church is by leaving spiritually domesticated congregations in droves” (*RT*, 158). Following Loder’s claim that teenage identity is a theological as well as a psychological issue, Wright shows how an understanding of transformation can provide a way for the church to be itself transformed by Christ, infusing new life into a community that has rejected ultimate allegiance to the *status quo*.

The second division of the book, “Redemptive Transformation of Practical Theology,” focuses a bit more on the principles *behind* practical theology rather than its application to specific rituals of the church. Using and critiquing the thought of Craig Dykstra rather than that of Loder, Susanne Johnson shows how “Remembering the Poor,” can be a test case for the depth of the Church’s understanding of the call of Christ. In a passionate indictment of American Christianity’s collusion with a globalized economy and consumer culture, she rejects a standard *service paradigm* for relating to the poor, in favor of a *faith-based community revitalization paradigm*, in which the poor do not simply receive the largesse of the powerful, but find their voice in a collective critique of ideology, thus uncovering the roots of their poverty (*RT*, 189-215).

Dana Wright’s “Paradigmatic Madness and Redemptive Creativity in Practical Theology” recapitulates much of the “Introduction” and the “Afterward” to the book, setting out an overview of Loder’s thought, which, given the complexity of that thought, is welcome. The specific vehicle for this version of the story is Paul’s letter to the Ephesians—Wright argues “that the kind of fiduciary concern that created canonical Ephesians...is discernable as well in Loder’s neo-Chalcedonian science, which he developed in response to the crisis he indwelt—that is, the...need to reclaim...the church’s life and witness in a radically uncertain postmodern world” (*RT*, 219).

Loder's own conviction through the accident of 1970 showed him the inadequacy of a "Parsonian-sized practical theological theory," and helped him see "the profound theo-anthropological difference between therapeutic creativity and redemptive transformation" (*RT*, 247-248).

Thomas John Hastings focuses on religious language in "George Lindbeck and Thomas F. Torrance on Christian Language and the Knowledge of God," reacting to "the fragmenting drift of postmodern Protestantism into the competing options of orthodoxy, experimentalism, and activism..." (*RT*, 252). Hastings critiques Lindbeck's method and proposal for ecumenical dialogue while approving Torrance's, but does not attempt to relate his discussion to Loder.

"Transformational logic" is examined "in story form" in Margaret Krych's essay, "Transformational Narrative in a Non-Transformational Tradition." Using an anthropological study of folklore and mythology, Krych argues that a "semantic mediator" is a necessary element in a transformational narrative, the mediator stepping in to accomplish what the agent could not do on her own. This mediator "bears the pattern or 'grammar' of the Holy Spirit who transforms our situation...and brings us to the convictional knowing of faith" (*RT*, 282-83). She then applies this understanding to the Lutheran tradition, which does not share Loder's "anthropological optimism;" it sees sanctification "less as transformation and more as a daily return to the good Word of justification, of God's mercy in forgiving sin" (*RT*, 286). Loder sees the transformational process ending "with the agent having a permanent life-changing experience." The Lutheran emphasis on human sin rejects that possibility, so that the transforming experience will have to be repeated "daily, hourly, constantly" (*RT*, 295-96).

In one of the more important essays in the volume, Russell Haitch gives "A Summary of James E. Loder's Theory of Christian Education," which was contained in a manuscript almost finished at Loder's death but not yet published, titled "Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit." His essay is important because it presents the signal contribution of Loder to this important topic in practical theology. A distinction between "socialization," the standard model in the field, and "transformation" is Loder's first step in reforming Christian education, which replaces a natural progression of the human agent through various stages of maturity with the Holy Spirit's transformation of the individual: "This is our epistemology. For all that pertains to teaching and learning in the Christian context, our fundamental epistemology and guiding assumption has to be: The Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth" (quoted in *RT*, 306). The remainder of the essay shows how Loder's view of education is *transformational, four dimensional, and christocentric*.

The last division, "Redemptive Transformation *beyond* Practical Theology" contains three essays which extend Loder's thought philosophically and theologically. LeRon Shults gives helpful background to a central Loderian concept in "The Philosophical

Turn to Relationality,” tracing this term from its suppression by Plato and Aristotle to its elevation by Emmanuel Levinas (*RT*, 325-46). John Kuentzel excavates another crucial term of Loder in “The Heidegger in Loder (or, How the Nothing Became the Void).” Noting that Loder often used Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics?* as a classroom text, Kuentzel begins with an extensive, careful presentation of Heidegger’s thought, noting along the way where Loder used similar concepts. Though there are important differences between Heidegger’s *nothing* and Loder’s *void*, there is clearly kinship, and not only in their common origin in Kierkegaard. The crucial difference is that for Loder, the experience of the void is overcome by transformation in the Holy Spirit, a step which Heidegger does not take (*RT*, 366). The last part of the essay discusses the sense of wonder that arises from the experience of the void, and is a central ingredient of education. Finally, Eolene Boyd-MacMillan shows that Loder’s transformational logic connects naturally with mysticism in “Loder and Mystical Spirituality: Particularity, Universality, and Intelligence.” Using four contemporary scholars of mysticism (Louth, McGinn, Turner, and McIntosh) to establish a consensus view of the nature of mysticism, Boyd-MacMillan describes the “deep, transforming encounter with God” that is mysticism as an alternate form of Loder’s “transformation in the Holy Spirit,” and then shows how Loder’s logic of transformation can aid discourse about particularity and universality, that is, whether the object of the mystic’s devotion is the same in different traditions. She then concludes with a discussion of how, for both mysticism and Loder, creative intelligence should be understood as a form of love: “love itself is a knowing” (*RT*, 373-400).

The volume concludes with an “Afterward” by Dana Wright that tries, with only partial success, to explain the senses in which Loder’s work can truly be called “scientific,” and with a helpful bibliography of Loder’s publications and writing about him. The Afterward repeats some things that Wright has already said in the introduction and in his essay on youth ministry, but adds, on p. 417, thirteen ways in which Loder illuminates “actual Reality,” though he does not unpack this list. In the last part of the essay, he discusses sixteen “potential challenges” of Loder’s work to practical theology, and though he does explicate these challenges, it still seems a somewhat anxious, thrown-together effort to show that James Loder’s work is relevant to contemporary theological and philosophical discourse. The entire collection of essays, however, establishes Loder’s importance through the inspiration he has given to many scholars working on a wide variety of issues, such that the Afterword seems unnecessary.

Though *Redemptive Transformation* is quite long, this review should not be, so let me close with brief observations. As the first full-scale treatment of James Loder’s work, *Redemptive Transformation* is an important book, well worth reading. Its great virtue is the variety and quality of the essays, which is quite high. Its weakness is an uncertainty about audience, so that while most of the essays will be welcomed by practitioners in

ministry, there are several (Wright, Haitch, Adams, McClure, for example) that are exceedingly dense, and probably unhelpful to those same practitioners. Loder's background in psychotherapy adds a dimension to his post-critical thought that Michael Polanyi lacks, though this seems insufficient to term his thought "scientific." Most important: the authors will stimulate readers to turn again, or for the first time, to Loder's books, and that in itself makes their effort quite successful.

ENDNOTE

¹Readers of *TAD* will be interested to know that Martin's Princeton dissertation under Loder was on the thought of Michael Polanyi and Thomas Torrance.

JAMES LODER'S *THE LOGIC OF THE SPIRIT IN HUMAN THOUGHT AND EXPERIENCE*



Dana R. Wright and Keith J. White, eds. *The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience: Exploring the Vision of James E. Loder, Jr.* Foreword by John S. McClure. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014. Pp. xxv + 357. ISBN-13: 978-1625646897. \$42.00 (hb).

Esther Lightcap Meek

This anthology is the production of former students of the late James Loder and other professionals committed to Loder's visionary proposals and to expanding them into a research program far-reaching in impact. It represents the results of a 2012 conference sponsored by the Child Theology Movement (of which coeditor Keith White is the Director). Conference presentations have been carefully compiled by Loder's former student, Dr. Dana Wright, and are included in this volume along with Wright's short intellectual biography of Loder and his to-date complete bibliography of all works by and about Loder.¹ The conference, and the publication of this anthology, may well prove to have been especially timely for the future of Loder's scholarly impact, given the suddenness of his death in 2001.

Dr. Loder was Professor of Practical Theology at Princeton for four decades. His expertise was multidisciplinary, spanning theology, psychology, Christian education, philosophy and science. But especially remarkable and significant to his work and legacy were two personal spiritual encounters that transformed him and led him to explain it and to render transformation the *sine qua non* of his scholarly proposals in all areas, including his pedagogy and counseling. His life and work became the steady endeavor to bear witness to the reality of the Holy Spirit's transformative involvement in human development, Christian education, and practical theology, presenting such transformation in a way that it accords fundamentally with science.

Loder's major works are *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (1982; rev. ed. 1989); *The Knight's Move: The Relational Logic of the Spirit*

in *Theology and Science* (1992; co-authored with personal friend, physicist, W. Jim Neidhardt); and *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective* (1998). Just prior to Loder's death, he sent for publication a manuscript entitled, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*. At that point, Loder told Wright, "This is to be my legacy!" An additional valuable contribution that Wright makes to *The Logic of the Spirit in Human Thought and Experience* (hereafter *Logic*) is a detailed summary of that manuscript.²

These four works represent the key loci of Loder's scholarly vision, which is explored in this collection of essays. Thus, my brief description of each will double as a summary of this book's central concerns. *The Transforming Moment* is Loder's highly creative, sophisticated, and dense account of "convictional experiences"—that is, of an individual person's actual experience of the convicting presence of God the Holy Spirit.³ In it he offers his "logic of transformation," or the five-fold knowing event: 1) conflict-in-context, 2) interlude for scanning, 3) insight felt with intuitive force, 4) release and repatterning, and 5) interpretation. Readers familiar with Polanyi will easily recognize the similarity of this to Polanyi's subsidiary-focal integration, as did I. Indeed, Loder cites Polanyi's work in that discussion, and he concurs that this, and not the Deweyan scientific method, describes scientific discovery.⁴

Also in *Transforming Moment*, Loder offers his account of the four dimensions of humanness: 1) the lived world, 2) the ego, 3) the Void, and 4) the Holy. Loder argues that standard accounts of human development fail because they take into account only the first two dimensions. The Void, which is the threat of nonbeing, and the Holy, which is the gracious intrusion of the possibility of new being, are essential to fully developed humanness. Loder shows that the driving dynamism of all knowing is rooted in this developing structure. He shows that transformation is essential to human development to maturity and flourishing. And for the purposes of his case for convictional knowing, he argues that this transformative dynamic of knowing and of human being becomes the "grammar" the Holy Spirit "commandeers" in any instance of encounter with God. These analyses of Loder's are evident and further employed throughout the Wright and White anthology.

In *The Knight's Move*, Loder and Neidhardt seek to articulate how theology and science share fundamental accord because the Spirit of God prompts every scientific discovery, even as She prompts every convictional encounter.⁵ It was critically important to Loder to reconcile his logic of transformation with science, and he felt that apart from such an account of knowing and being, science itself falls short of the mark. That is because underlying both theology and science is a reality that is relationally structured.⁶ The relational structure of reality is evidenced most clearly in the Chalcedonian understanding of Jesus Christ as fully divine and fully human (13).

According to Wright, Loder “took his analysis of the power of convictional experience and the ground of conviction in the Spirit of Christ to develop a theological and interdisciplinary scientific explanation of human development” (15). As mentioned above, Loder has offered an account of human development through four dimensions. These four dimensions may be diagrammed using a horizontal and a vertical axis: the world and the ego occupy the horizontal axis, and the Void and the Holy anchor the vertical axis at bottom and at top, respectively. Now Loder expounds on “socialization”—what I take to be the horizontal axis—and “transformation”—the vertical. Transformation is “a patterned process whereby in any given frame of knowledge or experience, a hidden order of meaning emerges with the power to redefine and/or reconstruct the original frame of reference” (17). This is “the logic of the Spirit,” as well as the transformative relationality of reality that is central to Loder’s vision. Apart from this redemptive transformation, socialization is entropic, such that death dominates and haunts life. This entropy may be observed on the psychic level, the social, and the cultural—even in macroeconomics and among nation-states. The fourth book, the unpublished manuscript, *Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit*, would have fleshed out the implications of this thesis for education and for educational ministry.

Even this severely brief representation of the argument easily suggests the critical importance, and at the same time the courageous riskiness, of Loder’s frontal challenge to modern Western thought and culture. And it is easy to imagine the concerns and creative possibilities that would occupy a collection of contributors committed to furthering Loder’s vision. Indeed, the Wright and White anthology never departs from these commitments. Loder needed no help to render his proposals interdisciplinary; the anthology only reflects and works to continue the extension and to deepen it. With this background regarding Loder and his work, specifically, now, we can appreciate the distinctive contributions of the anthology.

First, consider the Child Theology Movement, and contributions that link it to Loder’s ideas. The vision of Director Keith White, also coeditor of this anthology and convener of the 2012 conference, was directly influenced by Loder’s work. CTM is not about theology for children, as one might suppose. Rather, it is committed to taking seriously the significance of Jesus’ iconic gesture to respond, in a theological dispute, by setting a child among his disciples (Matthew 18). The gesture suggests that the adults’ theological debate is wrongheaded when it comes to understanding reality and truth. The child holds a key to the nature of the kingdom of God, and to relating to Jesus (xx). The kingdom of God is not, “*pace* Harvey Cox,” human progress, or a Babel-like, adult, totalization of system. Rather, reality comes graciously to those in the posture of a child in simple, direct, intimate, humble, anticipation of its (and His) coming.

Obviously this has implications for children and child development and education. But it must have implications for adults equally. CTM associate Haddon Wilmer

contributes the proposal that links forgiveness with Loder's description of a child's uncanny capacity to construct the world, to create a future that is indebted to but not controlled by the past, in which the past is totally reworked and reconstructed as new forms of relating self and environment emerge.⁷ (It is easy for a Polanyian to see that this is subsidiary-focal integration.) Wilmer concludes that forgiveness is not the verbal, contractual, speech act we commonly suppose, so much as it is *this* reconstruction of relationship. Thus, it constitutes the person, and it is the distinctively childlike thing the Savior had in mind.

Also notable is New Testament theologian Elizabeth Waldron Barnett's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 13, "the love chapter."⁸ She argues that when the Apostle Paul says, "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me," (v. 11) he is contrasting childlike behavior to the defective behavior described at the beginning of the chapter as deficient because it has nothing to do with love. Thus—surprise—he is not calling us to turn away from childlike behavior, but rather to return to it. This brings 1 Corinthians 13 directly in line with Jesus' injunction in Matthew 18. Barnett explicitly values Paul's—and Loder's—and CTM's—stance as a much-needed, direct challenge to the individualist, rationalist, progressivist, chauvinist, developmentalism of Western modernity.

Another key emphasis in this anthology, closely related to the Child Theology Movement, is the implication of the logic of the Spirit for psychological human development. Both emphases hold important implications also for education, for childhood education, for Christian education. Various essays address these implications.⁹ One very helpful application is that of Lutheran pastor and former Loder student Mark Koonz, regarding "the healing of memory as a pathway to transformation."¹⁰ Koonz relates, verbatim, Loder's personal guidance of him through Koonz's encounter with a young male delinquent. He shows that a person may experience real healing of tragically haunting personal memories by inviting Christ into them. This is a specific way in which the logic of the Spirit may be tapped for real psychic healing and human flourishing.

Finally, Dana Wright wraps up the book with a comprehensive essay that has application to nothing short of life itself, and which sounds a last-ditch, clarion call regarding the critical value of Loder's vision for the future of everything. In "A Tactical Child-Like Way of Being Human Together: Implications from James Loder's Thought for Post-Colonial Witness," Wright contrasts the devastating "burden" of Jack Burden, from Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men*, to engage in the aggressive, dominating, ultimately self- and other-destructive "strategic defense initiatives" typical of modern Western imperialist progressivism, with what he calls "tactical" engagement, a kind non-acquisitive engagement with life that is only possible from the stance of "holy

insecurity,” a radical vulnerability only possible as a result of redemptive transformation: the gracious, person-constituting, freeing love of God, which therein no longer retains any crippling “place” to defend. “Christ calls us to participate existentially in a relational Reality that cannot be ‘possessed’ or ‘secured’ to our own advantage, even as we come to ourselves in that relationality and receive our life over and over again as gift. We live in and through the ‘no-place’ of Face-to-face relationality through which we are ‘taught of God’....” (313). This alone makes full human flourishing, necessary to love, possible—where love is, according to Loder, “non-possessive delight in the particularity of the other” (1). Indeed, to quote the essay’s epigraph from Irenaeus, “The glory of God is humanity fully alive” (291).

Thus, what appears at first glance to be a stodgy exercise typical of academics, self-absorbed enough to produce a book of their humble convening, turns out to overflow with healing, vibrant, and valuable application, as well as hope. I commend the work of James Loder to the reader, along with Wright and White’s collection, for existential transformation that far outstrips academic curiosity.

ENDNOTES

¹Dana R. Wright, “*Homo Testans*: The Life, Work, and Witness of James E. Loder, Jr.” 1-30; “Loder Bibliography,” 333-57. Up to the time of Loder’s sudden death, Wright was in regular professional conversation with him. Wright also produced Loder’s festschrift: *Redemptive Transformation in Practical Theology* (Eerdmans, 2004). Dr. Wright contacted me last year at the point that he discovered that my work appropriates Loder’s (*Loving to Know: Introducing Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). Subsequently he invited me to speak at the church in Everett, WA where he serves as Director of Christian Education.

²Dana R. Wright, “*Educational Ministry in the Logic of the Spirit: A Loder Legacy?*” in *Logic*, 155-203.

³I found and engaged *The Transforming Moment* entirely without the benefit of commentary from other scholars; now reading Wright and White’s collection of essays brings me satisfying confirmation of the importance of Loder’s work and it expands my insight as I continue to work with his ideas. And since his proposals involve transformation, I myself have firsthand experience of that transformational dynamic, both in my own life and pedagogy, as well as in the lives of the majority of my students. I must also note that I have appropriated portions of Loder’s argument to support my own proposal of covenant epistemology, which it emphatically underscores; but that is not to say that covenant epistemology fully represents Loder’s own agenda.

⁴Wright notes that Loder references Polanyi’s saying that good science requires fiduciary passions and “prolepsis,” or anticipatory glimpse, in an essay called “The Place of Science in Practical Theology: The Human Factor” (*International Journal of Practical Theology* 4 (2000), 22-44). See *Logic*, 6.

⁵I confess that I have yet to read these later books of Loder’s.

⁶It appears that Loder drew on the work of Polanyian T. F. Torrance to build this argument—see *Logic*, 2.

⁷Haddon Wilmer, “Forgiving Constitutes the Person,” in *Logic*, 58-77.

⁸Elizabeth Waldron Barnett, “James E. Loder and Paul in Conversation; Discourses of Development and Disruption” in *Logic*, 78-102.

⁹Keith J. White, “Child Theology, Loder, and Holistic Child Development,” 33-57; Jerome W. Berryman, “*The Transforming Moment* and Godly Play,” 105-30; Lauren Sempsrott Foster, “Pedagogical Implications of Loder’s Theory of Transformation,” 143-54; Wendy Hinrichs Sanders, “Walking Alongside Children as They Form Compassion: Loder and Lerner in the Role of Relationships and Experience as Interactive Developmental Process,” 268-89; all in *Logic*. One essay I have not noted elsewhere in my review is Ajit A Prasadam’s “Transformation of the Ego; A Study via Sudhir Kakar and James E. Loder,” *Logic*, 243-67. Prasadam, an expert in both Loder and in Hinduism, shows by means of this positive comparison the value of Loder’s work for understanding other faith traditions.

¹⁰Mark Koonz, “The Healing of Memory as a Pathway to Transformation: A Case Study Presenting James Loder’s Counsel,” in *Logic*, 205-42.



BOOK REVIEWS

Guy B. Adams and Danny L. Balfour, *Unmasking Administrative Evil*, 4th edition. Armonk, NY; London, England: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. (also Routledge), 2015. Pp. xx+222. ISBN 978-0765642912. \$44.95.

In a few words, the thesis of the book is that the end result of the use of technical rationality in organized living is often an evil of which we are unaware until after the fact. This is a newly realized problem of evil that can be translated into terms parallel to the traditional question of theodicy how can good, but fallible and not too powerful people do evil when they are doing their best to perform their jobs in apparently ordinary institutions? The authors' answer is that ordinary people *choose* to employ the commonly accepted standards of technical rationality, focusing exclusively on the narrow picture of their organization's policies and goals rather than looking at the broader picture of universal humane and ethical goals. The root of "masked evil," then, is technical rationality. The attitude of "just doing my job" permits one to avoid asking broad questions of ethics and allows one to narrow one's focus to issues of technique.

Two common questions about evil from a humanist point of view are 1) how much evil is due to good intentions

and 2) how much evil is due to the unintended consequences or side effects of social and technological changes? Situations that illustrate the first question are the great loss of life that occurred when trying to implement utopian plans such as happened during the terror of the French Revolution and the loss of life in the famines that resulted from Stalin's attempt to collectivize agriculture. The second situation is even more widespread, occurring during technological revolutions where ways of social life and entire cultures are lost. However, as Adams and Balfour point out in their emotionally wrenching book, the Holocaust produced a new question about evil that requires addressing: in our mundane organizations, how much evil is done of which we are unaware?

The authors of *Unmasking Administrative Evil* argue that the evil unwittingly depicted by Eichmann in his trial, "the banality of evil" discussed by Hannah Arendt, was a hitherto unknown unspeakable evil committed during the Nazi tyranny. The "banality of evil" was the unaware product of the apparently mundane actions of ordinary people in all spheres of organized life and institutions such as the civil service, the courts,

and not to be overlooked, institutions of “higher learning” and “research.” The authors suggest that today “the banality of evil” is committed in an unwitting manner in our supposedly humane institutions and that this evil is “masked” by the ordinary actions of ordinary people seeking to achieve excellence in their careers. The best practices of “technical rationality” or “instrumental rationality” that are employed in the guise of efficient and effective management and organizational practice today were studied by Max Weber in the bureaucracies of his day and those practices were used in the civil organizations of Nazi Germany.

Unfortunately, in juxtaposing the *masked* evil done *unwittingly* by organizations in liberal democracies with the *blatant* evil of the Holocaust done *wittingly but as a matter of course* by organizations in Nazi Germany and other tyrannies, the authors appear themselves to mask some important ethical distinctions. It appears the authors are saying that, because both evils were done by ordinary people in organizations using modern techniques of management and rational planning, both forms of society—Nazism and modern liberal democracies—are identical in the evil they do. The authors give the false appearance of wanting to blind us to the fact that there is a huge disparity between evils done wittingly as part of the mission of a fascist society dedicated to genocide and war, versus the wrongs done unwittingly in societies dedicated to achieving some form of good for all of their citizens. Indeed, to couple the term

“administrative” with “evil” is misleading because “evil” requires an intention and awareness to commit inhumane acts, an intention that is lacking in administrative policies in liberal democracies. But I think a reading of the book as having a subliminal message that fosters and reinforces a false equation of the wrongs done in liberal democracies with the wrongs done in totalitarian and genocidal nations is unjust.

To put the thesis of the book in Polanyian terms, the new problem of evil is that when evil occurs as a result of modern organizational life, it is often masked because the form of reason employed, technical rationality, has become part of the *tacit knowledge* of modern organizational life. Technical rationality in our time, called by the authors “praetorian times,” is said to manifest a sense of social decay and social disorder. “The Praetorian Guard was an elite military force that was originally created to protect the Roman emperors (perhaps analogous in some respects to the Waffen SS in Nazi Germany and more recently, Iraq’s Republican Guard). Over several hundred years of Roman history, the Guard gradually became a symbol of pervasive corruption and venality, and this is the sense in which the term is evoked here” (160). The sensitive reader may well consider this description of American social fabric to be exaggerated.

Our world should not be equated with the Nazi Reich; rather the unpremeditated evils of our world are often the result of ordinary persons trapped

in a social fabric not of their own weaving. Therefore, the authors ask us to look critically at the overall social structure of modern liberal democracies in “praetorian capitalism” (163 ff.) to see how ordinary people commit administrative evils under the pressure of governments expecting public institutions to perform according to the demands of market economics. The outsourcing of entire sectors of public institutions to private institutions results in public employees cutting important corners that lead to disasters with the loss of life, in the worst case, and with the loss of humanity and basic humane treatment in other horrendous cases. One needs to grit one’s teeth to read the following chapters for examples and analyses of such cases: Chapter 5 for the space shuttle disasters, Chapter 6 for the internment of many Japanese American citizens during WWII, and Chapter 7 for the treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib.

Two important concepts are introduced by the authors to explain how ordinary people, once they realize that the treatment of people by their organizations is awfully wrong, blinker their recognition of themselves doing anything immoral and deny their involvement in wrong. The first concept is regarding groups as “surplus populations”—treating a population and their very existence as a “problem” that needs a “solution.” They are regarded as analogous to pests or invasive species and diseases, epidemics, pandemics and plagues. The second concept is “moral inversion”—evaluating immoral actions taken to “solve the

problem” as morally just. How the ordinary public servant and the ordinary corporate worker adopt these methods for hiding the wrong they do from their own sight is through a process the authors discuss in chapters 1 and 2 about the psychological dynamics of “splitting,” a casting off of one’s moral conscience from self-awareness and also no longer identifying those regarded as problematic as part of our group or even part of true humanity. The two psycho-social strategies of identifying suspect populations as “surplus” and of the “inversion” of common morality further entrench technical rationality in a self-reinforcing loop. For instance, by thinking of the poor as a problem, rather than implementing social measures to help people who are poor, administrators sometimes eliminate the problem by simply removing the poor from visibility.

The authors do suggest some connection between the evils of Nazism and American decision making. The United States imported from Germany some of the administrators, engineers, and scientists who worked on the development of the missiles for bombing Britain. Moreover, the authors tell of how even some of the former slave laborers used to manufacture the missiles were also brought to the United States, but were subjected to more scrutiny by U.S. Immigration services than were the Nazi officials and Nazi technical staff who were brought into the United States to manage and design the Space Program.

Chapter 8 provides some small sliver of hope for avoiding administrative evil and its masking. They discuss the “liberalism of fear,” where we expect the worst from humanity and our ordinary selves, and “deliberative democracy,” where we open the discussion of policy to a broad spectrum of populations. But the ultimate question that confronts us in a situation where evils are unmasked is this: once evil is done, how can we “expiate” the evil? The “Afterword,” Chapter 9, discusses expiation through reparation of the victims and forgiveness by the victims. Where forgiveness by the victims is in reality impossible, the chapter discusses the question of the reconciliation of evildoers with their victims.

I will leave it to the reader to make a judgment about whether the authors exaggerate the wrongs done in America and whether America is in a state “of corruption and decay.” The clear and explicit message of the book is that the avoidance of a masked evil requires constant self-vigilance and the ability to go beyond technical rationality and look at ourselves from the outside of our organizational and cultural frames of reference. Though the authors do not explicitly say so, to paraphrase the famous saying, constant vigilance is the price of avoiding administrative evil.

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Esther Lightcap Meek, *A Little Manual for Knowing*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books (Wipf & Stock), 2014. Pp. 108. ISBN 978-1610977845. \$14.00 pb.

Esther Lightcap Meek, a philosophy professor at Geneva College in western Pennsylvania, has added a third volume to her works inspired by philosopher Michael Polanyi. First she authored *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (2003). In this creative effort, Professor Meek compared “knowing God” to “knowing your auto mechanic.” The effort was a brilliant explanation of how humans know what they know: knowing how we know things, knowing how we know people, and knowing how we know God.

A second and more complex book, *Loving to Know: Covenant Epistemology* appeared in 2011. In this volume, the mention of “covenant,” a biblical term, signals that knowing is less about information and more about transformation. Relying again on Polanyi but following other guides as well, Meek claims that all knowing takes the shape of an interpersonal, covenantal relationship. Rather than knowing in order to love, we love in order to know. Meek contends that all knowing is best understood as transformative encounter. In this regard, Meek reflects the influence of theologian James Loder (*The Transforming Moment*, 1989).

At 108 pages, *A Little Manual for Knowing* is much briefer than the other tomes. It covers much of the same material and advances the ideas detailed in the longer work, *Loving to Know*. Meek seems to have written this guide with

college students particularly in mind. She refers throughout the book to “knowing ventures” and often refers to the college experience. Still, the *Manual* is general enough to guide anyone wanting to reflect on a life’s journey of discovering, learning, gaining insights and building relationships. The book is titled “a manual” because it is constructed with a set of exercises or study questions that conclude each chapter and challenge the reader to go further.

In her introduction, Meek tells the reader of the dangers of a view of knowing called “the knowledge-as-information vision [that] is actually defective and damaging. It distorts reality and humanness, and it gets in the way of good knowing” (2). Congruent with this emphasis on knowledge-as-information, Meek asserts that we tend to be “epistemological dualists” (2-3). She echoes Michael Polanyi’s critique of western Enlightenment sensibilities that theologian Lesslie Newbigin repeated in his books—namely, that “we distinguish knowledge from belief, facts from values, reason from faith, theory from application, thought from emotion, mind from body, objective from subjective, science from art” (2).

Campaigning against the modernist inclination to overly-distinguish between the subjective and the objective, and between the scientific and the imaginative, Esther Meek builds upon Polanyi’s understanding of personal knowing. Meek invokes additional insights from James

Loder, Parker Palmer, John Macmurray, Colin Gunton, Martin Buber and others.

Professor Meek says in the opening paragraphs, “my life and work have been shaped in the Christian tradition. It stands to reason that if you believe in the God of the Judeo- Christian Scriptures, you would think it important to develop an epistemology that accommodates knowing God” (6). The phrase, covenant epistemology, certainly signals the importance of relationships (the knower and the known), the primacy of love and personal transformation through encountering God (4-5). Nonetheless, she contends that her manual is intended for all persons and not simply for religious persons.

The book has two parts and eight chapters. Part One is titled “Pilgrimage” and moves from “Love” to “Pledge” to “Invitation” to “Indwelling” (the titles of the first four chapters). Pilgrimage suggests a journey or a process and the chapters represent steps along the way. Meek contends that this process is born of love and involves a responsibility to seek what we do not know. Polanyi’s understanding of discovery aligns with this pilgrimage theme. The second part of the *Little Manual* is called “Gift” and suggests that knowing includes coming to discover insights or epiphanies--these insights should be registered as gifts. Under this heading of “Gift”, Meek includes chapters as additional steps entitled “Encounter,” “Transformation,” “Dance,” and “Shalom.”

Chapter Four, “Indwelling,” stands at the midpoint of Meek’s *Little Manual*.

It is the chapter that most emphatically expounds Polanyian ideas. Perhaps because I share the author's admiration of Polanyi, I found it the most satisfying part of the book. Since the passing of Richard Gelwick, Meek has become perhaps our best translator of Polanyi's epistemological insights for persons not accustomed to reading or studying philosophy. Her ability to present complex ideas like "subject-focal integration" (SFI) and "indeterminate future manifestations" (IFM) bodes well for new Polanyi readers to begin their knowing pilgrimages. Here is a sample of her explanatory prose:

Every time we notice something, picking out an object or pattern, we are focusing on that thing and relying subsidiarily on an array of other things. We rely subsidiarily on background and surroundings. We rely subsidiarily on our felt body sense. We rely on authoritative guides in the form of mothers, coaches, traditions, theoretical frameworks. That means that the simplest perception involves SFI: this cup beside me, that flower vase over there. But so does the most theoretical claim: Chemical elements conform to the Periodic Table... Subsidiaries can't simultaneously be focal. We can't attend from them and to them at the same time...They are tacit rather than explicit. (50)

Although Dr. Meek cogently presents Polanyian ideas and other insights from other "authoritative guides," the *Little Manual* still reads like a philosophy argument. No doubt, epistemology is hard to translate, though Meek certainly succeeded in her first book, *Longing to Know*. Her use of abbreviations like SFI and IFMs does not necessarily elucidate. How many readers will digest these ideas and remember the relevant phrases? Like Christian discipleship, some adventures require "forming" and "transforming."

To go on pilgrimage with Esther Meek as a wise guide, however, is a journey worth taking. Polanyi himself inspired his readers to make common cause with scientists who comprise a society of explorers intent to discover what lies beyond our reach. Meek invites us to do likewise. "To move, in love and pledge, through invitation and indwelling, to undergo encounter and transformation, cultivating dance and communion to the end of shalom, is not exactly to arrive with exhaustive finality at what we sought, and not exactly to be finished with the adventure" (98).

No, the journey goes on. There is more to discover. And there are more subsidiary clues to be focused and integrated into meaningful patterns as we submit to reality. I salute Esther Meek who calls us to go beyond the world of information into knowing ventures and perhaps, even into the place of wisdom.

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Walter Gulick (WGulick@msubillings.edu) has long been interested in the various ways people find or construct existential meaning. While sympathetic to religious naturalism, he was interested in seeing to how Crosby deals with emotion-laden existential concerns in a religious way without traditional Christian consolations.

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ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LIST

The Polanyi Society supports an electronic discussion group that explores implications of the thought of Michael Polanyi. Anyone interested can join. To join yourself, go to the following address: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/polanyi_list/join. If you have difficulty, send an e-mail to James van Pelt (james.vanpelt@yale.edu) and someone will see that you are added to the list.

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