

---

## THEOLOGICAL INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

LISA M. HESS

**Abstract:** The research and teaching of religious leadership habitually confronts the interdisciplinary issue, the challenge of identifying a theological center and religious identity. Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity, from the disciplinary perspective of practical theology, offers a theologically coherent and critically rigorous interdisciplinary method, enfolded within a christo-pneumatological phenomenology, and reclaimed here in a mutually illuminating conversational critique of “Radical Orthodoxy” and recent religious leadership scholarship. Research and teaching of religious leadership is thereby freed to engage diverse interdisciplinary sources with an explicitly theological coherence and open-ended, integrative rationale.

Critical scholarship within the research and teaching of religious leadership habitually confronts an issue of interdisciplinary rigor within the contextual, critical, and non-canonical challenges of its young disciplinary life, not to mention in the complexity of the lived experience it examines. Within the increasing diversity of (post)modern<sup>1</sup> contexts, what constitutes authority, religiousness, expertise, or theological character amidst variously valid voices? How do scholars and practitioners of religious leadership engage their field(s) of study with a critical rigor *and* conviction, manifesting expertise *and*

*Lisa Hess is Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Contextual Ministries at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.*

---

<sup>1</sup> The form of the word, (post)modern, functions here as an intentional sign or symbol for the vast, critical literature on what constitutes modernity, what postmodernity may mean, and whether there *is* an arguable adjective for our era.

openness to human, potentially divine, interaction? Practical theology, a traditionally critical-correlational discipline where contextual particularity meets systematic theology, has been wrestling with the question of methodology, theological formulation, and “the interdisciplinary issue” for quite some time.<sup>2</sup> This essay offers a renewed practical theological perspective in conversation with some disciplinary debates swirling around Radical Orthodoxy and religious leadership scholarship in order to critically address, define, and de(con)struct<sup>3</sup> a Chalcedonian theological interdisciplinarity, directed here toward religious leadership studies.

A relational logic of the Spirit through which Chalcedonian methodology (CM) historically originated will open the discourse, followed by an overview of CM, which may be unfamiliar. An appreciative de(con)struction of CM offers the renewed practical theological perspective and CM interdisciplinarity to another generation of scholars. Then follows a brief summary of some Radical Orthodoxy (RO) themes—intentionally brief, as this work has been done by others much closer to RO than myself,<sup>4</sup> and determinedly

---

<sup>2</sup> See Friedrich Schweitzer and Johannes A. Van der Ven, *Practical Theology – International Perspectives*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1999) for a good compilation of recent contributions. See also Don S. Browning, ed., *Practical Theology: the Emerging Field in Theology, Church and World*. (San Francisco: Harper&Row, 1983); Edward Farley and Barbara G. Wheeler, eds. *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), among others.

<sup>3</sup> This spelling emphasizes the reconstructive impulse within a deconstructive moment such as what follows, James K.A Smith, *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory*. (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> James K.A Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*. (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2004); James H. Olthuis and James K.A. Smith, eds. *Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition: Creation, Covenant, and Participation*. (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic, 2005). Also helpful are D. Stephen Long’s essay, “Radical Orthodoxy” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. ed. Vanhoozer, Devin J. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, 126-145), and the edited compilation, Laurence Paul Hemming, ed., *Radical*

summary as my intentions are practical theologically oriented, over and against aligning with RO itself. The conversation between reclaimed Chalcedonian method and RO refines and beckons further distinctive characteristics within each voice, before the essay concludes with a preliminary exchange between CM and the recent work of Russell W. West and John Stoekle on “mapping the intersections” within religiously-based organizational leadership theorizing.<sup>5</sup> CM offers a suitable if partial remedy to the absence of theological conceptualization within religious leadership studies, to the ambiguity identified within existing, representative scholarship, and to the need for interdisciplinary proposals toward a critical appreciation of religious-based, organizational leadership scholarship.

### Relational Logic of the Spirit

Geography is coming back into popularity within contemporary theology, which is a timely event for contextual studies such as religious leadership. Yale theologian David Kelsey chronologically begins the impulse with his *Between Athens and Berlin: the Theological Education Debate*.<sup>6</sup> Serene Jones orients her remapping of religion through feminist perspective, subtitled her efforts “cartographies of grace.”<sup>7</sup> Most recently, James K.A. Smith picks up the mantle of theological cartographer in order to introduce RO in his introductory but constructive text, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy:*

---

*Orthodoxy? – A Catholic Enquiry*. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000.) Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau, eds., *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to “Radical Orthodoxy”*. (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), offer good counter-proposals.

<sup>5</sup> Russell W. West and John Stoekle, “Theorizing Religiously-Based Organizational Leadership: Mapping the Intersections,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, vol. 4, no. 1-2. (2005), 147-190.

<sup>6</sup> David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: the Theological Education Debate*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

*Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*.<sup>8</sup> And remember his early engagement with RO from the specifically Pentecostal location, Azusa Street.<sup>9</sup> A substantive contribution within religious leadership studies has also mapped its own intersections, and will be engaged below.<sup>10</sup> Geography appears to be growing in importance within recent theological discourse, finally finding its feet within (post)modern milieux.

Another theologian centered his last essay contextually, even eschatologically, within a metaphorical geography. James E. Loder, emerging from theology-science scholarship and convicted by the centrality of theology within critical discourse, represents what I will call “an-other Princeton” voice, recognizably nuanced by Princeton Barthianism, yet constructively rebellious in his disarming pneumatology and Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity. In one of the last articles before his death in 2001, “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: ‘the Interdisciplinary Issue,’”<sup>11</sup> Loder described the contemporary theological scene reliant upon four geographical *ethoi*—Manchester, Athens, Berlin, and Delphi—before noting that an important one was missing in the face of (post)modernity’s epistemological and ontological constraints: the *ethos of Jerusalem*. He argued that without a specifically theological center born of the church, in the power of the Spirit, cognizant of suffering yet joyful in praise, *any* interdisciplinary work would lead theology away from its coherence and purpose. “Thus,” he wrote, “I want to centre the interdisciplinary aspect of practical theology in Jerusalem as both a city of suffering and the birthplace of the

---

<sup>8</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*.

<sup>9</sup> James K.A. Smith, “What Hath Cambridge to Do with Azusa Street? Radical Orthodoxy and Pentecostal Theology in Conversation,” *Pneuma*. (Spr 2003) 25, no. 1, 97-114.

<sup>10</sup> West and Stoekle, “Theorizing Religiously-Based Organizational Leadership: Mapping the Intersections,” 147-190.

<sup>11</sup> James E. Loder, “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: ‘The Interdisciplinary Issue’” in *Practical Theology: International Perspectives*, 359-81.

church in the power of the Spirit.”<sup>12</sup> He wrote within practical theology, and the resources brought to his tasks were orthodoxly theological, philosophical, and psychological.

His lasting contribution with a variety of constructive, theological projects was what he called a “relational logic of the Spirit,” by which he meant “an asymmetrical, bipolar relational unity” that realistically and analogically reconciles human and divine, physical and supraphysical, within Chalcedonian formulation of christology and a pneumatologically palpable witness to Spirit-spirit intimacy within lived experience. He explored this logic within a philosophically oriented epistemological-ontological treatise on convictional knowing.<sup>13</sup> He developed it further in conversation with physical and psychological science, resonant with a philosophically Kierkegaardian complementarity, again observing Chalcedonian christological formulation within mathematics, philosophy, art, music, and psychology.<sup>14</sup> His last major published work addressed the relational logic again within a theologically driven perspective on human development.<sup>15</sup> Reliant upon God’s primary relationality given ultimate expression in the Chalcedonian christological formulation of the qualitatively distinct natures of Christ yet unified within Christ’s person, this logic of the Spirit offers a powerfully theological voice resonant with contemporary voices in RO and potentially fruitful for the confrontation of interdisciplinarity within religious leadership.

---

<sup>12</sup> Loder, “Normativity and Context,” 364.

<sup>13</sup> James E. Loder, *Religious Pathology and Christian Faith*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), and *The Transforming Moment*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> James E. Loder and W. Jim Neidhardt, *The Knight’s Move: the Relational Logic of the Spirit in Theology and Science*. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1992).

<sup>15</sup> James E. Loder, *The Logic of the Spirit: Human Development in Theological Perspective*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

## Chalcedonian Method

Chalcedonian methodological orientation arises from decades of theological wrestling with questions of normativity and context in the interdisciplinary issue.<sup>16</sup> Since the rise of the modern university, theology has sought an empirically reasonable core of its discipline amidst the push and pull of university discourse and specialization proliferation. How does theology rationalize, discern and systematize its critical discourse across the transcendent-immanent or divine-human divide? How may it relate to the increasing number of disciplinary fields with clearly non-theological or a-theological problematics and be understood to contribute to theological knowledge?

Loder articulated CM initially with the assumption that the core of a discipline lies in its generative problematic, which means that the core of theology lies not in its practices, congregations or functions, but in the intersubjective *why* and these and related phenomena present problems for study and analysis in the first place (I). Not only is the presenting problem of critical importance, but also the *generative impetus* for the problem, so conceived. The object of study cannot be dissected or ultimately bracketed from the subject studying it. Said practically, theologically: any presenting issue within a discipline of study involves not only the historical and logistical phenomena for overt analysis, but also the intersubjective dimensions that involve the self, lived world, void, and Holy<sup>17</sup> in a relational unity of felt dissonance or incongruence. The question of *why* within

---

<sup>16</sup> Loder, "Normativity and Context in Practical Theology," 359-81. His argument is outlined in twelve statements, noted within the text here by I, II, III, ... These Roman numerals simply note his argument summary statements, much in line with Stephen E. Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*. updated edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). They track in linear fashion Loder's force of logic from observed data through warrants toward his claim for a Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity.

<sup>17</sup> These describe the four-dimensional 'worlds' as described in other works of James Loder. See especially *The Transforming Moment*.

the generative problematic orients the sequence of its different aspects given and perceivably apparent.

In response to this question, CM proposes an inclusive divine-human action theory<sup>18</sup> whereby the humanly felt incongruence or dissonance instigating critical study is interpreted as the decentering and unavoidable combination of divine and human realities, operative in a divine-human unity of congruent action. Not only is an indeterminate space made for divine agency, alongside human action, but eventual intelligibility is posited, even if only at the end of time as we know it.<sup>19</sup> The “unbearable lightness of being,”<sup>20</sup> emergent within being *and* non-being whose relationality constitutes them each to the other, drives critical inquiry. “The answer proposed [to the question of *why* within any problematic] is: such phenomena combine two incongruent, qualitatively distinct realities, the divine and the human, in congruent forms of action.” (II) Additionally, *both* divine and human agencies enact the relationality in a concrete, historical manner (III). In every observed phenomena, and in all those that fail to attract particular or critical attention, human *and* divine agency are implied, if indeterminately named, and intelligibility is discovered or revealed, but not arbitrarily created.

CM maintains an acknowledged, self-involved commitment (IV) to a non-reductionistic, mutually illuminating, and constructive relationship between disparate disciplinary fields (V), even as it maintains its

---

<sup>18</sup> “A Neo-Parsonian Field of Human Action,” beyond the focus of this essay, but briefly addressed with intentions for primarily critical musical study within Lisa M. Hess, ““Toward a Full-Fledged Action Theory with a Perspective of Musical Transcendence,” *Verbum et Ecclesia*. Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa, 25, no.2 (Spring 2004): 519-533.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> Philip Kaufman, director, “Unbearable Lightness of Being” (1988: Saul Zaentz Company, Orion Pictures). Based upon Milan Kundera, *Unbearable Lightness of Being*. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2004), who quoted title from the work of Friedrich Nietzsche.

generative core in the human-divine relationality (VI). CM moves outward from more narrowly conceived theological disciplines to in depth engagement with other disciplinary fields appropriate to the phenomenon as given. This means an intentional and rational consideration must be given to norms and intentions within disciplinary discourse that are irrelevant or incommensurable for critical theological discourse on the phenomenon in question. In its initial expression, CM states: interdisciplinary, methodological “models for [engaging non-reductionistic, mutually illuminating, and constructive discourse] that are yet non-theological in their baseline do not meet the central problematic of the field and present, thereby, a displacement of...theology from its theological centre.” (VI) Enacted relationship between theological and explicitly non-theological disciplines, therefore, needs clarification on priority, interpretation, and understanding toward analysis of presenting phenomena. When one engages critical discourse about a particular presenting phenomenon, what sources are given primacy of voice and how does one determine the contributions of such contextual rationality, hermeneutics, and analysis?<sup>21</sup>

The resolution offered by CM, henceforth its name, is the indeterminate but trustworthy insight successively available within the person of the researcher, grounded theologically in the power of the Spirit within the Person of Christ who is fully human and fully God, with no confusion, change, division, or separation. “The Chalcedonian formulation of the relationality between the divine and the human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, provides the relationality required to address adequately the problematic in this field” (VIII). No one disciplinary field will hold the market share of phenomenological perspective; only the continued

---

<sup>21</sup> Loder argues in VII that this methodological solution will also shape all other dimensions within practical theology as a discipline—historical, ecclesial, operational, and contextual dimensions—but that is specifically an intra-disciplinary issue.



relationality between disciplinary fields enacted within critical pursuit will constitute a vibrant interdisciplinarity. CM formulation orients disciplinary fields into an asymmetrical, bi-polar, relational unity characterized in Barthian terms as “indissoluble differentiation,” “inseparable unity,” and “indestructible (asymmetrical) order,”<sup>22</sup> translated into an analytical and critical model through the logic of complementarity (IX). Disparate disciplines of inquiry may be brought into non-reductionistic, mutually illuminating, and constructive relationship by means of a theological formulation that respects the integrity of all voices, whether they self-identify as theological or non-theological, and that holds contributions in tensive conversation whereby differences sharpen awareness of reality that is beyond all conceptualization. In this way, CM posits a hermeneutics of humility and charity—with precedence given to theological formulation coherent with theological disciplinarity—and yet with continually open-ended seeking of understanding beyond the theological/non-theological, modernly disciplinary reification.

An additional dynamic orients this entire methodological discussion, and that is the transformational interaction within and toward the living center of critical inquiry within wonder, doxology, and worship. The Chalcedonian method posits an involved (and claimed) interest in transformation as its guiding theme and locus of divine-human agency.

Dynamically, [the Chalcedonian method] brings theology and the human sciences into a transformational interaction: where human science understandings (or their equivalents) negate the Divine reality, this negation is negated and these understandings are re-appropriated in terms of

---

<sup>22</sup> The Chalcedonian, christological paradigm undergirds and shapes multiple segments of Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, noted by both George Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth: the Shape of his Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 85ff; and Clifford Green, ed., *Karl Barth: Theologian of Freedom. The Making of Modern Theology* series (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 29ff.

cognate theological concepts; where theological concepts negate the legitimacy of human science insights as elements in the transformational interaction, this negation must also be negated. However, the direction of the transformational dynamic, manifesting its inherent spiritual quality, is always to establish a bi-polar asymmetrical relational unity between the human science understanding and its more comprehensive theological cognate, thus reflecting the Chalcedonian model. ... The living centre of this field, as a discipline, is worship in which the methodology thus articulated is expressed in prayer and praise, and in the liturgies of the Word and Sacrament. Here the methodology is taken up into the reality from which it has arisen and toward which it points.<sup>23</sup>

Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity acknowledges the unavoidable selection and combination of sources brought into conversation toward critical analysis of any phenomenon, yet it also maintains an explicit commitment to an inclusive, interactive theory cognizant of human and divine agency, irrespective of faith commitments. CM posits that God acts, regardless of our choice or atheistic defenses. It also acknowledges the irreconcilable distinctions between disciplines that negate the divine reality or another disciplinary position, yet may still offer positive contribution to understanding and interpretation by negation of negation, reestablishing (by the Spirit's agency) an asymmetrical, bi-polar relational unity of scientific discourse that honors the primacy of the divine. Finally, CM claims its living center in worship, expressed in prayer and praise, and in the liturgies of the Word and Sacrament. The ultimate point is neither the critical discourse nor even the solution of the presenting problematic, but worship of the One who engages critical discourse and constructive transformation within and beyond human agency.

---

<sup>23</sup> Loder, X-XII, 359-60.

*Critique*

For all its contribution, CM, as originally expressed, arises from an overly narrow and inconsistent epistemology, captive to inherited theological dualisms no longer meaningful within constructive practical theology, and to an implicitly violent imperialism in the face of ‘the other.’ With a caring and care-full critique, however, CM ‘revised’ may yet offer a vibrantly critical, theological interdisciplinarity, charitably enlivened by the relational force of desire and pragmatically structured in a christo-pneumatological phenomenology defined by risked trust that Spirit’s work in the world beckons all impassioned and critical research.

CM, as conceived by Loder, retains implicit reliance upon a modern systematic that not only belies an epistemology inadequate for today’s theological milieu, but one that is actually inconsistent with a central theme in the rest of his work: determinative relationality. As argued within his other work, the primary organizing reality of authentic theological discourse is the vulnerable, cruciform love of God made known to us in the life, death, resurrection of Jesus Christ, who offered and offers us continually an advocate in the Spirit. Such relationality is to be primary and constitutive of all, with the human spirit sustained within and through the Holy Spirit, whose personhood is constituted within the primary relationality or Trinitarian nature of God. As such, an epistemological frame of question-answer, centered solely on the question of *why*, will not be suitable for organizing a critical, inter-subjective approach to theology’s generative problematic.<sup>24</sup> Yet Loder insisted upon the primacy of the systematic dimension of practical theology—sustained in the *why* as

---

<sup>24</sup> This may bring Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* to mind, where he suggests that one can endure any *how* if one has a *why*. The nuance here is not to deny the importance of the *why*, but only its secondary formulation within a governing relationality where risk of trust is primary to articulation of the relationship. Thanks to colleague Brian D. Maguire for this connection with twentieth-century literature.

organizing question for the generative problematic.<sup>25</sup> He attempts to organize theology within a modern, question-answer, genetic-empiricism, consistent with his Piagetian training but inconsistent with his professedly constitutive relationality. Loder's socialized adherence to the organization of modern theology, represented in his institution's curriculum and his own methodological argument, ironically makes his method inconsistent within his own articulated relational logic of the Spirit.

Loder's CM also operates with modernity's determined dualism of "theology" and "the human sciences." In contemporary (post)modern thought, however, is such a distinction fruitful, or even worse, remotely viable? What is arguably "non-theological" in a world where materiality and nothingness are both in the redemptive power of the Spirit? What is theological when texts like John Caputo's *The Weakness of God: a Theology of Event*<sup>26</sup> can claim philosophy as a discipline yet argue a negative theology within postmodern communities of discourse? In related fashion, as "theology" has diversified into institutional expressions from the more traditional theological education for professional ministry degrees to continental philosophical theology to religious studies to cultural studies and more, does the line hold between "theology" and "the human sciences" in any meaningful way? CM's original, dialectical configuration of "theology" vs. "the other sciences" fails in the light of contemporary discourse and disciplinary diffusion.

Additionally, Loder's CM enacts a conceptual, even imperialist, violence against 'the other' by placing *the* answer to the question of *why* in the incongruence of divine-human relationality yet held together in congruent forms of action. With this answer, Loder prefigures that a generative problematic, in the disciplinary fields to be engaged with this interdisciplinary method, comes from the incongruence or cognitive dissonance *interpreted as a*

---

<sup>25</sup> Loder, 359, 364-5.

<sup>26</sup> John D. Caputo, *The Weakness of God: a Theology of the Event*. (Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006).

*divine-human incompatibility made present in substance of question and answer.* Loder prefigures the searching of all others within his divine-human relationality. While I believe there is potential in this incongruous unity, there is also the so-called violence of the concept,<sup>27</sup> the disregard of another's inviolable alterity. Such a conceptual violence and imperial prefiguration again contradicts the infinite valuing of the creature by a cruciform, vulnerably loving Creator. How can relationality be primary if such pre-interpreted searching is predetermined? A more feasible approach is to lodge the generative problematic in the expression or repression of desire, understood within the relational orientation of hospitality and wonder...even curiosity. The question of *why* is a portion of this desire expressed, but secondary to the coherent and relational force itself.

### **De(con)structed CM and Its Christo-Pneumatological Phenomenology**

The dialectical relationality at the heart of Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity recommends a de(con)struction of it for the faithful pursuit of critical theological thought, but also a practical theological extension of it for the intimately christo-pneumatological, phenomenological analysis of lived experience. CM lends itself well to such development, with its divine-human interactive theory (regardless of faith, doubt, or *via media*), its originating Spirit-spirit intersubjectivity maintained within christological formulation, and its deliberate articulation of constitutive relationality. The revised CM articulated here offers a (post)modern corrective to CM's original expression and charts a path for the christo-pneumatological examination of phenomenality within research and teaching of religious leadership.

---

<sup>27</sup> The phrase obviously connotes much out of and within deconstructive thought, not to mention Levinas and others. An edited compilation addresses thematic foci and philosophical/theological reflection on this idea: Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber, eds., *Violence, Identity and Self-Determination* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Critical theological thought originates and is enacted within God's primary relationality manifest in cruciform love, sustained and embodied in desire. As the human spirit has been described as "the uninvited guest in every knowing event,"<sup>28</sup> so is desire the oft-shadow force within all critical endeavors. The need to resolve cognitive dissonance or logical incongruity stems from this desire and a trained skill of resolution—whether that has been in biological expression, psychological belonging, societal groupings, or cultural significance. Yet desire is the irrepressible and singularly satisfiable companion of human creatures constantly between being and becoming amidst historical-time-laden worlds and their worldviews. In contrast to the original expression of CM, the generative energy within critical theological disciplines does not arise from a question *why*, so much as from the irrepressible and epistemological-ontological force of desire funded by Spirit and continually de(con)structed by the human spirit yet held captive to modern dualisms. True to the retained intersubjectivity, a phenomenon to be investigated offers opportunity for new insight into the phenomenon itself, as well as *the promise of new relationship desired* between self, lived world, void, and Holy.

CM revised still implies an inclusive, interactive theory, testimony to the indeterminate but no less real combination of divine-human agency throughout the lived world and the self's formation within this world, the void, and in encounter with the Holy. A disengaged mind or a detached observation is again excluded, because of the governing dynamics of desire within relationship-as-creation, not because of an integrated subject-object dualism inherited from modernity's epistemological orientations.<sup>29</sup> Addressing the challenges of contemporary

---

<sup>28</sup> Loder, *Transforming Moment*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> Outside the confines of this essay, but similarly resonant here, is the work of James H. Olthuis. A good epistemological-ontological exploration of this kind of relational knowing can be found in Olthuis, ed., *Knowing Other-wise: Philosophy on the Threshold of Spirituality* (New York: Fordham, 1997).

(post)modernity requires an interdisciplinary method that systematically establishes a relationship between a multitude of critical disciplines of study, funded by the desire for clear thinking, hospitable discourse, charitable hermeneutics, and collaborative creation of a healthy, sustainable, and unavoidably shared future. This method must necessarily be *non-reductionistic*<sup>30</sup>—in the need to honor the alterity of other disciplines—*mutually illuminating*—in the enjoyable play and critical refinement that authentic dialogue brings to human knowing—and *constructive* for participating disciplines—as part of honoring of alterity and trusting in the telos of God in a substantial fashion—and *disclosive of the phenomenon in question*—which is where the searching began and where the governing relationality and the expressions of desire meet in an indeterminate and repetitive consummation.

Such an interdisciplinarity does not predetermine what is theological and non-theological, yet lives the cultural critique funded by the Gospel in a vibrant, concretely expressed form that respects disciplinary particularity while contributing via any internal inconsistencies. Critical edge comes when one perceives the divine reality or a discipline's alterity negated by either so-called theological disciplines or so-called non-theological disciplines, and that negation is thereby negated by gentle critique. Additionally, irreconcilable

---

<sup>30</sup> Loder insisted upon and argued against a sense of “reductionistic” which became rather a “straw man,” if he’ll forgive the blatant description. He argued compellingly against the reductionism of positivism, empiricism, and models of rationality that neglected the irreducible intersubjective element. He often decried phenomenological reduction, or the *epoche*, though I argue that was out of habit and to highlight the impossibility, recognized by phenomenologists themselves, of bracketing *all* assumptions within human science research. Much of phenomenological reduction, such as Max van Manen’s *reductio*, paired with *vocatio*, is actually within the spirit (Spirit) of Loder’s work within personal knowing and Michael Polanyi/T.F. Torrance epistemological-ontological integration within Spirit-spirit theology. “Non-reductionistic” in the sense here entails a critique against the reductionism within positivistic rationality and a so-called ‘objective empiricism’ that are both inevitably employed within intersubjective and interpersonal critical discourse.

views are held in tensive proximity whereby a minimal or middle way may emerge or if not, then a minimal theological suggestion may be offered—theology in *pianissimo*<sup>31</sup>—such that companionship is honored and time grows new responses or simply new emphases of import. The illustrative and operative formulation is the relationality between divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, palpably available within lived experience of Spirit’s agency, translated into an analytical and critical model through the logic of complementarity whereby the primacy of relationality undergirds pursuit of *caritas*, belonging, interpretation, understanding, and service.

The living center of theological discipline within this CM interdisciplinarity remains worship in which fidelity is engaged, the method is offered as humble service and invitation to encounter with ‘the other’ toward mutual transformation, and all are invited to share in celebration, prayer, wonder, delight, joy, given cruciform shape within liturgy, implicit or explicit. From this penultimate place, the discipline and its method are taken up into the reality from which has arisen and toward which it points its ultimate destination. The restless desire that only finds rest in God drives both wonder and understanding. Such a revised CM offers a vibrant interdisciplinarity, suggestive of what has been called a theopneumatic method by some within the RO sensibility. After a schematic description of the christo-pneumatological phenomenological method to be engaged here, informed by Chalcedonian thought, the relevance of such method becomes apparent in its remarkable similarities to, yet important divergences from, Radical Orthodoxy.

---

<sup>31</sup> See Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004). His reference is to Max Weber, “Science as Vocation,” a recent publication of which can be found in David Owen and Tracy B. Strong, eds., *The Vocation Lectures* trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2004), 30ff.



*Christo-pneumatological Phenomenology*

Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity was conceived and articulated with the intent of organizing practical theological discourse into a powerful and hopeful new paradigm.<sup>32</sup> CM offers compelling structural resources within which to engage disciplinary contributions, hence all this effort on methodology, but its promise lies not in the organization of the discipline of practical theology but in the theological underpinnings for a christo-pneumatological, phenomenological examination of lived experience, such as that within religious-based organizations and their examination by those interested in religious leadership studies. Phenomenology has a long philosophical history begun in the descriptive psychology and intentionality of Franz Brentano and given explicit articulation in the work of Edmund Husserl, whose actual and derivative students have included Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jacques Derrida, to name a few.<sup>33</sup> A contemporary voice in whom this tradition finds comprehensive articulation toward action-sensitive theory is Max van Manen, a Canadian educator and human-science researcher.<sup>34</sup> In his work, one sees an interdisciplinary and rigorous approach to researching lived experience, not toward ultimate or universal meaning of such experience, but toward an action-

---

<sup>32</sup> See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), an influential voice within theological discourse, particularly in latter 20<sup>th</sup> century discussions in search of modern coherence and correspondence with secular reality.

<sup>33</sup> Dermot Moran's introductory volume offers excellent background and constructive commentary. See *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> Max van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (Albany: State University of New York, 1990). See also [www.phenomenologyonline.com](http://www.phenomenologyonline.com). In accordance with accepted critical intentions, .com sites usually garner well-deserved suspicion. In this case, van Manen's work begins within textual sources and in 2002 moved to an impressive web-format without diminishing its scholarly presentation and detail.

sensitive knowledge of and for tactful action within particular situations on the basis of a carefully edified, open thoughtfulness.

A trio of points supports his work within the context of Chalcedonian theological interdisciplinarity, though van Manen's work itself has no explicit, theological intention. First, Max van Manen observes the startling reversal and underlying challenge within the research of lived experience, so resonant within the research and teaching of religious leadership: we do not know too little about religious leadership, *we actually know too much*. There are too many perspectives, too many possible approaches, and too many convicted voices within increasingly diverse strands of literature offering comment upon all dimensions of the field of study within this coalescing discipline. Phenomenological inquiry within its early and then twentieth century expressions is a consistent return to this unfolding mystery of lived experience which is knowable within linguistic and textual discourse.<sup>35</sup> Such experience "is not a problem in need of a solution but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension."<sup>36</sup> In our context here, and within this perspective, problems of religious leadership are not to be solved; but the continually pressing need for sensitive, tactful knowledge within situations requiring guidance must be repeatedly, evocatively comprehended. This inquiry returns us to the concrete, sensate, material world of things-in-themselves. Second, phenomenological inquiry requires this characteristic of concreteness and the characteristic significance within any particular setting. As such, it focuses on the objective nature of the phenomenon as meaningfully experienced. Phenomenological inquiry requires both *what is* and the *interest* or *orientation* toward what is. Inquiry begins within the lived world and a worldview, and constructs a

---

<sup>35</sup> van Manen identifies the various intersections and combinations of language and "things in themselves," from Heidegger forward. See Chapter Two, *Researching Lived Experience*.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, *Researching Lived Experience*, 50.

possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience such that others are drawn into the phenomenological inquiry with deeper and deeper, open-ended persistence. In our work here, the research and teaching of *religious* leadership requires this very return to the lived world, ever deeper awareness of worldview, and *open-ended* persistence that draws toward deeper and deeper intelligibility.

One might argue for a solely christological method within Christian religious leadership, yet *christo-pneumatological* insures the rare theological *concreteness and openness* required for an actual return to the *lived*, non-conceptual world in which the Spirit will move us all into a deeper intelligibility. Not only does the Spirit blow where it will, but also critically rigorous research within this lived world requires a christologically-oriented daring of critique *and* a pneumatological humility of perspective in the face of mystery from overwhelming knowledge and perspective. Reliant upon van Manen's integrated movements of *reductio* and *vocatio*, phenomenological inquiry or researching lived experience is so addressed, re-viewed, re-encountered, and revealed within this twofold critique and openness. *Reductio* names the famous phenomenological reduction or *epochē* whose aim is to re-achieve direct contact with the world by suspending prejudgments, bracketing assumptions, deconstructing claims, and restoring openness to things-in-themselves. The intention here is to approach, as best we can, the phenomenon of interest, within the world and as we experience it, not as we conceptualize it. This critical inquiry is not primarily procedural, but the practice of a certain attentiveness. There is no presumption of universal meaning, but there is promise of a "state or condition of phenomenological "seeing" or understanding that is as much an experience of meaningfulness as it is a form of knowledge."<sup>37</sup> *Reductio* involves six aspects—not linear steps or methodical achievements—through which such "seeing" may occur:

---

<sup>37</sup> van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience*, 129-30, 149.

wonder, openness, concreteness, eidos (iconic universals) approach, and otherness.

The aim of *vocatio* within this christo-pneumatological inquiry is to let things speak or be heard by bringing them into nearness through the vocative power of language. Again and again, the challenge of any critical study is to have the phenomenon itself address the conceptualizer, the thinker, and the researcher. Through the vocative power of language, within this written offering, the phenomenon of any lived experience will be invited in terms of tone, lived-throughness, nearness, intensification, appeal, and answerability. A theological phenomenology of practice within religious leadership studies makes no pretension to *be* the experience itself, but only phenomenological writing as phenomenological inquiry that evokes deeper comprehension to be returned to the lived world once again. Through reflective writing, researchers offer only their own moments of seeking, entering, traversing, drawing, gazing, and touching<sup>38</sup> in which they have been (often) unexpectedly sought, inspired, transcended, seized, seen, and touched. It is this theological reciprocity within Holy Spirit/human spirit, potentially honored within this phenomenological turn, that promises theologically practical insight for the critical study of lived experience, such as religious leadership.

The third point of this trio, in support of van Manen's work within Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity, stems from the action-sensitive integrity of researching lived experience toward practices of tact within encounter. The return to the lived world, within and underneath the overwhelming conceptuality of (post)modernity, is enacted *through* a worldview *toward* a critical, action-sensitive competence: *knowing how to act tactfully in particular situations on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness*. Not only does this concrete yet open-ended goal preserve the integrity of world and worldview inquiry, it also honors the determinative relationality

---

<sup>38</sup> van Manen, "Writing," [www.phenomenologyonline.com](http://www.phenomenologyonline.com).

witnessed within a vulnerable, cruciform God made known in the person of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity relies upon the formulation of the asymmetrical,<sup>39</sup> bi-polar, relational unity of divine-human interaction, as it unfolds within the lived world, dependent upon an unavoidable yet trustworthy supposition that the Spirit is already at work. This formulation then guides the continuing christo-pneumatological inquiry in the person and ecclesial community of the researcher, reliant upon the centrality of resurrection proclamation and coherence of resurrection knowledge.<sup>40</sup> The christo-pneumatological phenomenology that marks this action-sensitive CM offers a systematic and intersubjective approach to lived experience, things-in-themselves within the divine-human field of interaction.

Max van Manen spells out six research activities held in a dynamic interplay, appropriate to the aforementioned christo-pneumatological phenomenology and aimed toward a concrete yet open-ended, action-sensitive tact within particular situations. The activities include:

- (1) Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world,
- (2) Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it,
- (3) Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon,
- (4) Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting,
- (5) Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon, and
- (6) Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> The use of *asymmetrical* in the tradition of Karl Barth names the non-hierarchical order, based upon the qualitative distinction between divine and human. The divine is not hierarchically primary, but qualitatively distinct. And yet, by divine choice, intimate beyond conceptual formulation.

<sup>40</sup> See W. Stephen Gunter, *Resurrection Knowledge: Recovering the Gospel for a Postmodern Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), especially Chapter Four.

<sup>41</sup> van Manen, 30.

The first portion of CM in action is the recognition that the intersubjective nature of the research involves a being-given-over to some quest or task. In van Manen's words, "Every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern. ... This commitment...is the practice of thoughtfulness, of a fullness of thinking. ... a being-given-over to some quest, a true task, a deep questioning of something that restores an original sense of what it means to be a thinker, a research, a theorist."<sup>42</sup> This commitment also requires the suspension of a habituated or natural attitude, a re-learning to look at the world by re-awakening the basic experience of the world. Phenomenologists have often referred to this as a "becoming full of the world, full of lived experience," a "wisdom of the practice of living which results from having lived life deeply."<sup>43</sup> The third research task is to delve into the essential themes or characteristics of a lived experience, not for the particularity felt or perceived but for the "thoughtful, reflective grasping of what it is that renders this or that particular experience its special significance."<sup>44</sup> What is it that constitutes the significance of this lived experience?

Such phenomenological research is also funded by the art of writing and rewriting about the lived experience over time. As language and thinking are intimately intertwined, this practiced writing and rewriting embodies the application of language and thinking to a phenomenon, to an aspect of lived experience that shows itself precisely as it will show itself. This extended research activity also insures a methodical character to any implausible conclusions, increasingly apparent over time. Fifth, and contrary to popular conceptions of theological criticism, such christo-pneumatological phenomenology is intensely demanding, requiring qualitative research, exponentially more difficult because

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

of the inclusive and interactive divine-human theory. Presupposition of divine agency does not make such research easier, as supposed by God-in-the-gaps arguments or ontotheological discourse, but actually more difficult in the audacious and humility-causing statements in the face of mystery. Such a phenomenological approach requires the maintenance of a strong and oriented relation to the certain question, phenomenon, or notion about which disinterestedness cannot be sustained. Lastly, a persistent and continual balance between parts and the whole, within the research, must be achieved, in order to offer both a faithful attentiveness to the experience and a contribution to knowledge beyond that experience.

While much, much more could be said about this phenomenological method within van Manen's interest of teaching/learning pedagogy, and our exploration of it within CM interdisciplinarity, the end of this research is to reintegrate part and whole, the contingent and the essential, value and desire, such that we may know further how to act tactfully in situations of religious leadership on the basis of a carefully edified thoughtfulness. The contemporary importance and relevance of this theological interdisciplinarity comes into greater focus when brought into a mutually illuminating conversation with a contemporary theological conversation partner, or Radical Orthodoxy (RO).

### **Radical Orthodoxy in conversation with Chalcedonian Method**

My affinity with RO sensibility emerges with its highlight of "a metaphysical vision," "a methodological approach" and a "constructive task,"<sup>45</sup> particularly as interpreted within the gathering conversations of contemporary Reformed theologians; the implicit disconnection between such theological innovation and its life of discipleship, however, suggests a divergence

---

<sup>45</sup> Catherine Pickstock, "Radical Orthodoxy and the Mediations of Time," *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*, 63.

between RO and CM for constructive, practical theological work. After a brief summary of RO themes, well familiar to that strand of contemporary theology, a conversation between CM interdisciplinarity and RO will show each as a contemporary of the other, if with mutually illuminating and ultimately divergent differences.

### *Radical Orthodoxy*

A recent introduction to radical orthodoxy identifies some of its major themes as well as some areas for future contribution. RO resists the media-driven impulse for simplistic summary. It is neither a movement nor school, nor is it a return to any mythical golden era of Christian speculation. In short, RO is a trans-confessional, ecumenical program that is unafraid to speak of boundaries for clear and critical discourse, but not at all in a manner that seeks to establish a narrow orthodoxy. It is a concrete proposal, a search to rethink tradition as the very condition for theological reflection, a loose tendency or certain theological sensibility shared by several contemporary theologians. James K.A. Smith focuses his summary with one RO thinker's words, "Employing the tools of critical reflexivity honed by continental thinking, taking on board the full implications of what has been termed the linguistic turn, Radical Orthodoxy reads the contemporary world through the Christian tradition, weaving it into the narrative of that tradition."<sup>46</sup> Smith offers a heuristic summary of RO as a symphony with five movements, a beginning schematic for promising acoustics within renewed practical theological perspective.

Reliant upon a governing musical metaphor, RO's major themes are as follows: a critique of modernity and liberalism; post-secularity; participation and materiality; sacramentality, liturgy, and aesthetics; and cultural

---

<sup>46</sup> Graham Ward, "Radical Orthodoxy and/as Cultural Politics," in *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*, 106, cited in Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 67-8.



critique and transformation. A brief listening to each is offered here to en flesh what is to come. RO considers modernity to be “a flawed, imploding project,” reliant upon the institution of dualisms and exclusive of the divine and transcendent, such that what was eschewed—the prejudice of prejudice—is simply recreated and intensified into nothingness. In this view, modernity and liberalism operate with confessional commitment to autonomy and rights. Secondly, RO questions the notion of secular reason, thereby dispelling the distinction between sacred and secular, and circumventing modernity’s assumptions. In Smith’s project, RO offers a road to post-secularity by challenging “*the* orthodoxy of the academy: secularity or the belief in purportedly objective accounts of human life untainted by faith perspectives.”<sup>47</sup> Smith also notes that these two epistemologically oriented themes rest in and grow out of “an ontological commitment to participation as the only proper metaphysical model for understanding creation, the Creator/creation relation in particular.”<sup>48</sup>

The third theme within this heuristic RO symphony, arguably “the crescendo,”<sup>49</sup> is this participation and materiality. In contrast to postmodern ontology, a materialism that leads to nihilism or flat-lined immanence, RO argues for a participatory ontology “in which the immanent and material is suspended from the transcendent and immaterial.” Participation (*methexis*) names the integrity of created reality without a modern partitioning or phenomenological bracketing in order to get “a real look” at it while simultaneously dissecting its reality. From the original RO introduction: “Participation...refuses any reserve of created territory, while allowing finite things their own integrity. Underpinning the present essays within Radical Orthodoxy, therefore, is the idea that every discipline

---

<sup>47</sup> Smith. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*. 74.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. He notes Ward’s summary here too, Ward, “In the Economy of the Divine,” 118.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

must be framed by a theological perspective; otherwise these disciplines will define a zone apart from God, grounded literally in nothing.”<sup>50</sup> In contrast to the fragmenting impulses in much of modern theology and philosophy, RO establishes a unified epistemological, ontological program reliant upon insight, revelation, and participation. Additionally, the crucial role of transcendence in this suspended materialism informs the entire pedagogical project here, all of which will become apparent below.

The fourth and fifth themes within RO deepen the epistemological and ontological commitments in the lived world while urging them forward toward “this world” transformed in the power of the Spirit. A result of the previous three themes can be found in a “renewed appreciation for the liturgical or doxological character of creation and the role that liturgy plays in leading us to the divine.”<sup>51</sup> This shows up in the emphases upon sacramentality, liturgy, and aesthetics inherent to a participatory materialism that is both linguistic and experiential. In this guise, liturgy becomes the sole space for language, meaning, and aesthetics. Much more follows below regarding this audacious claim, even with its compelling vision. The final theme noted by Smith in the RO program is its qualification of the church as cultural critique and transformation not of itself but of the world and all within it. “Given its incarnational account of God’s revelation in the world, building on the participatory account of the relationship between creation and Creator, RO emphasizes both God’s revelation of himself in the material world...and God’s concern for the redemption and transformation of this world (socially, politically, and economically).”<sup>52</sup> Here we do not fit

---

<sup>50</sup> John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, “Suspending the Material: the Turn of Radical Orthodoxy,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: a New Theology*. (London: Routledge, 1999, 3).

<sup>51</sup> Smith, 77. See primarily Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*, 79.

within the familiar church/world dichotomy whereby we have to integrate our way toward public space. Here we are involved in a “reading of the signs of the times” such that doing theology, being theological, participates in the redemption of culture, *poiesis*, itself. The church’s politics *is* its ecclesiology, expressed not as sacred/secular but as mutual transformation in encounter with the Gospel that is probably offensive to both.

### *RO Converses with CM*

The two strands of theological perspective show a gathering consensus about the constitutive role of relationality—embodied and funded by desire—and remarkably creative but different strategies to address contemporary challenges within *and beyond* critical theological scholarship into the world, transformed and transforming. Both strands of critical scholarship confront the problematic of theological method or critical theological contribution in the face of (post)modernity by means of a constructive approach that prioritizes the theological, loosely understood. Comprehensively epistemological and ontological impulses fund both approaches toward an integrated, unified and orthodox redress of *public* or *culturally identified* problematics. Both are ultimately interested in transformation of “the world” both as it is materially now and as it will be in its “not-yet” form whose *telos* is in discipleship with and worship of God. Both illustrate the characteristics of ‘radical’ and ‘orthodox,’ in the sense of ‘return to roots’ within received theological traditions, and in the sense of ‘theological confession’ amidst competing cultural forces. Both find their living theological center in worship. Both have emerged from specifically confessional theological communities, albeit with some obvious distinctions. Both rely on a logic with a specifically indeterminate character: RO accomplishes this with an argument against a modern logic of determinism and for a suspended materialism that protects reality while preserving its (transcendent) indeterminacy; Chalcedonian method achieves this with

its logic of complementarity which maintains a dialectic while held within a relational unity in paradoxical perception (Möbius band). Finally, both strands of critical scholarship rely upon an integrated epistemological-ontological participation in the material world—RO with participation, CM with incarnation. In these brief ways, RO and Chalcedonian method are clear contemporaries with a mutually identified problematic and an integrally theological response.

One specific resonance deserves a little more precise attention. Both John Milbank and James Loder address the latent, potentially (ironically) constructive role nihilism plays within (post)modern thought, and each develops the role that theology plays in a negation of negation. Milbank places this observation within the post-Kantian and post-Hegelian hypostasizing of the negative and tragic, arguing instead for a mediating theological turn against nihilism, with such a turn shared between RO and the French Catholic phenomenologists-cum-theologians like Jean-Luc Marion, and such mediation reserved as a distinctly RO impulse.<sup>53</sup> The integrated epistemological-ontological frame within which Loder's logic of the Spirit manifests itself relies upon a notion of the void, the contradictory presence of an absence that is nothingness, articulated within the postmodern (or latently modern) nihilism within Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, and others. Loder's theological turn that constitutes this negation of negation emerges in his interdisciplinary respect of the specific disciplines themselves. His method honors the inevitably irreconcilable differences between disciplinary concepts and cognate forms, not to mention the negation of Divine reality present within Enlightenment epistemology or ontotheology, and employs the negation of negation as vehicle to honor alterity while witnessing to divine

---

<sup>53</sup> John Milbank, "The Programme of Radical Orthodoxy," *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*. 41-44.

primacy.<sup>54</sup> RO and Chalcedonian interdisciplinary offer a compellingly constructive role for nihilism and a so-called theological turn that is the only possible materialism.

The differences between RO and Chalcedonian method make their collaboration mutually illuminating and critically refined. The origins of their arguments differ in approach and expression. RO diffuses and ultimately dissolves the so-called modern project by hacking at its root in secular reason. Observing that the Enlightenment impulse or systematic rebuttal of prejudice against prejudice actually intensifies and recreates fideistic commitment to secular reason, RO confronts the notion of secular reason itself, and thereby dissolves the distinctions between sacred and secular. Without a universal and supposedly neutral fount of reason, the space is cleared to constructively engage public phenomena with critical reflexivity and resourced theological precision, and without unending methodological prolegomena justifying theological contributions. In contrast, Chalcedonian method operates within scientific reason—albeit with a clear preference for truly scientific reason within realms of discovery and wonder; (i.e., Michael Polanyi’s “personal knowledge”<sup>55</sup>), instead of technological reason mired in productive and capitalistic rationale. One need not eliminate the notion of secular reason in order to find its self-reflexive inconsistencies whereby the constructive contribution of the observer enters in; one only need look to Kierkegaard, Gödel, Bohr, and Piaget within the logic of complementarity to find an observable yet paradoxical critical realism in which the indeterminate freedom of the Spirit finds expression within and transforms the material. The specificities of the arguments may be

---

<sup>54</sup> This honoring of alterity further solidifies Loder’s intent for determinative relationality as the central origin of his work, over and against the systematic theological formulations of problem, question why?, and argumentation critiqued above, within “Normativity and Context in Practical Theology: “The Interdisciplinary Issue,” 259-260.

<sup>55</sup> See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1962).

explored further, but the point here is simply the contrast of approaches toward similarly constructive, primarily theological gains. Chalcedonian method offers RO a complementary if distinct ally in discussions of rationality, as it broaches a similar problematic in a different but resonant way from *within* the logic or critical realism of the physical sciences themselves.

The *comprehensive* nature of contributions by RO and Chalcedonian method also differs in ultimately fruitful fashion. RO emerged from a context in which continental thought and consideration of the linguistic turn were crucial for its articulation and continuing formulation. Cambridge (or now Nottingham) is much closer to Tübingen and “the Continent” than are Princeton or New York, from which Chalcedonian method emerges.<sup>56</sup> This means RO embodies a distinctly hermeneutical flavor, reliant upon philosophical considerations of language and its comprehensively defining characteristics for humankind. Chalcedonian method, on the other hand, argues a comprehensive approach to divine-human agency based within an ordered interdisciplinarity and theoretical articulation of a neo-Parsonian field of human action. Convinced that hermeneutical approaches are necessarily too restricted in scope—be they theories of rationality or sustained treatments of practical reason—Chalcedonian method relies upon a field of human action, operative by means of the dynamics in socialization-transformation whereby Divine-human agency occurs within the logic of complementarity and continuing indeterminacy. The gathering consensus within RO may offer a growing community in which hermeneutical and Chalcedonian method, a renewed and otherwise interdisciplinary strand of theological reflection, may come together in fruitful contribution. RO offers Chalcedonian method a savvy and refined

---

<sup>56</sup> See also Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: an Interdisciplinary Approach*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). van Deusen Hunsinger’s work originated within graduate work at Union Theological Seminary, New York, NY.

appropriation of the linguistic turn or hermeneutical/contemporary Continental thought and Chalcedonian method offers RO a fresh avenue beyond the naming games within modern-postmodern philosophical debates.

While both rely upon a notion of participation, each offers its own doctrinal language within a Trinitarian commitment. The Reformed engagement of RO represented within the work of James K.A. Smith operates within a governing theme of incarnation, engaging materialism in a yet suspended and indeterminate form.<sup>57</sup> Chalcedonian method relies upon primarily pneumatological language, attempting to reclaim a doctrinal focus on the role of the Holy Spirit within clearly Trinitarian, Christian theological commitments. Each paves the way for a concrete engagement with (and continuing redemption of) the material world by God, and both share ultimately Trinitarian impulses; yet primacy of foci differs between them, all the same. The role of the church in this participation also varies in explicit redress, even if the outward, transformative impulse is the same. RO names the church *as* cultural critique. Chalcedonian method identifies an ecclesial dimension to practical theology, of which the living center is worship formed by liturgies of Word and Sacrament. As such, CM offers the implicit logic of complementarity and concrete learning tasks that structure this lived intimacy within the life of a faith community. RO offers a contemporary and classically theological ontology of participation in which these tasks may find new expression in a diverse, ecumenically oriented theological program. In conclusion, RO and Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity share an avowedly theological orientation, though RO has its Anglo-Catholic roots and CM arises from a stronghold of Reformed heritage, Presbyterian (USA) style.

---

<sup>57</sup> See James K.A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the Logic of Incarnation*. Radical Orthodoxy series (New York: Routledge, 2002), though this is by no means only his orientation.

Compelling and constructive critique has begun in order to challenge and refine the theological contributions RO has made, and continues to make, to theologically coherent and potentially transformative action within (post)modernity today.<sup>58</sup> Drama and interest have waxed and waned, only to wax again regarding the pugnacious style of RO thinkers' discourse<sup>59</sup> and the manner in which participatory ontology may yet inform epistemological endeavors within a variety of theological disciplinary discourses. Speaking as a practical theologian, and one quite appreciative of the flexibility and freedom within the loose alliance of contributors' works: RO's interests rarely step foot within church or faith-life recognizable within practical theological discourse intent upon the muck-and-mire of lived experience and apparently irresolvable conflicts within ideological and polarized congregations and communities that I know today. Even a most supportive and collaborative conversation partner upon whose work I have relied, James K.A. Smith, acknowledges the need for constructive attention within RO to "acoustics" and "going to church."<sup>60</sup> RO contributes to the refinement of Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity, and its exercise within a christo-pneumatological phenomenology, but for the complexity of lived experience within contextually-specific settings, it falls short of the integrated church-life which is its *ecclesiology-politics-witness*, all in one. CM alone will not fill such an idealistic proposition, either, but it does focus a method and a phenomenological inquiry into the lived experience and interdisciplinary resources

---

<sup>58</sup> See especially Rosemary Radford Ruether and Marion Grau, eds., *Interpreting the Postmodern: Responses to "Radical Orthodoxy"*. (New York: T & T Clark, 2006), a compilation that offers good counter-proposals.

<sup>59</sup> Description is attributed to Nicholas Lash, "Where Does Holy Teaching Leave Philosophy? Questions on Milbank's Aquinas," *Modern Theology* (Oct 1999) 15, no. 4, 433, cited by Laurence Paul Hemming, "Introduction: Radical Orthodoxy's Appeal to Catholic Scholarship," in *Radical Orthodoxy? A Catholic Enquiry*. ed. Laurence Paul Hemming (Burlington: Ashgate, 2000), 3. I have not been an eye-witness to such debate, myself.

<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy*. 261ff.



necessary to articulate and implement an action-sensitive pedagogy, or in this case, leadership praxis.

### **Chalcedonian Interdisciplinarity at the Intersections**

A theological interdisciplinarity such as CM finds its preliminary engagement within religious leadership studies in conversation with the recent work of Russell W. West and John Stoekle. In “Theorizing Religiously-Based Organizational Leadership: Mapping the Intersections,” they address the absence of a canon for the teaching and research of religious organizational leadership, and offer an extensive analysis of the status of theorizing and the prospects of disciplinary growth and coherence. Although I am skeptical of an approach to religious leadership scholarship reliant upon the traditional disciplinary notion of a canon, I do argue that a Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity will clarify the unavoidable, interdisciplinary issue within burgeoning leadership studies, and will do so in a manner coherently and originally theological. In collaboration with West and Stoekle, I argue that CM offers a suitable if partial remedy to the *absence* of theological conceptualization within religious leadership studies, to the *ambiguity* identified within existing, representative scholarship, and to the need for interdisciplinary proposals toward a *critical appreciation* of religious-based, organizational leadership scholarship.

West and Stoekle note the relative absence of theorizing within leadership studies offered by leaders in religiously-based organizations,<sup>61</sup> and CM offers an arguable Spirit-spirit theoretical formulation through which both evangelically Christian and non-confessional Christian scholars may articulate their work, *theologically*. In the *absentia* of such theorizing from religiously-based organizational leadership, CM responds to an implicit warrant for such scholarship, and offers a constructive response to the (perhaps unintentional) dualism that challenges with “bottom-line” and “religious factor”

---

<sup>61</sup> West and Stoekle, 156-159.

dichotomies. Profession (or gift) of religious faith is not required in order to have the bi-polar-relational-unity feel attractive as a logic for holding disparate convictions together and seeking for critical contribution within the persons within the scholarship. In this sense, in contrast to West and Stoekle's tongue-in-cheek reference about either God or the Devil in the details, God does not have to be named in the phenomenon explicitly, for he is already in the formulation of perspective and the desire engaged for sustained relationship of perspectives that honors the alterity of disagreement.

The ambiguity of scholarship within organizational leadership studies also offers the challenge of obscurity—or profundity<sup>62</sup> (within *either* Continental philosophical prose so popular within ontotheology or negative theologies within (post)modernity, *or* within dogmatic propositions of evangelical, fundamentalist, liberal, or liberationist, or...theologies that appear to originate within metaphysical or unreal cosmologies). While I certainly do not profess particular profundity in what has been given here, there *is* a manner in which CM honors the sense-making character of the person of the researcher, in impassioned pursuit of some phenomenon in critical evaluation and understanding. CM begins from the implicit constructs with which we all operate, and without dissecting reason into sacred/secular dualisms, brings an impassioned reason to the phenomenality of what is, itself. CM operates with a definitive epistemological interest, enacted with the ontologically-oriented, relational force of desire.

Additionally, the appropriation of critical perspective is not naïve to non-theological agendas, but is encouraged to explore what contributions such non-theological perspective has to offer our collaborative understanding of the phenomenon examined. And finally, the focus of Chalcedonian interdisciplinarity cannot be subsumed within “self-actualization” or some transcendent ineffability. Its invitation, its goad, and its

---

<sup>62</sup> West and Stoekle, 159-160.

result are primarily *relationally* constitutive and offered within an ultimate context of worship. What else should critical scholarship for the research and teaching of leadership within religiously-based organizations address, if not the gift of relationship to the other, within God's gift of relationship to *all* of us?

## Conclusion

West and Stoekle do indeed offer scholar-practitioners of religious leadership a bridge between widely interdisciplinary resources on leadership and organizations intent upon teaching/learning that is transcendentive, transformative, and redemptive in leadership and mission. Within the naming of absence, and the description of ambiguity that encourages a phenomenological turn,<sup>63</sup> we are invited into stewardship of cultural spaces, moments, "the cultural garden"<sup>64</sup> in which questions of religious import are ever-present within organizations professedly religious or not. The various intersections they name—identity, involvement, and ecological—chart a path through variously relational space, whether that is conceived in interpersonal or over-archingly, systemic, environmental terms. The question with which I conclude, and with which I hope to evoke engagement toward deeper and deeper intelligibility in the unfolding conversation and writing: Is disciplinary coherence to be found within a *canonical* approach to young field(s) of religious leadership scholarship and teaching, or is there untapped promise within a primarily *methodological* one, reliant upon and obviously informed by the recent canonical approach?

Contextually-oriented disciplines, intent upon the ever-unfolding complexities of rapid cultural and global change, stumble when reliant upon previously configured media and critical scholarship practices. How do we

---

<sup>63</sup> They *also* name the copious buildup of research and the focal point of 'sense-making' that requires deeper and deeper epistemic awareness. West and Stoekle, esp. 160-61.

<sup>64</sup> West and Stoekle, 190.

define what is religious about religious leadership studies amidst such rapidly changing languages and conceptualizations? Practical theology as a constructive, critical-correlational discipline, has wrestled with this question throughout the last several decades, and I am newly convinced that such *methodological* inquiry has ripened a harvest for the taking. Contextuality requires a primary and determinative relationality: the recognition that relationship comes before conceptualization and that divine agency must be posited as real if conceptually indeterminate in a completely absolute sense. Such determinative relationality subverts and grows new forms of divine-human action at the intersections of lived experience, rigorously observed and comprehensively evoked in a christo-pneumatological phenomenology in movements of *reductio* and *vocatio*. Theological coherence and religious identity are formed within such method, not only by the conceptual formulations suggestive of a canonical history, but within an orthodox, theological interdisciplinarity given shape within the Chalcedonian logic. Can theological method become our canon?

A concluding image, which some may recognize: A recent, collegial gathering of religious-leadership scholar-practitioners (namely, The Academy of Religious Leadership<sup>65</sup>) engaged in critical discourse about the formation of a canon. One portion of those gathered engaged the question of “what’s missing” from our preliminary discourse about such a canon. Focus began with the slated topic of discussion before growing to the various intersections of worldviews lived within the concrete context of the gathering itself—made of leaders, followers, and scholar-practitioners of leadership. The governing metaphor within the critical reflections became musical: what are the constitutive melodies, and how may diverse tunes be brought into the complex harmonies offered by *all* who desire to participate in the music? In one sense that oversimplifies, do we trust the music or do

---

<sup>65</sup> [www.arl-jrl.org](http://www.arl-jrl.org)

we trust our instruments? The preliminary recognition was that there was no problem to be solved except those we conceptualized, or were formed to conceive, within traditional models of scholarship and systemic dynamics. The concluding wisdom of the group was *to trust the music*, to engage the larger conversation and, for each, simply *to play*. A christo-pneumatological phenomenology, a return to researching lived experience toward an action-sensitive theory within which divine-human interaction unfolds as our trust in Spirit allows, offers an orthodox theological and interdisciplinary method for such diverse harmonies to come.