

## Futurology 5

### Jurgen Moltmann, Cynthia Bourgeault, and Stories of Hope

By now my strategy in these early essays should be evident. The broad aim is to initiate functional collaboration. In the first six essays I take a particular topic, End Times, called in classical Catholic theology *de Novissimis*, and in more recent times *Eschatology*. I moved into that topic by musing on particular entries into it through functional research. The second and third essays were intended to reveal aspects of the Standard Model that needed to be present with some degree of luminosity in the FS<sub>1</sub> person if we are to stumble towards a beginning of “cumulative and progressive results.”<sup>1</sup> Those aspects can be identified as belonging to the general categories. In the previous essay we ventured into the works of Thomas Aquinas in a rambling fashion in order to move our considerations towards special Christian categories that had best be present in the researching subject if we are to push forward into cyclic collaboration. Here I push a little further, but in a manner which cannot but be seen as shabby.<sup>2</sup>

I mention two authors in my title and I am thinking here only of one work of each author: Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope*<sup>3</sup> and Bourgeault’s *The Holy Trinity and the Law of Three*.<sup>4</sup> But I am thus thinking in categories that I have laboriously and stumblingly developed in the past six decades. There is certainly no point in getting into that stumbling here, but at least the mention of it might be both helpful and encouraging. But one bit of my stumbling seems to me to be more precisely helpful here. That stumbling was with a third author who weaved around the same topic<sup>5</sup> in a single book—Frederick Crowe in *Theology of the Christian Word: A Study in History*.<sup>6</sup> My stumbling there was a prolonged and focused stumbling.<sup>7</sup> First, the focus

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<sup>1</sup> *Method in Theology*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> My original view of this essay was way too ambitious. Copious notes on Moltmann and Bourgeault were to have led to related pointers about functional research. Then there was to have been a second part with hints of their place in the massive geohistorical heuristic that would hold together the story of the stories of hope. That second part was eventually — and, of course, wisely! — postponed till the final essay of this group, *Futurology 7*, “Time and Eternity.” Following that essay the focus is to shift to helpful reachings — based on dialogue with potential participants — towards the transition envisaged for the Vancouver Conference of 2014.

<sup>3</sup> See note 14 in *Futurology 1*, “Suggestions About Heavenly Genitals.”

<sup>4</sup> With subtitle *Discovering the Radical Truth at the Heart of Christianity*, Shambhala Press, 2013 (hereafter *The Holy Trinity*).

<sup>5</sup> Weaving towards a fuller Trinitarian meaning of history.

<sup>6</sup> Paulist Press, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> My first writing on the problem with Crowe’s book, which I had been musing over for 25 years, was in *Cantower 38*, “Functional History” (available at: <http://www.philipmchane.ca/cantower38.pdf>), where I was still struggling with the book’s place in the way forward. I returned to it in the concluding essays of the *Humus* series, where there was the leap to see its place as messy research. *Humus 8*, “Crowe’s Theology of the Christian Word”; *Humus 9*, “Fred Crowe and Ourselves as Researchers”; *Humus 10*, “Fr. Crowe’s ‘The Christian Message Begins’”; *Humus 11*, “The Word of God as Truth”; *Humus 12*, “Crowe: Possibilities of

was methodological: what was Fred at? Secondly, the stumbling was a matter of revisiting the book, sifting its context differently each time, but always with that same question: **What is he at?** I bold-face that question as an afterthought now because it is the key to what I am at here, and to what I do in relation to each of my two selected authors: **what is (s)he at?**

I look now at my elaborate notes on Moltmann and see the impossibility of doing justice to the stuff lurking in his book. But then I recall my much longer musings over Crowe's book and realize that I am able to do little more than what Fr. Boyer did for Lonergan: indeed, here, much less.<sup>8</sup> The reference to Boyer, now quite familiar to you, is significant. If you follow up my messy journeying in Crowe's book you will find that the slim conclusion I came to was about, round and about, identifying Crowe's book, magnificently suggestive as it is, as really just messy functional research. But the thing about Crowe, as opposed to the other two, was that I knew extremely well his general position, and features of his position and his protopossession.<sup>9</sup> We could—and indeed casually did—putter randomly down through page 250 of *Method in Theology*—or its equivalent in chapters 8, 9 and 10 of *Futurology Express*—and agreed to differ or agree.

But there was a key agreement that put us in the same fundamental ballpark and I would note, as I begin to talk of Moltmann and Bourgeault, that

we are not discussing a merely technical point in philosophy. Empiricism, idealism, and realism name three totally different horizons with no common identical objects. An idealist never means what an empiricist means, and a realist never means what either of them means.<sup>10</sup>

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Methodological Collaboration" (the *Humus* series is available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/humus.html>). More refinements occurred in later *Posthumous* essays but the topic is too complex for a note.

<sup>8</sup> In *Futurology* 9, "The Resurrection of God," I will have more to say about Moltmann's Part Two: "The Resurrection and the Future of Jesus Christ," winding into my reflections considerations of the topic resurrection in the Cynthia Bourgeault book and in the book referred to in *Futurology* 3 "Pannenberg, Space, Time, and Eternity." Into that context I wish also to bring the third volume of N.T. Wright's New Testament work, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Fortress Press, 2003. At that stage, we should have a much better grip on the problem of the recycling of such writings as we find in abundance in the past century. The dominant question in this series is, "How much of it gets into functional research?"

<sup>9</sup> For the meanings of *poisition* and *protopossession*, see *Cantower* 9, "Position, Poisition, Protopossession" (at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower9.pdf>), and the refinements added in *Posthumous* 8, "My Story, His Story, Position" and *Posthumous* 9, "Poisition, Comparison, Finite Processions" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous.html>).

<sup>10</sup> *Method in Theology*, 239. I was tempted to quote the whole powerful paragraph, but it is there, waiting not only to be digested but to be slowly swung into the psyche of those serious about tower collaboration. We are here back at the heart of the message of a unified front in cyclic collaboration, and of my new view on name-dropping to which I come shortly in the text.

Crowe and I shared that mad position that Lonergan names *realism*, and we shared it luminously and articulately. A flash of inspiration while working on these essays led me now to the convenience of calling the view *surrealism*.<sup>11</sup> I regularly called it *extreme realism*, not only because of its extreme oddness and its “startling strangeness,”<sup>12</sup> but because it fitted in so nicely with a line-up identified by Lonergan.

There are two quite different realisms. There is an incoherent realism, half animal and half human, that poses as a halfway house between materialism and idealism, and on the other hand there is an intelligent and reasonable realism between which and realism the halfway house is idealism.<sup>13</sup>

Moltmann is in that fuzzy halfway zone, made fuzzier because of a sedate truncatedness. What, then, am I to say, after all my detailed note-taking, about his book, about **what is he at??** When struggling with Crowe I turned out a few essays that, really—or surreally—were only geared to help the reader to glimpse what I had glimpsed: that the book is to be weaved into functional research.<sup>14</sup> He was doing on a grand scale what Boyer did for Lonergan: pointing to something worth attending to. “When you have a mountain to move, and only a spade and a wheelbarrow to work with, you can either sit on your hands or you can put spade to earth and move the first sod.”<sup>15</sup> Crowe’s pointing is surrealistic. What, then, am I to do with the realist pointings of Moltmann? “There aim is to show how theology can set out from hope and begin to consider its theme on an eschatological light.”<sup>16</sup> Do not our aims overlap?

Not according to Lonergan’s suggestion of *Method in Theology* 239. In Crowe there are magnificently suggestive positional pointers that are to be rescued in functional research and cycled towards town and gown. In Moltmann the pointers are caught up in realist obscurity. Consider the two following pieces that both complement each other, and also fit in with my interest in identifying authors’ reachings for general and special categories:

[1] “From the depths of his creative unfathomableness man must ever again seek and find himself, ever again form and determine himself, and it is this

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<sup>11</sup> For my move to using the name *surrealism*, see *Futurology* 2, “Out of Body Experiences,” at notes 11 and 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Insight*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, the text is slightly modified above.

<sup>14</sup> See note 7 above. It is much easier to identify that in Crowe’s later project: *Christ in History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982*, Novalis, St. Paul University Ottawa, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> *Theology of the Christian Word*, 149. I would note the gallant and more luminous continuation of the effort in Crowe’s last work, a work heading into functional research.

<sup>16</sup> *Theology of Hope*, 11.

that constitutes the common core of similarity which makes historical understanding possible and also necessary.”<sup>17</sup>

[2] “The self which here emerges, however, becomes the ‘pure receiving’ of the transcendent and the divine.<sup>18</sup> The modern metaphysics of subjectivity with its consequences in the secularization of the world must be represented as a consequence of Christian faith, and Christian faith must be represented as the truth behind this metaphysics of subjectivity.”

Could you not read these two statements with me and applaud the nudges towards general categories in [1]—even find a sniff of cycling and recycling—and a view of the absolute supernatural in [2] that edges to the fringe the “marginal thesis”<sup>19</sup> regarding a natural story of human subjectivity? Yet Moltmann and I are not talking at all about the same nature and supernature, history<sup>20</sup> and subjectivity.

**What is he at??** Getting at it, at him, is a much more massive task for functional research than working the question with Crowe. And when the functional research is eventually done Moltmann’s name may well be dropped, in my odd sense of that dropping.<sup>21</sup> That odd sense is illustrated for us immediately by attending to his footnote in [2]. If the distinction that he mentions there from Gogarten is not only not overlooked by him, but even positionally reversed—a lot of work for Moltmann and his followers—then, instead of dropping Gogarten’s name he can indeed drop it, helping theology to rise above a listing among “academic disciplines.”<sup>22</sup>

Cynthia Bourgeault’s work is in another world from that of Moltmann. It is recent, written fifty years later than Moltmann; the same span that I take into account in *Futurology* 6.<sup>23</sup> It is not focused, as was Moltmann on eschatology, yet it weaves into our title topic of stories of hope. Again, while Moltmann represents an older type of scholarship that can be associated with

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-7.

<sup>18</sup> [Best put in his footnote here:] F. Gogarten, *Der Mensch zwischen Gott und Welt*, 1952, pp. 181ff. ‘*Die Personalität. Christlicher Glaube als Reflexion*’, esp. pp. 187 ff. Here the distinction which Gogarten makes between idealist subjectivity and the personal character of faith must not be overlooked.

<sup>19</sup> “The natural desire to see God,” Lonergan, *Collection*, University of Toronto Press, 1988, *CWL* 4, 90.

<sup>20</sup> This in itself would be a complex of functional research topics, far too large to detail here. It would fall into the context of a functional research enterprise into the two problematic chapters on history, 8 and 9, in *Method in Theology*.

<sup>21</sup> This is a central question that relates to the lift from being an academic discipline. The names dropped in the book – there is a four-page index of them – are to be sifted out through cycles into a smaller list of what may be called identifying names, as in physics: Maxwell’s equations, Feynman diagrams.

<sup>22</sup> *Method in Theology*, 3, the final words.

<sup>23</sup> The question of the next essay: What happened to Lonergan’s most profound discovery of 1965 in the years since?

the first phase of the specialties, Bourgeault fits more into the patterns that are to emerge in the second phase, and indeed I might consider her work as belonging to what I call “C<sub>9</sub>,” what eventually is to be an output from the cycling through to FS<sub>8</sub>. What, then, is to be said of Bourgeault’s book in relation to functional research? A key point is that it illustrates the dynamics of cycling: the output of FS<sub>8</sub> and its effects on progress of town and gown are grist for the mill of functional research.

I note here that I selected Bourgeault’s book prior to reading it. I had enjoyed and benefited from previous writings of hers, particularly *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene* and *Love is Stronger than Death*. What, then, might she have to say regarding the “Radical Truth at the Heart of Christianity” that would benefit, that would perhaps represent “cumulative and progressive results” after fifty years?

The book turned out to be a strange adventure for me. But first note its attractiveness: “what emerged over the next couple of weeks was a breakthrough glimpse of the journey of divine love into time, through time and out of time—from Alpha to Omega, from origin to final ‘*Consummatum est*’.”<sup>24</sup> That could be regarded as “being my ‘posthumous book’.”<sup>25</sup> I had just finished in five weeks my *Futurology Express* which came as a final book after my own *Posthumous Essays*.

That Cynthia should weave her searchings and her guidance of others so firmly into the searchings of Gurdjieff distresses me, and, as with Moltmann, I see no point in adding comments from my copious notes. But the key point is that her searchings and those of the various wisdom groups call out for inclusion in our global cyclic searchings. Gurdjieff, like *Glee*, is to be weaved into our native bent to find our way, a reality of hope and loneliness that is to “play its part in leading us onwards—together!—to the Ultimate Shore.”<sup>26</sup> Bourgeault is trying to enliven dead traditions, as I am, and I might echo her view expressed late in the book:

“I have stated that there is nothing amiss in our familiar model. I repeat: *there is nothing amiss*. The ‘persons’ are correctly named and nothing needs to be amended. The only problem is that it is in a *freeze-frame*.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *The Holy Trinity*, 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Understanding Sankara: Essays by Richard De Smet*, edited by Ivo Coelho, Mtilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2013, in Coelho’s Preface, xii.

<sup>27</sup> *The Holy Trinity*, 200.

The freeze frame is, certainly, partly due to an axiomatic bent in both Aristotle and Thomas, and the break from it is “some third way ... even though it is difficult and laborious.”<sup>28</sup> It is the way that replaces all present axiomatic efforts with a totally concrete and global cyclic antifoundationalism. Its seeds cannot be found in the enneagramic efforts associated with Gurdjieff—so sadly caught also in an axiomatics,<sup>29</sup> without a drawing into the struggling selves quite beyond the meanings in the book. “It draws people in only to put in their hands basic tools for self-observation and non-identification that classic psychotherapeutic models have generally failed to deliver.”<sup>30</sup> Might Bourgeault’s wisdom followers find, through a radical existential shift, the basis of basic tools, hand holding their heads, heart-hunting? Then Cynthia’s goal and mine could coincide: “My goal is not to enforce a particular solution upon you but to invite your own spiritual imagination to engage.”<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, is not, and was not, that the goal of Lonergan? I think of the session that encouraged Bourgeault to dream on, and hope for such a session in Vancouver 2014. Might there be 35 interested in the true, surreal and esoteric Lonergan? And might there not be an effective hope, sublating thus the hope of Bourgeault’s group. “‘If thirty-five of us can get it,’ one of them said, ‘why not the whole world?’”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *Method in Theology*, 4.

<sup>29</sup> This is a massive complex topic, needing the geohistorical heuristics to which this essay points. It’s Western version has solid roots in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*, as it travels, in various cultures, through neglected subjectivity to the truncated subjectivity represented by contemporary authors such as Moltmann and Bourgeault. What are the sources of axioms, what is the form of inference? The law of three hangs around in forms as different as Hegel’s, Lonergan’s and Gurdjieff’s: what is key is keeping one’s nose in the concrete, and the concrete includes **what**.

<sup>30</sup> *The Holy Trinity*, 200.

<sup>31</sup> *The Holy Trinity*, 128.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.