

## Does a Hermeneutical Clarification of “Presence” Advance O’Collins’ Christology?

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### Abstract

The theme of “presence” holds an ambivalent place in Gerald O’Collins’ *Christology*. On the one hand the theme is O’Collins’ “most creative contribution to contemporary Christology” and on the other hand the notion itself is a difficult and stubborn concept that can be best understood in an evolutionary way. This deeper analysis of “presence,” which is not offered by O’Collins, occupies a center stage in Bernard Lonergan’s Christology. This essay mediates O’Collins’ account of “presence” with Lonergan’s evolutionary understanding of the term—a scientific theological account Lonergan worked out in dialogue with phenomenology and the sciences. The paper argues that such a mediation is necessitated by the fact that the meaning of “presence” is key to understanding the Chalcedonian definition of the union of the two natures of Christ, an important Christian dogmatic teaching that both O’Collins and Lonergan consider sacrosanct, and that a clarification of this meaning advances not only Christian understanding of Christ’s presence in history, but also Christ’s presence in non-Christian religions.

In the last two decades Gerald O’Collins has written massively, producing a comprehensive, and to his credit, a lucid and innovative treatises that cannot be ignored in contemporary study of Christology.<sup>1</sup> His 1995 work *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic*

<sup>1</sup> Gerald O’Collins has written many other brilliant works that introduce readers to Jesus, Christianity, and Catholicism and with special attention to the resurrection. See Gerald O’Collins, *Easter Faith: Believing in the Risen Jesus* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2004); *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); *Salvation for All: God’s Other Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); *Jesus: A Portrait* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); *Believing in the Resurrection: The Meaning and Promise of the Risen Jesus* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2012); *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); *Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2014); *Christology: Origins, Developments, Debates* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

*Study of Jesus* (revised and updated in 2013),<sup>2</sup> attempts a comprehensive study of Jesus, as the title suggests, with particular attention to history, Jewish-Christian Scriptures, and systematic theology. Its uniqueness is not merely because it covers a wide range of issues on Jesus, but because of the creative way it stresses the resurrection as the hermeneutical key for unlocking the Jesus message.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the revised and expanded version “functions somewhat as a summary discussion” of O’Collins’ entire work in Christology.<sup>4</sup>

This essay focuses on a key notion in this brilliant and much discussed work that needs more elucidation – the notion of “presence.”<sup>5</sup> The term “presence,” like “absence,” is a difficult and self-referential concept describing a state of being. O’Collins takes up this important concept in the concluding chapter of *Christology*, under the title “The Possibilities of Presence.” Although only explicitly discussed in the

<sup>2</sup> See Gerald O’Collins, S.J., *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). In this revised and expanded edition O’Collins modified some texts to meet the criticisms of some of the scholars who responded to the original edition. For some critical reviews of the original edition see D. Carroll in *The Furrow* (May 1996), 317-18; D. Flanagan in *Doctrine and Life* 46 (1996), 187-88; C. Heffling in *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1997), 73-76; J. Heft in *Theological Studies* 57 (1996), 547-49; J.P. Kenny in *Australasian Catholic Record* 73 (1996), 120-21; J. McIntyre in *The Expository Times* 107 (1995), 88; G. T. Montague in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 59 (1997), 168-69; and J.E. Thiel in *Religious Studies Review* 23 (1997), 46-47.

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 4 of *Christology* for an extended discussion of the revelatory and redemptive significance of the resurrection. Here O’Collins offers a cogent rebuttal of skeptics’ argument that the empty tomb and the missing body was a case of theft and fraud. Since what is contentious is not whether the tomb was empty, but why it was empty, O’Collins writes about the historical reliability of the empty tomb: “Women were central: Mary Magdalene (John 20: 1-2) and perhaps other women with her (Mark 16: 1-8) found to their astonishment Jesus’ tomb to be open and empty on the first Easter Sunday. If these stories had simply been legends created by early Christians, they would have attributed the discovery of the empty tomb to male disciples, given that in first century Palestine women were for all intents and purposes, disqualified as valid witnesses. Legend-makers do not normally invent positively unhelpful material” *Christology*, 100.

<sup>4</sup> See Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Christology and the Historical Jesus,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997), 255-58, 255. The importance of O’Collins’ contribution to the subject has been underscored by convergence of essays honoring his work. See Daniel Kendall, SJ and Stephen T. Davis, *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O’Collins, SJ* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The notion of presence also features in O’Collins’ earlier work. See Gerald O’Collins, *Jesus Risen* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987), 201-208. By O’Collins’ own admission, this new attempt to articulate the reality and notion of presence in this new and expanded edition of Christology takes into cognizance criticisms by Archbishop Peter Carnley, Robert Imbelli, and P. Perkins. See Gerald O’Collins, SJ, “The Risen Jesus: Analogies and Presence,” in *Resurrection*, edited by Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 195-217, 212. See also Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) and reviews by R. Imbelli, *Commonweal* 26 (January 1996), 25-27 and P. Perkins, *America* (March 1996), 26-27.

last chapter of the book (chapter 14), the notion of presence weaves through several of the earlier chapters (chapters 2 to 9) and "entered, explicitly or implicitly, into the systematic treatment of Christology (Chapters 10 to 13)."<sup>6</sup> After a brief analysis of the notion and reality of presence, O'Collins attempts a Christological synthesis that shows the active presence of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit. Thus, O'Collins uses the theme of presence to intimate his reader that Christ's universal role as redeemer and revealer of God can be conceived in terms of "grace,"<sup>7</sup> i.e., the mystery of God's universal presence in creation, history, and in our individual lives.<sup>8</sup>

A lot has been made about the theme of presence as O'Collins' "most creative contribution to contemporary Christology."<sup>9</sup> Still O'Collins does not offer a convincing philosophical analysis of "presence" to sustain his argument. There is a need for a deeper analysis of "presence" to anchor O'Collins' argument. This paper appeals to the phenomenological analysis of the Canadian Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Bernard Lonergan (1904-84), for a "scientific theology"<sup>10</sup> of presence that O'Collins sought with no success in the works of philosophers. Existentialism and phenomenology was a "zone of scholarly inquiry"<sup>11</sup> for Lonergan whose thorough inquiry on "presence" engaged eminent thinkers on the subject like Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). Lonergan was also one of the early contemporary theologians to understand that theology must move beyond philosophy and be in dialogue with the natural and social sciences and that this dialogue need not necessarily be mediated by philosophy because the sciences, as Karl Rahner (1904-84) his Jesuit confrere and dialogue partner correctly pointed out, "no longer bow before philosophy's claim that they are to be mediated by philosophy or clarified by philosophy."<sup>12</sup> Thus, Lonergan's scientific theology of presence was one

<sup>6</sup> O'Collins, *Christology*, 336.

<sup>7</sup> "Grace" here is understood in the Rahner sense of the history of grace being the history of Christ's saving presence. See Leo J. O'Donovan, ed., *A World of Grace: An Introduction to the Themes and Foundations of Karl Rahner's Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1989).

<sup>8</sup> O'Collins, *Christology*, 337.

<sup>9</sup> See review by Lucien J. Richard, OMI in *Theology/Spirituality* (June 2010), 291.

<sup>10</sup> I've borrowed this phrase from Rahner who, like Lonergan, recognized the need for theology to dialogue with the sciences. See Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: Crossroads, 1997), 8.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 18, edited by Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), xxii.

<sup>12</sup> Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 8.

he derived in dialogue with not only philosophy, but the natural and human sciences as well.

Mediating O’Collins’ account of “presence” with Lonergan’s scientific-theological account is warranted on many levels. First, for O’Collins, the Chalcedonian definition of the union of the two natures of Christ is central to Christology—that Chalcedon’s one-person-two-natures doctrine is the altogether appropriate culmination and summary of a trajectory that runs from the Old Testament to the New Testament and later Christological thought.<sup>13</sup> For Lonergan in whose work Christology, Trinity, and Grace also occupy a central place and for whom redemption is a basic movement in human history, a movement he conceives in triadic form of progress-decline-redemption,<sup>14</sup> the purpose of his Christology is also “to give meaning to Chalcedon.”<sup>15</sup> Second, the meaning of “presence” is central to understanding the Chalcedonian definition of “person,” i.e., the union of two natures in one person (hypostatic union).

Lonergan’s first elaborate attempt at the philosophical meaning of “presence” was in his work on Christology, *De Verbo Incarnato*—a treatise in which he brought a “new understanding to the old question of the hypostatic union and breaking new ground on the question of the consciousness of Christ.”<sup>16</sup> In post *De Verbo Incarnato* writings Lonergan also saw the need to offer a more elaborate philosophical meaning of “presence” as a way of resolving the Christological controversy involving the Dutch Jesuit Piet Schoonenberg (1911-1999) who, in the effort to uphold a Christology of presence, rejected Chalcedon and the third Council of Constantinople.<sup>17</sup> For Lonergan, the

<sup>13</sup> See Charles Heffling’s review of *Christology* in *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1997).

<sup>14</sup> See Raymond Moloney, SJ, “Lonergan’s Soteriology,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78 (2012), 19-37; Joseph A. Komonchak, “Lonergan’s Early Essays on the Redemption of History,” in *Lonergan Workshop* 10, ed., Frederick G. Lawrence (Boston, MA: Boston College, 1994), 159-77; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1960).

<sup>15</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, *Christ and History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005), 176.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 51. One central question that Lonergan explored was: how on the basis of his consciousness did Christ know himself as the Son of God? His answer was that Christ knows all that pertains to his mission: that “He who is God is conscious of his own vision of God in such a way that he could affirm with certainty and did affirm with certainty that the one knowing himself is the same one that is known in the beatific vision” (see Crowe, *Christ and History*, 60-61).

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Lonergan, “Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,” in *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, SJ*, edited by Frederick E. Crowe, SJ (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 74-99. At issue was Piet Schoonenberg’s 1969 book that first appeared in Dutch and later translated into German, English and French. See Piet Schoonenberg, *Hij is een God van Mensen* (’s-Hertogenbosch: Malmberg, 1969) [*The Christ: A Study of the God-Man Relationship in the Whole of Creation and in Jesus Christ*, translated by Della Couling (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) *Il est le Dieu de*

crucial issue here is how to understand the dogmas of faith. For him also, the deeper issue at Chalcedon is that its decree is dogmatic and its pattern results from earlier dogmatic decrees of earlier Councils.<sup>18</sup> "The clarity of Chalcedon has an essential condition, for it can be clear only if it has a meaning, and it can have a meaning only if dogmas have a meaning."<sup>19</sup> The problem with Schoonenberg, as Lonergan saw it, was that he, like many others of his stripe, "do not advert to the very notion of dogma, to the notion that propositions can be true or false."<sup>20</sup> The problem with Schoonenberg was that he misunderstood both the dogmas of the church and the "conditions of possibility of man's living in a world mediated by meaning."<sup>21</sup> Despite the deficiencies he saw in Schoonenberg's position, Lonergan still thought Schoonenberg had raised "a very real issue in systematic theology," issues he considered to be "very urgent in pastoral theology."<sup>22</sup> It was not surprising that the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith surmised that Schoonenberg "had favored replacing the doctrinal pattern of these councils with 'that of God's complete presence in the human person Jesus Christ with his own human will and actions.'"<sup>23</sup>

It is not the intent of this paper to re-open the Church's controversy with Schoonenberg. I only use Schoonenberg's non-adherence to the decrees of Chalcedon<sup>24</sup> and his lack of understanding of the "possibility of man's living in a world mediated by meaning" as an entry

*homes* (Paris: Cerf, 1973)]. On the evidence of Lonergan, "it was in between the English and the French translations on February 21, 1972, that the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith decided to oppose certain errors and issued an explicit reaffirmation of the doctrine s of the council of Chalcedon and of the third council of Constantinople." Lonergan, "Christology Today," 74-75.

<sup>18</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History*, 162.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 162. Lonergan's important distinction between "systematics" and "doctrine" is helpful here. Because human language is transient and the meaning of words is culturally conditioned and it is possible to know what church doctrines are without knowing what they mean. What he calls "systematics" seeks gradual increase in understanding. It proceeds according to *ordo disciplinae* or *ordo doctrinae*, the order of learning and teaching—the proper order for systematic ordering of ideas. See Cyril Orji, "Lonergan and Pannenberg Methodologies: A Critical Examination," *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), 555-76 and Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2005).

<sup>21</sup> Lonergan, "Christology Today," 90.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>24</sup> Lonergan writes: "The deeper issue at Chalcedon is that its decree is dogmatic and that its pattern results from earlier dogmatic decrees. It results from the rejection by Nicea that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, that he is not made but begotten (DS 125). It results from the rejection by Nicea of those that claimed there was a time when the Son did not exist or that he did not exist before he was begotten (DS 216). It results from Ephesus and from the *Formula unionis* on which Alexandrines and Antiochenes agreed in the spring of 433 that Jesus Christ the only Son of God was consubstantial with the

point for dialogue between Lonergan and O’Collins on the meaning of “presence” and on the matter of what it means to probe whether one can lead a truly human life without being a human person. Lonergan’s own unique contribution to this discussion is a hermeneutical understanding of “presence” he derived in dialogue with the natural and social sciences—a scientific theological notion that can help ground our grasp of the Chalcedonian definition of the hypostatic union that O’Collins considers central to Christology.

In *Christology*, O’Collins engages scholars who proffer unorthodox positions, particularly Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55), and Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) whose reductionist and “minimalist answers to the historical questions about Jesus”<sup>25</sup> he dismisses with sound argument. But nowhere does O’Collins make allusion to Piet Schoonenberg’s misunderstanding of Chalcedon, not even the chapter on “The Possibilities of Presence” that dealt with similar matter of Christology of presence. Even where O’Collins draws from the likes of Balthasar, Barth, Dupuis, Kasper, Moltmann, Pannenberg, and Rahner, thinkers for whom he has much admiration,<sup>26</sup> his list of admirers does not include Lonergan. The index of *Christology* has no single entry of Lonergan or to any of his works in either methodology or Christology. To be clear, there is no suggestion here that O’Collins must willy-nilly mention or engage Lonergan’s work. It is always the prerogative of an author to select and choose his or her dialogue partners. But my point here is rather that the failure to engage Lonergan in a subject matter for which he has done a pace-setting work leaves a lacuna that begs for answers. Lonergan addresses the important matter of the meaning of “presence” (as this bears on divine presence)—a phenomenological problem that O’Collins does not deeply explore,<sup>27</sup> and a problem for which O’Collins correctly admits “little philosophical analysis is

Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity” (see “Christology Today,” 90).

<sup>25</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 217. O’Collins’ admiration for these thinkers does not in any way suggest that he is in complete agreement with them or that he appropriates them uncritically. He thinks, for example, that Pannenberg got it wrong on the question of virginal conception. He seems to single out Pannenberg among the Christians who affirm the incarnation and at the same time deny the virginal conception. For O’Collins for whom the issue is the “virginal conception and not, as many inaccurately do,” of the virgin birth, Pannenberg “uncharacteristically lapses into extreme language when he declares: ‘in its content, the legend [!] of Jesus’ virgin birth [Pannenberg means conception] stands in an irreconcilable contradiction to the Christology of the incarnation of the preexistent Son of God found in Paul and John.’ A few pages later, Pannenberg again insists that the concepts of virginal conception and pre-existence ‘cannot be connected without contradiction’” (*Christology*, 286 and 287).

<sup>27</sup> See review by Charles Heffling, *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1999).

available.”<sup>28</sup> One of the motivations of this paper is, therefore, to overcome this oversight, particularly since Lonergan offers a phenomenological analysis of presence that can advance O’Collins’ key points. Related to this is the other fact that my endeavor here is in line with what Lonergan’s procedures, i.e., expounding and contributing to “the clarification of methods and principles” for those investigating speculative questions in Christology.<sup>29</sup>

### Clarification of Meaning

The notion of “presence” is a difficult and problematic notion that cannot be fully grasped in isolation from the reality of human beings who exist as persons and subject. The notion of a person as subject is of fundamental importance to Christian revelation and the self-understanding of Christianity.<sup>30</sup> A person is constituted by various determinations—nature, nurture, historicity, responsibility and freedom, and transcendence and orientation towards incomprehensible mystery.<sup>31</sup> Implied in these various determinations is that one is present to oneself and to others. As Rahner poignantly puts it, “a personal relationship to God, a genuinely dialogical history of salvation between God and man, the acceptance of one’s own, unique, eternal salvation, the notion of responsibility before God and his judgment, all of these assertions of Christianity, however they are to be explained more precisely, imply that man is . . . person and subject.”<sup>32</sup> O’Collins and Lonergan approached the matter or “presence,” a constitutive element of what it means to be a person and subject, in ways that are somewhat similar and somewhat different. Where there is a striking difference Lonergan’s notion serves as an enrichment to that of O’Collins.

### Excursus of “Presence” in O’Collins’ Work

In *Christology* O’Collins affirms the importance of interpenetration of the disciplines of philosophy and theology and suggests that Christian theologians need to take advantage of the way philosophers clarify a whole range of concepts by adjusting these concepts and putting

<sup>28</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 338.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, vol.7, translated by Michael Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 26.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

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

them into service to express Christian faith coherently and systematically.<sup>33</sup> He also recognizes, and correctly too, that a major challenge “in developing a Christology of presence comes from the fact that philosophers offer little help here.”<sup>34</sup> After scouring through some major encyclopedias and dictionaries of philosophy, O’Collins’ regrets that entries on “presence” are either marginal or non-existent even in these reference works.<sup>35</sup> Apart from the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and the French existentialist Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973)<sup>36</sup> who gave little attention to the theme of presence, O’Collins is left bewildered to “puzzle over and speculate about this relative silence from philosophers.”<sup>37</sup> Much in the tradition of Augustine of Hippo (354 AD-430 AD) and other medieval Christian theologians for whom the question of divine omni-presence was important for their discourse on God, O’Collins finds the theme of divine presence to be a necessary precursor for constructing a coherent systematic discourse in Christology. With little help from philosophers, O’Collins surveys and outlines nine characteristics of “presence”:

Excursus I. Presence always implies “presence to,” i.e., being present always entails being present to someone, something or some event.<sup>38</sup> Self-knowing and being, therefore, yield a primordial “presence to” because in the process of knowing something one knows something other than self. “Whenever we come to know someone or something, the object known becomes present in us, and so related to us. There is a mutual presence of the perceived in the perceiver.”<sup>39</sup>

Excursus II. Presence is relational and happens in a relationship.<sup>40</sup> This implies that presence is essentially personal, a prerogative of human persons alone. “The personal self can be self only in relation to other selves. Being personal means being relational . . . being

<sup>33</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 337-38.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 337.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 338. O’Collins correctly notes how there is no entry on “presence” in D.M. Borchert, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. [2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Farmington, Hill, MI: Gale-Macmillan, 2006)]; E. Craig, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 10 vols. (London: Routledge, 1998); P. Edwards, ed., *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. (London: Collier-McMillan, 1967); H. Krings, et al., eds., *Handbuch Philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, 6 vols. (Munich: Kosel Verlag, 1973-4). It is only in the eighth volume of *Encyclopedia Filosofica* (Florence: Lucarini, 1982), 790-1 that “presenza” received just one column entry.

<sup>36</sup> See Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator*, trans. E. Craufurd (London: Victor Gollanz, 1951) and *The Mystery of Being*, trans. G.S. Fraser and R. Hague (London: Harvill Press, 1950-51).

<sup>37</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 338.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 339.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



present to other persons. Being in relation and being present express what it is to be personal."<sup>41</sup>

Excursus III. Presence implies a free act and the exercise of personal freedom. "We are truly present to those with whom we genuinely wish to be present; in other words, we are and remain present to those whom we love."<sup>42</sup>

Excursus IV. Presence, in so far as it is free self-giving and interpersonal "discloses fresh possibilities and a being acted upon in ways that may even profoundly change the direction my existence."<sup>43</sup>

Excursus V. Presence is costly and open to vulnerability. Making oneself available to people that one loves usually comes with a cost, say time and money. Making oneself available to people one loves involves sacrifice, even to the point of self-denial. "In innumerable ways, presence can be 'costly,' even to the point of risking our lives."<sup>44</sup>

Excursus VI. Presence has both bodily and spatial dimensions. Human beings are embodied spirits and the free exercise of their freedom make them present in a way that inevitably involves their body. This means that we experience presence as involving bodies and occurring in particular space.<sup>45</sup>

Excursus VII. Presence is mediated through words and actions (say meals and embrace). Presence, in other words, is mediated symbolically through things that have special connections to us.<sup>46</sup>

Excursus VIII. Presence is an analogous term and reality. As human beings we experience an infinite variety and forms of presence. Presence (or its opposite absence) is "always a question of what kind of presence and what kind of absence, or how someone is present or how someone is absent. Every presence, short of the beatific vision of the final encounter with God, is always tinged with absence."<sup>47</sup>

Excursus IX. Presence has some innate feminine dimensions. "Our experience of presence was a maternal one, when we were each umbilically bonded to our mother who harbored and protected us. After birth, her presence continued to shelter and nurture us."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 339-40.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

What do these themes portend for O’Collins’ Christology? What light do they shed on Jesus Christ in whom the union of the two natures is unmixed, undivided, inseparable, and unchangeable, according to the Chalcedonian definition? O’Collins does not play down the central place the themes play in his Christology. He in fact makes it clear that all major items expounded in the book *Christology* can be re-articulated through the nine themes recounted in his “account of presence and that they “throw light on Christ ‘in himself’ (‘in se’) and Christ ‘for us’ (‘pro nobis’).”<sup>49</sup> Based on these, we can infer the following:

Excursus I gives O’Collins grounds to speak of the divine presence and communion of the Persons of the Trinity—that Christ is eternally and personally related to the Father in the Spirit. “This divine ‘presence to,’ which constitutes the triune God’s life in communion, is mirrored in Christ’s earthly existence—from the Trinitarian face of his virginal conception and baptism right through to his ‘being exalted at the right hand’ of God the Father and jointly ‘pouring out’ the Holy Spirit on the world (Acts 2: 33).”<sup>50</sup>

Excursus II, i.e., presence is relational, is essential for O’Collins to uphold, as he had always wanted to, the Chalcedonian definition of the unity of the divine and human natures of Christ that subsists in one *prosopon* or *hypostasis*. It also gives him ground to affirm Christ’s personhood—person-in-relation to the God whom he called “Abba” and as a subject-in-relation to us through his acts and volition.<sup>51</sup>

Excursus VI helps O’Collins answer the question regarding how God, as purely spiritual and non-spatial, can be located in space and time and be present to human beings. “By personally assuming the human condition, the incarnate Son of God provided the bodily, spatial-temporal component also on the divine side.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, by his incarnation provides a “new way for the divine person to be present somewhere” and by his resurrection “supplied the bodily ‘requirement’ on the side of God to be present somewhere and everywhere.”<sup>53</sup>

Excursus VI suggests how “a vital, personal ‘presence to’ can develop” on the basis of some spatio-temporal nearness.<sup>54</sup> “A bodily presence allows the interpersonal relationship with Christ to emerge

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 343.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.243.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 344.

and grow as the revealing/saving presence *pro nobis*.”<sup>55</sup> This provides ground to affirm, against the Gnostics, the goodness of creation, and against Marcionism, the Christological relevance of Jewish history and story. The affirmation of the goodness of the material world, which is vindicated by Christ’s corporeal humanity, and relevance of Jewish Covenant to human salvation, the full spatio-temporal presence of God is made visible to us.<sup>56</sup>

Excursus VII addresses the question regarding how presence is mediated between divine Persons of the Trinity, in contrasts with how presence is mediated between human persons. Between the divine Persons presence is communicated immediately but between human persons it is never immediate, but mediated symbolically.<sup>57</sup>

Excursus VIII suggests for O’Collins that we be open to acknowledging that divine presence, as an activity, do occur in endless varieties and ways. “To allege anything else would be strangely at odds with the loving freedom of an infinitely creative God.”<sup>58</sup> This means that soteriology is multiform because God’s unique foundational presence in Christ (God’s presence and offer of salvation) is mediated in a variety of ways.<sup>59</sup> In this wise, we can speak of the presence of Christ in human history (history of salvation). “That presence assumes a multiform diversity that allows us to acknowledge him as present everywhere and active in innumerable ways as the history of the world moves towards the end.”<sup>60</sup> Acknowledgment of the universal presence of Christ in human history and Christ’s presence in various ways and varying degrees, even in anonymously in other religions, should be an entry point for dialogue with non-Christian religions.

Excursus IX helps O’Collins to address the matter of “receptive, nurturing, and maternal feel to the presence of God.”<sup>61</sup> It grounds the use of motherhood metaphor in Christology and Trinitarian theology, like that found in the writings of St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) and Lady Julian of Norwich (1342-1413).

In all, Excursus I-IX are consistent with O’Collins’ reflections on Christ’s personal identity as the Son of God:

A Christology of presence displays many attractive features. It ties faith in Christ firmly to the mystery of the Trinity. It provides a thread to link the soteriological mysteries: from creation, through the

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 342.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 343.

incarnation (and its proximate preparation in the Old Testament), the ministry of Jesus, his crucifixion, the resurrection, his self-bestowal in the life of the Church, the activity of the Holy Spirit within and beyond the Christian community, the role of Christ in human history and world religions, and his inauguration of the universal *eschaton* in which through him God will be unavoidably and publicly there for all.<sup>62</sup>

O’Collins’ survey of “presence” barely touches on the important matter of Christ’s consciousness, an important though often neglected theme in Christology. The consciousness of Christ was key topic in Lonergan’s early works in Christology. His position was that consciousness is not to be conceived as a perception of an object, but rather as an inner experience of a subject—that consciousness, in the strict sense, is an interior experience of oneself and one’s acts.<sup>63</sup> I will return to how this relates to the consciousness of Christ later. But suffice to say that philosophically or procedurally speaking, Lonergan reasonably affirmed that method, when applied to Christology today, has a two-fold function: select and define what was inadequate in former procedures and indicate the better procedures that are available.<sup>64</sup> O’Collins’ succeeds in doing the former but not the latter. One of the many figures with whom O’Collins took issue was the German Friedrich Schleiermacher whose anthropocentric theology “showed a massively subjective switch in the way he systematically set out to base all Christian truth on the experience and self-consciousness of the individual.”<sup>65</sup> O’Collins correctly pointed out that “by making the subjective experience of the earthly Jesus dominate at the expense of post-New Testament Christian reflection and teaching, Schleiermacher in effect turned Christology into Jesuology.”<sup>66</sup> Beyond pointing out inadequacies of Schleiermacher, O’Collins does not indicate if there is any better procedure available for moving forward other than hacking back to the Chalcedonian definition, which he considers sacrosanct. Charles Heffling was perhaps alluding to this point when he politely pointed out how O’Collins was content with offering only palliatives in his response to Schleiermacher’s objection to the Chalcedonian affirmation—that one individual cannot share in two different natures.<sup>67</sup> The first of the two palliatives O’Collins offered, according to Heffling, “is a bare assertion that the divine and the human are not all that different—which is possible, though it departs from what Nicea affirmed and calls for further explication

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>63</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> Lonergan, “Christology Today,” 74.

<sup>65</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 217.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>67</sup> See Heffling’s review in *Anglican Theological Review* 79 (1997).

that is not provided. The second palliative is the observation that divinity and humanity, according to Chalcedon, must not be ascribed to the one Christ in the same respect—which is perfectly true, but amounts only to a restatement of just the conceptual difficulty to which Schleiermacher objected.”<sup>68</sup> Lonergan offers more than palliatives in his denouncement of misconceptions in the Christology of those thinkers he found deficient. Furthermore, his well-worked out phenomenology of presence provides a richer way of applying our mundane notion of presence to divine presence. To his argument we turn next.

### Lonergan’s Hermeneutical Clarifications

The notion of “presence,” which cannot be discussed apart from the reality of a human being who exists as a person and subject, is of no marginal concern in Lonergan’s corpus. It occupies a central place in Lonergan’s work because of its implications for his well-worked out Christology. Lonergan approached the matter of Christology not only systematically, but also methodologically, beginning with the central question “what is a person?” Lonergan writes: “Augustine said a person is what there are three of in God: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Three what? Not three gods, not three Sons, but three persons.”<sup>69</sup> As it relates to the Trinitarian Persons, person is for Lonergan the answer to the question “three what?”<sup>70</sup> Lonergan understands the notion in an evolutionary way—metaphysical (regarding the constitution of the person), psychological (regarding the consciousness of the subject), and phenomenological understandings (regarding intersubjective and interpersonal relations), regarding every stage as important and coalescing to our understanding of the notion.<sup>71</sup>

Lonergan credits Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) for bringing the matter of the person as subject into technical prominence after a long period of neglect, and credits him with initiating a Copernican-like

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Early Works on Theological Method 3*, vol. 24, translated by Michael G. Shields, edited by Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 122.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. Lonergan accepts Karl Jaspers insight on the notion of person, particularly Jaspers notion of *grenzsituationem* (limiting situations), which he interprets to mean that factors like historical period or social milieu of a person, the accidents of birth, age, gender, suffering, life struggles, guilt, and inevitability of death are some of the general limiting situations or *grenzsituationem* of which Jaspers spoke. See Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic*, 239.

revolution on the matter.<sup>72</sup> But when Lonergan speaks of the subject he speaks of the subject in ways quite different from Kant and the likes of Georg Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), and Martin Buber (1878-1965). In spite of their attempt to contribute to our knowledge of the subject, these have contributed to what Lonergan calls “the neglected subject” (who does not know himself or herself) and the truncated subject who “not only does not know himself but also is unaware of his ignorance and so, in one way or another, concludes that what he does not know does not exist.”<sup>73</sup> In Lonergan’s unique sense, a subject is one who is present to self—a conscious and intelligently inquiring, rationally reflecting, and responsibly deliberating person.

The presence of the subject to himself or herself is key in Lonergan’s idea of the subject. In fact, in two early works, *De Verbo Incarnato* (one in 1960 and the other in 1964) in which he takes up a lengthy discussion of issues like the consciousness of Christ, the knowledge had by Christ, the liberty (freedom) of Christ, and the redemption brought about by Christ, the question of what is meant by “presence” takes center stage.<sup>74</sup> While the discussion of all of these themes is beyond the scope of this paper,<sup>75</sup> relevant for our purpose here is the fact that Lonergan proposes a three-tier way of understanding the concept of “presence.”

1. Locally: There is a local presence. “One can think of merely local propinquity, as one stone is next to another, but we do not say it is present to the other.”<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Bernard Lonergan, “The Subject,” in *A Second Collection*, 69-86, 70 (particularly note 2).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History*, 80. According to Frederick Crowe, the concept of presence, though not a key concept yet, was already explicit in Lonergan’s work of 1956. See Bernard Lonergan, *De Constitutione Christi Ontologica et Psychologica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1956). On the matter of the knowledge that Christ had, an old question that goes back to the Scholastics, Lonergan concurs with the scholastics that Christ had an immediate knowledge of God, but adds a nuance that besides divine knowledge Christ had human knowledge that was blessed, infused, and acquired. He writes: “Besides divine knowledge Christ living here on earth had human knowledge, both effable and ineffable; for as comprehensor he both knew God immediately by ineffable knowledge, also called beatific knowledge, and by the same act but immediately knew everything else that pertained to his mission (“munus”); as pilgrim, however, he elicited by effable knowledge those cognitive acts, natural and supernatural, which constituted his human and historical life” (see Crowe, *Christ and History*, 82).

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of these themes see Crowe, *Christ and History*, 81-88.

<sup>76</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History*, 80.

2. Physically: Something is present as an object, like when one animal is present to another or as colors are present to those who see them.<sup>77</sup>
3. Ontologically: This third variety belongs to intellectual beings who can be present as a subject—by seeing colors a person is present to self as seeing.

It is the third variety, “that by which a subject is present to oneself and the acts of a subject are present to subject” that Lonergan calls consciousness.<sup>78</sup> This kind of presence “is not had in deep sleep; it begins if one dreams; it is greatly heightened when one wakes; it gains an intellectual quality if one inquires, understands, and so on; it gains a rational quality when one reflects on one’s ideas and makes a judgment; finally, it acquires its full perfection when one goes beyond truth to good and to responsible action.”<sup>79</sup> Thus, this kind of presence, as a kind of consciousness, is known only by consciousness in the same way light is seen by light.<sup>80</sup>

In all, Lonergan employs a didactic approach to get at the meaning of the Chalcedonian definition of the unity of the divine and human natures of Christ, determining in the process what it means to be present.<sup>81</sup> “We have to say what it means for a divine person to live a fully human life.”<sup>82</sup> First, he recognizes the importance of going beyond the metaphysical view of the human person on which traditional Christology (constructed by scholasticism) was constructed.<sup>83</sup> The scholastic notion of person was built on the Aristotelian metaphysical system of psychology that focused primarily on essences and potencies to the detriment or neglect of consciousness (how a person is present to oneself and others). This abstract Aristotelian psychology of habits and acts and objects of the acts, traditionally, underpinned the theological accounts of the person of Christ.<sup>84</sup> But Aristotelian psychology failed to grasp that a person is a psychological subject who is involved in interpersonal relations. It also failed to grasp that one cannot be human in the true sense of the word

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 80-81.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> What Lonergan says here should be understood in the backdrop of his account of the subject—that each of us lives in a bounded world that is fixed with its own range of interests and a fixed horizon. See Bernard Lonergan, “The Subject,” in *A Second Collection*, 69-86.

<sup>82</sup> Lonergan, “Christology Today,” 91.

<sup>83</sup> See Bernard Lonergan, “The Dehellenization of Dogma,” in *A Second Collection*, 11-32.

<sup>84</sup> Lonergan, “Christology Today,” 75.

without being a person. Most importantly, it fails to grasp that human development is an entry into a world mediated by meaning.<sup>85</sup> What does this mean for a philosophy of presence? It means that to be present is to be capable of experiencing (through inquiry), understanding (from intelligent formulations), judging (from apprehended reality) to deciding (by making evaluations and choosing the best of possible options).<sup>86</sup>

Second, philosophically, “presence” has multiple meanings. There is, for example, the presence of parents to their infant child and the presence of the parents to one another. The two kinds of presence are two different instances of presence.<sup>87</sup> In Lonergan’s technical term, we live in two worlds that differ vastly in their content and in their operational procedures: the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. The world of immediacy is the infant world where everything is mediated by sense experience—touch, smell, feel, etc. “It is a world as yet without names or concepts, without truth or falsity, without right or wrong. Its criteria lie quite simply in the presence or absence of successful functioning.”<sup>88</sup> The world mediated by meaning, by contrast, is an adult world that “goes beyond experiencing through inquiry to ever fuller understanding, beyond mere understanding through reflection to truth and reality, beyond mere knowing through deliberation to evaluated and freely chosen courses of action.”<sup>89</sup>

Third, to speak of person is to speak of a conscious subject capable of sensitive, intellectual, rational, and moral operations—operations that both intentional and conscious. “Insofar as they are intentional, they make objects present to us. Insofar as they conscious, they make us present to ourselves.”<sup>90</sup> In other words, a person is a subject and object at one and the same time. Subject and object are not to be conceived as fixed and immutable things.<sup>91</sup> “The world mediated by meaning is not just reality but reality as known, where the knowing is ever in process. The subject that mediates his world by meaning

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 76. In his essay on “The Subject,” Lonergan points out that the existential subject—a person who knows oneself as a knower that experiences, understands, and judges—is “a notion that is overlooked on the schematism of older categories that distinguished faculties, such as intellect and will, or different uses of the same faculty, such as speculative and practical intellect, or different types of human activity, such as theoretical inquiry and practical execution” (see Lonergan, “The Subject,” 79).

<sup>86</sup> Lonergan, “Christology Today,” 76.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 91. See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* for a fuller account of Lonergan’s cognitional structure.

<sup>91</sup> Lonergan, “Christology Today,” 92.



similarly is in a process of self-realization through self-transcendence."<sup>92</sup> A person is, therefore, a unity-identity-whole:

In a truly human life there is identity. I am no longer an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, but however great the differences in my truly human living, I am still the same I that I was from the beginning. Nor is this identity diminished by the fact that the differences are not confined to differences in abilities and skills and habits, that they involve the becoming and the stability of my ego, my personality, what I can call myself. For such differences regard not the identity of the subject but his subjectivity. He remains himself though he truly transcends himself.<sup>93</sup>

What does such understanding of "presence" portend for Lonergan's Christology? How does Lonergan's notion of "presence" as consciousness apply to Christ? If consciousness includes, as he suggests, consciousness of self, and the self in Christ, as Chalcedon definition maintains, is human and divine, how can these two consciousness be reconciled in one *hypostasis*? Lonergan does not just accept the Chalcedonian dogma, he attempts to help us understand it. "If in earlier ages it was enough to adore the mystery, if from the medieval period some metaphysical account of person and nature were all that was sought, it remains that in our age of psychology and critical philosophy, of hermeneutics and history, something both different and more exacting is required. We have to be able to say what it means for a divine person to live a fully human life."<sup>94</sup> For Lonergan, it is relevant to explain that the Chalcedonian affirmation of one person and two natures of Christ invites us to make a logical clarification because such logical clarification is within the meaning of the decree—that a distinction be made between "person" and "nature." It is one and the same person, Jesus Christ, who is both God and man and that divinity and humanity refer to two natures.<sup>95</sup>

Lonergan explains it further thus: "The person of Christ is an identity that eternally is subject or divine consciousness and in time became subject of human consciousness."<sup>96</sup> And from his hermeneutical and critical account of what it means to be a person today argues

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>95</sup> Lonergan, "Unity and Plurality: The Coherence of Christian Truth," in *A Third Collection*, 239-49, 244.

<sup>96</sup> Lonergan, "Christology Today," 91. In explaining his terms Lonergan points out that there three meanings of "one," i.e., "one" as meaning "instance," "one" as meaning intelligible unity, and "one" in Chalcedon's sense of "one and the same." Thus, "identity," here refers to this third sense of "one." By "consciousness" he means sensitive, intellectual, rational, and moral operations that are intentional and conscious. As intentional they make objects present to us and as conscious they us present to ourselves. See Crowe, *Christ and History*, 162.

that it is possible to speak intelligibly of the hypostatic union (as well as the three distinct and conscious subjects of divine consciousness). Even if imperfectly, we can conceive "the possibility of a single divine identity being at once subject of divine consciousness and also subject of a human consciousness."<sup>97</sup> Although his identity was divine, "Jesus had a truly human subjectivity that grew in wisdom and age and grace before God and men (Luke 2: 52)."<sup>98</sup> The timeless and unchanging subjectivity that is proper to his divine identity is in no way in "conflict with the developing subjectivity of a human life."<sup>99</sup> This, according to Lonergan, is a good way to understand the Chalcedonian definition that the Lord Jesus Christ is one person in two natures unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable.

Drawing from the Fourth Gospel: "Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith" (John 20:29), Lonergan suggests that the presence of Christ to us is not presence in the world of immediacy. "The fact is that divine revelation comes to us through the mediation of meaning. It comes through meaning transmitted by tradition, meaning translated from ancient to modern tongues, meaning here clarified and there distorted by human understanding, meaning reaffirmed and crystalized in dogmas, meaning ever coming to life in God's grace and God's love."<sup>100</sup> Lonergan argues that the psychology of Christ as man is to be conceived not only in ontological terms but also on the basis of the perfections that on a priori grounds are to be considered as befitting a divine person.<sup>101</sup>

### Relevance for Pastoral Theology

The theme of presence can be re-articulated in ways that will shed light on what O'Collins and Lonergan think Ontological Christology (who and what Jesus is in himself) and Functional Christology (Christ's saving or redemptive work for humanity) mean for contemporary Christians as they engage the modern world. The perspective of presence brings many advantages. O'Collins has explicitly alluded to three of these: the Jewishness of Jesus, the feminine face of God, and spiritual and pastoral imports.<sup>102</sup> The last of these, i.e., the spiritual and pastoral possibilities, needs to be fleshed out, particularly in light of the nuance offered by Lonergan. My argument all along has been that Lonergan's hermeneutical understanding of "presence"

<sup>97</sup> Lonergan, "Christology Today," 94.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>102</sup> O'Collins, *Christology*, 352.

advances O’Collins’ argument on what it means to speak of the presence of Christ among us today. The implication of these for pastoral theology is immense. Here I highlight only two.

### 1. Spiritual Growth—the Changing Context of Theology and Changing Face of Christianity:

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) the American physicist, historian, and philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996), challenged the prevailing conception of science. From his work, which at the time was considered by many in the science community to be controversial, emerged terms like “paradigm,” “paradigm shift,” and “paradigm change.”<sup>103</sup> Arguing with the science of chemistry, physics, and astronomy in mind, Kuhn explains that a paradigm shift emerges as a result of crisis, “when an old, established theory becomes increasingly difficult to maintain and must be overthrown by a newer, more intellectually savvy competitor.”<sup>104</sup> Whether or not one adheres to the details of Kuhn’s theory or the variant versions that have emerged since his landmark work, it is a widely acknowledged today that through conflicts new theories are born and old ones die, notwithstanding that it may take decades for the transition to take place.<sup>105</sup> In Catholic Christian theology we can speak of a paradigm shift or paradigm change in the Kuhn sense of the word, a shift that Lonergan indeed was one of the first to recognize in Catholic theology. He effected a paradigm shift in Catholic Christian theology in arguing for interplay of history, tradition, and culture.<sup>106</sup> He recognized correctly that theology is product, not only of faith, but also of culture, and that the defects of the old style theology that goes by the name Scholasticism were the defects of the time. “It is cultural change that has made Scholasticism no longer relevant and demands the development of a new theological method and style, continuous indeed with the old, yet meeting all the genuine exigencies both of Christian religion and of up-to-date philosophy,

<sup>103</sup> See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>104</sup> Gregory R. Peterson, “Whose Evolution? Which Theology?” *Zygon* 35 (2000), 221–32, 221.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>106</sup> Innovations Lonergan introduced are innovations in theology, philosophy, and the social sciences. He uses a language akin to that of Kuhn to describe his paradigm shift: These innovations “have occurred in different times. Each was preceded by earlier stages in which their later separate tasks were undifferentiated parts in previous larger wholes. In each case their emergence generated identity crises in their former hosts and demanded the discovery and the development of new methods and procedures.” See Bernard Lonergan, “Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation,” in *A Second Collection*, 35–54, 35.

science, and scholarship.”<sup>107</sup> He formulated his Christology with the awareness that metaphysical worldview and the faculty psychology on which Scholasticism built its explanation of Church doctrine has to be replaced with an intentionality analysis. Scholasticism’s tendency to reconcile differences in the dogmatic statements of the Church, for him, had one grave defect. Scholasticism “was content with a logically and metaphysically satisfying reconciliation; it did not realize how much of the multiplicity in its inheritance constituted not a logical or a metaphysical but basically a historical problem.”<sup>108</sup>

Paradigm shift in theology has led to spiritual growth of the Christian faith worldwide, particularly in the last century. The American historian, Philip Jenkins, describes the spiritual explosion and expansion of Christianity into what used to be considered distant lands of Africa, Asia, and Latin America as a transformation in which the center of gravity in the Christian faith is shifting “inexorably away from Europe, southward, to Africa and Latin America, and eastward, toward Asia.”<sup>109</sup> The Gambian historian Lamin Sanneh prefers to call it “the resurgence of Christianity as a world religion.”<sup>110</sup>

## 2. Pastoral Outreach—Dialogue with other Religions

Here Lonergan and O’Collins essentially agree. O’Collins sees Functional Christology as coinciding with soteriology—Christ’s redemptive activity to humanity.<sup>111</sup> O’Collins sees soteriology as the multiform ways “in which Christ’s presence (or God’s unique, foundational presence in/to Christ) mediated and mediates itself to human beings and their world, so as to communicate revelation and redemption.”<sup>112</sup> Although Christ was spatio-temporally present to his disciples, a bodily presence on which our salvation hinges (to paraphrase Tertullian’s famous phrase *caro cardo salutis*),<sup>113</sup> this presence need not be “a felt presence” to be real and effective. “It can remain a hidden presence and do so throughout the lives of innumerable human beings.”<sup>114</sup> In other words, Christ is universally present and this “saving presence differs according to one’s location in the world of

<sup>107</sup> Lonergan, “Unity and Plurality,” 247.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>109</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1. For more on the expansion of the Christian faith in the global south see Cyril Orji, *A Semiotic Approach to the Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, OR: Pick Wick, 2015).

<sup>110</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 3.

<sup>111</sup> O’Collins, *Christology*, 19.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 344.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

various cultures and religions.”<sup>115</sup> Pastorally, it behooves on Christians to read the “signs of the times” and carefully interpret Christ’s presence and influence in the multiplicity of contemporary cultures. The presence of Christ “assumes a multiform diversity that allows us to acknowledge him as present everywhere and active in innumerable ways as the history of the world moves towards the end.”<sup>116</sup> This opens up dialogue with non-Christian religions, for Christ, as Justin and Clement of Alexandria correctly remarked, is “in varying ways and degrees, actively, if anonymously, present redemptively in other religions, even before any contact with the gospel message has taken place.”<sup>117</sup> Thus, dialogue with other religions, for O’Collins, stands to enrich our understanding of the ongoing, universal presence of Christ.<sup>118</sup>

Elsewhere O’Collins elaborates on how the love of God is a “creative and efficient cause” in the network of loving relations between Christians and non-Christians. He emphasizes the “efficient causality of love exercised when the church prays for those of other religious faiths” and the “central role of Christ’s priesthood” as grounds for salvation for non-Christians as well as dialogue with them. “This universal, priestly intercession might lead us to coin a new axiom. Provided we insist that no one is ‘outside Christ,’ we should state: ‘outside the priestly intercession of Christ there is no salvation.’”<sup>119</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 349.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. To those who may object that Christian affirmation of the presence of Christ seems like an appalling piece of arrogance, O’Collins offers the following three points: “First, this claim is personal and not institutional; it maintains the universal impact of Jesus himself and not of the Christian Church as such. Second, we should not forget that some of the religions (e.g., Islam and some forms of Hinduism) honor Christ and include him in one way or another in their faith. They do not endorse the universal significance of Christ that is prosed here, but they certainly do not deny all significance to him. Third, while Christians should not ignore the claims of other religions, they should not play down or misrepresent their own claims about Jesus as universally present to mediate revelation and salvation everywhere” (see O’Collins, *Christology*, 50).

<sup>119</sup> Gerald O’Collins, “Jacques Dupuis: The Ongoing Debate,” *Theological Studies* 74 (2013), 632-54, 635 and 654. For O’Collins’ further views on the Church’s relations with non-Christians and people of no faith, see Gerald O’Collins, “Does Vatican II Represent Continuity or Discontinuity?” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012), 768-94; “Jacques Dupuis’s Contributions to Interreligious Dialogue,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003), 388-97; *The Second Vatican Council on Other Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). One may say that O’Collins’ foray into the important but complicated matter of how believing Christians can affirm faith in Jesus Christ as universal savior of the whole of humanity while still recognizing the Spirit of Jesus in other religions and cultures was propelled by Jacques Dupuis’ *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (1997) that was investigated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF) in 1998, leading to a notification of January 2001 by CDF that Dupuis’ work “contained notable ambiguities and difficulties on important doctrinal points, which could lead a reader to erroneous or

For Lonergan for whom Christology is not merely functional ontological but both,<sup>120</sup> the universal significance is vindicated by the evolutionary process, i.e., the evolutionary view of the universe that can be fully grasped only by attending to the cause of the universe. The cause of evolution is divine providence, not probabilities that some contemporary scientists think or the chance variations of Darwin.<sup>121</sup> Here Lonergan's argument comes close to Rahner's famed Christology within an evolutionary perspective.<sup>122</sup> His point is that there is a three-fold personal self-communication of divinity to humanity, "first, when in Christ the Word becomes flesh, secondly, when through Christ men become temples of the Spirit and adoptive sons of the Father thirdly, when in a final consummation the blessed know the Father as they are known by him."<sup>123</sup> In other words, God's universal salvific will to save humanity was concretized in the person of Christ who, though present not physically present with us now as he once was at some point in human history, is still present with us through his spirit. This means that "Christ and history are co-extensive."<sup>124</sup> Those familiar with Lonergan's work would recall that Lonergan distinguishes between two kinds of history: the history that happens and the history that is written. The latter is written from the former and the two form a part. The history that happens begins with the creation of Adam and Eve, God's entry into history and humanity's reception of God (*via receptionis*, in Thomistic phrase), and continues into the foreseeable future,<sup>125</sup> to the time when the Christ-event (*via motionis*) definitively exercises an influence on the world.<sup>126</sup> All history is unified in Christ; Christ permeates all history.<sup>127</sup> Lonergan sees the Christ-event "as happening not only in thirty short years under Augustus and his successors, but as happening in the preparation for those thirty years that began two millennia earlier...; in the countless prehistoric millennia of the past and the millennia, possibly countless of the future."<sup>128</sup>

The logic of the Christ-event, for Lonergan, is simple. Christianity is "the community that results from the outer communication of

harmful opinions." It would seem that O'Collins writings on interreligious dialogue is an attempt to make remove and make clearer "ambiguities" and "difficulties" contained in Dupuis' work.

<sup>120</sup> Lonergan, "Christology Today," 86.

<sup>121</sup> Bernard Lonergan, "Mission and Spirit," in *A Third Collection*, 23-34, 24.

<sup>122</sup> See Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 176-321.

<sup>123</sup> Lonergan, "Mission and Spirit," 26.

<sup>124</sup> Crowe, *Christ and History*, 166.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 171-72.

Christ’s message and from the inner gift of God’s love.”<sup>129</sup> But salvation is possible for anyone who accepts God’s offer of love and loves God back “without qualifications or conditions or reservations or limits,”<sup>130</sup> regardless of their religion. It is what Rahner describes thus, “Anyone who does not close himself to God in an ultimate act of his life and his freedom through free and personal sin for which he is really and subjectively guilty and for which he cannot shirk responsibility, this person finds his salvation.”<sup>131</sup> Thus, Lonergan opens up a pastoral outreach—dialogue with non-Christian religions.

### Conclusion

The question of Christ, God-man, is a question that for Lonergan is at once theological, anthropological, and methodological.<sup>132</sup> O’Collins’ *Christology* addresses only the theological and anthropological aspects of this question, leaving the third, the methodological aspect, unresolved. Lonergan’s evolutionary understanding of what a person is and what “presence” means helps bring clarity to our understanding of Christ’s “presence” in Christianity and non-Christian religions—a clarification that furthers Christology and his attempt at pastoral outreach to non-Christian religions.

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<sup>129</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 361.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>131</sup> Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 143.

<sup>132</sup> Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, 5.