Conceiving Presence in evolution as pure being, energy, and act may not lend itself to ascribing self-limitation. Nonetheless, if this Presence is *personal*, having the qualities and activities of *self*hood such as loving, accepting, forgiving, and empowering, might self-limitation also bear experiential credibility? The point is, once Presence is deemed personal, it implies a beingness to which one can impute certain qualities, including self-limitation. If the experience of Presence is experientially flexible, labeling insights as bogus seems a stretch.

Clearly, the limits of this review cannot do justice to the contribution that Roger Haight makes to theology and spirituality in *Faith and Evolution*. His expositions of the world revealed by science and of what I term "knowing and naming" in science and faith laid a firm foundation for his unfolding project. Haight's insights on the coherence of the immanent creativity of God, Spirit, and grace and his proposals concerning Christology "from within" are incisive and thought-provoking. I was intrigued by the absence of explicit engagement with the construct of "Trinity," as well as by the brevity of his treatment of panentheism. Each piqued curiosity and the desire for dialogue. Although, as T. S. Eliot wrote, words "strain, crack and sometimes break under the burden" of the mysteries of God in the context of evolution, Haight's engagement stimulates innovative approaches to imaging God and the God-world relationship and offers a broad point of entry into the mystery of God in a religiously and theologically pluralistic world.

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## IV.  Faith Encounters Scientific Culture: A Mutually Critical Correlation?

I enjoyed this book and wrestled with it. It delivers what we have come to expect from Roger Haight. The text strives for—and usually attains—precision of definition, clarity about presuppositions, lucidity of prose, and a relentless drive toward the consequences of the argument thus laid out. There are gaps and arguments that need to be developed further, as Haight himself recognizes, yet this is inevitable given the complexity of the field (debates in the philosophy of science over terms such as "emergence" or over directionality in evolutionary processes are extensive and ongoing). In the end, though, I could not buy into the book's project as a whole, however much I learned from many parts of it (such as the sections on

*creatio ex nihilo*). Here I discuss three loci of hesitation and disagreement: the precise identification of the two partners in the "friendly, critical exchange" (51) that Haight proposes, the pervasive use of the argumentative trope of anthropomorphism, and the eschatology proposed against the horizon of evolutionary time.

First, then, who are the partners in this conversation? Haight describes his project as "theological construction within the constraints of what may be considered a culture influenced by science" (x); elsewhere he speaks of a scientific culture (43), or "the perspective of the inquirer, one who has appropriated scientific culture and seeks to understand Christian faith from within that perspective" (43). Or, in discussing original sin, he uses "North American intellectual culture" (117). He admits that he is leaving "scientific culture" vague, although he elaborates that it refers "more to the secular culture that uses the technology and gradually internalizes the worldview of the many scientific venues that influence us through education, communication, and industry" (43 n. 15). This vagueness leads to slippage and ambiguity at a number of points in the argument. For example, Haight claims that a "scientifically conscious culture" (yet another term) "assumes that cultural matrices are so complex that there cannot be one exclusive way of understanding anything, but that any valid position could be explained or justified on the basis of principle and evidence" (29). But this is precisely what "scientific culture," at least as we find it today, does *not* assume, or even allow, particularly as represented by figures like E. O. Wilson and Steven Pinker. To be sure, Haight rules out "reductionism" of any kind, whether from the side of religion or from science (46–48). Yet, I was surprised by how often and easily he lets Wilson, Pinker, and others off the hook, and even takes their assertions as ingredients for his own synthesis as opposed to often acerbic expressions for traditional Christian language—"baby language for God" (whereas science gives us "mature and measured language," 70). For example, remarking, without critique, that E. O. Wilson believed that "human nature can be completely deciphered by evolutionary science" (23), he goes on to endorse Wilson's claim that human beings are innately aggressive as "not extreme," (24) more puzzling because Haight had just dismissed on methodological grounds counterevidence of altruistic alliances, friendship, and empathy, that at least troubles this assertion (22–23). In the same section, he adduces, without comment, Steven Pinker's claim that "this momentous fact [of our evolutionary origins] *explains our deepest striving*" (23, emphasis added). Other examples abound.

In short, I was looking for more of a *mutually* critical correlation, particularly when it comes to "scientific culture." This is the perspective that Pope Francis took up in *Laudato Si'*, in praising science but critiquing the

"technocratic paradigm" by which science has come to exercise its power in culture. To be sure, Haight does concede that his is a more one-directional movement: he is more interested in the critical questions that a scientific culture raises for Christian faith than vice versa. One might see his project as the *beginning* of a conversation. Yet this bracketing of the problematic character of scientific culture elides other possible explanations for resistance to science on the part of Christian faith, which he consistently critiques. Could it not be the case that at least *some* Christians who resist "scientific culture" and its vision of our world, and continue to find the traditional symbols and beliefs of Christian faith deeply sustaining, do so not because of immaturity, naiveté, or a failure of imagination (139), but because they quite perceptively sense the reductionism and virtual Manichaeism of Pinker and Wilson, and others of their type, or because they are reacting to the modern world, with its objectification and instrumentalization of nature (including human nature), processes for which "scientific culture" bears a good deal of the responsibility?

A second concern centers on the pervasive argumentative trope of anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism in God language is the cardinal sin for much of this book's argument. Here too there is slippage. At one point Haight defines "anthropomorphism" as "the reduction of transcendent Presence to finite conceptualization" (40) and connects it thereby with the tradition of negative theology. Later, however, anthropomorphism describes not "finite conceptualization," but envisaging "transcendent reality, specifically God, in terms of the human" (48). It is now not "finite conceptualization" (which would include "creative presence"), but "familiar personal characteristics" that require dialectical qualification or even excision in the name of negative theology. This strikes me as problematic. Like any finite conceptualization, understanding and relating to God as a person will have its dangers; but the same is true of "creative presence," and Haight devotes a good deal of space to attending to those dangers. He seems unwilling, however, to admit that the same work could be done with respect to person language, often simply asserting that it results in thinking of a big person up in the sky. Yet this kind of work *has* been done throughout the Christian tradition, for example in creative linkages of negative theology with various forms of apophatic mysticism, resolutely affirming in its practice and language that God is a person, while equally resisting the reduction of God's personhood to human personhood.

My point is not in itself a rejection of Haight's option to work with the metaphor of creative presence, but it is a rejection of his assertion that the work of negative theology cannot operate with more directly personal language or at least a call for further argument on that point. There are, however, cogent

reasons to hold on to "person language," even in a scientific culture. Haight explains the procedure of negative theology as "a *realistic* projection of the actual character of Presence experienced within ourselves, broadly guided by the mediating symbol, and applying it in a sense that we cannot comprehend" (40–41), to which I would add mediating *practices* in the context of which faith knowledge with its symbols is verified insofar as "it works" (41). It seems to me that in this process the theologian should try to stay as close as possible to the actual language and practices of people of faith. The practices I have in mind are various traditions and practices of Christian prayer. In these practices God is experienced and addressed as a person, not a presence, a person who can be held to account, as in traditions of lament and complaint, and often is experienced as painfully *absent* as in mystical traditions of affliction and abandonment by God.[30] These traditions seem to me to be very relevant today, and are potent instantiations of Johann Baptist Metz's assertion that the language of prayer is far broader and bolder than the language of theology. We need this boldness. To use a scientific metaphor, just as it is important to preserve biodiversity in ecosystems, we should preserve as much "theo-diversity" as possible in the Christian tradition, and person language for God, dialectically applied, is not only closer to the actual experience and practices that theology serves, but better able to preserve this theo-diversity.

What does one do when one has the insight that "serendipitous creativity" is the ground of the emergence of the coronavirus, which is indeed ingeniously (creatively?) crafted to afflict human beings, particularly given the patterns and structures of late modernity (international travel, large cities), and to do so in such a way as to make its own "preferential option for the poor"? Powerful, hope-giving responses include lament, complaint, and protest, as with Job—but these correlate more closely with person than presence. Or even apocalyptic crying out ("O that you would tear open the heavens and come down"). To preserve and continue to learn from these responses from the history of symbols and practices in Christian spirituality, it is important for theology to stay close to the ground, as it were, and maintain language for God as *a* person, while also maintaining that the way that God is a person is not the way we are persons. And, to repeat, I see no reason why it is intrinsically less possible to work dialectically with this language than with abstract and apersonal (but still finite) conceptualizations like presence and creativity.

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[30] See, for instance, Bernard McGinn, *"Vere tu es Deus absconditus*: The Hidden God in Luther and Some Mystics," in *Silence and The Word: Negative Theology and Incarnation*, eds. Oliver Davies and Denys Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94–114.

Because I have veered into issues of theodicy and apocalyptic, I close these reflections by referring to the one who most passionately made those themes the center of his theology: Johann Baptist Metz. Metz did not have a negative view of science (227), but he did have a negative view of evolution that had become a new mythology and quasi-metaphysics of time in modern culture. On his reading, in modernity's temporality, governed by the logic of evolution, "Catastrophes are reported on the radio in between pieces of music. The music plays on like the 'passage of time' rendered audible, rolling over everything mercilessly, impossible to interrupt. 'When atrocities happen it's like when the rain falls. No one shouts 'stop it!' anymore' (Bertolt Brecht)."[31] For him, evolution, as a cultural myth about temporality, is like the music playing soothingly on, interspersed by a mass extinction here, a genocide there, a plague here, a lynching there. Thus, for him: "The shortest definition of religion: interruption."[32] And also, for him, the continuing relevance of those most unruly symbols for modern evolutionary consciousness: apocalypticism and the temporality it projects. Of course, there are immense problems in continuing to argue these symbols, but I find myself in agreement with Metz that *especially* in a culture where science has come to have the authority it has, it is important for theologians to be productively out of step with the times and to tarry just a little bit longer with Christian symbols and practices like these (including original sin) that do not appear to make sense in modern, scientific culture, both to preserve the theo-diversity of the tradition and also to resist the dehumanization that scientific culture (not, to be sure, science) is bringing so many. Of course, if one is *too* far out of step, then that "noncontemporaneity" loses its productivity, and so it is a judgment call. In the end, as much as I admire it, I judge that Haight's attempt needs more.

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[31] Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 157.
[32] Ibid., 158.