

**Mark Wallace “Re-enchanting the World” Zoom Chats (first names only)
February 26, 2023 – The in-session chats, then a post-session Poem, and more Questions**

In-session Chats

From Dean (he, him) to Everyone:

Feel free to put your questions in the chat as they occur to you, while Mark is speaking.

From David to Everyone:

How does the discussion change if we move the center of the argument from the earth to the cosmos?

From Dean (he, him) to Everyone:

If earth survives the extinction of humans, then does God not remain, despite all the damage we have done to God through our destruction of the habitable aspects of earth?

From Dianne to Everyone:

You began with talking about the necessary of mindfulness. Are you talking about being mindful of God in and through our world and beyond?

From Laurie G to Everyone:

Dr. Wallace’s insistence on Holy Spirit’s incarnation in more-than-human life also shatters the illusion of human exceptionalism

From Bill to Everyone:

Foundational to my theology is that all of creation not just exists because of God the Creator and should thus have our respect....but that all of creation CONSISTS of God and thus is sacred and should have, beyond respect, our reverence..... Colossians 1:16-17 KJV

for by God were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by God, and for God: and God is before all things, and by/through God all things CONSIST.” :-)

From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:

No worries

From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:

YES

From Rod (he/him) to Everyone:

In classic theology, "pantheism" is used - God in all things, but God also beyond. Do you feel that idea simply collapses onto pantheism or animism?

From Lizzie (she/her) to Everyone:

There’s another Berry, Thomas Berry, that I recommend reading.

I've been working for Rights of Nature efforts these last many years.

Understanding the worth of all persons means the worth of all persons, two legged, four legged, many legged, no legged, ... not as objects, not nature to be tortured as Francis Bacon stated, but subjects with rights—the right to exist, flourish and regenerate.

From Claudia to Everyone:

If we don't have time to talk about the TREE example, could you at least share the scripture reference?

From Paul to Everyone:

Mark 8:22-25

From Laurie G to Everyone:

As a biologist in my previous life, I have become deeply drawn to the depth of the symbol of the Tree of Life ... this symbol that begins and ends the biblical witness is the symbol that grounds evolutionary understandings of the deep kinship of all biological creatures and, among the mystics, especially in the Kabbala, a symbol that points to the 10 faces of God ... I'm also a tree lover, and I know I'm not alone in this group ... So, this is a long way of saying, I'd love to hear what you wanted to tell us about trees!

From David & Jan to Everyone:

When the lioness kills the lamb to feed her babies does that make the lamb a commodity? Is the lioness killing god?

From Lynn to Everyone:

me too.

From Andrew to Everyone:

Do we need to stop referring to animals, birds and fish as stock or commodity but as species?

From Gil to Everyone:

Does the use and over use of 'God' a noun interfere with the Essence of Being that can only be describe with adjectives to free us from the bondage of defining God in our own image

From Michael to Everyone:

From my perspective, If God was likened to the sun, and a human was a mirror, reflecting that sun, it could reflect light and heat, but the sun in the sky does not come down into the mirror. Doctrine and Covenants Section 9a says "Wherefore, verily I say unto you, that all things unto Me are Spiritual..."


And so, this metaphor of sun and mirror can be applied to all things. But like the metaphor, God, in this metaphoric form of the sun, in His fullness – whatever we may understand that to be – in my thinking does not come down out of the Heavens into the mirror; rather everything is a reflection of and a manifestation of His attributes.

A plant has no eyes to see or ears to hear, so is the plant oblivious to our existence ? Likewise a dog is aware of our existence, but you could not explain to the dog that the earth

rotates around the Sun, or how to create a computer microchip, so the dog is oblivious to our science. So too, like the plants being oblivious to our existence to some extent, we are immersed in the

From Michael to Everyone:
Sorry, Section 28 verse 9a

From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:
You probably don't want ALL of the comments preserved

From Brad to Everyone:


From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:
So many saying come to mind....like "make it plain." And "Talk don't cook rice."

Laurie to Everyone:
Seek ye first the KIN-DOM of God ...

From Bill - Salem, OR to Everyone:
Mark - Thanks for your presentation and thoughts which very much resonated with me/my theology. Blessings to you and may your blessings and "thin places" be many :-).

From Dean (he, him) to Everyone:
Mary, I appreciate your practical demand for doing what makes sense!

From Lizzie (she/her) to Everyone:
Thank you kindly for this important session!

From Justice to Everyone:
Thanks for a new perspective to this attendee. Some interesting information to process.

From Sue Ann (she/her) to Everyone:
Thank you for a thought-provoking and stimulating session!

From Vonda to Everyone:
Have really appreciated this session. It resonates deeply with my personal philosophy about nature

From Nancy to Everyone:
In chaos theory I see the unity in all the cosmos, tree branches and roots, clouds, our blood vessels and nerves... galaxies and dispersion of cosmic gases viewed by Webb telescope...etc and etc... thank you Mark for the amazing confirmation of my spiritual and Christian journey.

From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:

Thank you for your sharing, and your vulnerability...your testimony and connection to nature.

From Nancy to Everyone:

I have spiritual encounters with hummingbirds

From Mary W *she/her* REST to Everyone:

Stay safe...Happy Black History Month

From Colleen to Everyone:

many thanks

From Nancy to Everyone:

Wonderful and powerful session

From Mary J to Everyone:

Deep thanks. Mark!!

Poem and Comments Received After the Session

After the Storm

by Lynn Capling

After the storm I went for a walk,
To greet you God in the sunshine.
I paused at a tree,
Alive with the song of a hundred winter birds.
I wondered if they too felt gratitude
for the mystery, the magic, the Divine in the sunshine.
Or if that was you God,
singing to me.
Thanking me for coming to greet the magic and mystery
of you in creation.

Lorrie L:

This presentation blessed my soul!! So good and, yes, I would really like to hear him share his understanding of how God is incarnate in trees!!

Carolyn:

Mark Wallace is good. Interesting that these are not new thoughts for some of us in C of C. The term animism might be new to describe it. But it's part of the spirit and element, sacred

creation, panentheistic worldview that some of us have realized by reading with green eyes. He's certainly adding some eloquent language and layers to it. So opening our eyes a bit wider. And for some maybe first time they've thought of it this way. He's a great speaker.

Love the feathered language.

Powerful idea, too, that we continue to crucify God's body. The earth and the cosmos is God's body - Sally McFague idea. She did a powerful talk at an environmental conference on similar topic some years ago.

Some Additional (Very Nerdy) Questions

VNQ 1:

Native American Robin Wall Kimmerer's shares the struggle and the insights that have come with learning her native Potawatomi dialect (an Anishinaabe language, related to Ojibwe) in two essays ("Learning the Grammar of Animacy and "Kinship is a Verb").

In her native language, case is assigned (to verbs as well as nouns) as animate or inanimate. Animate applies to natural entities, "things" that we call "created," including all persons – humans, more-than-human animals, and plants, as well as stones, mountains, rivers, bays, etc. Furthermore, 70% of the language consists of verbs (vs 30% in English). So to reference "a bay", Kimmerer says, one says "to be a bay ..." thus maintaining a sense of (dynamic!) life flowing through this place where earth and ocean meet.

On the other hand, the inanimate (static!) case is only applied to made objects, humanly constructed things: an airplane, a table, etc. "You hear a person with a word that is completely different from the one with which you hear an airplane," she says. ("Learning the Grammar of Animacy," *Braiding Sweetgrass*, p. 53)

English is so problematic, so limited, when making the arguments for animism.

In your vision of Christian animacy, would a similar distinction between animate and inanimate hold? (You seem to recognize animacy in the work of artisans, for instance) And do you have any thoughts on how language needs to evolve so that it has the capacity to more ably point towards God's dynamic, living enfleshment within all creation?

VNQ 2 (abbreviated):

A challenge of Christian animism (or so it seems to me) that recognizes God's enfleshment in the Dove is how to simultaneously claim unviolated, distinctive personhood for that particular creature while at the same time affirming her incarnation as God.

Does / how does agency and choice come into the picture?? Not just for the human Jesus, but especially for more-than-humans ... like the Dove? Does the Dove exercise some form of choice to carry the message of Belovedness to Jesus at the river?

Might / how might the *coincidentia oppositorum* of the Christian mystics help us hold *both* the distinct personhood of an individual creature and, at the same time, the essential indistinction / unity of God's embodiment in/with/as/through creation.

VNQ3:

What distinguishes various forms of panentheism is how that little word “in” (in the panentheistic formula “God is *in* all things, and all things are *in* God”) is understood. Christian animism seems to allow the claim of God’s within-ness in creation to penetrate further than most other renditions of panentheism. Is the same true on the other side of the dialectic? Could you say more about the other side of the dialectic in Christian animism? How do you as a Christian animist imagine/name/point to God’s “within-ness” in creation, while also holding it in a fully balanced tension with the opposite proposition of creation’s “within-ness” in God?

VNQ4 (abbreviated):

Given the difficulty of maintaining a robust dialectic (without collapsing into one side of the paradox or the other) I wonder about turning to the Christian mystics to further explore a non-dualistic framework for Christian animism.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for instance, named the Holy One from his prison cell as the “Beyond in the Midst.” In this formulation (and others), incarnation could be understood as the pivot point that holds the dialectic of divinity’s transcendent “beyondness” and immanent, intimate “being-in-the-midst” as a single whole. Does that hold any relevance for Christian animism, where God’s incarnation is revered as the central affirmation of Christian faith?

Then there’s Francis of Assisi who had no patience whatsoever for metaphysics. His life is told with robust, earthy stories about reverent kinship with God’s sacred creation; and he preached voluntary simplicity as a lifeway that fosters deep care for creation.

I guess I’m really just asking about the value of dialogue between Christian animism and the dialectical intuitions of the Christian mystics. I notice with interest your work with Hildegard in *When God is a Bird*, for instance. Might / how might such (presumably on-going) conversations with “negative theology” deepen our understanding of God as “in” but “not in,” and ultimately “not not in” creation? Or is the truth of Christian animism simply best encountered through direct experience of the natural world, by steeping in its earthy sacredness and allowing ourselves to be transformed through re-enchantment?