Outline

* Gospel is culturally embodied but not contingent upon culture
* His solution is not simply post-liberalism 24-25. Crucially, he sees mission as integral to the Gospel, not subsequent. This is linked to the doctrine of election and Christology
* Gospel is the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus (put quote here regarding the beginning of Christianity). This does not mean that the church is in ‘possession’ of the truth. But this does not answer the suspicion of an underlying positivist epistemology. We need to explore the epistemology offered by LN, drawing upon MP in particular
* A-criticality, givenness and personal commitment as the basis for critical reason (rationality) – summary (detail later)
* Only if this is eschewed is historical truth separated from timeless metaphysical truth, and all the other dichotomies eg believing vs knowing
* The success of natural science depends upon isolating the study of cause and effect relations from the question of purpose. [Insert section on Nancey Murphy’s comments on teleology and purpose in her response essay to Early et al.]
* In turn, one is able to argue that the ‘rationality’ of the universe is a construct of the observer… Kant. (The answer to this as I hope to show with Paul LaMontagne’s work on Critical Realism is ‘yes and no’)
* But LN argues that in Polanyi’s account of *Personal Knowledge* there is an epistemology that integrates many of these dichotomies.
  + Critique of doubt / necessity of belief and personal commitment 19-20
  + ‘facts are interpreted facts’ 21
  + personal knowledge is both objective and subjective 22-24 (fn this is both an affirmation of pluralism as human freedom and a radical challenge to it as an epistemological foundation 25-26)
  + our need for language to ‘know’ reality and make ‘true’ statements further underlines the illusory nature of a separation of “we know” and “some people believe” (?fn critique of Russell 30-32). We accept language and indwell it a-critically in order to know. It is risky, incomplete and open to criticism and refinement, even abandonment. But the reality is not in question, only the truthfulness of our statements 33-38 and 39-49 passim
  + what is indwelt in the Christian community is a truth that extends beyond cause and effect to purpose 49-51
  + There is no “supracultural rationaility” 55 or “disembodied reason” 57, but this is not complete relativism because “tradition is not ultimate” 55-57 (fn cf critical realism of PLM)
  + Facts are theory-laden within historical traditions 58 Coherence is intuited… *revealed*? 59-60
    - Personal knowledge and autonomous reason 60-61
    - Karl Barth, natural theology and danger of setting revelation vs reason 62
  + Christian tradition of rationality 63-65
* “If God does not act in history, what meaning can there be in saying that God acts at all? And if there is no category in which we can speak of God acting, what meaning can we attach to the word “God”?”69
  + cause and effect does not explain fully 69
  + God reveals himself in history, but not all history reveals God 71 (links to logic of election.) But to say this requires an account of meaning in history 72
  + Specifically, the Christian affirms that to know God’s purpose for human beings, we must attend “to the particular events and words which communicate that purpose” 73
  + No *a priori* rational ground for locating this in the community of Israel and the church, but there is a rational ground for saying that it must be a specific community 74
  + Barr’s critique assumes a reductionist approach leads to truth. In fact, it leads nowhere. The missing epistemological pivot is that I make a personal commitment to this truth, this community, his historical tradition of knowing. The scandal of particularity is that it is only possible because God has chosen me to. 74-77
  + Johannine account of this 78-79
* “We can only understand the biblical teaching about election if we see it as part of the whole way of understanding the human situation which is characteristic of the Bible. … there is no attempt to see the human person as an autonomous individual, and the human relation with God as the relation of the alone to the alone. From its very beginning the Bible sees human life in terms of relationships. There is no attempt to strip away the accidents of history in order to find the real essence of what it is to be human. Human life is seen in terms of mutual relationships …