

## Humus 10 Fr.Crowe's "The Christian Message Begins"

Humus 12, hopefully opens us to a richer existential asking of the concluding question of the previous Humus, about 8 millennia's goings-on: it concludes the sketching we mused over with *Humus 6*, and heads towards the discomfiting etchings of the following collaborative essays. Here we pause further, modestly, over that curious but enlightening suggestion that Crowe's efforts are more research than history. We edge into his first chapter with that in mind. But the issue all along is **context**: an actual nest of questions and answers<sup>1</sup> that is the desired mindset of the future functional collaborator. Crowe's Introduction gave us the very suggestive context of a genetic sequence that carry the book forward. The problem I, and I hope we, can nurse gently towards etching through these last sketching essays is that the suggestive context remains a descriptive context, a context that somehow needs pulling up by its own boots-traps, in a fresh liberty.<sup>2</sup> All I can do in this sketching is to point towards that trapping in the writing and reading of, say, this beginning chapter of Crowe's reaching and invitation to reach.

But sketching that 12-page chapter is certainly problematic. My musing led me to the value of some few quotations for your ingestion. Do they warrant the suspicion that what is really going on here is a type of researching tied to a trapped description? Well, why not just start with such a question lurking over the first nine lines of the chapter:

"This chapter, which assumes as its task the study of the origins of the Christian word,

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<sup>1</sup>*Method in Theology*, 163-4, 183-4. The emphasis given in these essays to the molecularity of the subject points to a considerable complexification of the meaning of "nest". You might be helped by replacing the word "organism" in that favorite page of mine in *Insight*, page 464[489] : "Study of the organism begins ...." Psychic nesting is the object of a nest of studies ranging from neurochemistry to refinements of understanding of mysticisms.

<sup>2</sup>Place the word *liberty* in the context of two of Lonergan's uses of it. There is it mention in his longing for cosmopolis: "there is such a thing as progress and its principle is liberty" (*Insight*, 234[259]), Then it occurs, in our massively new context of functional distinctions, in the third line of that familiar diagram-sketch on page 48 of *Method in Theology*. The issue in these short essays is the operative intussusception of the meaning of that line, the open endless lifting, *orientation* and *conversion*, of *personal relations*, through new patternings of nerved talk, to ontogenetic and phylogentic and eschatological growth. It is the push to add Finnegans Wake to the Ulysses of *Insight*, and beyond that to an dark anticipation of the Paradiso, imaged in Joyce's unwritten reach for a Dantesque finale.

proceeds in two phases. It will describe the situation in which that word originally presents itself for study by the historian; and it will describe the first stage of history, the form of the word that was destined to be the antecedent of historical movement. A general picture of the original situation can be gained through a rough inventory of elements pertaining to the word, set against the background of the general mentality of the early church.”<sup>3</sup>

Add to this the statement of purpose: “The purpose is a general sketch, a kind of rough inventory, an overall view that, though static, will be the immediate context for a concentration on what was going forward.”<sup>4</sup>

It seems best to halt with those two quotations, although one could delve deeper by considering problems of “the act of naming” mentioned twice on **Crowe** 15.<sup>5</sup> Is there some sense in which the entire book becomes acts of sophisticated naming that, within the Tower of mature theology, are to belong to talk of researchers to interpreters? Yet the book seems, in the final analysis, to slide past this spirally demand for richer concrete context, to direct these acts of naming towards a future disorientation of searchers and students?

The disorientation is away from Lonergan’s challenge regarding the new context sketched by him, a “sketch calling forth rather vigorous resistance”<sup>6</sup> among his disciples. The new context, like “tensor fields and eigenfunctions”<sup>7</sup> is “sheer mystery”<sup>8</sup> to people quite content with Lonergan’s strategically descriptive ramble in chapter 7 of *Method in Theology*.

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<sup>3</sup>**Crowe**, 7.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>5</sup>This leads us into the problem of description mentioned in note 1 of *Humus* 9.

<sup>6</sup>*Insight*, 581[603]. When the resistance is unattended to it is more dangerous. See, for example, the volume *Lonergan’s Hermeneutics. Its Development and Application*, edited by Sean McEventue and Ben Meyer, The Catholic University of America Press, 1989.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 581[604]. Lonergan’s use of the word *mystery* does not have the meaning he was pushing for in section one of that chapter, the meaning I return to in the final paragraph of the next *Humus*. It is, rather, a pointing to the articulation of patterns of non-vigorous resistance to the discomfiting call to understanding. The sick superego strikes again!