

Humus 11 “The Word of God As Truth”<sup>1</sup>

Although I take as title here that of single chapter of **Crowe**, this is not the beginning of a sub-series that works through his book. These little preludes are brief mooded melodies, hints of future symphonic meaning. And the title here is certainly symphonic: further, it is echoed in all the titles of the remaining chapters. Further the core problem of this chapter is echoed right on through those chapters. What is that core issue? It is the search for an adequate context, indeed a context for research. But let us carry that bent and that puzzle into the first paragraph of Fr. Crowe’s chapter.

“Two centuries after the beginnings, the Christian message, now handed down and accessible primarily in the scripture of Old and New Testament, is firmly established as the word of God, and the sacred writers are universally conceived to have written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, just as the prophets are conceived to have spoken under his influence. That is the net result of the previous chapter, and on that basis we ask: *What is the direction of the next step? Is it possible to find a theme that focuses the ongoing theology of the word at this point and will provide a **context** for the themes that will emerge later in history?*”<sup>2</sup>

So, he moves forward in a search for context, a search that climbs along through an apparent functional history, but that can be recognized, from the larger context that we are pushing for, and with a degree of luminous recognition that depends on the slow results in each of us of that push, as rather, a peculiar type of research.

Part of that peculiarity is Crowe’s pedagogical style, something which makes the book wonderfully readable.<sup>3</sup> But it leaves a discomfiting ambivalence. He is definitely not writing for

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<sup>1</sup>The title of the third chapter of **Crowe**.

<sup>2</sup>**Crowe**, 43. The italics and bold-face are mine.

<sup>3</sup>On this, see James Pambrun, “Revelation and Interiority: The Contribution of Frederick E.Crowe. S.J.”, *Theological Studies* 67 (2006), 320- 44. The question lurking within Crowe’s work is the complex one of both “initial meanings” (see *Insight*, 544[567], note 5) and the place and character of rich description in both common sense and the Tower of serious understanding. See notes 7 and 8 below.

professions but for grateful students when he remarks that “we have the task of exegesis to explain in terms more adapted to our understanding what really is being said.”<sup>4</sup> And on the next page he is not heavy in his demands regarding “the use of the word ‘truth’ in this chapter. Our meaning is the plain and simple one that we intend when we speak of ‘the true state of affairs,’ or that we translate into other words when we say that we want to ‘get at the facts’”.<sup>5</sup>

So I move here, as I intend to do again in *Humus* 12, by way of contrast, simply by calling attention to the problem of truth as it emerges in *Insight*. Perhaps you might risk identifying that emergence before venturing on here? “The real is, then, is truth” and it emerges in a historical fullness from the last powerful paragraph of section 17.1 of *Insight*. A main 5 points are tackled in section 2, but what concerns us is the last main point, “(6) the truth of interpretation,”<sup>6</sup> which is held over to section 3 of the chapter, a massively elusive zone.

But the trouble we are dealing with right through these twelve short essays is that which lurks in the first section of that seventeenth chapter, something that I have noted over the years, but now has opened up to me, in me, in a fresh molecular “come about,” (about)<sup>3</sup>, intensity.<sup>7</sup> The longer cycle of decline has put the squeeze on molecules’ exigence for mystery, the cosmic zeal that is the vestige of a trinitarian call patterned, in the recent ten million years, by spirit’s imaging of that companionship. There is no such thing, in finitude, as the ordinary. Every common site may take on the *Kabod* of a dream of morning: but we must reach from *can* to *may* in the collaboration of that region of culture that I have named the Tower of Able.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Crowe, 43.

<sup>5</sup>Crowe, 44.

<sup>6</sup>*Insight*, 549[572].

<sup>7</sup>I raise here again the issue of accelerating adult growth and explanatory imaging. See *Lack in the Beingstalk*, 161-63. Without a controlling imaging linked to the minding of the “comeabout”( *Insight* 514 [537]) - for me, heavily chemical - one is battered into a shrunken adulthood of worshiped description, not legitimate as a life-style if one has Tower pretensions.

<sup>8</sup>The implicit reference is to Lonergan’s comment on Wordsworth, *Insight* 532[556]. The naming of the Tower, and the Can Tower, is more than a naming: it is an aiming at Fortress Superego, the chemical pattern called image that presents and preserves axial anxiety.