

## LONERGAN GATHERINGS 12

### Finality, Love, Courage

Questions have been raised about comments I made in this past decade about problems in Lonergan's "Finality, Love, Marriage."<sup>1</sup> In particular I suggested, in *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, that issues there could be faced in an essay of the above title.<sup>2</sup> Instead of *marriage* there is the word *courage* in that title. What do they mean? The context of the meaning of *marriage* can be taken initially to be that given by Lonergan in that 1943 essay. The meaning of *courage* may recall to you Socrates, and what I had in mind when I concocted the title was the sublation of the Socratic attitude into a serious contemporary theoretic of the fourth, middle, gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously, I am not going to "solve" the problems in this short appeal: I simply point here, for starters, to the need to read carefully- reaching gallantly (see note 15's quotation from Lonergan's early appeal) for the context of what I call *The Standard Model* – section 4.4 (pp. 49-51, *CWL 4, Collection*) of "Finality, Love, Marriage." That standard model is the topic of the book mentioned in the next footnote, which merges *Insight* and *Method* into the Allure of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> P. McShane, *The Allure of the Compelling Genius of History*, Axial Publications, 2015. The issue was raised in footnote 15, page 39, and perhaps it adds a useful context to quote the footnote fully here. " 'Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his' (the second to last line of Hopkins' 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire'). But I would have you think differently of that loveliness, like the little boy did in his telling of the story of St. Vincent in the 2014 film of that name, with St. Vincent played by Bill Murray. I recall now quite vividly Fred Crowe speaking to me on the day of the assassination of Robert Kennedy, "some day we may come to speak of people like him as saints." We desperately need to step out of the flow of mythic thinking regarding "the just man justices" (Hopkins, *op. cit.*, line 9). But that is grist for a later mill. It will take courage, the fourth gift of the spirit, a courage that needs to be bred in the full Christian community. This is true especially in the shambles of myths regarding sexuality's place in the cosmic groaning of *Romans* 8:22. There is a quite large lift to be given to Lonergan's efforts of "Finality, Love, Marriage": perhaps an essay titled, "Finality, Love, Courage." The reach of trees, the lust of bees, the homing of salmon, the rutting of beasts and boys and girls, need to be swept up into towering luminous graceful activities of "craving" ("Finality, Love, Marriage," *CWL 4*, page 49, line 17) in human beings, unleashing new levels of recognition and joy."

<sup>3</sup> This is a hugely difficult topic of self-identification (see notes 13 and 14 below): one gets the hint of a start in *Quodlibet* 3, "Being Breathless and Late in Talking about Virtue." One lifts what

I had hoped to avoid tackling this essay myself, whether briefly or in the massive way that, as we shall see, it warrants. But the issue came up while I was writing a *Festschrift* essay in honor of Brendan Lovett, “For the Joy Set Before Us of Effective Field-fostering Reviewing” to be published in the month of March, 2016.<sup>4</sup> A centerpiece of that essay was a reviewing—in a peculiar sense that emerged there and that is to emerge here—a recent volume by Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self. An Essay on ‘On the Trinity’* (sic).<sup>5</sup>

The issue, lurking in the title of *Coakley I*, could not be fitted into the already dense *Festschrift* article, which is certainly a context for my effort here. Best pick up on that context in its final pages, which talk of contemplation in a manner that supplements my ventures in *Loneran Gatherings 3* and *5*.<sup>6</sup> So I quote a footnote, footnote 57, from page 21 of my website version of the *Festschrift* article to lead us forward. The footnote is to a passage on contemplation in *Coakley I* which ends with her phrase “instigates an acute awareness of the messy entanglement of sexual desire and desire for God.”<sup>7</sup> My footnote reads:

Here, again, there is a liberating road to be taken. Critics of Coakley rightly point to the slimness of her discussion of sexuality, granted the title of this volume. But it is a topic cramped by abominable ancient and contemporary mythologies. I regularly refer to the nudging of

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is meant by the residence in us of the Third Person of the Trinity into the startling and starting world of subject-as-molecular-subject in an Agenbite of InWithTo Subjects.

<sup>4</sup> For your convenience, I have made the essay available on my website at the same time as this *Loneran Gatherings 12*. It is to be found in [‘Online Publications: Website Articles.’](#) It was Brendan himself who recommended the book by Coakley mentioned immediately. This *Loneran Gatherings 12* essay was written after I finished the *Festschrift* essay, but since the *Festschrift* was a secret enterprise, *Loneran Gatherings 12* had to await the June publication, in the journal *Himig Ugnayan*, and the concomitant celebration, at the Institute of Formative and Religious Education in the Philippines.

<sup>5</sup> Cambridge University Press, 2013. I shall refer to it below as *Coakley I*. It is the first of four volumes. The overall title of the series of volumes is *On Desiring God*. (*Coakley I*, xv)

<sup>6</sup> The venture is an ontic climb, described in the four Appendices of *Allure*.

<sup>7</sup> *Coakley I*, 43.

Lonergan in 'Finality, Love, Marriage' *CWL* 4, 17-52, blocked the next year [by] ecclesiastical mythmakers in Rome (see *ibid.*, 263-4, note x). There needs to be a solid heuristic retrieval of Lonergan work that would open us to the splendor of that 'infinite craving on a finite object' (*ibid.*, 49). I excuse my own slim comment, a demand of brevity, by referred you to the recent addition to my website: *Lonergan Gatherings* 12, 'Finality, Love, Courage,' where I tackle related issues in a way that parallels the work in this essay: a viewing and reviewing of a letter by Lonergan on the issue of contraception.

The meaning of viewing and reviewing is the central topic of the *Festschrift* article, but we have already implicitly met that meaning in an elementary way in *Lonergan Gatherings* 4, "Creeping into Functional Collaboration." Briefly, there is to be a cultural lift of the meaning of viewing and reviewing that places such efforts of meaning in a functional context. In the terms used in *Lonergan Gatherings* 4, with a focus on the first specialty, the viewing and reviewing is for a discovery that leads to the joyful claim, "this is worth recycling!"

Let me slide past the bundle of issues regarding a Standard Model that lurk in this joyful claim and move to presenting the Lonergan Letter on contraception, which letter I add at the conclusion of this short essay. The move, again, appeals to the topic of the paper "For the Joy Set Before Us of Effective Field-fostering Reviewing." In that paper I mention and quote from a variety of letters of Lonergan. The objective was to illustrate and cultivate the lift of culture of viewing and reviewing that goes with functional collaboration, effective of field-fostering viewing. The letter on contraception has been round since 1968 and publically available since its publication in a 1990 Lonergan Newsletter.<sup>8</sup> It has not been seriously revisited, probably because of nervousness regarding the Ecclesiastical ban mentioned above. Think now of ourselves as functional researchers finding this letter's nudge to reconsider human

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<sup>8</sup> Pages 8-9 of *The Lonergan Newsletter*, Vol. 11, no. 1 (March 1990).

conception: might we joyfully claim that it is worth recycling, granted the relief it would bring, e.g., on the African continent? Or granted the relief it would bring generally if fully grasped and cycled into “the messy entanglement of sexual desire and desire for God”<sup>9</sup> that Lonergan treats of densely in “Finality, Love, Marriage”? What was he doing there? He was “engaged in establishing a basic system of reference”<sup>10</sup> for “the space-time multiplication of a unique revelation”<sup>11</sup> that would reach out through thinking, preaching, teaching, about this particular set of patterns of human relating.

Later in that article, he comments as follows in a footnote: “I fear I am rushing through a large and complex historical question. May I say that the views so briefly expressed here do not pretend to settle any issue, but only to indicate that the vast questions involved account not a little for the difficulties of the past in arriving at a satisfactory theory of marriage.”<sup>12</sup>

Twenty-two years later he would move up a methodological level to indicate the full context of dealing with the “very large and complex historical question”. That is the full context that is the central concern of these LG essays. It was the central concern of *Allure*. And in the first chapter of that book there is a lead, a hint, a hent, to the strategy that blocks the entry to that concern. There I present what seems a very simple question: “*How many ways can n married couples be seated about a round table in such a manner that there is always one man between two women and none of the men*

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<sup>9</sup> *Coakley I*, 43. I am repeating a piece of the phrase already quoted. As I do there comes to mind a strategy of repetition that I used both in the Lonergan biography and in *Allure*: you never step into the same phrase twice. Does it not mean massively more after your paws in my footnote from the Lovett article? And might it not slowly rise in effective meaning to ground the courage of disentanglement described at the end of note 14 below?

<sup>10</sup> “Finality, Love, Marriage,” 40.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, note 80.

*is ever next to his wife?*"<sup>13</sup> The challenge is, not only to solve the puzzle but to reach a sufficient mastery to present the solution to a sufficiently cultured audience. The sufficiency is not huge: e.g. there is no calculus involved, but only an elementary grip on combinatorial analysis. "To appropriate truth is to make it one's own .... If one understands one can teach. But the understanding that enables one to teach adds identification to insight."<sup>14</sup> You are, I suspect, not bursting to take a week off to tackle the table puzzle, nor am I pressuring you to do so. But I wish you merely to draw a light parallel. We have a puzzle, in "Finality, Love, Marriage," about married couples: indeed we have the core of the solution that is, we may say,<sup>15</sup> presented pastorally, in Lonergan's letter of 1968. The odd question I am posing now is, Could you present, with improvements on his diagramming, the content of his 1943 essay to an audience?

The issue I am raising is continuous with the issues I raised in *Lonergan Gatherings 4*, "Creeping into Functional Collaboration." It is the issue of competence, of having

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<sup>13</sup> This is a classic mathematical puzzle that I consider at length in "Undermining Macrodynamical Reading," *Journal of Macrodynamical Analysis* 1 (2001), 77-100. If taken with modest seriousness it is a great wake-up call that relates back to my comments in note 9. Common sense can putter with it but there is the shock that, while it needs only elementary combinatorial analysis, it pushes one into another world of serious control of meaning. *Haute vulgarization* is neatly challenged. (See *CWL* 6, 121,155).

<sup>14</sup> *Insight*, 582. The following note ends with Lonergan's early challenge to identification, a challenge expressed for Tower people in *Lonergan Gatherings 5*: the climb of contemplation that heartily identifies our Trinitarian dynamic.

<sup>15</sup> I note a curious twist here. "We may say" does not, in full strictness, include me, when I consider pastoral address in the context of Bell-curve effectiveness. This is a very deep problem of the "cumulative and progressive results" (*Method in Theology*, 4) required in positive statistical distribution by the functional cycle. A great deal of work needs to be done, from the neurodynamics of persuasion up, towards a massive sublation of old traditions of rhetoric. Have we the Ghosted courage to rise to this? "Charity is an eternal fire of optimism and of energy, dismayed at naught, rebuked by none, tireless, determined, deliberate; with deepest thought and unbounded spontaneity charity ever strives, struggles, labours, exhorts, implores, prays for the betterment of the unit action of man, for the effective rule of sweetness and light, for the fuller manifestation of what charity loves, Wisdom Divine, the Word made Flesh" (I quote from the conclusion, of Lonergan, "Essay in Fundamental Sociology" of 1934-5: Michael Shute, *Lonergan's Early Economic Research*, University of Toronto Press, 2010, p. 43).

battled beyond commonsense towards theoretic speaking and writing, indeed that edges towards functional control. I look now at my much-marked photocopy of the 1943 essay, read many times from different and growing perspectives over six decades. I read it yesterday in further astonishment, noting freshly how, for example, Lonergan cuts through muddles of commonsense discussion in note 34.<sup>16</sup> I wrote fresh marginal notes, pushing further detailed issues of the liberation of sexuality. And today it is quite clear to me that such details should be bypassed here: I battle continually with the same problem that Lonergan bent under in the years after 1957: sliding from the norm he implied in his story in Dublin of the lady asking the physicist to tea and asking him to explain general relativity 'in my own simple words: I was never good at mathematics.'<sup>17</sup>

So, too, I pass over the muddles in Sarah Coakley's volume. I am thus reducing the venture, promised in the Lovett *Festschrift* article, of making a contribution towards progress out of this mess. But am I not making a key contribution? The push for light in Lonergan's 1943 essay is worth functional recycling. Such functional recycling is to eventually topple the stupid opinions that seek to tie humanity into mean little views on the practicalities of sexual joy. "Self-sacrificing love of God and of one's neighbor is repentant."<sup>18</sup> "Such repentance is not a merely sensitive feelings of guilt. It is an act of good will following the insights of intelligence and the pronouncements of reasonableness."<sup>19</sup> "Finally, good will is joyful. For it is love of God above all and in all, and love is joy. Its repentance and sorrow regards the past. Its present sacrifices look to the future. It is at one with the universe in being in love with God, and it shares its dynamic resilience and expectancy. As emergent probability, it ever rises above past

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<sup>16</sup> "Finality, Love, Marriage," 28-29. The footnote's meaning, of course, haunts the letter of 1968.

<sup>17</sup> The first of the Dublin lectures of Easter 1961 was not recorded. I quote from my memory of the event.

<sup>18</sup> *Insight*, 722.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

achievement. As genetic process, it develops generic potentiality to its specific perfection. As dialectic, it overcomes evil both by meeting it with good and by using it to reinforce the good. But good will wills the order of the universe and so it wills with that order's dynamic joy and zeal."<sup>20</sup>

Augustine waltzed away from that order's dynamic joy and zeal, cut back on plain folks "dynamic resilience and expectancy" and bred centuries of distorted thinking in which such resilience and expectancy are identified as "a fecund cause of actual sin."<sup>21</sup> Augustine was nudged existentially into the world of interiority, but theory was not his ballpark.

The world of theory, in the main, is rejected by ecclesiastical and theological leaders. That rejection, sweetly meshing in with the world's rejection of a serious theoretic, can be effectively met only by the massive dynamics of functional collaboration.

So I come here to an abrupt end and to the presentation of that simple letter of Lonergan. You may read it in commonsense mode and get the key points in that mode. But to get the points across globally, that is an issue of the functional effort that is cosmopolis. Curiously, though, I can appeal to the message of *Lonergan Gatherings 3*, "Strategies of Seeding Collaboration." There I pointed out that, even with slight understanding of Lonergan's economics, one could get into the strategy of considering oneself at the edge of the specialty of Communications regarding, say, two types of firm and their need for turnover considerations.<sup>22</sup> So, in the present case, one can do positive *haute vulgarization* by undertaking to make the more evident points of

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, the concluding paragraph.

<sup>21</sup> "Finality, Love, Marriage," 50. One has to follow up the notes on this page, so finding one's way to my quotation above (at note 12) from note 80, so finding one's way to sensing the larger functional context that is needed for this "very large and complex historical question" (*ibid.*, 51)

<sup>22</sup> I have treated the topic in various places. E.g. *The Road to Religious Reality*, 56-59; *Futurology Express*, 51-53; *Piketty's Plight and the Global Future*, 11-14.

Lonergan's neglected letter a public outcry. The more subtle and also more obvious points regarding sexual joy, well, that's another matter for a later day.

## APPENDIX: THE LONERGAN LETTER ON CONTRACEPTION AND THE NATURAL LAW<sup>23</sup>

Regis College  
3425 Bayview Ave., Willowdale, Ont., Canada  
September 6 1968

Dear Father,

*In answer to your request I would note that traditional Catholic doctrine on the sexual act followed rigorously from the position adopted by Aristotle in his De generatione animalium. That position was that the seed of the male was an instrumental cause that changed the matter supplied by the female into a sentient being. As was argued from the instance of wind-eggs, the female by herself got no further than a nutritive principle. The efficient causality of the male was needed to produce the sensitive principle or soul. On that basis it was clear that every act of insemination was of itself procreative and that any positive interference was an act of obstructing the seed in its exercise of its efficient causality.*

*Two factors, however, have combined to bring about a notable change in the views of Catholic theologians on this matter. The first, of course, is the fact that the Aristotelian position is erroneous. Insemination and conception are known now to be quite distinct. The act of inseminating is not an act of procreating in the sense that of itself, per se, it leads to conception. The relation of insemination to conception is just statistical and, far more frequently than not, insemination does not lead to conception.*

*So there arises the question whether this statistical relationship of insemination to conception is sacrosanct and inviolable. Is it such that no matter what the circumstances, the motives, the needs, any deliberate modification of the statistical relationship must always be prohibited? If one answers affirmatively, he is condemning the rhythm method. If negatively, he permits contraceptives in some cases. Like the diaphragm and the pill, the menstrual chart and the thermometer directly intend to modify the statistical relationship nature places between insemination and conception.*

*Besides erroneous Aristotelian biology there has been another factor leading to the change in Catholic theological opinion. It is that sexual intercourse between man and wife both expresses and fosters their mutual love. This is fully acknowledged in Vatican II and also in Humanae*

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<sup>23</sup> Edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, copyright Bernard Lonergan Estate 1989. The letter is reprinted in *Lonergan Studies Newsletter*, vol. 11 (1), March 1990, 7–8. *Lonergan Studies Newsletters* are available on The Lonergan Research Institute @ Regis College website: <http://www.lonerganresearch.org/resources/lonergan-studies-newsletter>

*vitae. Aristotle treated not marital intercourse but generation as common to all animals. His oversight has been corrected by contemporary phenomenological inquiry.*

*While the Encyclical acknowledges the "unitive sense" of marital intercourse, it claims that inseparable from it there is a "procreative sense." This would be easy enough to understand if one still clung to Aristotle's biology. But on contemporary biology, if insemination may be said to be inseparable from normal intercourse, conception cannot be said to be inseparable from insemination. The discharge of two million spermatozoa into the vagina does not mean or intend two million babies. Most of the time it does not mean or intend any babies at all. The relationship of insemination to conception is not the relation of a per se cause to a per se effect. It is a statistical relationship relating a sufficiently long and random series of inseminations with some conceptions.*

*In my opinion such opinions as are expressed in phrases like "actus per se aptos ad generandum" and "process open to conception" are transitional. They reformulate the Aristotelian position and the resultant Catholic tradition during the interval between the discovery that Aristotelian biology is mistaken and the discovery that marital intercourse of itself, per se, is an expression and sustainer of love with only a statistical relationship to conception.*

*I have concentrated on what I consider the main issue. Much seems deliberately done to obscure it. The issue is not whether or not people have to have reasons for accepting the Pope's decision. The issue is that, when there is no valid reason whatever for a precept, that precept is not of natural law. Again, re dissent, Vatican II refused to oblige theologians to silence after the Pope determined controverted issues. See Orsy, America August 17 1968 p. 99, central column, top.*

*Fr. Sheridan has permitted me to xerox three papers of his own in this connection. They state more fully what I have indicated, add references from which I have abstained, and deal with further matters. He will be a peritus at Winnipeg, and I am sure you will treat these outlines with the same discretion and respect for property as this letter.*

*With every good wish,*

*B. Lonergan*