

Posthumous 10

“End here Mememormmee!”: Come About or Comalya

I have paused over this ending, consulted friends, and mused over the long disappointing haul of my life's work. I quote in the title from the end of *Finnegan's Wake*, but first I must plead with you not to get distracted into that zone or topic. The four words I end with in the title is a comic but blunt appeal for responses to the massive ramble round those lines 18-33 *Method* 250 that was and is my life-work: Come About or Comalya.

A comalya – sometimes with two *i*'s – is an Irish gathering of familiars ready to sing and chat in “the usual” ways: “come all you” is a mood, an ethos, and there is assumed to be no “crisis.”¹ It was a mood, a dangerous subtle mood that I found present during a recent venture into what I dare to call *Lonerganesque Ecclesiology*. That venture showed the effort as having plausible imports from the philosophy of models and the sociology of institutions meshed with what is regularly called “the later Lonergan,” but it remains quite numbly, dumbly, complacently, inadequately, “in the unenviable position of ... breathlessness” Lonergan wrote of in a famous paragraph of *Insight*.² The dumb inadequacy excludes breathlessness by breathing steady rhythms of commonsense language, enriched by Lonergan's vocabulary, into a no-man's land of *haute vulgarization*.³ It is all massively plausible and acceptable to old-style theology and put me in

¹ I recall Lonergan's brief reflection on crisis: “The aesthetic apprehension of the group's origin and story becomes operative whenever the group debates, judges, evaluates, decides or acts – especially in a crisis.” See *Topics in Education*, CWL 10, 230. But now I would have us begin a massive heuristic and aesthetic gripping by humanity “of all that is lacking.” See *Insight*, CWL 3, 559: the first section of that 17th chapter gives an initial context.

² *Insight*, CWL 3, 755.

³ See *Philosophical and Theological Papers, 1958-1964*, CWL 6, 121 and 155.

mind of the C.S. Lewis Screwtape letter that points to the realism of the big red bus as opposed to the truth reached in the quiet of the British Museum.⁴

Of course, I am thinking of all of Lonerganesque theology here, a very plausible rich complex of discourse that rarely moves to the level of the times. For such plausible printings and meetings Lonergan's canons of hermeneutics and their sublation into cyclic collaboration are a foreign world.

And indeed one can reach beyond in this criticism to non-Christian studies of religion, but let me stick with Christian theology, and let me be as brief as possible. So, I poise over *Trinity and Society*, the title and the reality, and over Leonard Boff's final chapter, "Amen: the Whole Mystery in a Nutshell." What a base vulgarization of the noble calling of theology! Yes, there is the nut shell of Julian of Norwich, but that is apophatic. What the cosmos groans for is effective explanatory understanding.

I have been repeating this for decades but perhaps I had best conclude with a single hint about categories from Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. This hint is important in that I wish to follow up on it in essays to come, essays that invite the personal searching for categories of towering relevant collaboration. So, present Lonergan studies revels in Lonergan's turn to talking of "being in love with God,"⁵

⁴ The big red bus represents for me what Lonergan calls "the arrogance of omniscient common sense." See "Questionnaire on Philosophy: Response," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, CWL 17, 370. But we need, in these coming millennia, massive aesthetic representations of "all that is lacking." (See note 1 above, then follow the trail in the two notes 5 and 6.)

⁵ *Method in Theology*, 105. How might I begin the nudging towards the new ethos mentioned in notes 1 and 4? The second part of my little book *Sane Economics and Fusionism* (Axial Publishing, 2010) points to our ignorance of the meaning of *spiritual*, and to the centuries of labour ahead. I would have all of us pause, poise, for some generations over the shocking little sentence "will, then, is spiritual appetite." (*Insight*, CWL 3, 621. See also *Verbum*, CWL 2, 209 on this.) and mind the slimness of our meaning for *love*. Mind, for a start, the slimness of Lonergan's pointers towards the meaning of *love* and *in love*. "This emanation by which love [note the typo in the text: 'loves'] comes forth involves the constitution of an inclination, an impulse, an adhesion." *The Triune God: Systematics*, CWL 12, 199. But what is this strange involvement of **clasp**ing in being? Is there help on this in Lonergan's first venture into the zone, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, CWL 1? Yet love does not occur in the index of *Grace and Freedom*. And so on, towards our glimpsing of "all

but doesn't seem to take serious note of the ballpark of the speaking. "To speak of the dynamic state of being in love with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense."⁶ So, to speak adequately thus is to be in a world of new categories mediated by a communal going on from the general categories to

vastly enrich[es] the initial nest of terms and relations. From such a broadened base one can go on to a developed account of the human good, values, beliefs, to the carriers, elements, functions, realms, and stages of meaning, to the question of God, of religious experience, its expression, its dialectical development.⁷

The developed account, of course, is to lead to a massive creative rewrite of chapters 2, 3 and 4 of *Method* listed so neatly here by Lonergan. Who, in the Lonergan community, "can go on to a developed account ... of religious experience?" The Lonergan community is quite lost in the world of the new general categories. Where, then, are the special categories to come from? "The task of a methodologist is to sketch the derivation of such categories, but it is up

that is lacking." Pause quietly and puzzle over what **you** mean by "being in love with God" and perhaps you might rise to venture into the collaboration mentioned in the final note 22 of *Posthumous* 11.

⁶ *Method in Theology*, 107. We need to follow on, and follow **in**, our musings of notes 1, 4 and 5. We? See note 11 of *Posthumous* 12. There is the call to the more excellent way of Aristotle sublated by the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John chapter 17. So there has to emerge the effective struggle to rise to an infinitely larger meaning of Proust's and Joyce's "mememormmee." I ask us, once more, what is this clasping, craving, embracing? And how are we to generate that later stage of meaning where we come to cherish in more lightsome darkness that "love is dynamic presence." *Verbum*, CWL 2, 211. So, in later millennia, we may get towards a towering collaboration effectively rounding the question, "What, then, is critical method?" *Insight*, CWL 3, 706. Might we begin to sniff our way towards that distant humanity by humbly reaching into the order of the universe that twirled into its first second of that order in chemicals' cravings, chemicals' dynamic joy and zeal, so that we begin to whirl, in the magnetic **field** (see *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, CWL 18, 199) of the Incarnation, towards a circumincessional meaning of the claim that "good will wills the order of the universe, and so wills it with that order's dynamic joy and zeal"? *Insight*, CWL 3, 722, end.

⁷ *Method in Theology*, 287.

to the theologian working in the fifth functional specialty to determine in detail what the general and special categories are to be.”⁸ Lonergan does not claim to have derived them. Should we not make a start by admitting our failure and pointing the next generations towards the task? So, in these next essays and in the related Q/A series,⁹ I shall have a stab at stirring up psyches. What I write, yes, is stumblingly in the fifth functional specialty, but the writing takes its place, in these faulty times, as a component of the response asked for by Lonergan in his 1833 Overture.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 291.

⁹ The first page of my Website gives the connection to the Q. and A. series, which will, I hope, evolve into some interchanges on the present topics.