

Prehumous 4

Foundational Prayer 1

I would like us to muse here, not about “a room filled with music”¹ or “the music of the spheres”² but about “a phantasm flickering in faith”. Of course, for some of my readers, that latter phrase can have resonances that parallel personal vibrations consonant with the calling in and of the other two. I spoke with an elder man yesterday about a favorite hymn of ours, “O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go”³ written by George Matheson in 1881, and he talked with bright-eyed faith of that wonderful blind preacher writing those word in certain circumstances of rejection, talked too of the weave of the words round the melody of Albert Peace: one might say, a match made in heaven. So, the word *flickering* is there as the melody mounts in the second line of the second verse: “I yield my flickering torch to Thee”, and in so far as the hymn hums in molecular memory, the word *flickering* weaves into the seamless robe of Godtalk,⁴ and like the letters of Goldmund, the phonemes echo divine oceans, “God writes this world with them.”⁵

But for some of us, especially in deadening days, words, never ordinary, are yet shrunken back into ordinariness: *flickering* takes on its old Indo-European meaning of

¹See *Method in Theology*, 290.

²I am recalling the work of the elder Shakespeare: see *Pericles* V. I. 238. For a commentary on it and its relation to adult growth see the conclusion to chapter two of *Lack in the Beingstalk*, Axial Publishing, 2007.

³Words by George Matheson, 1881; music by Albert Lister Peace, 1884. Available in various hymnaries, e.g. *Voices United*, The United Church of Canada Publishing House, 1996, 658.

⁴An elementary context is John’s Gospel, with a focus on the end phrase of 19:23: there are complex questions here about the secondary determinations of Divine Incarnation. A more complex context is chapter 7 of the website book, *The Redress of Poise*: “Grace: The Final Frontier”.

⁵Herman Hesse, *Narcissus and Goldmund*, Penguin, 61.

“flaw,” or some technical meaning to do with filming, and walking on Sandymount Strand no longer holds eternity in its flickering shadow, the shadow that is the phantasm in faith.⁶

So perhaps we had better hold to a duller specification of topic: I am raising the question of what I might call ordinary foundational prayer, knowing that, like *flickering, foundational prayer* and foundational prayer are never ordinary. Unless we slip towards a refreshingly novel meaning of *ordinary*: then the world indeed becomes “charged with the grandeur of God”⁷ and the seeing eye seizes “in the stars the glory of His eyes.”⁸ Still, you and I know what is happening when the daily doings invite us successfully to think that the room is just a room, the sphere is just the moon or a soccer ball. And we know, but varyingly, what is happening when we turn, return, to the light that is curiously in us with the active contexted curiosity of faithfilledness.

But are you with me here? The question raises for you and me the issue of the foundationality of our turning and our prayer. And that issue is not a single question but a cascade of curiosities. But perhaps I could raise the issue in a decent enough context by calling in some previous prose of mine regarding “Images of Lonergan”⁹: indeed, I would do well to simply make some few added points here that would help you to read that prose in the present context of our beginning to ask, What is foundational Prayer?

First, I would note that this brief reflection is, indeed, only a beginning, numbered in the title as such, number one. I shall continue little rambles, shared I hope

⁶“Am I walking into eternity on Sandymount Strand?”, James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Penguin, 1968, 43. The context is relevant to our reflections here: see *A Brief History of Tongue*, ch. 5.

⁷From the first line of G.M.Hopkins’ *God’s Grandeur*.

⁸From the poem “I see His Blood upon the Rose”, by Joseph Mary Plunkett, one the leaders of the 1916 Irish revolution, executed that year.

⁹“Images of Lonergan” is the title of Part II of *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Ideas*, by Pierrot Lambert and Philip McShane, to appear in 2009 in English and in French.

in a sharing of questions and suggestions from you, but I think also of the beginning that would be a full community of stumbling dialecticians battling towards establishing kataphatic prayer. Those stumbling dialecticians would anticipate a later generation of collaborators who are to share what I call a Standard Model of meta-reflection, analogous to the standard model of present physics, an assumed psychic presence in all participants at graduate physics gathering. But let us be simpler here, starting with a couple of convenient named definitions.

What is prayer?: it is a resting or questing in the real. What is foundational prayer? It is such a resting or questing that occurs - normatively - when the person has reached some decent degree of luminosity regarding his or her positioning in proportionate, general and then special metaphysics.¹⁰

And here we hit a difficulty, one that relates especially to special metaphysics. To speak in a manner familiar to readers of *Method in Theology*, we are in the zone of the undeveloped special categories of pages 288-91. There is the sad story of the fact that Lonergan could have left us substantial prose pointers to this communal and personal development, but did not get the opportunity: he was ordered to teach in Rome, beginning September 1953.¹¹ So, what might I write here of help? I am back to the issue of “decent enough context”. Foundational prayer is a personally luminous pursuit (what a strange and wonderful word!, especially when it is foundationally meshed with the pursuing zeal of the cosmos!), in faithlight, and perhaps in delight when

¹⁰There is an obvious connection to the movement of the book *Insight*. Add the context that the following note points to, and in that context consider the effort required to handle the elusive metaphysics that would be associated with the absolutely supernatural. See *Insight* 734 [756], the paragraph on “more technical matters”.

¹¹Evidence of his hopes and frustrations at the time are in letters to Fr. Crowe and Eric O’Connor of 1952. I quote a passage, relevant to our present reflections, from a letter to Eric O’Connor, July 23, 1952: “If I possible can do it, I must try to finish and arrange for the publication of a first part of my work before my departure. It would be entitled, *Insight*, and the remainder could be named, *Faith*, or *Insight and Faith*.” (No italics in the letter).

circumstance be favorable, speckling phantasms in their shadowing of the real.

But what is this speckling of phantasm, and where are its molecular resonances? The promised quotation has to do with making a beginning on plumbing that reality in ourselves, and it helps to savor that beginning in term of the missing Lonergan book, the far larger work that would have been named *Insight and Faith* mentioned in the footnote. That book would have led us into the explanatory world that eludes us when we cherish, but only descriptively, the talk in *Method in Theology* of religious orientations.¹² Perhaps this next century will bring us to that standard model of serious and needed contemplation, “but we are not there yet. And for society to progress it must raise its eyes more and more to the more general and more difficult fields of speculation.”¹³ As a community interested in Lonergan’s search, we do not have the answers that would bring forth that larger work, *Insight and Faith*, a foundational prose-pointing that would exercise our own and later generations towards adequate flexible circles of ranges of schemes of luminosity.

But let us go back to the simpler question of phantasm, of image, and approach it with a fantasy about the imaging within Lonergan as he talked out his old ABC exercise during those logic lectures of fifty years ago.

*We could be fruitfully diverted here to considering the images as affect-laden, and necessarily so, thus tackling a muddled zone of what is called Lonerganism head on: but that is a topic for a book in a later generation.*¹⁴ *Let us move forward with care, as best we can, tuned to what is called the “the intellectual pattern of experience.”*¹⁵ *Of course, in so far as the “as best I*

¹²See *Method in Theology*, the index under **Religious**. See also below, at note 31.

¹³Lonergan, *For A New Political Economy*, 20.

¹⁴A context for the beginning of the necessary self-digestion might be “The Solution to the Problem of Feelings in Lonergan Studies”, the title of my *Quodlibet 19*.

¹⁵A topic first introduced in *Insight* chapter 6, section 2.4, “The Intellectual Pattern of Experience”. I would note the realism of the final paragraph there. The “bloody entrance” and “living in constant absorption” are not feelingless pursuits.

can" is luminous, the previous question regarding **affect-laden** recurs here, coloured, for different readers, from the extreme of deep resentment to that of cosmic joy.¹⁶ But I keep raising questions that are beyond this little introduction. Perhaps the proper mood of our skimming along is the mood of a suspicion that there is legitimacy in claiming that these images, soaked in existentially, bring us to the heart of our effort to present a brief, inadequate, functional biography of Lonergan, a biography that meshes with our best heuristics of future millennia.¹⁷

Within that compact context of text and previous footnote, let us take the first image: it is an image of a spoken¹⁸ version of Lonergan's drawing attention to an image and an exercise in which he was altogether at home.

A beginner reading the exercise in the first chapter of *Insight* is certainly not thus at

¹⁶"Good will wills the order of the universe with that order's dynamic joy and zeal" (*Insight*, 700[722]). And there is resentment in all its forms.(e.g. *Insight*, 417[442], 536-42[560-66]).

¹⁷As a help in our struggle, or in your part in the redeeming of history, I would ask you to eventually move back and forth between these images and the first section of the Epilogue. And I would call attention to the strange little book by George Monbiot, *The Age of Consent. A Manifesto for a New World Order*, (Harper Perennial, 2004). "Imagination is the first qualification of the revolutionary"(Monbiot, 253) and here we are in the presence of imagination straining for a sensing of global collaboration quite beyond Monbiot's imagination - fantasize and think, for example, of the effective meshing of functional collaboration with Lonergan's political economics. The fantasy is of a "metaphysical mutation"(Monbiot 15, 85, 260). And the key question of that first section of the present Epilogue home in on his concluding remarks: "The shift depends not on an amorphous *them*, but on a specific *you*. It depends on your preparedness to abandon your attachment to the old world and start thinking like a citizen of the new, to exchange your security for liberty, your comfort for elation. It depends on your willingness to act. Well? What are you waiting for?"(Monbiot, 261)

¹⁸It is, obviously, from a tape, my "verbatim" version of what appears, edited, on page 62 of *Phenomenology and Logic*. In so far as one is familiar with his voice pattern, his gestures, his stance, one is better able to vibrate with his molecular resonances and the dynamism of his becoming. But again, our focus is on the intellectual pattern at the core of his performance. I would note, further, that there are four performances available to us: two in *Insight*: 25[50], 504[528]; one at the conclusion of chapter 2 of *Understanding and Being*, and the present one. Certainly Lonergan's personal meaning matures from performance to performance: in discussing the final image in my series I shall return to this topic.

home: I would say that this is a case of “another sense” of transcendental method.¹⁹ But I would hope that my reader has been round the book *Insight* a few times. Still, the question must surge up from your molecules: in what sense or manner can I visit this **home** of Lonergan? The question throws me back to a standard experience of teaching first university courses in physics: one encourages sweaty climbing by pointing to later heights.

So I pose the fascinating question, What was Lonergan’s intellectual and psychic stance as he spoke thus into history to his priestly audience?²⁰ Some seven years earlier he had comfortably written his basic expression of a definition of potency, “potency denotes that component to be known in fully explanatory knowledge by an intellectually patterned experience of the empirical residue,”²¹ and here he is, inviting a beginning of that journey in old comrades, inviting them into his strange home. He was, by then, well on the way - “not without labour,”²² - to a psychic and explanatory control of the “given”²³ and of curiosity’s life within that given.²⁴ The ABC exercise of those lectures, and of chapter one of *Insight*, is only a beginning of that labour to reach a post-Hegelian possession of finite minding. What “intellectual patterns” had he in mind, possessing that mind, in that forty-fifth year of his climb? Might we not suspect that he had adequate control of his binocularity²⁵ and its equivalent in other zones of sensibility to give

¹⁹See *Method in Theology* 14.

²⁰“It is evident from the content that Lonergan was lecturing to fellow Jesuits.” (*Phenomenology and Logic*, xii).

²¹*Insight*, 432[457].

²²*Verbum*, 38.

²³See section 4 of chapter 13 of *Insight*.

²⁴Link this challenge with that of the notes 17 and 20. There is a great deal of nominalism in this area, from which one escapes only by a long road that parallels the road beyond Hegelianism. One discovers that one’s curiosity, holding its identity, nonetheless rambles round the empirical residence, “what’s that I hear?”, “what’s that I smell?”. And it is a further struggle to find the bubbling of an inner word, an inner wart, on the skin of one’s minding.

²⁵This is a very complex existential challenge which needs lengthy descriptive instructions if it is to become a possession of individuals and so getting on the road to being a

him positional dominion over the all-too-human mistaken take on "the universe of being" as "a matter of meeting persons and dealing with things that are 'really out there'"²⁶ As he spoke "the intellectual pattern of experience is presupposed and expressed,"²⁷ but his audience is comfortably looking at him, already out there. What was it like to be so alone? No wonder he marked vigorously in his copy of my *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations* my recalling of Jung's remark that the truly contemporary man is alone.²⁸

But the issue is you and me, herenow, therethen, in the presence of an image of real print, both the print and the image being an effect of the integral consciousness of a religious genius, "a new psychic integration through affective contemplation of the mysteries of Christ."²⁹ Have we slipped radically away from the ABC exercise? Or have we not rather reached towards the sadness of the "existential gap"³⁰ that daily hounded that genius?.

And that ends my quotation from Part II of *Bernard Lonergan: His Life and Leading Idea*. I suspect that most of my present readers find it baffling. But the point of it is that it is on the road - a block, a stumbling block - to defining in oneself, for oneself, what is meant by adequate prayer, and adequate foundational prayer. And I would note the discomfort of you coming to the suspicion that adequate prayer can only be defined

tower culture. It requires a massive effort of intellectual control to, as it were, flatten the image, where flatten is a spatial business but it refers to an equivalent re-possessing of other sensibilities. A help here is the study of drug-experiences, phantom-limb experiences, so-called 'out-of-body' experiences, but the primary lift is from self-appropriating of neuropsychology.

²⁶*Insight*, 385[411].

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸See *Wealth of Self and Wealth of Nations* (1975), p. 102. The book is available on the usual website.

²⁹*Insight*, 741[763].

³⁰See *Phenomenology and Logic*, the index under *Existential Gap*.

within foundationally-adequate prayer.³¹

And are we not praying here? We are if we are questing in the real.

You see the deep cultural problem, so gently expressed in that first section of chapter 17 of *Insight*? Euripides rots European Poesis.³² Against that drift stands the lost fact that the divine is not a sporadically-entering character in the drama of history, but the core of our curiosity. “So we are brought to the profound disillusionment of modern man and to the focal point of his horror The real issue, then, is truth.” What is it to quest **in the real**? And how are we to answer that question with a luminous foundational efficiency that will carry the human group beyond the brutality of the axial period?

I am drawing attention to a beginning, a humble beginning, a return to pieces of the Standard Model that were brewing in the Lonergan who wrote *Insight*. And as he wrote he took time to give his students and us leads, leads to the simple fact that we need a prayerful procedural analysis of Faith, a questing **in the real** of that faith: what that possessive state and act are.³³ There is nothing dated about his program of 1952:

“What is the analysis of faith?”

³¹The same is true, obviously, of the non-ordinary prayer of the mystics. Add to the context of notes 10 and 12 above the more precise pointers of the second last paragraph of Lonergan’s chapter, on Dialectic, in *Method in Theology*: page 266.

³²These four words point to a long inner climb, and to a need for an initial large book, but an anecdote may help. I recall, in the 1970s, reading my way through Greek drama during a stay in Oxford. The above pointing dawned on me around a midday in the sun. It was afternoon in Boston College, where Lonergan lived, so the burst of enthusiastic enlightenment carried me to the phone. It was quite evident from his remarks that he had climbed, that it was for him a familiar zone, a perspective on secularized literature: enter Deus-ex-machina like a bond, James Bond.

³³*Prehumous 3* is titled “Procedural Analysis” Among other ventures, it seeks to rescue serious self-appreciation from tendencies towards vagueness that are associated with intentionality analysis that are locked into the descriptiveness of *Method in Theology*. Obviously, too, the procedural analysis here has a beginning in the analysis of belief of chapter 20 of *Insight*, and a fuller context from Thomas’ *Prima Secundae*, qq. 6-17.

Since science is the certain knowledge of a thing through its causes, the analysis of faith aims at resolving the assent of faith into all of its causes, intrinsic and extrinsic, proximate, intermediate, and immediate or first causes. This analysis, therefore, will be ontological, psychological, and typical: ontological, since it deals with things and acts; psychological, since these things are to be known and willed, and these acts are acts of the intellect and of the will; and typical, in the sense that it deals with what happens necessarily or at least contingently as a general rule.

Hence this question is not a matter of apologetics (What is the true faith?), nor a practical question (How to promote the true faith?), nor a question about logic (What premises lead to valid conclusions?). Rather, supposing the existence of an act of true faith, we ask, by reason illuminated by faith, what that act is."³⁴

[to be continued]

³⁴I quote from the English translation of Michael Shields S.J. published in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20 (2002), "Analysis of Faith", 130-31.