

Q. 42 (April 30th) You have, during your writing of the *Posthumous* series, recommended works by N.T.Wright. Do you regard his work as fitting into some area of functional collaboration or functional talk?

A. 42 You will notice – and the point is elaborated on in an introductory note at the beginning of the next answer in Q/A 43 - that I have omitted the questioner, and wish to do so henceforth. This relates to my desire to avoid the emergence of appearances of taking sides in the upcoming split regarding the meaning of Lonergan.

Here we are dealing with the meaning of Jesus as presented by N.T. Wright. And, yes, I recommended recent works of his in the *Posthumous* series: his popular outreach is clearly grounded in his Christian faith, and he has some extremely well-put stuff. But you would have noticed reservations. Where, for instance, does he recent book, *How God Became King* (2012), end up? On this I have commented before but there is no need to go back. Rather, let me make a very strange broad point. His concluding chapter is quite obviously very different from my pointing in *Arriving in Cosmopolis*.¹ It is in another world entirely, totally lacking in any heavy reach for the effective grounding of global change, which was the topic of my essay and its fantasy about the functional collaboration of the year 9011 A.D. But let me leave that problem about his popular works for the moment and go on to share some musings about his more technical works, such as the three volumes, *The New Testament and the People of God* (1992), *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996), and *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (2003).

I am talking here about 2000 pages of solid scholarship, and intend to be brief. What then can I say that is to be helpful in our struggle to seed functional talk? In my brevity and helpfulness I need to speak startlingly. So, let me stir the waters of amazement – and perhaps resentment - by saying that, no, this is just not IT! The research and interpretation and history presented in these volumes lack both the control of a scientific standard model and serious redemptive potential.

¹ The Essay is available in the Website Archives in English and in Spanish: it was presented at the Lonergan Conference in Puebla, Mexico in 2011.

Such control is a topic for Wright in chapter two of his first volume. “If we do not explore presuppositional matters, we can expect endless and fruitless debate” (1992, 31). Shortly after, he points to the impossibility of “arguing at great length for the viewpoint that I propose to adopt. That would demand a whole book to itself”(1992, 32). He claims that his viewpoint is that of “critical realism”, mentioning Ben Meyer, whose view derives from Lonergan.

Now my musing here does not involve getting into the usual aspects of critical realism. It involves adverting to the broader and deeper aspects of intellectual conversion that I raised in Q/A 36. Critical realism in the narrower sense just is not going to generate the new theology: indeed I would argue that critical realism as a communal possession and possessor depends for its emergence on the cyclic dynamics of functional collaboration (See my website book, *Method in Theology: Refinements and Implementations* chapter one for pointers on the priority of cyclic collaboration to even the discovery of levels of consciousness). My pointing here is to the demands of *Method* pp. 3-4, and to the millennial gap between theology and *theoria*. Here I can only assert the massive effort of fantasy required to sniff out that gap, the “Existential Gap” (*Phenomenology and Logic*, index). The diagram that I call \mathbf{W}_3 is essential as a starting heuristic to the fresh strenuous climb. I am not going to enlarge on this. Wright talked of a needed “whole book in itself”. The book *Insight* does not suffice; the missing second volume Lonergan talked of (*Insight*, 754) would not suffice. What else might I say? How are we to get out of the settled scholarly common senses of the huge and detailed Volume Three, Wright’s gallant effort regarding the resurrection of Jesus, without being brutally yet providentially cycled into “thoroughly understand what it is to understand”(*Insight*, 22)? For the people in the Tower of Able both the pilgrim and the resurrected Jesus have to be patiently cherished, not as radiantly out there real, but as $f(p_i ; c_j ; b_k ; z_l ; u_m ; r_n)$ within an increasingly sophisticated contemplative appreciation generated by cyclic generations of the “eo magis unum” of the incarnate meaners of \mathbf{W}_3 . That cherishing is to give rise to a quite fantastically new and strange popular literature and aesthetics of the global mysteries – I am thinking here of the demands of *Insight* 17.1. There is little hint of that Tower work and its popular redemptiveness in either Wright or in the Latin

writings of Lonergan. We are centuries away from the radiant street-suspicion of our reality, our position, our poosition, in the caul of God, in the womb of Jesus.

The two types of writings of N.T.Wright bring out this problem to a small degree. In the new theology there are to be nine genera of writings about Jesus – a point that emerged for me as far back as the chapter on Jesus – chapter 5 – in the Website book of 1990, *Process. Introducing Themselves to Young (Christian) Minders*. But that is a topic for another day.