

Q. 48 (May 13th) You have pointed favorably at various times to Fr. Crowe's *Theology of the Christian Word*, a book which I find very inspirational for theology. Could you please comment further on it in relation to your idea of a renewed theology, and especially in relation to the spirituality of 'the sacrament of the present moment' of Fr. de Caussade, of which Crowe writes on pages 113-115?

A. 48 In note 6 of A. 46 I wrote: "I am recalling Gaston Bachelard's marvelous little book *The Poetics of Space* (Beacon Press, 1970) on reading a house, a nest, ... (ibid., 14, 39, 47, 83). Think now of the reading of any zone of space-time¹ yielding 'timely and fruitful ideas.' Think of this sacramental moment!" The reference at the end of that statement is to an aspect of de Caussade's spirituality. Crowe in fact does not mention "the sacrament of the present moment" but does quote de Caussade in a way that nudges us on here: "you speak, Lord, to the generality of men by great public events ... You speak also to each individual soul by the circumstances occurring in every moment of life."² Now the fractional generality of men and women that I am talking about are those that are to be committed luminously to the Tower Care of history, and the great public event is the mustard seed of the Big Bang and its ongoing reaching in an absolutely supernatural cosmic symphony. Talking about this to them means luminously talking (about)³ this and them, and that shift lifts the previous sentence here way beyond common sense. This points to a problem that haunts the renewal of theology, and there is no value in me covering old ground. Let me, rather, give pointers to the characters of the new Tower lift in terms of Crowe's search, in terms that weave round the position of *Insight*,³ in terms that echo my ongoing search for "Protopossession."⁴ But notice – yes, I repeat myself – the problem, as it is summed up in the question: yes, I am talking about – in any of its senses – but who am I talking to? Only you can judge herenow where you stand, and I would add that the function of the Tower Community's future operation is to help people detect where they do stand in relation to seriously renewed theology. But meantime there is the long introductory section of *Cantower 9* that can help. It is a tough climb to get to the position. It is tougher still to get to a poosition. Getting to Protopossession? Well, I have given hints, as the previous note echoes, regarding my own long incomplete journey. And here I am about to ramble further about that incomplete journey as it is found in Fred Crowes' great little book.

¹ The quality of the thinking depends on diagraming. So, one has great control of meaning if one has a heuristic image, such as a matrix outgoing temporally from a globe representing geohistorical zones of meaning. Then one can take concrete account of interweaving ongoing contexts etc.

² Crowe, 115; de Caussade, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, 21.

³ *Insight*, 413.

⁴ One can begin with *Cantower 9*, "Position, Poission, Protopossession" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/cantower9.pdf>) and follow with *Posthumous 8*, "My Story, His Story, Position" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous-08.pdf>) and *Posthumous 9*, "Poission, Comparison, Finite Processions" (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/posthumous-09.pdf>).

So, I suggest as psychic strategy that you intussuscept as best you can – and with friendly help if you can get it – the notion that if you are under 30 you are probably at the base camp of Everest looking at maps. Don't mistake the maps for the mountain-climb.

First I ramble further regarding the maps or guidelines produced by me from Lonergan; then I turn to Crowe's mapping. But there is a twist, a useful pedagogical twist. I ask you to muse over my own grappling with Crowe's mapping as part of my climb towards understanding the Tower.

Without that grappling with Crowe's work I would have had a tough alternate struggle to shaping my growing view on functional research. My grappling? You can get high points of it by going back to my first formal reflection on Crowe's book, *Theology of the Christian Word. A Study in History*, in *Cantower* 38, "Functional History." It was a reflection of April 2005, and – from my present open growing perspective – I had no great clue about functional history. But I knew that Fred's stuff was just not it! Perhaps five years later I got back on the job in the *Humus* Essays, and there I began to view Crowe's effort – slowly and excitedly – as a puttering round towards functional research.⁵ I can illustrate this from the section of the book to which my questioner refers. Crowe concludes his remarks of de Caussade's work as follows. "This doctrine remains an extremely interesting and significant stage in the ongoing history of the theology of the word. I do not know whether its history has been fully investigated in its origins⁶ and its subsequent development, but I do think there is need to bring it into relation with that work of professional theologians which forms the bulk of our study."⁷ Now, let me pull in another piece of Crowe's writings that could nudge you towards my insight. It is Crowe writing on Lonergan searching for a doctorate topic in Rome, 1938. Lonergan goes to chat with Charles Boyer. "Finally Boyer reaches for his copy of Thomas Aquinas's *Prima secundae*, pointing to an article that he himself had difficulty in interpreting, and suggested that Lonergan make a study of that article in itself, of its *loca parallela*, and of its historical sources."⁸ Are you with me? Do you, excitedly, see the parallel? Boyer is doing shabby functional research, which pivots on the baton-exchange, "this is worth recycling," starting, of course, with functional interpretation. But none of this was in the intellectuality of the room that day, and wouldn't be in Lonergan's later room in Rome for over a quarter of a century. Wouldn't it have been nice if Boyer saved Lonergan the research time by presenting Lonergan e.g. with the *loca parallela*, and then would it not have been nice if Lonergan had been able – within, which was missing, a decent geohistorical mindbent – to home in on interpreting Thomas on the precise topic, so

⁵ The emergence is recorded in the sequence of 5 essays, *Humus* 8 – 12 (available at: <http://www.philipmcshane.ca/humus.html>).

⁶ [Crowe's note in the text here:] The influence of Ignatius of Loyola (seeing God in all things) on de Caussade is one example of such a thread through history.

⁷ Crowe, op. cit., 115.

⁸ *Grace and Freedom*, CWL 1, xviii.

that he could hand on the new twist to an up-to-dated community of historians that would detect the relevance of this missed complex of insights. Then – let’s carry on our fantasy – would it not have been nice if hot-shot dialectic ladies added the missed complex to their next *Assembly*,⁹ and so on through their self-exposure as strategized by *Method* 250, so that a cleaned-up complex would be batoned on to foundational people, and Lonergan’s subjectivity would be imported into the future: “from the subject one moves to subjects, their togetherness in community, etc.”¹⁰ But imported into the future from the foundational persons through the global baton-spread so that what began in the village of Rome would hit the streets and the steeples and the peoples of the world’s villages.

So, “in this final stage theological reflection bears fruit.”¹¹ You might try to imagine, to fancy, the shift “down” from foundational science to street-value, but that imagining is very tough future work. The great thing about the renewed theology is that such a process, with your help, is to exist: its emergence in any zone, perhaps in theology, will ferment into a global shift eventually, and it will weave into a renewal in theology. We’ll get into that further in the next two questions.¹² Here we’ll slip past it to get to the question raised, but I do note in passing that Lonergan’s discoveries about grace and its operations are to eventually become “sacraments of the present moments” in all cultures. So far they have not got through to historians, much less being rolled on towards the streets by dialectic ladies.

Those two paragraphs give a glimpse of my six-year struggle with Crowe’s effort in his book. Let me move on to my own climb, my own fuller poise, my present protopossession.

Back then to *Insight*, its position and its poosition. First the position: it evolves steadily through the book but here I note only the major existential steps in the note below.¹³ The poosition? That is the gradual overcoming or controlling of what he writes of at the beginning of chapter 14 of *Insight*: again let me leave that to your reading of Cantower 9.¹⁴ “What I want to

⁹ The final word on page 249 of *Method in Theology*.

¹⁰ *Method in Theology*, 291, top.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 355.

¹² We will get to the religious ongoing dynamic base of that renewal in Q/A 51, entitled “You Make My Skin Caul.”

¹³ There is the offered choice of *Insight* 413; there is the extraordinary achievement of the come-about described at the end of page 537; there is the leap in interpretative capacity of the paragraph I call 60910 (the turn of page 609). Q/A 51, mentioned in the previous note here, will intimate the altogether fuller basis and capacity.

¹⁴ *Insight*, 411. “... the self of our self-affirmation seems quite different from or actual self And spontaneity becomes a matter of meeting persons ... ‘really out there’.”

communicate in this”¹⁵ short answer is some impression of the climb to the fuller Faithfilled position, poosition and protopossession that parallels but sublates Crowe’s efforts in his little pastoral book, and does so in a manner that foreshadows later pastoral directives.

The position and the poosition of *Insight* are nurtured and refined by the position and the poosition in Faith. But, obviously, now, I am talking about Tower people, a breed that as yet does not exist. Still you can get a sense of this from your commonsense Faith and your growth in it, especially through a self-attentive commonsense reading of Lonergan on personally-relevant topics. “The real is the concrete universe of being and not a subdivision of the ‘already out there now.’”¹⁶ That conviction is clasped in Faith and cultivated in life-styles of patterned displacements – at their best aesthetically-rich – of the ‘already out there now’ in rites-of-passage and robings, rituals and right-minded kindness, but all rooted in Faith seeking the grounds of such patterns in concrete understandings. That rooting has a heart in hearty privacy that exploits the threefold twist of analogy in kataphatic contemplative honesty.

I mention robings and rituals etc., but you must notice that there is nothing special there relating to Tower People – and of course, yes: Tower people share thus common meanings with diverse communities. The great GAP difference is that there is to be a swathing¹⁷ pervasiveness of ... might I not call them *Characters of characters*?¹⁸ It is to be a clearly-distinguishing Existential Gap. Something like the incomplete sets of characters **W_i** are to be the cherished possession and possessor of the Tower community. But that, fortunately, is to be the topic of the next Q/A. However, I would note that that cherished presence and Presence is to be at the heart, in the heart of, “the sacrament of the present moment” of Tower people.

But let me continue nudging towards that presence in a way that helps us see better the direction of Crowe’s struggle and pointings.

Yesterday I went back over, for the umpteenth time, Crowe’s final chapter 7, titled “The Inner Word of the Spirit.” In some previous reading I had circled the title word “Word” as problematic. It is a problem that haunts Crowe’s work, but he knows that he is reaching.¹⁹ What I mentioned earlier – that he is nudging unknowingly towards functional research –

¹⁵ I quote from the conclusion of Lonergan’s *Topics in Education* to give you food for thought both about the function of art in all this, and the folly of the “want to communicate.” From 1958 on Lonergan was turned in this direction of *haute vulgarization* in many of his presentations.

¹⁶ *Insight*, 413.

¹⁷ The Indoeuropean base has meanings of **turn**, **bend**, underpinning usual meanings. There is also the relation to swaddling.

¹⁸ As well as the characters that are symbols, and so determinative of the character of their competent users, there is to be considered the occurrence of the word *character* in the first section of Method chapter 14, and my usual lift of it into the context of the first paragraph of *Magna Moralia*.

¹⁹ See *Op. Cit.*, page 148-9, the concluding paragraph of his chapter “Conclusions and Projections.”

shines through on every page of the chapter. He climbs forward into his final semi-chapter, “Conclusions and Projections,” moving towards his final hearty oration that begins, “If, as Lonergan maintains, and I am increasingly convinced, we need ‘a complete restructuring of Catholic theology,’²⁰ then our first step is to realize the magnitude of the task, and our second is to begin, with what resources we have, to do what is possible here and now.”²¹

But now I poise again over the question, “Could you please comment further on it in relation to your idea of a renewed theology, and especially in relation to the spirituality of ‘the sacrament of the present moment’?” I have taken the first and second steps suggested by Crowe, and from the resources reached out from and beyond Crowe who “was not to propose any systematic understanding”²² but none the less notes that “what history presents is a series of efforts to understand,”²³ and “there is one space-time continuum into which both the events and our reflections are inserted, the same Spirit who draws us all to the wonder of those events, the same stirring of mind and heart that links question to question in the genetic sequence that I have tried to describe.”²⁴

What comment can I add regarding my climb to “systematic understanding,” indeed, an understanding of history’s “series of efforts” that Crowe “tried to describe”? My discomforting brevity leads me to halt with identifying my last little book *The Road to Religious Reality* as the pointer towards that lift of fragmentary descriptions into a sacrament of the present moment, a mindset on breeding forward, in wondrous identification of “the genetic sequence” in history and heart as ...

Are you with me? The mystical body, so to speak, one real dog, weaving its way through the best and worst of times. The treatise on the mystical body that Lonergan longed to see emerging as an integral perspective on the weaving sequence of understandings – more or less effective in history – of that incomplete reality.²⁵

That incomplete reality is the Word made flesh in which we live, a startling facticity of Paul’s “in Christ” ever to be made fresh in our minding by a revisiting of our position and position in the Trinitarian Presences that I have named the five Cs.²⁶ And it is in the solitary contemplation of the radiance of the notional activities that are God within us that we leap beyond the searching muddle of Crowe’s title, “the Inner Word of the Spirit,” and the text that follows it there, to a

²⁰ Crowe is quoting Lonergan, *A Second Collection*, 161, from the essay “The Future of Christianity.”

²¹ Crowe, *op.cit.*, 148-49.

²² *Ibid.*, 142.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 143: the final words of chapter 7.

²⁵ McShane, *The Road to Religious Reality*, 34.

²⁶ They are named again in the final sentence of this essay. I return to the topic in Q/A 51, “You Make My Skin Caul.”

fuller theological meaning. “Are you with me?” You must follow beyond the clues of *The Road to Religious Reality* to find the trail to that meaning in symbolic identifications of our concrete reality in God, \mathbf{G}_{jk}^i . I dare repeat the key statement that sublates Crowe’s search. “ C_3 is that subtle absent-presence of the whisper that is the caul of Father-Son. With C_4 it grounds a molecular living-in-tension that breaths and breeds the patterned ontic and phyletic story-polyphoning (see 3rd *Collection*, 132) of history and His Story.” (I am repeating here from note 12 of my answer in Q/A 45). The inner word of the spirit is the word in our minds and molecules gestated, daily and decadely, by our questing participation in passive spirating, clasping and craving in tension with active spirating’s cauling to bring forth the molecular weavings adequate to our integral resurrection in the ever-fresh Fleshed Word. In the minding of the Tower people it is to have the swaddling²⁷ clothes of ever-recycled words, \mathbf{W}_i , the key word of which, \mathbf{W}_3 , is a prayer, “Double You Three in me, in all, Claspings, Cherishing, Calling, Craving, Christing.”

²⁷ See note 17 above.