

## “A Foundational Stand” Method and Academic Disciplines

On November 21<sup>st</sup> 2015, the following document, titled *My Promised Land*, was sent out by me to a large group of Lonergan students. In it I take a discomfoting stand on our common failure to move forward into seeding functional collaboration.<sup>1</sup> I did not expect a surge of replies from leading students of Lonergan: it would, after all, be embarrassing for them to admit that they had been decades-long wrong, and of course it would be LOL silly of them to claim that I was wrong! The main point was to get the historical record straight: but there is also the goal of awakening these next generations to the global task ahead.

Philip McShane

### **My Promised Land**

First, the entry, sent today, for the Lonergan Newsletter, December 1<sup>st</sup>:

An e-seminar on economics, “Economics’ New Standard Model” gets underway on January 17<sup>th</sup>, continuing till March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Information regarding the seminar is available on the website series “Economics’ New Standard Model” and those interested in participating can contact me directly at pmcshane@shaw.ca. The e-seminars to follow, of 2015-16, are to weave round *CWL* 7, 8, 9, 11, 12. The autumn seminar, titled “The Minders’ Reach for God,” shifts Trinitarian theology into the context of subject-as-subject (*CWL* 18, index); the spring seminar, 2016, “Christ, Science, Futurology,” will move towards collaborative structures of the Mystical Body. My Boston Workshop of June 2015 on “Functional Collaboration” is to open the road to these two seminars, reaching out for and gathering suggestions and questions.

Next there is the following:

On November 14<sup>th</sup> of 2014 I e-mailed to some few colleagues the following odd message, here somewhat abbreviated:

It seems best for me not to declare open war on Lonergan Studies until after the Boston gathering of 2015, when I then get into focus on the second and third seminars.

The economics, of course, is to carry on in those seminars as a piece of  $W_3$ , but I am presently inclined to use Shostakovich’s *Opus* 135, Symphony no. 14, a crazy 11 music-poem about death,<sup>2</sup> but now relating it to the death of Thomas’ *Quaestio*

---

<sup>1</sup> “I take a sad risky stand in claiming that his disciples—including myself—have failed him outrageously.” (“Arriving in Cosmopolis” at page 5).

<sup>2</sup> I resonate with Shostakovich’s sentiment regarding the *opus*: “Everything that I have written until now over these long years has been a preparation for this work.” (Francis Maes, *A History of Russian Music*, University of California Press, 2002, 370).

*Prima*, in the face of the new cyclic method. Indeed, a revised *Method* might start there. “Tell all the Truth but tell it slant – / Success in Circuit lies.”<sup>3</sup>

Should I, perhaps, try approaching individuals? I am inclined to think not. The leading people in the Lonergan movement know my view—which is, for me, evidently Lonergan’s—yet they succeed admirably in avoiding confronting me and persevere in their objectively immoral and objectively stupid ways. So, unless there is some miracle shift in attitude it seems that a nine-month silence is best for me. BUT—think of this if I drop dead!—Lonerganism has to be exposed for what it is: the parallel between the rejection of Thomas and Lonergan given in the prologue of *The Everlasting Joy of Being Human*,<sup>4</sup> with that providential title—in the context of Shostakovich’s op. 135!!—‘The Betweenness of Death’, brought into scathing and perhaps comic proportions.

A week later I changed my mind about the nine-month’s silence, while working on the modern history of Palestine and the emergence of Israel, and it is the title of Ari Shavit’s magnificent book on the topic, *My Promised Land*, that gave me my present title.<sup>5</sup> The ‘drop-dead’ factor, of course, has its place: I recently read a biography of Cary Grant and noted his quick evening-departure off the stage at 84. But then there is also the simple fact that it would be remiss of me to think of pushing for functional collaboration fifty years after its discovery yet only start the push mid-way through the year. So “here I stand”, but with no intention of making an elaborate stand, of, for example, weaving analogies round the poets of Shostakovich’s symphony or—yes it had occurred to me—weaving the apex of Lonergan’s journey round salvaging the twisted odyssey of Israel.

I am writing about **my** promised land, not Lonergan’s. I have taken his **1833 Overture**<sup>6</sup> seriously and invite you to do so also, but in your own way, which may well implicitly deny the value of Lonergan’s page 250 of *Method in Theology*. Implicitly I have been climbing towards that page since 1952. Explicitly I have been crawling down that page since I indexed the book in 1971. Now, weaving my invitation to you to join me in the page’s final lines, I am sadly and deeply convinced of his Dublin outburst to me in 1961 about “big frogs in little ponds”. We cannot afford this as we move into the *Dark Age Ahead*.<sup>7</sup> No doubt there will be offense and indignation at my notions of objective immorality and stupidity. Think, then, of an earnest froggy Phlogiston dark-age devotion to pre-Lavoisier chemistry in a post-Mendeleev world.

---

<sup>3</sup> Emily Dickinson, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson, Harvard University Press, 1955, p. 306. (I found this poem in Eugene H. Peterson, *Tell it Slant: A Conversation on the Language of Jesus in His Stories and Prayers* [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2008].)

<sup>4</sup> One of my efforts of 2013, the other being *Futurology Express* (Vancouver, Axial Publishing, 2013), which gives an integral view of the challenge of *Insight* and *Method in Theology*.

<sup>5</sup> Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, New York, Spiegel and Grau, 2013. An enlightening effort at patterning “the conflict and the wars and the stress and all the shit of this country.” (*Op. cit.* 300).

<sup>6</sup> The reference is to his push of lines 18 to 33 on page 250 of *Method in Theology*.

<sup>7</sup> The title of Jane Jacobs’ last book (Random House, 2004).

Despite creative urges, I halt here. I would appreciate if some of you, especially my senior colleagues, would respond in some way: why do you think I am wrong about the importance of Lonergan's discovery of fifty years ago? Do you not have a suspicion that he replaced drastically the *prima quaestio* of the *Summa Theologiae* with "a third way, difficult and laborious"?<sup>8</sup> Please, please, join me, confront me, correct me, writing to me or to the group.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Method in Theology*, 4. The file of his scribbles of the creative February of 1965 contains a quoting by him of that first question of the *Summa*. He was, I would claim, deeply tuned to the magnificence of his replacing it.