

## **Haute Vulgarization: Negative and Positive**

I was bumped up enormously regarding the problem named in my title by my presence at my reverend wife's Filipino (United) Church on Sunday.

That sentence, read by you, contains the problem, and my problem here is to communicate to you, not the bump, but your likely comprehension of the bump.

There: I did it again. What could those last six words of the previous sentence mean to you? That's my question! What do those last six words of the previous sentence mean to you? That's your question! Are you going to pause over it? That, again, is your question, and it is the question asked of you by the Lonergan Overture with which we started this series, "Low and Behold."<sup>1</sup> How low are you in the comprehension of the bump? The enormous bump, brooded over by me into the next day by way of an exponential acceleration in my meaning of  $\{M(W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$ , is, as I see it and seize it, a massive shift in the Standard Model. Indeed, it reminds me of what Lonergan wrote in a letter of 1954:

The Method of Theology is coming into perspective. For the Trinity: Imago Dei in homine and proceed to the limit as in evaluating  $[1 + 1/n]^{nx}$  as  $n$  approaches infinity. For the rest: ordo universi. From the viewpoint of theology, it is a manifold of unities developing in relation to one another and in relation to God, i.e., metaphysics as I conceive it but plus transcendent knowledge. From the viewpoint of religious experience, it is the same relations as lived in a development from elementary intersubjectivity (cf. Sullivan's basic concept of interpersonal relations) to intersubjectivity in Christ (cf. the endless Pauline [suv- or] sun- compounds) on the sensitive (external Church, sacraments, sacrifice, liturgy) and intellectual levels (faith, hope, charity). Religious experience : Theology : Dogma :: Potency : Form : Act.

But the focus of the reminder, for you, is, in our present venture, in the bracketted phrase, "(cf. the endless Pauline [suv- or] sun- compounds)". The problem then is narrowed down, but still—LO—bumpy. Might I put it this way: What was Paul communicating to the people of

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<sup>1</sup> [\*LO and Behold 1\*](#): "Low and Beholden."

Corinth or Ephesus with such phrases as “made us alive together with Christ.”<sup>2</sup> What and how did Paul think he was communicating with such phrases?

Let’s spread our interest to ask: What and how did Thomas Aquinas think he was communicating when he meshed scriptural pieces into his theological reflections?

Jump to a new level of the What and How by homing in on the second page of Lonergan’s fourteenth chapter in *Method and Theology*. How much of a grip had he, and have we, on what I may usefully call *the bridge problem* that stares us in the face, that could stair us in the race there? What is that problem? It is the problem constituted by the shift of titles from the first to the second section of the chapter.

There you have “Meaning and Ontology” bumped up into “Common Meaning and Ontology.” So, round we go again: what do I mean here in the writing and the reading of “bumped up”? Is my meaning uncommon? Is there is an existential gap? Is that existential gap luminous to you, even effective in you in your interpersonal relating, in perhaps your pawlined letters, your class room litters?

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My suggested assembly here is simple: link “implementation” in *Insight* with “fruit to be borne” in *Method in Theology*. What does your viewpoint, your standard model, lead you to think and say and hope of them? Low and be Wholed.

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Or it could be “Hi!” and Beholden. I am recalling here the first essay of this series, mentioned in note 1 above, and its footnote 8. But what I am thinking of is a neat bit of cheating, an unjust steward sort of thing.

You can either do your “Lonergan Overture” exercise from my simple suggestion—not reading on—or you can read on here and then try for a slow larger reach. How slow and large? It could be a month’s musing, thus sniffing around the larger climb, or a life-climb-tower-shift into Lonergan’s view of progress.

And of course you can read on later, in which case you are really rambling round my part of the third objectification. So here we go, into the apparent third objectification of mine round

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<sup>2</sup> *Ephesians* 2:5.

mine in the midst of an ethos of views. It is only an apparent third objectification, because it is really my *Assembly* of a shift in my Standard Model, tersely indication above by “{M<sub>3</sub>}<sup>θΦT</sup>}<sup>4</sup>”.

Perhaps it is best to begin with an essay I wrote on Paul, “Paul’s Epistles and Functional Systematics.”<sup>3</sup> The essay begins with a fictional quotation.

Paul? In the Garden of Jesus, not a new or second Adam: an InWithTo new creation that yet was there, Bigbang Class-ping. Now in Your garden, Guarding, Double Big-Banged, I tune thornily—and tend and guard and bind and greet.

Then below there is the footnote to the quotation:

A little fiction here hear: Lonergan puzzling about Paul, and echoing Rilke. I am thinking of the broad context fermented forward by the brilliant Albert Schweitzer, with his *Quest for the Historical Jesus* of 1906 and his Paul-quest of later years. I have his 1931 *Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London: A. and C. Black) open before me, at the final chapter, “The Permanent Elements in Paul’s Mysticism,” and you might muse of the geohistorical heuristic that could connect Paul, him, and Lonergan as you read a few quotations. The chapter starts: “Paul vindicated for all time the rights of thought in Christianity” (376); “Paul is the patron-saint of thought in Christianity. And all those who think to serve the faith in Jesus by destroying the freedom of thought would do well to keep out of his way.” (377)

But now I read that same text’s beginning, and indeed all my ventures into the problem of scripture studies,<sup>4</sup> with a fresh twist, a twist that is so obvious yet not obvious to??? ... history’s thinkers and pastors.

Paul is “the patron-saint of thought in Christianity,” yet what is this thought in Paul that mediates his letter-writing? This is a subtler question than is asked in my previous essays: it lifts off from my bump up in and after my Filipino church service. There is now my fresh reach for an effective push on fresh grip on the geostatistics of effectiveness towards answering the prayer of Jesus, “. . . may they all be one . . .” (John 17, 21).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [Disputing Quests 10](#): Paul’s Epistles and Functional Systematics.

<sup>4</sup> The ventures go back to [Process: Introducing Themselves to Young \(Christian\) Minds](#) (1988–89) and continued in the [Disputing Quests](#) essays (2016–17) on scripture studies that focus on the efforts of the New Testament scholar N.T. Wright.

<sup>5</sup> I am quoting from the third last paragraph of Lonergan’s *Method in Theology*.

I refrain from expanding on this, apart from the dense footnote. The third objectification “meeting and clashing of minds” is not the zone of that sort of treatise-format. It will emerge as something precise, sharp, disturbing, inviting, in which people are, yes, ultimately beholden.

But should I not add further pointers, pointers that in the real cycling of theology would seed a foundational surge?

Well, I can point you to the central context: *Insight*, chapter 17, perhaps helpfully mused over as “Engineering as Dialectic.”<sup>6</sup> We shall twist our myths into mysteries of situations great and small only by the huge collaboration that lifts the suggestions of that neglected chapter into an effective ethos of the positive Anthropocene age. A plethora of other suggestions sit neuro-pushingly before me in notes and scribbles, but this is not the place to scatter you into texts. Perhaps best to end comically by returning to Paul’s letters. Paul would have benefitted from having in mind the global drive of  $\{M(W_3)^{\theta\Phi T}\}^4$ . Its absence in him seeded a shockingly warped development of Christ’s initiation of the rescuing of human whats. We shall learn, as we weave along out of the dark of the axial negative Anthropocene, just what a battered plant, a classical empire and its fragmentations, emerged in these last two millennia. It has joined other empires in “an arrogance of omnicompetent common sense.”<sup>7</sup> Such a “classical culture cannot be jettisoned without being replaced; and what replaces it cannot but run counter to classical expectations.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The final, seventeenth, essay of the website series [Economics](#).

<sup>7</sup> *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965–1980*, “Questionnaire on Philosophy,” *CWL* 17, 370.

<sup>8</sup> *Collection*, “Dimensions of Meaning,” *CWL* 4, 245. The familiar conclusion, now shockingly applied to the needs of a renewing of Christian community’s role in history. The full shock is *Assembled in Lo and Behold 11*.