

Fr. Giovanni Sala, S.J., Philosopher and Theologian

MATTHEW L. LAMB
Ave Maria University
Naples, FL

DURING THE NIGHT of March 14–15, 2011, Fr. Giovanni Sala, S.J., passed through the portals of death to meet the Lord Jesus, whom he had followed so faithfully as a Jesuit scholar. He ranks high among the insightful and productive philosophers and theologians renewing Catholic intellectual life and culture in our times. Most of his many books and even more articles and essays have appeared in German or Italian. They explore the intellectual and scholarly coherence and brilliance of Catholic philosophical and theological traditions, as well as the intellectual indigence and mediocrity of those dissenting from the teachings of the Catholic Magisterium.¹ Only a very few of his essays have been translated into English. In this retrospective, I shall first sketch the orientation of Sala's exposition of Fr. Bernard Lonergan's explanatory articulation of human experiencing, understanding, knowing, and willing—what Lonergan calls the third stage of meaning: interiority. Secondly, I shall outline how important this interior orientation is for doing genuine Catholic theology up to the level of our times.

¹ See the bibliographies in Giovanni Sala, S.J., *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube*, ed. Ulrich Lehner and Ronald Tacelli (Nordhausen: Bautz, 2005), and Sala, *Kontroverse Theologie* (Bonn: Nova & Vetera, 2005), each of which has a tribute to the work of Fr. Sala by a cardinal of the Church. Unless otherwise stated or implied by English titles, all English translation of Sala is my own work.

The Orientation of Lonergan's Cognitive Theoretical Achievement

Sala's last book has two parts,² the first of which gives a detailed examination of the operations of human knowing and the second of which orders the major achievements of human knowledge in the fields of common sense, natural sciences, human sciences, metaphysics, and natural theology. Part I of the book has ten chapters and ten excursi. The latter are important in showing the ways in which Lonergan's appropriation of the related and recurrent operations of intelligence shows the relevance of Aquinas's analysis of intellectual operations. Sala understood that the only way to overcome the conceptualism and nominalism of modern cultures was to articulate the related and recurrent experiences of the human mind. Such experiences are both universally present in all human beings and uniquely present in all individual persons.

Thus, he begins the book with chapters on the needed heightening of awareness (ch. 1) in order to attend to both the human innate desire to know and the two types of related questions, those pertaining to understanding (what is it?) and those pertaining to judgment (is it so?). The questions for judgment are all of the type that can be answered by "yes," "no," or "maybe," and all other questions cannot be so answered and are questions for understanding. The dynamic relation between these two different types of questioning are seen in the fact that we do not want only to think about something; we want to know what really exists—we desire to know being (ch. 2). This knowing is a formally dynamic structure in that human beings spontaneously raise these two fundamental types of questions given their intelligence and reason (ch. 3).

After going on to show that overlooking this formally dynamic structure results in an "intuitionism" of empiricist or conceptualist varieties (ch. 4), Sala then details the conscious acts and objects constituting how and what we experience (ch. 5). These experiences provide the data on which the two sets of intelligent acts or operations seek: first, to understand and—if we gain some insight—conceptualize (ch. 6), and then second, to judge whether the concepts are verified in the data and, thus, are true knowledge of the objects (ch. 7).

After each of these chapters there are excursi in which Sala

² Sala, *Die Struktur der menschlichen Erkenntnis: Eine Erkenntnislehre* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2009).

provides evidence for Lonergan's recovery and transposition of what was classically called by Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas (among many others) the "theoretical way of living." In doing this, Sala concentrates on Lonergan's explanatory retrieval of Aquinas's teaching on knowing and being, as well as how this retrieval shows the nominalist and conceptualist roots of modern and contemporary pendulum swings between empiricism and idealism, between libertarianism and authoritarianism, between nihilistic relativism and a-rational voluntarism.

A fundamental challenge within post-Enlightenment cultures and philosophies consists in overcoming the conceptualism that obfuscates the natural orientation of all human knowing toward being, toward what actually exists. Sala was a recognized expert on the work of Immanuel Kant. When his provincial told him he was to join the faculty at the Jesuit Philosophate in Munich, he saw it as an opportunity to do what he could to show how Kant had failed to grasp the full range of human knowing and willing.³

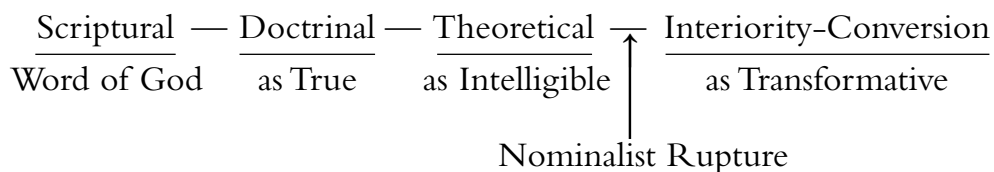
Sala meets this challenge by calling for his readers to direct their attention to their acts of questioning and desiring to understand and know things. Drawing on Lonergan, Sala invites his readers to an intellectualist exploration of what we too often take for granted: daily conscious living and questioning. This exploration is guided by the question (for understanding) of what knowing is, addressing the origins of knowledge in the question of "what do we do when we know?" Concepts and definitions do not float out from some unknowable black box; their origins are acts of understanding and judging. Knowledge is not a matter of simply memorizing concepts and definitions; it is knowing what, in fact, is true.

We do not want to just have ideas; we want to know whether they express what things are in fact, in reality. "What do we do when we know?" is a cognitional theoretical question. Only when we answer it truly can we go on to the more modern epistemological question of "why is doing that knowing?" This, Sala points out, is the contemporary Cartesian question: Descartes asked whether or not we know reality. He asked the *an sit* question before he had adequately answered the *quid sit* question, what knowing is and what we do when we know. The result was his universal doubt as the *fundamentum*

³ Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

inconcussum of all thinking.⁴ Sala indicates that no one can, in fact, performatively carry through a universal doubt, and he shows that the failure to ask the cognitional theoretical question of what we do when we know has its roots in nominalism.

In order to understand the need in Catholic theology to overcome the rupture occasioned by nominalism, Sala turns to Lonergan's analysis of revelation, doctrinal development, and the stages of meaning. These might be outlined as:



The first development led to the differentiation or development of doctrine and creed from Sacred Scripture. If the Bible as the Word of God is true, then questions arose that could not be answered simply by quoting the Bible. The great Trinitarian and Christological councils, beginning with Nicea (AD 325) realized that, in order to assure that the Word of God in Scripture is true and that what Jesus Christ reveals of himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit is true, one had to invoke terms other than only biblical ones. Non-biblical terms such as “consubstantial,” “relations,” “persons,” “properties,” and “processions” were employed to assure the truth of revealed Trinitarian and Christological texts in the Gospels. Wisdom is given in revelation and evokes the development of an acquired wisdom. Gifted wisdom is faith in the revealed Word of God attuning the believing and worshiping Church to the realities of the Holy Trinitarian and Christological Mysteries. This leads in turn to the acquisition of a reasoned, metaphysical wisdom aimed at defending and understanding revelation.⁵

The Greek and Latin Patristic and Monastic authors in the first millennium of Catholicism found a stable home or institution in the thousands of monasteries, convents, and cathedral schools where generations of men and women kept alive the sacred word of Scripture, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and the classic literature of East and West. Teaching, learning, and the intellectual life

⁴ Ibid., 22–23, 67–70.

⁵ Sala, *Kontroverse Theologie*, 23–65; 237.

were practiced within the orientations toward wisdom and holiness on the part of the monks, nuns, clerics and lay students. The Greek and Latin Fathers were able to incorporate the best of their philosophical sources into a Christian Hellenism that preserved both reason and the Christian faith.⁶

As this doctrinal and creedal development continued, there were questions that arose about the inner intelligibility of the many doctrines and creeds. These questions led to the second development, which differentiated theoretical *summae* from collections of doctrines and creeds. Doctrinal developments address the truth question and, so, assert that whoever does not accept the truth is heretical. For, the profession of faith in the creeds is dealing not only with propositions but also with the sacred realities revealed by the creator and redeemer of the universe. Unlike doctrine, the quest for the intelligibility of the doctrines deals with the first act of the mind, asking what the true doctrines mean. So, theoretical developments give rise to various schools of thought. The truth of Catholic doctrines is accepted, but there are different ways in the different schools for seeking some understanding of the true doctrines and mysteries of the faith.

An essential question was the extent to which this differentiation of theoretical theology would succeed in being faithful to both the Scriptural and doctrinal, on the one hand, and to the exigencies of intelligence and system, on the other hand. Theology is both wisdom, which requires holiness and goodness, and a science, which is a scholarly discipline requiring intelligence and theory. The second millennium witnessed the emergence of the universities dedicated to sciences and scholarship.

As with all things Catholic, the new did not dispense with the old. We still have the intellectual tradition carried on in monasteries, seminaries, and convents. Thanks to the new directions in Catholic Europe, universities now span the globe. New forms of religious life emerged to integrate the new with the old. Mendicant Dominicans and Franciscans, and later the Jesuits and other religious and lay

⁶ Ibid., 40–59. See also Pope Benedict XVI, *Regensburg Lecture*: “A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, ... [so that] Not to act “with logos” is contrary to God’s nature” (https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html).

organizations in the Church, took up the challenges of keeping the burgeoning sciences, humanities, and arts from being cut off from the quest for wisdom and holiness.⁷

The synthesis of wisdom and science in Thomas Aquinas required intellectual, moral, and theological virtues that were not adequately practiced and deepened in subsequent theologians. They did not grasp the theoretical as a way of living, a contemplative way of living requiring an intellectual conversion whereby one can understand that the intelligible causes the sensible. Several key oversights followed from this failure on the part of Scotus and were deepened by Ockham and his successors.⁸ Reason was left with only sensations versus concepts and it was claimed that men know only “concepts,” not real beings. A massive eclipse of judgment as knowing reality spread. Universals became only *flatus vocis*, empty words used to arbitrarily label fragmented individual entities or, in Leibniz’s terms, monads.

Despite efforts to counteract it by realists, nominalism spread, replacing wisdom with increasingly fragmented attention to particulars in isolation from their natures and from their ends within the universe of being. Metaphysics was increasingly truncated and distorted by a conceptualism that failed to attend to (1) the objective abstraction whereby objects define sensation and intellectual light and (2) the acts of judging as affirming or denying the composition of subject and predicate and, so, affirming or denying being as *esse*. Nominalism exalted the will over reason, breaking any living continuity with the great philosophical and theological traditions of the past. Doctrinal and theoretical traditions were devalued as purely “textual” and “verbal” matters imposed by arbitrary papal or conciliar authorities, just as Reformers claimed.

With the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, and the Modern period, a new development was increasingly needed. This third development was occasioned by disputes and

⁷ On the cathedral schools and the emergence of universities in Europe, see C. S. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools & Social Ideals in Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994); Hastings Rashdall, *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1942); Olaf Petersen, *The First Universities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁸ See Sala, *Die Struktur der menschlichen Erkenntnis*, 85–206, and Benedict XVI, *Regensburg Lecture*. See also James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (St. Augustine Press, 2007), 63–68, and Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 61–121.

questions that tended to fragment and remove Scripture, doctrines, creeds, and *summae* from their sapiential context. The previous two developments—doctrinal and theoretical—were called into doubt and ignored by many scholars in the name of a greater attention to empirical data, and this religiously exalted *Sola Scriptura* against doctrinal and theoretical developments.⁹

A Truncated Kantian Turn to the Subject Devastates Catholic Theology

Fr. Giovanni Sala's profound scholarship on Kant enabled him to see how impoverished and distorted was the much-vaunted Kantian "turn to the subject." His very extensive scholarly publications on Kant and Lonergan have established that Lonergan adopted Aquinas's cognitional theory in order to provide a thorough criticism of Kantian philosophy.¹⁰ Thus, it is not surprising that Fr. R. J. Henle, S.J., would reject the notion that Lonergan was a transcendental Thomist in his *American Thomistic Revival*.¹¹ To group Lonergan with the transcendental Thomists influenced by Maréchal overlooks the fact that his studies concentrated on Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas—not the work of Maréchal. Lonergan recalled that, when he came to hear of Maréchal's approach, he did not really study it so much as recognized Maréchal's treatment of judgment as confirming what he was more familiar with—namely, Augustine's key notion of *veritas* and Aquinas's notion of *esse*.¹²

⁹ See Brad S. Gregory's important work in *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Sala, *Das Apriori in der menschlichen Erkenntnis: Eine Studie über Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft und Lonergans Insight* (Meisenheim: Anton Hain, 1971); Sala, *Lonergan and Kant*; Sala, *Kontroverse Theologie*; Sala, "What Use is Kant for Theology?" in *Wisdom and Holiness, Science and Scholarship*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), 293–314.

¹¹ R. J. Henle's study of transcendental Thomism says Lonergan is not one; see *The American Thomistic Revival* (St. Louis, MO: St. Louis University Press, 1999), 348 ff. Lonergan himself never, as far as I know, referred to himself as a transcendental Thomist. His use of "transcendental" is not in the Kantian meaning of the term, but rather the Thomist sense. I have also indicated the inadequacy of Fr. Gerald McCool's claim that Lonergan is a transcendental Thomist; see my "Divine Transcendence and Eternity," in *Continuity and Plurality in Catholic Theology: Essays in Honor of Gerald A. McCool, S.J.*, ed. Anthony J. Cernera (Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 1998), 75–106.

¹² Bernard Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1974), 265: "I was sent to Rome for theology, and there I was subject to two import-

Sala indicates that, in two of his essays in the 1970s, Lonergan articulated a dependence of his method on Aquinas. In “Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation” (1975) and “Horizons and Transpositions” (1979), Lonergan writes of the “emergence of method” in the thirteenth century schoolmen: the technique of the *quaestio* “resulted in a method, for it attracted a group of specialists following a common procedure in a determinate field of investigation.”¹³ He defines his own transposition of Aquinas’s method of the question as “transcendental” in the Scholastic sense, where the transcendental is distinguished from the categorical as something not bound to one of Aristotle’s predicaments.

Lonergan’s notion is a critical response to Kant by way of indicating that it is not some list of categories (cause, substance, etc.) that is prior to and imposed on the data of the senses. Rather, it is the given nature of human intelligence itself, with the two sets of its operations as analyzed by Aquinas and specified by the *quid sit* and *an sit* questions, leading the mind to both the intelligibility and the truth of the real.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the subtleness of the method of the *quaestio* in the work of Aquinas gave way to the conceptualist deductivism in nominalism and voluntarism that increasingly absorbed metaphysics

ant influences. One was from an Athenian, Stefanos Stefanu, who had entered the Jesuit Sicilian province and had been sent to Louvain to study philosophy at a time when Maréchal taught psychology to the Jesuit students and the other professors at the scholasticate taught Maréchal. Stefanu and I used to prepare our exams together. Our aim was clarity and rigor—an aim all the more easily obtained, the less the theses really meant. It was through Stefanu by some process of osmosis, rather than through struggling with the five great Cahiers, that I learnt to speak of human knowledge as not intuitive but discursive with the decisive component in judgment. This view was confirmed by my familiarity with Augustine’s key notion, *veritas*, and the whole was rounded out by Bernard Leeming’s course on the Incarnate Word, which convinced me that there could not be a hypostatic union without a real distinction between essence and existence. This, of course, was all the more acceptable, since Aquinas’ *esse* corresponded to Augustine’s *veritas* and both harmonized with Maréchal’s view of judgment.”

¹³ Sala, *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube*, 491–562; Lonergan, “Horizons and Transpositions,” in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 17, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, ed. Robert Croken and Robert Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 421. This can also be found in his *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick Crowe (New York: Paulist Press), 35–54.

¹⁴ Sala, *Das Apriori in der menschlichen Erkenntnis*. See also his *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube*, 103–30, on intentionality in Aquinas and Lonergan contra Kantian intuition.

into a conceptualist logicism. Lost was the full interiority of Aquinas's cognitional theory as recovered and honed by Lonergan.

Sala's profound and detailed 474-page *Kant und die Frage nach Gott* exegetes all the relevant texts of Kant, while also disputing their validity "from a Thomistic standpoint."¹⁵ These criticisms are expanded in a number of articles Sala published over the years, some of which are gathered in his *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube* and his *Kontroverse Theologie*. Human reason can, as Aquinas and Lonergan demonstrate and Sala elaborates, know that God exists. Natural theology is valid only in a Thomistic context of clearly differentiating experience, insight, and judgment.¹⁶ This clearly establishes that the light of Christian faith heals and elevates the natural light of human reason, not blinding or negating reason. As Sala writes:

Allow me to recall a personal experience during the academic year 1959–1960, when I was attending his lectures on "De Verbo Incarnato." From the very introduction to the first thesis about the New Testament teaching on Jesus of Nazareth as true man and true God, the first philosophical theorem to which Lonergan appealed was on the "vis iudicii existentialis quo per verum iudicium cognoscitur existens." It is not enough—Lonergan said—to acknowledge that God reveals himself; we must also acknowledge that he reveals himself by teaching the truth. If we do not acknowledge the mediating role of the truth of judgment, then we do not establish, but rather we would eliminate the Catholic position, since this teaches us that the object of faith is the truth revealed by God and defined by the Church. . . . Here Lonergan sees the root of the realism implied in the preaching of the Church.¹⁷

¹⁵ Sala, *Kant und die Frage nach Gott* (New York: de Gruyter, 1990), vii: "Außer der genannten immanenten Exegese des Textes und möglichst deutlich von ihr getrennt habe ich versucht, eine argumentative Stellungnahme zu den jeweiligen Beweisen und Widerlegung Kants auszuarbeiten, und zwar von einem thomistischen Standpunkt aus" ["Besides the so-called immanent exegesis of the texts of Kant, I have sought clearly to develop criticisms of Kant based on verified evidence. Indeed, I do this from a Thomist standpoint"; my own translation].

¹⁶ Sala, *Kontroverse Theologie*, 23–39.

¹⁷ Ibid. 49. One should read the whole essay in which this appears, "The Encyclical Letter 'Fides et Ratio': A Service to Truth" (*Kontroverse Theologie*, 40–59).

This metaphysical realism is fundamental to the preaching and teaching of the Catholic faith. This led Sala to criticize the writings of Hans Küng for their continual severing of the New Testament from the doctrinal teachings of the Church. Sala first criticized Küng's failure to understand the Church's teaching on infallibility.¹⁸ Later, when Küng published *Christ sein*, Sala published a book length set of criticisms, indicating the ways in which Küng was proposing a secularized Gnosticism that was contrary to the doctrinal and theoretical traditions so important when defending revealed truth and the realism of Jesus Christ as true man and true God.¹⁹ Sala anticipated a later controversy Küng has had with the Magisterium of the Church.²⁰

The essays assembled by the editorial work of Ulrich Lehner and Fr. Ronald Tacelli illustrate Sala's concern to show the importance of a range of issues that exemplify the importance of recovering the scriptural, doctrinal, and theoretical depths of interiority for the truth of Catholic teaching and practice. Sala discusses pastoral and ecumenical controversies, as well as those centering on the importance of the ordinary Magisterium for Catholic theologians and the profession of Catholic faith,²¹ referencing Lonergan's insistence upon the foundational importance of the exercise of the intellectual excellences or virtues for anyone seeking to know the truth, as well as the importance of exercising the moral virtues to live a good life. Analogously, to open one's mind and heart to the revelation of the Triune God in Jesus Christ, a genuinely Catholic theologian must tend toward sanctity. As Sala writes:

Now when the Christian existence of the subject, the theologian, is undermined by inauthenticity, an adequate understanding of Revelation cannot be expected—indeed, not

¹⁸ Sala, *Infallibile? Una risposta. A proposito di una tesi di Hans Küng* (Rome: Edizione Paoline, 1971). Sala responded to Küng's comments on his own earlier criticisms in "L'Infalibile? di Hans Küng, Risultati e Rilievi di un Dibattito in Corso," *La Scuola Cattolica: Supplemento bibliographico* 100 (1972): 83–125.

¹⁹ Sala, *Essere Cristiani e essere nella Chiesa*, Teologia 10 (Alba, IT: Edizione Paoline, 1975).

²⁰ Sala, "La documentazione sulla controversia tra il magisterio e Hans Küng," *La Rivista del Clero Italiano* 59 (1978): 606–20, and "Hans Küng: Il problema di Dio nella cultura moderna," *La Rivista del Clero Italiano* 60 (1979): 75–87.

²¹ See the many insightful essays in Sala, *Kontroverse Theologie*, 71–286.

even the indirect and analogous understanding of theology. A regress in Christian living, in prayer, charity, self-denial and obedience, inevitably works as a negative factor with regard to the supernatural truth communicated by God to His Church. . . . Revealed truth is an essential part of the Christian life. Reflection on this truth can, therefore, be done only by one who lives it, just as communication of that truth can be done only through a living testimony. Now there is no Christian life except in communion with the Church, the adequate subject of our faith. It is only within a communion with the Church and in a constant endeavor towards personal sanctification that a proper relationship is possible between the theologian and the living Magisterium.²²

Regression in living doctrinal truth in charity, Sala saw, had moral theological consequences as well.

Without the full range of interiority thematized from Aquinas to Lonergan, modern appeals to freedom and conscience severed will from reason and its judgments of what is truly good. Sala engaged in a whole range of moral theological controversies that had their roots, as he saw clearly, in the subjectivism of truncated interiority. Secularized societies would appeal to “decisions of conscience” that would allow politicians and legislators to pass unjust laws “legitimizing” birth control, abortion, divorce, same-sex marriage, euthanasia, and the like. In Germany, these issues were usually labelled as *Gewissensentscheidungen* (“decisions of conscience”) that were increasingly protected by laws. Sala published a number of articles calling attention to these issues and supporting magisterial teaching such as *Casti Connubii*, *Humanae Vitae*, *Veritatis Splendor*, and *Evangelium Vitae*.²³

In a masterfully concise and clear book, *Gewissensentscheidung: Philosophisch-theologische Analyse von Gewissen and sittlichem Wissen*,²⁴ Sala began by showing just what one experiences in decisions of conscience. He takes the reader through the conscious intentional acts of human experiencing, understanding, knowing, and deciding

²² Ibid., 258.

²³ Ibid., 287–376. Sala also published a thorough commentary on Kant’s *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004). Regarding “decisions of conscience,” Sala shows that any genuine decision of conscience is normed by the truths of the natural law (reason) and the revealed truths of faith.

²⁴ Innsbruck, AT: Tyrolia Verlag, 1993.

subjects. Citing Aquinas and Lonergan, he takes the reader through the related and recurrent acts, showing how deliberating and deciding are within an intentional attunement to the orders in which something is truly good. This attunement requires learning the historical source of moral knowledge and understanding how conscience is either guided by right reason or becomes erroneous. To those who object to an objective moral order, Sala poses this question: “What is, then, moral if not the demand of our intentionality to do the good? And what is the good, if not that which is appropriate to humans as human? And how can one ascertain what is humanly appropriate, if not through a reflection as objective as possible on humans, on the ‘nature of the reality’ that human beings are?”²⁵

Given the widespread tendencies to rationalize disordered choices and how those disorders are woven into public opinion and unjust laws, ascertaining what is objectively appropriate to the human good challenges even the best minds. The best Greek and Latin philosophers were puzzled by the fact that so few men lived by what is highest in them: reason. Sala sees this problem of evil, following Aquinas, as a question of *intellectus quaerens fidem*.²⁶ It is reasonable to assent to the truth of revelation in moral matters. Humanism transcends its own limitations by its own intrinsic demand for a solution God has given only in Jesus Christ. The historical context of moral learning is found in the quest for justice fulfilled by the revelation entrusted by Christ to the Church and her Magisterium. Sala refers to Lonergan’s observation of man’s “proud content to be just a man” and the tragedy that “to be just a man is what man cannot be” without the revealed solution to the recalcitrant problem of evil.²⁷

Sala concludes the book with the recent teachings of the ordinary Magisterium on marriage and human sexuality. He shows how they preserve and elevate the truth and beauty of human love and friendship, transforming these into a holy and fruitful sacrament. Thus, decisions of conscience properly flourish in an enlightened obedience to the teachings and sacraments of Holy Mother Church.²⁸

²⁵ Ibid., 70.

²⁶ Sala, *Kant, Lonergan und der christliche Glaube*, 523–62.

²⁷ Sala, *Gewissensentscheidung*, 74–75, referring to a statement by Lonergan in *Insight: a Study of Human Understanding* that can be found in *The Collected Works*, vol. 3, *Insight* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 749–50.

²⁸ Sala, *Gewissensentscheidung*, 82–127.

Conclusion

This very brief sketch of Fr. Giovanni Sala's writings illustrates the importance of his scholarship for the renewal of Catholic intellectual and religious life. The emphasis he gives to the related and recurrent acts of human natural and graced interiority demonstrates that, in order to grasp the truths of Holy Scripture, of Church doctrines, and of theological theoretical achievements, one has to live the natural and sacred realities they communicate. Given the rupture caused by the spread of nominalism, intellectual, moral, and Christian conversions had to be made foundationally explicit. Only on those foundations could the biblical, doctrinal, and theoretical achievements be genuinely integrated within Catholic theology, thereby overcoming the distortions arising from truncated subjectivism and voluntarism. What is at stake in Giovanni Sala's work, as in the work of Thomas Aquinas or Bernard Lonergan, is realizing that they are all engaging us in a vital conversation about the most important realities in our own lives and the lives of all other human beings. The writings are invitations for us to experience the natural and sacred realities that embrace each moment of our own lives and the lives of the whole human race into which we were born and that call us into incredibly intimate friendship with God.

The works of Fr. Sala, as those of his conversation partners, bring together a metaphysics concerned with the proper understanding of the natural and a Catholic theology concerned with the interiority of the mutual self-mediation of Divine and human persons knowing and loving each other. As Lonergan has written:

Once this is grasped, it follows that the divine persons, the blessed in heaven, and the justified here on earth are mutually present in each other as the known is present in the knower and as the beloved is present in the lover. Attention is to be given to this knowing and loving both with respect to its ultimate goal which is that good that is the good through its essence and with respect to its proximate goal which is a common good of order, the kingdom of God, the Body of Christ, the Church. Moreover, the consequent mutual indwelling differs in accord with the nature and state of each individual: for the divine persons are mutually present in each other on the basis of consubstantiality; the justified are present in God and in each other on the basis of intentional act of existence and on the basis of the kind of identification proper to love; we are in the

Word as known to him and beloved by him both on the basis of his divine nature and on the basis of his human nature; the Word is in us in our knowledge and love for him as a sensible man as we are reaching toward a knowledge and love of God who dwells in inaccessible light (1 Tim. 6:16). And because the prior knowledge and love is easier for us in that it includes our sensitive memory of the past and our imagination of the future, we are led by it to that higher knowledge and love in which we now no longer know Christ in the flesh but our own inner word proper to the divine Word is spoken intelligibly in us on the basis of an emanation of truth and our own love proper to the divine Love is spirated on the basis of an emanation of sanctity. For the divine persons are sent on the basis of their eternal processions so that they may meet us and dwell in us on the basis of similar processions that are produced in us through grace. But those who proceed from and are sent by the Father do not come without the Father to whom all glory belongs through the Son and the Spirit.²⁹

It is only in this transposition within the supernatural context of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit that today's most pressing theological and moral problems will be resolved. N·V

²⁹ Bernard Lonergan, *De Deo Trino*, vol. 2 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964), 255–56 (my translation). This appears also in *The Collected Works*, vol. 12, *The Triune God: Systematics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 311–13.