

Envisioning a Systematic Theology (2)¹

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A recent review of my effort entitled *What Is Systematic Theology?* indicated impatience with the way Lonergan-based theologians like myself continue to postpone actually doing theology in favor of more and more sharpening of their tools.² The comment is reminiscent of something Karl Rahner was reported to have said about Lonergan himself. Rahner's comment as reported to me ran something like this: 'He's always sharpening his knife. When is he going to cut something with it?' Rahner's comment, if serious and accurately reported, was unfair to Lonergan, who cut through a great deal in his long and wonderful life. But the reviewer's comments on my book echo my own criticism of myself over the past couple of years: 'Okay, you've set the stage for what you want to do, now do it!'

In response to my own self-critique I have made at least a feeble effort to begin a book entitled *The Trinity in History*, which would be the first installment on a proposed systematic theology whose overall title, I suspect, will be *The Law of the Cross: A Systematic Theology*, or perhaps even *Lex Crucis: A Systematic Theology*. I propose in the present paper simply to share with you something of what appears in the draft completed to date and to ask for your feedback, whether positive or critical.

I propose to set forth in detail in this volume what I would call the 'unified field structure' of a contemporary systematic theology. I sketched the unified field structure in

1 This paper was presented at the Boston College Lonergan Workshop, June 2007. It is a development on the paper of the same name presented at the West Coast Methods Institute two months earlier (*Essays in Systematic Theology* 21 on this website). It was published in a slightly different form from what appears here in *Lonergan Workshop* 20, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston Cololege, 2008) 105-26.

2 Michael McGuckian, Review of Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* *Heythrop Journal* 48 (2007) 497-99.

*What Is Systematic Theology?*³ But now it has to be unfolded in an ordered, systematic, and relatively complete manner. The unified field structure is an open set of conceptions – open in the sense that additions are expected as questions emerge that demand new categories – that embraces the field of issues presently to be accounted for and presently foreseeable in systematic theology. It integrates in systematic fashion what, in his 1962 lectures on ‘The Method of Theology’ at Regis College, Toronto, Lonergan called the dogmatic-theological context.⁴ ‘Context,’ Lonergan says there, is a remainder concept; it is the rest. When someone says, ‘Your interpretation is all out of context’ or ‘Your objection disregards the context of the remark,’ the word ‘context’ refers to ‘all the rest that is relevant to understanding correctly what is being said.’ Lonergan’s point is, ‘If a person makes any statement that regards either dogma or theology, there is a whole circle of other statements that are relevant to the exploration of exactly what each word means, to the defense of that proposition, to the solution to all the objections that can be brought against it. There is an immediate and rather large circle that goes around any particular dogmatic or theological statement, and it forms the context of that statement. But all these other statements each have their own circle, and so one goes out to a circle of circles. But the thing does not go off into infinity. There is such a thing as the dogmatic-theological context at any given time.’

This ‘rest,’ this remainder, is usually not very well defined, and it seems to me that a systematics would do well if it could articulate this context at the outset, as this context exists and functions at the present time. Articulating it will, of course, entail making doctrinal and systematic statements, but if these statements really are part of the dogmatic-theological context, then they furnish something of the remainder that provides

3 See Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), index under ‘Unified Field Structure.’

4 An audio recording of these lectures has been made available through the work of Greg Lauzon, and an edited transcription of them will appear in volume 22 of the *Collected Works*.

a setting for the other statements that the theologian will make. Thus, on the structure suggested here, statements in ecclesiology or sacramental theology are set within a circle of circles of Trinitarian and Christological presuppositions. Furthermore, in our time there is going forward the work of transforming the dogmatic-theological context itself from its previous classicist form to a new, historically minded way of proceeding. That transition is still under way, and it is bound to take time – something that in perhaps feeble self-defense I would call to the attention of the reviewer whose challenge to me I narrated at the beginning.⁵ It is one of the transitions that Lonergan is talking about in the quotation that provides the theme of this workshop: ‘... what will count is a perhaps not numerous center, big enough to be at home in both the old and the new, painstaking enough to work out one by one the transitions to be made, strong enough to refuse half measures and insist on complete solutions even though it has to wait.’ We proceed at this workshop, I trust, with the conviction that Lonergan’s method *is* capable of guiding these transitions. In fact, it may be that history will show that this method was preeminent in preserving the center between the solid right of classicism and the scattered left of relativism and ultimately of nihilism.

Lonergan indicated in 1962 that the dogmatic-theological context not only is passed on but also develops. Moreover, in Lonergan’s view in 1962 (a view that remains true today, I believe), basic doctrinal parameters within which further development is possible are firmly established in only some of the areas of the Church’s constitutive meaning: namely, with regard to Trinitarian and Christological doctrine and with regard to the doctrine of grace; but there are other areas that call for development even with respect to basic doctrinal commitments; in one discussion session at the 1962 Institute on ‘The Method of Theology,’ Lonergan singled out Church and sacraments as areas calling

⁵ McGuckian seems to shy away from the implications of that transition, if I understand correctly the upshot of his article ‘The Role of Faith in Theology: A Critique of Lonergan’s Method,’ *Irish Theological Quarterly* 71 (2006) 242-59.

for such doctrinal determination, but, it seems to me, we may add such theological elements as revelation, creation, redemption, and eschatology; and even within Christology, there is a great deal of work to be done on the historical causality of Jesus and on the relation of the divine and human consciousnesses and the divine and human knowledge of Jesus. It is not the case, of course, that there are no doctrines, either ecclesial or theological, to be submitted to systematic understanding in the areas of sacramental theology and ecclesiology, or for that matter in these other areas. It is rather the case that in these areas there has not yet occurred in the doctrinal history of the Church as clear a demarcation within which further development may unfold as that which marks the Church's doctrinal commitments regarding the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in grace.⁶ The development of theological doctrines in these areas is one way in which the Church's dogmatic-theological context can develop. There is for Lonergan, then, as for myself, something about the doctrinal commitments that the Church has already taken in regard to Trinity, Christ, and grace that clearly sets parameters within which further development, both doctrinal and systematic, may legitimately occur, and outside of which what might pass for development is really deformation. As John Courtney Murray is reported to have said with respect to the conciliar dogmas regarding Trinitarian and Christological matters, 'Having come this far, we cannot but come this far before we move on.' A similar statement with respect to the other issues that I have mentioned can of course be made, at least up to a point, but it would lack the fullness or 'thickness' of meaning that attaches to the Church's

⁶ 'The degree of thematization differs in different cases. The fundamental developments are the Trinitarian doctrine in which the key element is the consubstantial; Christological doctrine: one person and two natures; the idea of the supernatural habit and act. There is then the field in which the categories are not yet fully developed. For example, categories as to the instrumental causality of the sacraments; they have to be developed more fully. There is also everything regarding history and the mystical body, and the Church; all these need further development.' Quotation taken from question session 4 of the 1962 Regis College Institute, 'The Method of Theology.'

Christological and Trinitarian commitments and to the doctrinal developments that have occurred with respect to the outpouring of God's grace in the gift of the Holy Spirit. And, I suggest, it is particularly in the mutual self-mediation of theology with the natural and human sciences and with contemporary cultural movements not specifically attached to the Church that these developments will occur, in a manner analogous to the developments reached by Aquinas through his appropriation and transformation of the Aristotelian corpus.

The nuanced character of the dogmatic-theological context, according to which it is more pronounced and clear in some areas than in others, throws light also on the matter of what, with David Tracy, we may call the focal meanings of a systematic theology.⁷ Some of the mysteries of faith have been formulated in dogmatic pronouncements, and I agree with Lonergan that systematics must for the most part begin here. But it must be added that at least two of the mysteries of faith that have been included from the beginning in creedal affirmations have not been dogmatically formulated, namely, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and the redemption wrought through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and that these are of a standing in the Church's constitutive meaning equal to that of the dogmatic pronouncements on the Incarnation and the Trinity. Thus they must be included along with the dogmas among the primary focal meanings of any systematic theology that would attempt a synthetic understanding of the realities that are central to the constitutive meaning of our faith community. They furnished, if you will, the dogmatic-theological context, the remainder, even for the definition of Christological and Trinitarian dogma.

We come, then, to the question of how the dogmatic-theological context might be expected to develop in our day. If we consider the areas that need even doctrinal

⁷ Tracy employs the notion of focal meanings throughout his book *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

development, I think we may find the solution to the problem of how to move systematic theology forward in our time. And I think there is evidence in Lonergan's notes written at the time of his breakthrough to functional specialization that he espoused a similar solution. The issues in the areas of ecclesiology, sacramental theology, soteriology, revelation, creation, and an eschatology built on the creedal affirmation of the resurrection of Jesus all have to do with *history*. And in the notes that he wrote in 1965 as he was working out the significance of his insight into functional specialization, Lonergan assigned as the mediated object of the functional specialty 'Doctrines' what he called 'redemption in history,' and as the mediated object of the functional specialty 'Systematics' *Geschichte*, history, the history that is written about. In other words, the doctrines, ecclesial and theological, that the theologian working in the functional specialty 'Doctrines' affirms are not an unorganized list of affirmations but are already organized into some kind of integrated pattern governed by a doctrinal commitment that affirms that God works redemptively in human history. And the attempt to understand these doctrines will take the form of a theological theory of history, of *Geschichte*, of the history that is lived and written about, that history that throughout his career Lonergan understood in terms of the three approximations of progress, decline, and redemption. In order to elevate ecclesiology, sacramental theology, soteriology, the theology of revelation, the theology of creation, and an eschatology based in the resurrection of Jesus to a status in the contemporary dogmatic-theological context that enjoys the clear parameters already given to the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and grace, there is required in theology a development of a position on the immanent intelligibility of human history.

At any rate, for an elaboration of the unified field structure that would integrate the contemporary dogmatic-theological context, I turn to two developments: first, to Lonergan's four-point hypothesis linking the four divine relations and four created participations in and imitations of divine life, and second, to the theory of history to be

found in Lonergan's own work and in my book *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. The four-point hypothesis provides a potential systematic unification of the understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnate Word, the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in grace, and the eternal life that is promised us in the resurrection of Jesus. It includes principally though not exclusively the *special* basic terms and relations of a systematic theology, that is to say, those terms and relations that are peculiar to theology. But more is needed to constitute a unified field structure. The 'total and basic science'⁸ of cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and existential ethics that grounds the theory of history includes the *general* basic terms and relations as well as some derived general terms and relations; and the theory of history itself provides a principal set of derived terms and relations both general and special. But that theory of history must be further articulated to include another set of *derived* special terms and relations, which will be largely constituted by a systematic position on the constituents of what the New Testament calls the reign of God: a heuristic, if you wish, of the social grace that is anticipated in Lonergan's chapter on the divine missions in *The Triune God: Systematics*, and that would stand over against the social sin that the present dogmatic-theological context already acknowledges.

Thus we have special basic (and some derived) terms and relations in the four-point hypothesis; general basic (and some derived) terms and relations in the 'basic and total science'; derived terms and relations both general and special in the theory of history; and further basic and derived special terms and relations (the consequences of Christian witness in history) in a transposition of the notion of the reign of God into a theology of social grace. Such is a rough sketch of the parameter of the categories. I have

⁸ For Lonergan's claim to have provided the total and basic science, see Bernard Lonergan, 'Questionnaire on Philosophy,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, vol. 17 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 355, 357, 381.

no doubt that it needs further nuancing, but for now I am content to leave that for the process of implementing the vision here offered.

The manuscript in its present form has four chapters, all of them in draft form, though the first is more complete than the other three.⁹ The first is entitled ‘The Starting Point,’ the second ‘Initial Issues,’ the third ‘Mimesis,’ and the fourth ‘Sacralization and Desacralization in History.’ These four chapters, along with a fifth that will present the materials to be transposed from the biblical narrative into a systematic position on the reign of God, would constitute a first part of the book or perhaps even a short introductory volume. In imitation of *Method in Theology*, this first part may well be conceived as ‘Background.’ For these chapters represent a synthesis of the background set in my own mind by previous work on aesthetic-dramatic operators and elemental meaning, on the structure of history, and on methodological questions in systematics. While this may sound like just more postponing of the actual systematic work, just more attempts to sharpen a knife, I think it is essential to the unfolding of the systematic vision that I hope I can now start to present. Moreover, a good deal of that systematic vision is contained in these chapters themselves.

I will summarize each of the four chapter completed in draft form to date, and will comment briefly on the issues entailed in the major steps of the argument.

1 The Starting Point

Chapter 1, ‘The Starting Point,’ consists of the article that I published in *Theological Studies* in December 2006, ‘The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,’¹⁰ supplemented by material contained in a lecture that I delivered at Marquette University in October

9 2009: The structure of the early chapters has been somewhat revised since I presented this paper.

10 Robert M. Doran, ‘The Starting Point of Systematic Theology,’ *Theological Studies* 67 (2006) 750-76.

2006 entitled 'Being in Love with God: A Source of Analogies for Theological Understanding.' The latter lecture was also presented in abbreviated form at the Third International Lonergan Workshop in Mainz this past January, and has been submitted for publication elsewhere.¹¹ In this chapter, I present Lonergan's four-point hypothesis and indicate the need to integrate it into a theological theory of history. I also suggest that the hypothesis provides us with a new form of the psychological analogy for understanding the divine processions, an analogy from within the order of graced experience itself. And I propose that systematic theology itself has evolved to the point where it can begin with a position that integrates the divine processions with the divine missions from the outset of the systematic enterprise. Let me address briefly each of the three components of this first chapter.

1.1 The four-point hypothesis

There are four divine relations: paternity, filiation, active spiration, and passive spiration. Three of these – paternity, filiation, and passive spiration – are really distinct and are identical with the three divine persons. Active spiration is not really but only conceptually or notionally distinct from paternity-and-filiation, the Father and the Son together, *Agapē* and its affirming Word, 'breathing' the proceeding Love that is the Holy Spirit. There is a created supernatural participation in and imitation of each of these divine relations.

Lonergan speaks of a 'secondary act of existence of the incarnation,' and he refers to it as the created supernatural participation in and imitation of divine paternity. What does this mean?

¹¹ 2009: It has appeared as 'Being in Love with God: A Source of Analogies for Theological Understanding,' *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73 (2008) 227-42.

We begin with an affirmation of faith. The divine Word, the Son sent by the Father, is incarnate in the human being Jesus of Nazareth. Nothing more is required for the mission of the Son to be *constituted* than the relation of origin according to which the Son proceeds from the Father. But the affirmation expresses three contingent truths: there is an incarnation, the incarnation is in the human nature derived from Mary, and the incarnation is the incarnation of the divine Word, of the Son, alone. There is required a created consequent condition of the contingent truth of the affirmation ‘the divine Word, the Son sent by the Father, is incarnate in the human being Jesus of Nazareth.’ The created consequent condition, in the real order, of the contingent truth of that proposition is called the secondary act of existence of the incarnation, the *esse secundarium incarnationis*. And what is that? It is the ground of the real relation of the assumed nature to the Son alone. As such, the secondary act of existence is the external, created, contingent, appropriate term required if it is contingently true that there is an incarnation of the divine Word in Jesus, that the complete humanity of Jesus is the complete humanity of the divine Word.¹²

In the four-point hypothesis presented by Lonergan in the final chapter of *The Triune God: Systematics*, the ground of this real relation of the assumed nature to the Son alone is also a created participation in and imitation of divine paternity, of the Father. That hypothesis – and it is nothing more than a hypothesis – expresses the kind of Christology that is most apparent in the Gospel of John but not absent from the synoptic Gospels, and in fact could even be argued to provide a kind of elemental theological context for the portrayal of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels. ‘The Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing; and whatever the Father does the

12 See Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, vol. 7 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002) part 4 passim. 2009: I have added the words ‘the ground of’ to the paper presented in 2007 and published in *Lonergan Workshop* 20.

Son does too. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he does himself' (John 5.19-20). 'My teaching is not from myself: it comes from the one who sent me' (John 7.16). 'To have seen me is to have seen the Father' (John 14. 9). Etc., etc., etc. The divine Word immanent in the Godhead does not speak; the divine Word is spoken; in Thomas's and Lonergan's trinitarian theology, its distinguishing notional act is *dici*, not *dicere*: to be spoken, not to speak. The incarnate Word speaks, but he speaks only what he hears from the Father. The relation of the assumed humanity to the person of the divine Word alone is also a created participation in and imitation of the divine Father, a participation in and imitation of the relation to the Son that we call paternity.

Next, the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son. Nothing more is required for that mission to be *constituted* than the relation of origin according to which the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. But as with the mission of the Son sent by the Father, so here too a mission as contingent and temporal requires an appropriate external term, not as constitutive of the mission but as a consequent condition of the truth of the proposition that affirms the mission. '... just as a divine person is and knows and wills and operates by the divine essence, and is distinguished as generating or generated, or as spirating or spirated, by a divine relation of origin, so also a divine person is constituted as sending or as sent by a divine relation of origin ... [But] the fact that a divine person sends or is sent cannot have the correspondence of truth through the divine perfection alone, and therefore requires an appropriate external term.'¹³

Since the mission of a divine person is the eternal procession of that person with the addition of an appropriate, consequent external term in time, the Holy Spirit is sent as what the Holy Spirit is, as proceeding Love. Essential divine love is common to the three divine persons, and it is by this love that the Father and the Son and the Spirit love all that

13 Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 465, 467.

they love. Proceeding love, however, is the Holy Spirit spirated by the Father and the Son breathing love, and it is by this spiration that the Father and the Son love themselves and one another and us by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ The Holy Spirit is thus sent as a ‘special and notional divine love,’ where the term ‘notional’ means that by which we know the distinctions of the three divine persons. The special divine love as which the Holy Spirit is sent is ‘that according to which the just are loved as ordered to the divine good.’¹⁵ The appropriate, consequent external term of the mission of the Holy Spirit is what has been known as sanctifying grace. But, says Lonergan, ‘although the Spirit alone according to his proper perfection is gift, still, since to give one’s entire love is the same as to give oneself, and since the Father and the Son give their entire proceeding Love, they also give themselves and therefore are said to come and dwell in the just.’¹⁶ Thus, in Lonergan’s hypothesis, sanctifying grace is the created supernatural participation in and imitation of active spiration, that is, of Father and Son breathing the Holy Spirit, and the habit of charity is the created supernatural participation in and imitation of passive spiration, that is, of the Holy Spirit, the divine Gift. The dynamic state of being in love without restrictions, qualifications, reservations, conditions is the created supernatural participation in and imitation of Father and Son, *Agapē* and Word, as together they ‘breathe,’ spirate the proceeding Love that is the Holy Spirit. Father and Son are divine *Agapē* and its Word, its Logos, its Judgment of Value, its *Verbum spirans Amorem*. Sanctifying grace is conceived as a created participation in and imitation of the divine *Agapē* issuing in the judgment of value, as from these together a proceeding love is breathed forth. What is breathed forth in created participation in and imitation of the divine Gift is charity. As the Holy Spirit is the *Amor* that proceeds from divine *Agapē* and its *Verbum spirans Amorem*, so what in the terms of *Insight* is called the gift of a

14 See *ibid.* 473, 475.

15 *Ibid.* 481.

16 *Ibid.* 471.

universal willingness proceeds from the created participation in and imitation of Father and Son together breathing the Holy Spirit.

The bulk of the quite lengthy first chapter is devoted to an attempt to articulate the dynamics of these special basic relations.¹⁷ More work will remain to be done on that issue, I know, but because I believe that it is precisely here that we will find special basic relations in the first place, the effort is in my view eminently worthwhile.¹⁸

Finally, in the four-point hypothesis the light of glory that is the created consequent condition of beatific knowledge is conceived as the created supernatural participation in and imitation of filiation, of the Son, the divine Word, as he bring us, his brothers and sisters, children by adoption, perfectly back to the Father.

17 2009: I have added refinements contained in my 2009 paper at the Lonergan Workshop, 'Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the *Nexus Mysteriorum Fidei*.' I regard the refinements as important to my own position. That paper will appear on this website at some point.

18 Note that Lonergan does not mention 'special basic relations' in his methodological statement regarding systematic categories, *Method in Theology* 343: 'As has been worked out in our chapters on method, on religion, and on foundations, general basic terms name conscious and intentional operations. General basic relations name elements in the dynamic structure linking operations and generating states. Special basic terms name God's gift of his love and Christian witness. Derived terms and relations name the objects known in operations and correlative to states.' My hypothesis, linked to Lonergan's four-point hypothesis, is that special basic relations lie in created participation in and imitation of the divine relations of active and passive spiration. These divine relations *are* the Blessed Trinity, since active spiration is identical with Father and Son, and passive spiration with the Holy Spirit. Special basic relations, then, emerge from our participation in the indwelling Trinity precisely as Trinity, that is, precisely as spirating and spirated. To Lonergan's statement, then, may be added a final sentence: 'Special basic relations name created participations in and imitations of the divine relations of active and passive spiration.' That statement, of course, is more than methodological. It is theological, very theological, and it is not impossible that Lonergan may have had something like this in mind that he could not include in a work on method, where methodological and theological questions are sharply distinguished on several occasions.

1.2 An Analogy

A second step taken in this first chapter is the suggestion that the dynamics of the special basic relations that obtain between the gift of God's love and the proceeding disposition of self-sacrificing love on our part might provide a new locus for the psychological analogy that may be used as we reach for a feeble, halting, obscure, but perhaps fruitful understanding of the mystery of the divine processions. It stands to reason that this should be so, if indeed there is any merit to the hypothesis itself of these special basic relations. For if the relations between sanctifying grace and charity are created participations in and imitations of the relations between active and passive spiration, then they are remote images of the Trinity, and so to articulate them carefully might provide an analogy for the divine processions. I do not have the time to develop the analogy here, but its basic lines of development may be seen in the *Theological Studies* article that will inform this first chapter.

1.3 Theological Evolution

Finally in chapter 1, there is presented an argument that has to do with the genetic sequence of systematic achievements. The argument is to the effect that, if the four-point hypothesis can be developed as providing one element in a unified field structure for systematic theology, then perhaps we may envision a systematics that begins, not with the divine processions alone, but with the processions and missions considered together. If this is correct, then introducing history into theology will affect in a profound way the very ordering of theological ideas. I suspect Lonergan was on to this, however remotely, in some of the things that he wrote in *Divinarum personarum*, where there are very interesting speculations about the role of history in theology that for some reason were

removed from the text when he rewrote it as *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*.¹⁹ This remains a suspicion at present, a surmise, something that has to be pursued in order to see whether it leads anywhere.

The problem may be formulated by pointing to a basic contrast between the respective approaches of Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Randall Rosenberg expressed the difference clearly in the paper he presented this spring in Los Angeles. Lonergan and Balthasar both start with explicit affirmations of the Christology of Chalcedon. But Lonergan ‘gives strong attention to an ontological and psychological analysis of the human person with a careful defining of the terms used and tightly and systematically ordered theses,’ while in Balthasar we find a determination to avoid what might appear extra-historical, static, essentialist, a ‘part one’ Christology ‘smoothly unfolding into a soteriological “part two.”’²⁰ Rosenberg writes, ‘In order to preserve the

19 See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 753-61. Consider, for instance, the following passage: ‘... the fourth way [that is, in addition to commonsense exegesis, doctrinal theology, and systematic theology as traditionally conceived] in which the same truth is understood is a new step in comprehension. Besides systematic exegesis ..., there is historical exegesis, which, far from omitting the accidentals, includes them synthetically [note that ‘synthetically’ is what distinguishes this from commonsense exegesis, which includes the accidentals in piecemeal fashion]. Besides systematic theology, there is a theology that is more concrete and more comprehensive, which deals with and seeks to understand the economy of salvation as it evolves historically. This new step in comprehension has over a lengthy period of time been gradually prepared by copious studies in the biblical, conciliar, patristic, medieval, liturgical, ascetical, and other areas of research, but in such a way that its synthetic character is not yet clearly apparent, since today’s scholars seem to resemble more the twelfth-century compilers than they do the thirteenth-century theologians in the proper sense. Still, just as the diligence of Peter Lombard and other collectors of “sentences” initiated and laid the groundwork for the theology that followed, so also those today who are engaged in learned and solid research in scripture and patristics and other fields can surely look forward to a theology at some time in the future that is at once more concrete and more comprehensive.’

20 Randall S. Rosenberg, ‘Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar on Christ’s Beatific Knowledge: A Dialectical Conversation,’ unpublished paper distributed and read at West Coast Methods Institute 2007, Loyola Marymount University, 14 April 2007, p. 1.

drama of the life of Christ, [Balthasar] shifts from ontological terms to obediential terms. Hence, Balthasar offers what might be called a mission-structured Christology.²¹

To cut to the chase, respecting the limits of this relatively short paper, I believe that both the ontological emphases of Lonergan and the mission-oriented emphases of Balthasar can be respected, not only in Christology but more fundamentally even in Trinitarian theology. Precisely because of the Trinitarian theologies of Aquinas and the early Lonergan, theologies that begin with the processions, move to the relations, progress to the persons, and end with the missions, and especially because of the four-point hypothesis articulated at the end of Lonergan's systematics of the Trinity, we are now able to come full circle, I believe, and begin a systematics of the Trinity somewhere else: namely, with a synthetic position that treats together the divine processions and the divine missions, the ontology and the historical and obediential contexts. For the missions are the processions in history. The 'somewhere else' where we begin does not depart from the starting point found in Aquinas and the early Lonergan, but sublates the ontological starting point in the divine processions into a more comprehensive dogmatic-theological context that has emerged or is emerging partly as a result of their work, and especially of Lonergan's work. The four-point hypothesis itself is part of what I am proposing as a starting point, not part of a conclusion, as it is in Lonergan's systematics of the Trinity, where it appears toward the end of the final chapter. And it aims at an obscure understanding not only of the divine processions but also of the divine missions and of the created consequent conditions of the missions precisely (1) as these provide a new set of analogues from which we can gain an obscure understanding of the divine processions and relations themselves, and (2) as these constitute the realm of religious values that my earlier work on the scale of values relates to the dialectical structure of history through the other levels of value: personal, cultural, social, and vital. This will

21 Ibid.

mean too that the biblical category of the reign of God, the central element in the preaching of Jesus, can now be transposed to a position at the very heart of a theology of history.

Theology is an ongoing enterprise, and what was not possible for Aquinas, simply because of the historical limitations of the dogmatic-theological context of his time, and what Lonergan arrived at only toward the end of his systematics of the Trinity, may well be the starting point for another generation, precisely because of Aquinas's own gains in understanding and Lonergan's firmer rooting of these gains in interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness. Just as the way of discovery in Trinitarian theology through the early centuries of the Christian Church ended with Augustine's psychological analogy, which then became in Aquinas the starting point of the way of teaching and learning, so Lonergan's particular embodiment of the way of teaching and learning ended with the four-point hypothesis, which now informs the starting point of a new venture along the same kind of path, the *ordo doctrinae*, a venture that also allows systematics to appropriate and transpose a central New Testament category as providing the key to a systematics whose mediated object is *Geschichte*. If we are beginning a systematics in its entirety where Lonergan ended his systematics of the Trinity, it is only on the basis of the development found in his own trinitarian theology that we are able to do so. He began with the processions. Balthasar begins, as do the scriptures, with the missions. I am suggesting we begin with the processions and missions together, affirming with Lonergan's assistance that they are the same reality, except that the mission adds a created contingent external term that is the consequent condition of the procession being also a mission.

In other words, the basic hypotheses that will have a profound effect on the remainder of the systematic theology that I am envisioning are more complex than those found at the beginning of Aquinas's or Lonergan's trinitarian systematics. That greater complexity is a function of a theological history that has been decisively influenced by

Aquinas and Lonergan. This history now permits us a new beginning by adding to the natural analogies employed in understanding the divine processions and relations the graced participations in those relations, and so we begin our Trinitarian systematics with the processions and missions as one piece. These graced participations constitute the realm of religious values in the theory of history constituted internally by a normative scale of values. That theory of history displays the historical significance and influence of these participations in and imitations of the divine relations. From above, the special basic relations of sanctifying grace and charity condition personal integrity and authenticity, which itself is the condition of possibility of genuine and developing cultural values. The latter, in turn, influence the formation of integrally dialectical communities at the level of social values, and only such communities functioning in recurrent schemes of a good of order guarantee the equitable distribution of vital goods to the entire community.

Such an analysis will result in a doctrine of social grace. As recent theology has enlightened us about social sin, so now it is time to propose a theology of social grace. I am suggesting a way of going about that task, a way that also connects with Lonergan's redefinition of 'the state of grace' as not an individual but a social reality. It is the divine-human interpersonal situation that resides in the three divine subjects giving themselves to us. That gift itself, Lonergan writes, while 'intensely personal, utterly intimate,' still 'is not so private as to be solitary. It can happen to many, and they can form a community to sustain one another in their self-transformation and to help one another in working out the implications and fulfilling the promises of their new life. Finally, what can become communal can become historical. It can pass from generation to generation. It can spread from one cultural milieu to another. It can adapt to changing circumstances, confront new situations, survive into a different age, flourish in another period or epoch.'²² It is no

²² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 130-31.

exaggeration to relate social grace thus understood precisely to the reign of God proclaimed by Jesus and accomplished in his own person in the Jewish context of his time and place.

2 Initial Issues

Chapter 2 introduces the notion of ‘autonomous spiritual procession’ as an expression of the way what is meant by *emanatio intelligibilis* is to be understood; in fact it is a translation of that term into something close to contemporary English. *Emanatio intelligibilis* is the key notion to be grasped in order to understand any variant on the psychological analogy, including the one proposed here. In this chapter, then, I begin what will be an extensive presentation and interpretation of Lonergan’s Trinitarian theology, but of that theology sublated into the explanatory starting point that considers procession and mission together. In this chapter the notion of ‘act from act’ (*processio operati* and by analogy *processio per modum operati*)²³ is introduced, and the convention ‘autonomous spiritual procession’ is suggested as a way of characterizing in more or less contemporary language those instances of *emanatio intelligibilis* that provide appropriate analogies for the divine processions. Inner words, for instance, proceed as acts from acts of understanding, and they do so ‘*from sufficient grounds known to be sufficient and because they are known to be sufficient.*’²⁴ In this second chapter as presently constituted, I comment briefly on the various examples that Lonergan provides of such processions of act from act, and I suggest how the examples can be extended to cover the autonomous spiritual processions that I am suggesting in the order of grace. ‘Autonomous spiritual procession’ is defined by modifying slightly Lonergan’s definition of *emanatio*

23 See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 144-81.

24 Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 207, emphasis Lonergan’s.

*intelligibilis: the conscious origination of a real, natural, and conscious act from a real, natural, and conscious act, both within the spiritual dimension of consciousness and also by virtue of the spiritual dimension of consciousness itself as determined by the prior act.*²⁵ I try to explain in this chapter what Lonergan means in the complicated discussion of *per modum operati* in *The Triune God: Systematics*, chapter 2, and conclude the chapter by highlighting the contemporary significance of the notion of *emanatio intelligibilis* or autonomous spiritual procession in terms, first, of the relation between language and understanding and, second, of issues raised in the mimetic theory of René Girard. It is especially in terms of the resolution of the latter issues that the ‘imitation of the divine relations’ of which the four-point hypothesis speaks can be rendered extremely fruitful.²⁶

Thus, I appeal to Lonergan’s explicit affirmation of two ways of being conscious²⁷ (in *The Triune God: Systematics* ‘through our sensibility’ and ‘through our intellectuality’) and to his distinction of spontaneous and autonomous processions within both ways of being conscious,²⁸ to argue that the discrimination of the two ‘ways of being

25 See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 141. The word ‘natural’ here is opposed not to ‘supernatural,’ but to ‘intentional.’ See *ibid.* Thus the definition can apply as well to processions in the order of grace.

26 Helpful here, however, are the cautionary remarks on imitation of the divine or of Christ in Raymund Schwager’s wonderful book, *Must There Be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, trans. Maria L. Assad (New York: Crossroad 2000) 177-78. I am talking here about created imitation known as such to God, not about deliberate external imitation.

27 ‘... we are conscious in two ways: in one way, through our sensibility, we undergo rather passively what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness; in another way, through our intellectuality, we are more active when we consciously inquire in order to understand, understand in order to utter a word, weigh evidence in order to judge, deliberate in order to choose, and exercise our will in order to act.’ Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 139.

28 Within both sensitive and spiritual process, a distinction is to be drawn between the emergence of act from potency and the emergence of act from act. At the level of the spiritual, this becomes a distinction of spontaneous and autonomous processions. Spontaneous procession is exemplified in the procession of understanding from questions; it is a procession of act from potency. Autonomous procession is the

conscious' is an extraordinarily sensitive and delicate business. For the first 'way of being conscious' permeates the second, and it does so either in support of the transcendental orientation to intelligibility, truth, being, and the good, or in conflict with that orientation. Or again and more precisely, it precedes, accompanies, and overarches the intentional operations that constitute the second 'way of being conscious.' In that sense it is partly constitutive of the vertical finality, the 'tidal movement' or 'passionateness of being' that Lonergan refers to in, respectively, 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness'²⁹ and 'Mission and the Spirit.'³⁰

procession of act from act such as is exemplified in the three instances that Lonergan presents: concept from understanding, judgment from grasp of evidence, decision from the judgment of value. What confers autonomy on the procession is precisely the fact that the procession is of act from act.

29 '... must not the several principles [of intentional consciousness, of the second 'way of being conscious'] be but aspects of a deeper and more comprehensive principle? And is not that deeper and more comprehensive principle itself a nature, at once a principle of movement and of rest, a tidal movement that begins before consciousness, unfolds through sensitivity, intelligence, rational reflection, responsible deliberation, only to find its rest beyond all of these? I think so.' Bernard Lonergan, 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,' in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 174-75.

30 '... [the] passionateness [of being] has a dimension of its own: it underpins and accompanies and reaches beyond the subject as experientially, rationally, morally conscious.

'Its underpinning is the quasi-operator that presides over the transition from the neural to the psychic. It ushers into consciousness not only the demands of unconscious vitality but also the exigences of vertical finality. It obtrudes deficiency needs. In the self-actualizing subject it shapes the images that release insight; it recalls evidence that is being overlooked; it may embarrass wakefulness, as it disturbs sleep, with the spectre, the shock, the shame of misdeeds. As it channels into consciousness the feedback of our aberrations and our unfulfilled strivings, so for the Jungians it manifests its archetypes through symbols to preside over the genesis of the ego and to guide the individuation process from the ego to the self.

'As it underpins, so too it accompanies the subject's conscious and intentional operations. There it is the mass and momentum of our lives, the color and tone and power of feeling, that fleshes out and gives substance to what otherwise would be no more than a Shakespearian "pale cast of thought."

'As it underpins and accompanies, so too it overarches conscious intentionality. There it is the topmost quasi-operator that by intersubjectivity prepares, by solidarity entices, by falling in love establishes us as members of community. Within each individual vertical finality heads for self-transcendence. In an aggregate of self-

Distinguishing intellectually and negotiating existentially the two ‘ways of being conscious’ calls for what the Christian spiritual tradition has called discernment. For what ‘we undergo rather passively’ in ‘what we sense and imagine, our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness’ affects the entire range of vertical finality as it actually unfolds. Under optimal circumstances, this whole dimension bolsters and supports the second ‘way of being conscious,’ where ‘we consciously inquire in order to understand, understand in order to utter a word, weigh evidence in order to judge, deliberate in order to choose, and will in order to act.’ But those optimal circumstances are rare indeed, and to the extent that they do not obtain, we can speak of a statistical near-inevitability of distortion precisely in the spiritual dimensions of human operation. There *is* a realm in which human desire and human operation are autonomous, not in the sense of a self-asserting effort at what Ernest Becker called the *causa sui* project,³¹ which belongs precisely under the Girardian heading of the illusion of autonomy, but in the sense of our operating under transcendental exigencies for the intelligible, the true and the real, and the good. There are moments in that transcendental operating in which act flows from act: concept from understanding, judgment from grasp of sufficient evidence, decision from judgment of value. But that realm, as Lonergan says of human authenticity, is ever precarious; it is reached always by withdrawing from inauthenticity. It is the realm of the pure, detached, disinterested desire to know that Lonergan highlights in *Insight*,

transcending individuals there is the significant coincidental manifold in which can emerge a new creation. Possibility yields to fact and fact bears witness to its originality and power in the fidelity that makes families, in the loyalty that makes peoples, in the faith that makes religions.

‘But here we meet the ambiguity of man’s vertical finality. It is natural to man to love with the domestic love that unites parents with each other and with their children, with the civil love that can face death for the sake of one’s fellowmen, with the all-embracing love that loves God above all. But in fact man lives under the reign of sin, and his redemption lies not in what is possible to nature but in what is effected by the grace of Christ.’ Bernard Lonergan, ‘Mission and the Spirit,’ *A Third Collection* 29-30.

31 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: The Free Press, 1973) passim.

and of the equally pure, detached, disinterested sublation of the desire to know by the transcendental intention of value. No one, not even the greatest saint, lives in that realm untroubled, serene, and free of temptation and some distortion.

Treating this question close to the beginning of the work might forestall difficulties that some (especially Girardians) might bring against an appeal to an ‘autonomous’ dimension of consciousness; and it will also highlight precisely in what consists the created participation in or imitation of the divine and how this is distinguished from elements of consciousness that are more a function of the passive undergoing of ‘our desires and fears, our delights and sorrows, our joys and sadness,’ where our desire is again mimetic, but now not of the divine processions. In that sense, taking this approach will help us to fine-tune our portrayal of the psychological analogy. *What is it to imitate the divine relations through created participations in them, and how does that differ from other forms of mimesis?* That is the question that I wish to introduce at this point, partly in order to get hold of the analogy of *autonomous spiritual procession* and partly to indicate the profound significance of such a Trinitarian theology for the understanding and guidance of historical process.

3 Mimesis

Chapter 3, then, takes up the issue of Girard’s mimetic theory and attempts to make a theological contribution to that theory. I will not go into detail here, because the contents, though not the exact wording, of this third chapter will appear soon in an article in *METHOD: Journal of Loneragan Studies* entitled ‘Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory.’³² Rather than summarizing either the chapter or the article here, let me simply indicate my views regarding the theological

32 Robert M. Doran, ‘Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory,’ *Method: Journal of Loneragan Studies* 23 (2005, published in 2009) 149-86.

significance of Girard's work, which I consider momentous indeed. (I say this without taking a position on the more controversial elements in his work, such as the theory of hominization.) The original temptation is represented in the Book of Genesis as awakening a desire to be like God (or like gods). The first murder recorded in the bible is prompted by mimetic rivalry. The Gospels of Mark and Matthew tell us that Pilate knew that the reason the chief priests had handed Jesus over was out of jealousy (Mark 15.10, Matthew 27.18). Even the extraordinarily insightful exegete N.T. Wright does not emphasize this verse and the dynamics that it reflects as much as I believe he should in his otherwise brilliant discussion of 'The Reasons for Jesus' Crucifixion.'³³ Raymund Schwager has made what I regard as essential contributions to the same overall project that Wright and the late Ben F. Meyer have so laudably begun, precisely because he does take these emphases seriously. Lonergan was on the same track, I believe, without having studied Girard's work, and I think this is reflected especially in his recognition of the importance of Max Scheler's book *Ressentiment*. I support the efforts of John Ranieri to rearticulate Lonergan's theory of the biases with the help of Girard's mimetic theory. Those like James Alison who have turned to Girard for an understanding of what the Christian tradition means by 'original sin' are also right on the mark, I believe, even if the etiological dimensions of Girard's contribution stand in need of qualification.

If all of these statements are true, then any systematic theology that purports to be a theological theory of history must take Girard's work with utmost seriousness. If the imitation of God that Jesus means when he says, 'You must therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Matthew 5.48), and that Lonergan anticipates when he refers to sanctifying grace and charity as created imitations of the divine relations of active and passive spiration, means what Jesus says it means, then it is set directly over against the deviated transcendence that is rooted in another form of mimesis. For being perfect as our

³³ See Wright's book *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), and especially chapter 12.

heavenly Father is perfect means precisely ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be children of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the bad as well as the good, and his rain to fall on the honest and the dishonest alike’ (Matthew 5.44-45). Again, it means precisely uttering the *verbum spirans amorem* that issues in the universal willingness of charity. I fully expect these emphases to permeate the work that I have begun, and I only hope that I will have learned them well enough in my own life that I can adequately integrate them into the theology to which I hope to contribute.

4 Sacralization and Desacralization in History

The fourth chapter reworks a paper that I delivered at the Lonergan Workshop several years ago on sacralization and desacralization in Lonergan and Girard. Again, I judged that, before I can proceed any further with the systematic themes already introduced in chapter 2, I had to outline the historical significance of autonomous spiritual procession in the supernatural order, precisely in the constitution of authentic religion under God. The Catholic Church today is still debating the issue of sacralization and secularization, and in my view has yet to reach an adequate formulation of what Lonergan called ‘(1) a sacralization to be dropped and (2) a sacralization to be fostered; (3) a secularization to be welcomed and (4) a secularization to be resisted.’³⁴ Again, due to the limitations of time, I cannot go into details here on the contents of this chapter, but can only indicate that it takes the same directions that I suggested in the 2004 paper, emphasizing the sacral prerogatives of life lived under the law of the Cross and calling into question all other

34 Bernard Lonergan, ‘Sacralization and Secularization,’ in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, vol. 17 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: 2004) 264.

pretensions to sacral status of person and work if they are unrelated to the central dynamics of self-sacrificing love.³⁵

5 Envisioning Chapter 5

I conclude simply by indicating that I envision a fifth chapter in this ‘Background’ portion, a chapter in which I transpose insights principally from N.T. Wright, Ben F. Meyer, and Raymond Schwager regarding the kingdom of God proclaimed and inaugurated by Jesus – transpose these insights into the systematic framework constituted by the four-point hypothesis and the theory of history proposed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. With this ‘Background’ work completed, I hope to proceed to unpack in detail the four-point hypothesis and to integrate its significance into the same theory of history, precisely in the realm of Lonergan’s scale of values. That done, this part of the volume will be complete.

One final comment is in order. Why am I selecting precisely these New Testament exegetes and not others? What has influenced that decision?

Let me ask, then, whether there is not possible today a far more detailed dialectical engagement of exegetical methods and results on the part of the systematic theologian than was possible when Lonergan wrote *Method in Theology*. If the answer is yes, then in my view the work of the late Ben F. Meyer should be given the principal credit. Meyer’s writings embody a straightforward and unapologetic employment of Lonergan’s critical realism in the task of New Testament exegesis. And largely through Meyer Lonergan has influenced the work of scholars such as N.T. Wright and James D.G. Dunn.³⁶ These and others (Larry Hurtado in particular³⁷) represent in New

35 2009: The paper was published as ‘Lonergan and Girard on Sacralization and Desacralization,’ *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 63:4 (2007) 1171-1201.

36 Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (San Jose, CA: Pickwick, 1989); *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1994); *The Aims of*

Testament exegesis at least a minor revolution, one that in Meyer, Wright, and Dunn is based explicitly in critical realism. Because of their work – and I am going out on a limb here that theologians working in either phase might want to cut while I’m sitting on it – it is possible for the doctrinal theologian actually to do what Lonergan approvingly cites Pope Pius XII as encouraging theologians to do, namely, to show how the doctrine defined by the church is contained in the sources. They did not, of course, set out to do this. But it is because they employed a consistent critical realism in their work that they have made possible this still very noble theological task. And because of their work, it is also becoming possible to integrate New Testament Christology with the dogmatic and systematic Christology both contained in Lonergan’s theology and envisioned in his methodological prescriptions that the mediated object of the functional specialty ‘doctrines’ is redemption in history and the mediated object of systematics is *Geschichte* itself. As I read Meyer and Wright in particular, I start to believe that a task that I dare say none of us was ready to undertake thirty-five years ago is beginning to be possible. Lonergan-inspired theologians can take heart now in the possibility of a new integration of first-phase and second-phase work in theology, and this precisely in the manner that Lonergan intended, that is, in a way that, first, does not manifest undue influence from the second, dogmatic phase upon work in the first but, second, that still manages to integrate the two phases without detriment to the Church’s doctrinal commitments and, third, that provides some content that actually can be transposed from Jesus’ proclamation and inauguration of the kingdom of God in the context of first-century Judaism to the context of a systematic theology whose concern is the mediation of the

Jesus (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2002); N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).
37 Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

reign of God with the contemporary global network of cultural matrices. Schwager joins Meyer and Wright to constitute my principal exegetical inspirations because, while his method is not explicitly rooted in Lonergan's critical realism, it is compatible for the most part with what Meyer and Wright are doing, and he adds what I believe are essential hermeneutical determinants from a critical appropriation of the mimetic theory of René Girard. The fifth chapter will attempt to integrate, then, the work of three New Testament exegetes – Meyer, Wright, and Schwager – and to suggest the appropriate direction in which to move to transpose their disengagement of the meaning of the kingdom or reign of God into the theological theory of history that constitutes one dimension of the contemporary dogmatic-theological context.