

**Essays in Systematic Theology 46:
Moving Vatican II Forward: The Multi-Religious Context¹**

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The present paper combines emphases (and if truth be told, paragraphs) found in two other papers I delivered earlier this spring, the first at the West Coast Methods Institute at Loyola Marymount University on April 14, and the second at the meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America in St. Louis on June 9. The West Coast lecture was entitled ‘Rehabilitating and Transposing the Theorem of the Supernatural: A First Installment,’ and the CTSA lecture ‘The Structure of Systematic Theology.’ The two lectures have in common an appeal to the multi-religious context of contemporary Catholic systematic theology, and the first lecture in particular makes explicit reference to the Second Vatican Council as setting the stage for the emergence of this context.²

I begin, however, with a brief word about my title. In one of his lesser known essays, Frederick Crowe reminds us that the Italian word ‘aggiornamento’ shares the same roots as the English word ‘adjournment.’³ When I saw this piece just a few weeks ago, I asked myself immediately whether it was not only the Council but also its *aggiornamento* that has been adjourned. At times it seems that

1 This paper was presented at the Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, on June 18, 2012.

2 The two papers may be found on the website www.lonerganresource.com, as Essays 44 and 45 in “Essays in Systematic Theology,” under “Scholarly Works/Books.”

3 Frederick E. Crowe, “Aggiornamento: Eternal Truths in a Changing World,” *The Canadian Messenger*, Toronto, February 1967, p. 8.

we have put the Council behind us as a temporary blip in the church's pattern of arriving on the scene breathlessly and a bit late, its determination to live in a world that no longer exists. The problem, of course, is more complex than this, and in particular more theological. As the hierarchy becomes less Aristotelian and Thomist in its basic orientation and more Augustinian, Bonaventurian, and Balthasarian, more methodologically monophysite, the less likely it is that any effort at mutual self-mediation between the church and contemporary cultures will occur. The result is serious, however, and not only for theology. The church is hemorrhaging women, gay people, and intelligent observers of contemporary events. Still, I believe that the most viable response to major inauthenticity in the contemporary Catholic church, that is, efforts, however indeliberate, to establish an inauthentic tradition, is not to do battle with resurgent rear-guard clericalism and triumphalism, but simply to move the council forward and stay at least one step ahead of those who would reverse its gains, and to do so not only with ruthless honesty but also with complete fidelity to the authentic tradition and especially to its dogmatic-theological elements, that is, with an effort to promote major authenticity. This suggestion imposes a great collective responsibility on the community of theologians in the church today, but it is a responsibility that by and large I believe that community is prepared to accept. I suggest that one way of doing what I am talking about is to make capital out of the Council's advances with regard to the church's role in the multi-religious situation of our time.

1 Vatican II's Question

The Second Vatican Council raises questions that it did not answer. Nothing can move the Council forward better than attempting to answer the questions that the Council invited us to entertain but did not itself pursue. In the case that I wish to

discuss, the question was raised in section 22 of ‘Gaudium et Spes,’ the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. First, the text emphasizes the revelatory function of the visible mission of the Word. ‘It is Christ, the last Adam, who fully discloses humankind to itself and unfolds its noble calling by revealing the mystery of the Father and the Father’s love.’ That revelatory mission is redemptive. ‘[B]y his incarnation the Son of God united himself in some sense with every human being’ (GS 22). Second, however, if this is the case, the Council must admit, as it does, that it is not only Christians who receive ‘the first fruits of the Spirit’ (Romans 8.23), which enable them to fulfill the law of love. Rather, ‘Gaudium et Spes’ asserts, ‘This applies not only to Christians but to all people of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly at work. Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God’ (GS 22).

The council is affirming a doctrine – ‘the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery’ – but in the words ‘in a manner known to God’ it is suggesting a systematic-theological question: How can this be? The same combination of a doctrinal affirmation of the universal offer of the Holy Spirit and a systematic question as to how the doctrine is to be understood appears in two encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, ‘Redemptor hominis’ and ‘Redemptoris missio.’⁴

4 ‘This [the Council’s affirmation] applies to everyone, since everyone is included in the mystery of Redemption, and by the grace of this mystery Christ has joined himself with everyone for all time ... Every individual, from his or her very conception, participates in this mystery ... Everyone without exception was redeemed by Christ, since Christ is somehow joined to everyone, with no

In the lecture ‘Rehabilitating and Transposing the Theorem of the Supernatural,’ I suggested that valuable hints toward answering the question, How can this be? may be found in texts of Aquinas that Lonergan interpreted in his doctoral dissertation. In a sense the breakthrough text for Lonergan in the history of Thomas’s views on what would come to be called actual grace is the early text *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 5. Here, in contrast with his position in the commentary on the *Sentences* and, it would seem, even with his position earlier in the *De veritate*, which we know was written over a number of years, Thomas does not limit *gratia gratum faciens*, the grace of justification, sanctifying grace, to the habitual grace infused in baptism. Consequent upon the discovery of the theorem of the supernatural, this baptismal grace, as Lonergan insists was important in resolving difficulties in medieval theology. Thomas writes, ‘The grace that makes one pleasing is understood in two ways: in one way for the divine acceptance itself, which is a gratuitous will of God; in another way for a certain created gift, which

exception, even though the person may not be conscious of it’ (‘Redemptor hominis,’ §14). As I suggested in the WCMI paper, the distinction between consciousness and knowledge would render the conclusion of this quotation better, if we may take the liberty of rendering papal statements, even good ones, better than they really are: ‘even though the person does not know that this is the case.’ Again, elsewhere Pope John Paul II writes, ‘Universality of salvation does not mean that it is given only to those who believe explicitly in Christ and join the Church. If salvation is meant for all, it must be offered concretely to all ...The salvation of Christ is available to them through a grace which, though relating them mysteriously with the Church, does not bring them into it formally but enlightens them in a way adapted to their state of spirit and life situation’ (‘Redemptoris missio,’ §10).

formally perfects man and makes him worthy of eternal life.’⁵ The second of these two ways is the habitual gift bestowed in baptism. But regarding the first of these two ways Thomas writes that ‘every effect that God works in us from his gratuitous will, by which he accepts us into his kingdom, pertains to the grace that makes one pleasing’⁶ and so to sanctifying grace, the grace of justification. That these latter are to be acknowledged as ‘sanctifying graces’ is explicitly affirmed by Lonergan.⁷ There are other texts in Aquinas that make the same point, including the texts that Jacques Maritain relies on to argue that in the first moral act of every individual justification and elevation to a share in divine life are at stake.⁸ But I am selecting this text because Lonergan emphasizes its importance in Thomas’s development. Thomas is on his way toward a theology of actual grace, and it is a theology that would acknowledge that at least some instances of actual grace are also sanctifying graces in the strict sense of the term, in that they include the

5 ‘Gratia vero gratum faciens ... dupliciter accipitur: uno modo pro ipsa divina acceptatione, quae est gratuita Dei voluntas; alio modo pro dono quodam creato, quod formaliter perficit hominem, et facit eum dignum vita aeterna.’ Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 5.

6 ‘...omnem effectum quem Deus facit in nobis ex gratuita sua voluntate, qua nos in suum regnum acceptat, pertinere ad gratiam gratum facientem ...’ Ibid.

7 See Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 35.

8 The text and Thomist references are found in Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Scribner, 1952). See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, q. 89, a. 6.

infusion of supernatural charity. Lonergan interprets Thomas's text precisely in this way. Supernatural habits, and especially of course charity, may not only be infused with baptism but also given in the assent to at least some of the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit by which a person is joined to God in the concrete circumstances of his or her own life; and they may be developed due to fidelity to such promptings. The issue would then be one of naming which instances of actual grace qualify also as infusions of charity and thus of sanctifying grace. In *De veritate*, these graces are not yet 'operans' but 'cooperans,' but in the later *Quodlibetum primum* the grace of conversion, an actual grace that occurs before and independently of baptism, can be interpreted in no other way than as 'gratia operans.'⁹ And in the *Prima secundae* actual grace, like habitual grace, is both operative and cooperative, and to both habitual grace and actual grace may be assigned the term 'gratia gratum faciens.'¹⁰

9 The dates of the *De veritate* are 1256-59 and of the *Prima secundae* 1271-72.

The *Quodlibetum primum* was written slightly before the *Prima secundae*.

10 The paper 'Rehabilitating and Transposing the Theorem of the Supernatural' argues this from an exegesis of *Summa theologiae*, 1-2, q. 111, aa. 1 and 2, and especially from the connection between the two articles. I quote: 'Article 1 asks whether it is appropriate to distinguish grace into *gratia gratis data* and *gratia gratum faciens*, grace gratuitously given and grace that makes one pleasing. These two terms occur throughout the development that Lonergan is researching in *Grace and Freedom*, both prior to Aquinas and in Thomas's own work. But they constantly shift their meaning. The division in the *Prima secundae* (as contrasted with earlier divisions given the same names both in Aquinas and especially in his predecessors) is a distinction between God's immediate action on the recipient (*gratia gratum faciens*) and God's use of

other people as instruments to lead their fellow human beings to God, for instance, in the preaching of a sermon or homily. The latter is the exclusive meaning of *gratia gratis data* in article 1 of q. 111. God's immediate action on the person, on the soul, is *gratia gratum faciens*, and God's use of others is *gratia gratis data*. In other words, over the course of the history of the use of these two terms, there can be discerned a broadening of the meaning of *gratia gratum faciens* and a narrowing of the meaning of *gratia gratis data*. In Thomas's early commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, as Lonergan emphasizes, *gratia gratis data* referred to every gratuitous gift of God other than the habitual grace infused with baptism, which alone merited the term *gratia gratum faciens*. But in article 1 of question 111 of the *Prima secundae*, 'gratia gratum faciens' refers to every grace 'per quam ipse homo Deo coniungitur,' while 'gratia gratis data' refers exclusively to the gift of one person being provided by God to help another and lead that other to God. Obviously, both the habitual grace infused with baptism and the actual grace that is an interior movement caused immediately by God are instances of 'gratia gratum faciens,' justifying grace, sanctifying grace. Moreover, article 2 goes on to ask whether both the habitual grace infused with baptism and the actual grace that in fact concretely joins a human being to God by a special interior movement are appropriately distinguished into operative and cooperative grace, and the answer is affirmative, with the addendum in the response to the fourth objection that operative grace and cooperative grace in either case, habitual or actual, are really the same grace but distinguished according to effects. In other words, the grace about which article 2 is asking includes every grace whereby human beings are joined to God by God's immediate action, whether that grace be habitual or actual. The history of Thomas's thinking about operative and

Next, as for the issue of determining which instances of actual grace qualify also as infusions of sanctifying grace, I turn to the passage already cited from Vatican II. What the Holy Spirit offers everyone in a manner known only to God is ‘*the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery.*’ Paradigmatic of the instances of actual grace that are justifying, that are also sanctifying graces, are those in which the recipient is called to participate in the dynamics of what Christians know as the Law of the Cross, the dispensation whereby the evils of the human race are transformed into a greater good through the loving and non-violent response that returns good for evil. That dialectical posture is for the Lonergan of chapter 20 of *Insight* a function of supernatural charity. It is by no means limited to the baptized members of Christ’s church or even to those outside the church who have in some way become heirs of the positive *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Christ’s historical causality, an influence of which René Girard makes so much.¹¹

In ‘De ente supernaturali’ Lonergan proposes an original thesis on the meaning of actual grace. Thesis 5 reads, ‘Interior actual grace consists in vital,

cooperative grace moves, then, from the unity of *gratia gratum faciens* and the multiplicity of *gratia gratis data* in the commentary on the *Sentences* to the multiplicity of *gratia gratum faciens*, at least in terms of effects, and the extreme narrowing of the meaning of *gratia gratis data* in the *Prima secundae*. The God of the *Prima secundae*, it would seem, is much more prepared to invite human beings to participate in divine life, and does so in many more ways and with many more people, than was the case with the God of the commentary on the *Sentences*. At least this is a potential implication of what Aquinas is saying.’

11 See for instance, René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002) 161-69.

principal, and supernatural second acts of the intellect and the will.’¹² The key word for my purposes is ‘principal.’ Principal acts stand as efficient causes of other acts. In the order of knowledge, principal acts are insights, acts of understanding, whether direct or inverse or reflective or deliberative. In the order of decision, principal acts are the willing of the end, which may be correlated with what the later Lonergan, following Joseph de Finance, will call acts of vertical liberty whereby one moves from one horizon to another. Supernatural interior principal acts are acts produced by God immediately in us without any efficient causality on our part: acts of insight and the willing of horizon-elevating objectives or ends, where the insight and the willing are *gratia operans*, to which, by God’s grace, we are enabled to assent (*gratia cooperans*). Among the principal supernatural acts that qualify as actual graces, then, are (1) the inverse insight that the violence that returns evil for evil solves nothing, (2) the direct, reflective, and deliberative insights entailed in concrete instances of non-violent resistance and the return of good for evil, and (3) the divinely proposed invitation to participate in a manner of living that concretely and, whether acknowledged as such or not, is patterned on the just and mysterious Law of the Cross. As I wrote in the paper from which I am drawing, ‘We are here moving into the territory staked out by charity, and charity and sanctifying grace are inseparable. There is never one without the other. The grace-enabled assent to the promptings of the Holy Spirit regarding an act of charity that would return good for evil brings with it the justification that is meant by *gratia gratum faciens*. At least *these* actual graces are also sanctifying graces, and they are so by definition,’ because of the intimate relation of charity with

12 Lonergan, *Early Latin Theology*, vol 19 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 229.

sanctifying grace. When one takes seriously the theological doctrine that sanctifying grace and charity are participations in and imitations of, respectively, the divine relations of active and passive spiration, one easily grasps that they entail elevation to participation in divine life.

2 The Multi-Religious Context and the Structure of Systematic Theology

In ‘The Structure of Systematic Theology’ I repeated the emphasis that I stressed in *What Is Systematic Theology?* to the effect that each of the major elements among the mysteries of faith that systematics is charged to understand and elaborate must be expressed in categories that indicate the significance for human history of the realities named in Christian constitutive meanings: of God, Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation, revelation, creation, original sin, redemption, sacraments, church, eternal life, praxis, and so on. Systematics is to be a theological theory of history. Its mediated object is *Geschichte*, as Lonergan emphasized in his notes at the time of the breakthrough to functional specialization.¹³

In the systematics that I am proposing, the scale of values that integrates the complex dialectical structures of personal integrity, cultural meanings and values, and the social order provides the principal general categories, the categories that theology shares with other disciplines, while the so-called four-point hypothesis that appears at the very end of Lonergan’s systematic treatise on the Trinity establishes the most basic special categories, the categories peculiar to theology. In terms of the theological difficulties that I mentioned at the beginning, Aristotelian-

13 See, for instance, the breakthrough page itself: 47200D0E060 on www.bernardlonergan.com.

Thomist persuasions will be far more oriented to accepting responsibility for general categories than will be Augustinian-Bonaventurian-Balthasarian persuasions. The claim regarding the link of the four-point hypothesis to the basic special categories is especially true of the relations of sanctifying grace and charity in that hypothesis, since these provide what I would call the special basic relations of systematic theology.¹⁴ The theory of history expressed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* and the hypothesis that links the divine processions and relations with the divine missions constitute together what I have called the unified field structure of systematic theology.

To the cultural factors of modernity in terms of which Lonergan understood the massive shift that called for a thorough exploration of theological method – modern science, modern historical consciousness, and modern philosophy – must be added the deference to the other that constitutes the postmodern phenomenon. In particular I stress the interreligious context within which all Christian theology must be conducted from this point forward, as well as the vast call that both God and humanity are uttering for social and economic justice, for gender equity, and for an up-to-date notion of sexual differentiation. The triune God with which a contemporary systematics begins is a God whose gift of grace is offered to all women and men at every time and place and in a manner that calls for the transformation of cultural meanings and values and the elaboration of social structures that deliver the goods of the earth in an equitable fashion to all. The

14 On the need for ‘special basic relations,’ see Robert M. Doran, ‘Sanctifying Grace, Charity, and Divine Indwelling: A Key to the *Nexus Mysteriorum Fidei*, *Lonergan Workshop 23* (Boston College, 2012) 189. This paper can also be found in *Essays in Systematic Theology* on the website www.lonerganresource.com, as Essay 32.

Incarnation of the Word of God is the revelation of that universal offer of grace and of the demands that come with it. Once meaning is acknowledged as constitutive of the real world in which human beings live and know and choose and love, soteriology can be phrased in revelational terms: the introduction of divine meaning into human history, which is what revelation is, is redemptive of that history and of the subjects and communities that are both formed by that history and form its further advance in turn.¹⁵ It is first and foremost the mission of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the universal realm of religious values in the integral scale of values, and by and large the systematics that I envision would articulate the relation of that mission and of the consequent and revealing visible mission of the Word to realities at the other levels of value: personal, cultural, social, and vital. But we must insist too that the invisible mission of the Spirit is not isolated from an equally invisible mission of the Word. The elaboration of the gift of the Spirit enables us to develop a new variant on the Augustinian-Thomist psychological analogy for understanding the divine processions. As the gift of God's love comes to constitute the conscious *memoria* in which the human person is present to herself or himself, the summation, as it were, of life experiences as these constitute one's self-taste, it gives rise to a set of judgments of value that constitute a universalist faith, a faith that gives thanks for the gift, a faith that in fact is the created term of an invisible mission of the Word. Together this self-presence in *memoria* and its word of Yes in faith breathe charity, the love of the Givers and a love of all people and of the universe in loving the Givers of the gift.

15 On revelation and the Incarnation, see Charles C. Hefling, Jr., 'Revelation as/as Insight,' in *The Importance of Insight: Essays in Honour of Michael Vertin*, ed. John J. Liptay, Jr., and David S. Liptay (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) 97-115.

Thus the theology that would move Vatican II forward, I believe, has to follow Frederick Crowe in understanding the visible mission of the Word in the context of the universal offer of divine healing and elevating grace in the invisible missions of the Holy Spirit and of the Word. This emphasis on the invisible missions of Spirit and Word introduces multi-religious advances on the theological situation, and these change everything in that situation. They do so in ways that are enriching but at the same time for many anxiety-producing. They also do so in ways that are as yet unforeseen. We do not know what God has in mind. As Crowe has insisted, there is no answer as yet to the question of the final relationship of Christianity to the other world religions. We are working that out. It is a set of future contingent realities, and nothing true can be said about them now. There will be no answer to that question until we have worked it out, and we are at the very beginning of that elaboration.¹⁶

It was with this in mind that I suggested here two years ago that the functional specialties in which Lonergan elaborates the overall structure of theology, a structure in which systematics is but one set of tasks among many, need to be considered as functional specialties for a global or world theology.¹⁷ The functional specialties, which I number as nine rather than eight,¹⁸ are really

16 See the concluding comments in Frederick Crowe, *Christ and History* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005).

17 See Robert M. Doran, 'Functional Specialties for a World Theology,' to be published in *Lonergan Workshop 24*. This paper can also be found in *Essays in Systematic Theology* on the website www.lonerganresource.com, as Essay 36.

18 See Robert M. Doran, 'The Ninth Functional Specialty,' *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, new series, 2: 1 (2011) 12-16. This paper can also be found

functional specialties for a vast expansion of theology, and of every functional specialty in theology, beyond what even Lonergan had explicitly in mind. The data relevant for Christian theology become all the data on the religious living of men and women at every age, in every religion, and in every culture. For the Holy Spirit and the invisible Word are at work, on mission, everywhere, and not simply in the post-resurrection, Pentecostal context of Christian belief. It is the responsibility of Christians to discern the workings of the Holy Spirit and the Word on a universal scale, and in theology that responsibility will take the form of interpreting the religious data, narrating what has been going forward in the religious history of peoples, dialectically and dialogically discerning what is of God from what is not, discriminating genuine transcendence from deviated transcendence, in the various religions of humankind including Christianity and Catholicism, and taking one's stand on what is of God wherever it may be found, articulating this in positions that all can accept, and understanding the realities affirmed in such judgments. At the heart of that discernment is the Law of the Cross that returns superabundant good for evil done.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me relate what I have said to Charles Taylor's four disjunctions of the contemporary church from the world it purports to address, disjunctions that would lead us to pass a quite negative judgment on the manner in which the church has heeded the challenge of the council: a disjunction from the spiritual seeking that asks questions the church does not want to entertain, a

in *Essays in Systematic Theology* on the website www.lonerganresource.com, as Essay 38.

disjunction in the model of authority that the magisterium is desperately holding onto, a disjunction from the sexual morality and gender equity that contemporaries increasingly accept as correct, and a disjunction from plural forms of spirituality.¹⁹ The emphasis on the primacy and universality of the mission of the Holy Spirit and the invisible mission of the Word will be one source of the church's redirection of its energies so as to heal these disjunctions. Vatican II, I suggest, began with what is first for us: the church. It followed the way of discovery. As a pastoral council it acted appropriately in so proceeding. But now we must acknowledge that the theology of the church is not first in the order of teaching but close to last, and so that a theology and an ecclesial praxis that would understand the topics that in reality come before the church – Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Incarnation, revelation, creation, original sin, redemption, and at least the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist – a theology that would understand these realities in terms of an assumed ecclesiology rather than understanding the church in terms of these prior topics, is itself a distorted theology. The mission of the church is an extension of the missions of the Spirit and the Word, of divine Love and divine Truth. 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' The appropriate systematic-theological understanding of the church can occur only within the dogmatic-theological context set by an adequate Trinitarian theology and within the unified field structure established by joining that Trinitarian theology to the integral scale of values. In accord with Vatican II, we may justly list the paschal mystery as the central articulation of what the mission of the Holy Spirit is always about: incarnating, whether the gift is recognized as such or not, the Law of the Cross in the dynamics of human history, the Law that enjoins human beings in the

19 These disjunctions are listed in an unpublished note that is being employed to generate multidisciplinary conversations and writings.

promptings of grace to cease returning evil for evil and to begin to resist in a new way, by heaping up superabundant good in the face of hatred, malice, corruption, ignorance, and decline. I am suggesting in this paper that we do precisely this in the face of the resistance the council is currently undergoing in the church. As the title of a movie some ten years ago put it, rather than paying back, Pay it Forward. Move the council forward. Do not spend time fighting the resistance against the council found in prominent powers in the church today. Join the Spirit responsible for the council and move forward the impulses of grace. Against such love there is no law.