

Essays in Systematic Theology 5: Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology¹

This study results from a long period of reflection on Bernard Lonergan's notion of systematic theology. In the mid-1970s I taught a graduate seminar at Marquette University on Lonergan's *Method in Theology*. In the course of that semester I began to believe that the conception of theology in terms of the functional specialization of the operations that theologians perform requires that more be said about systematic theology than is presented in the book's chapter on systematics. There is something about the dynamic movement of the process from data to results that comes to a temporary halt in that chapter, only to resume briefly in the seminal final chapter, 'Communications.' It is as if at this point Lonergan succumbed to a mentality that he really wished to overcome. This evaluation is similar to Lonergan's own judgment about chapter 19 of his earlier work, *Insight*. The position of chapter 19, on the philosophy of God, is one that he continued to maintain; but he found fault with the context in which he had raised the issues, and he relocated the question so as to place it squarely in the center of his concrete explorations not only of the exigencies of intelligent and reasonable intentionality but also of religious experience.² So it is also with chapter 13 of *Method in Theology*: what the chapter does say is not to be contradicted, but it does not say enough, and the

1 This essay appeared in *Theological Studies* 59:4 (1998) 569-607. By and large it anticipates many of the emphases of my book *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).

2 See Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophy of God, and Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), reprinted as chapters 9-11 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).

dynamic context of the movement of collaborative creativity that the entire book is devoted to promoting seems to be suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted.

The present reflections are driven by the questions that followed upon that discovery. They have been assembled at various intervals in the intervening two-and-a-half decades. Further study of Lonergan's notion of systematics, further teaching of his major texts (principally in advanced-degree courses and seminars at Regis College in Toronto), and the editing of some volumes in his *Collected Works* have all influenced the proposals offered here.

Again, I have no quarrel with what Lonergan *does* say about systematics. To the contrary, I have come to a greater appreciation of just how important his emphases are. Four items in particular are of crucial importance.

The first is the insistence that the principal function of systematics, around which its other functions are assembled, is the hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, and gradually developing understanding of mysteries of faith that are already affirmed on other grounds than systematic argumentation.³

3 A recent example of the oversight of understanding and the consequent confusion of the tasks that Lonergan assigns to the distinct functional specialties 'doctrines' and 'systematics' is found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991). See especially chapter 1, and note its title: 'The Truth of Christian Doctrine as the Theme of Systematic Theology.' For Lonergan, systematic theology is concerned principally not with the truth of doctrine but with the synthetic understanding of doctrines already affirmed to be true. The two theologians, of course, have different notions of truth. Lonergan's is a critical-realist version of the correspondence theory of truth (*adequatio intellectus et rei*), while Pannenberg's notion is clearly idealist: 'The systematic investigation and presentation itself entails also a very specific understanding of truth, namely, *truth as*

The second is the recommendation that the systematic theologians take as their core or central problems those mysteries that have been defined in dogmatic pronouncements of the Church, and especially the mysteries of the Trinity, the hypostatic union, and grace.

The third is the proposal that systematic understanding proceeds, as much as possible, according to what Lonergan, following Aquinas, calls the *ordo disciplinae* or the *ordo doctrinae*, the order of teaching.⁴

And the fourth is the crucial importance of making the systematic move from description to explanation, and of doing so on the level of one's own time. This means that one must root or ground one's categories in what Lonergan calls interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness, and that one must include the use of those

coherence, as the mutual agreement of all that is true.' Ibid. 21. Again, '...coherence is ... the basic thing in the concept of truth. The aspect of judgment – correspondence of judgment and fact – and the consensus of those who judge are then a derived element in the concept of truth.' Ibid. 53. In Lonergan's terms, the 'basic thing' about truth is found for Pannenberg on the second, rather than the third, level of consciousness; such a description can almost be taken as a definition of idealism.

⁴ See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 345-46. The way of teaching is presented more fully, and contrasted more clearly with the way of discovery, in Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 33-41, now available in *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007] 58-77). Aquinas speaks of the *ordo disciplinae* in the Prologue to the *Summa theologiae*, contrasting it with *librorum expositio* and with the more incidental treatment of issues dictated by a given *ocasio disputandi*.

‘general categories’ that theology shares with other contemporary disciplines.⁵ This fourth point could be called ‘honoring the systematic, critical, and methodical exigences.’⁶ In the tradition of Aquinas, it entails the turn to theory (the systematic exigence). In the face of the questions raised by modern and contemporary philosophy, science, and historical consciousness, it entails the turn to the subject (the critical exigence). And given the witness function of theology as mediating with culture, it entails the return in communications to the natural and human sciences and the varieties of common sense prevailing in one’s own cultural matrix (the methodical exigence).

The question remains, however, as to whether what Lonergan says is enough. That question can be broken down so as to complement the four emphases that have just been affirmed.

First, while Lonergan correctly insists that the principal function of systematics is the hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, and gradually developing understanding of the mysteries of faith, it may be asked whether he says enough about other functions of systematics and about how they are related to the principal function.

Second, while I agree that the core problems of systematics are set by the dogmas that express revealed mysteries, there are also nondogmatic elements of Christian constitutive meaning, some of which themselves express mysteries of faith. How are these to be related in a systematics to the dogmatic elements?

Third, while I honor the proposal that the *ordo doctrinae* is the appropriate mode of systematic exposition, the other functions to which I am calling attention introduce an element of the *via inventionis* whose relation to the *ordo doctrinae* needs further

5 On the general categories, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 285-88. An attempt to reinforce Lonergan’s insistence on the general categories is provided below at the end of the section on the transposition of categories.

6 On these exigences, see *ibid.* 82-83.

elaboration. It is true that entering on the way of discovery will involve one in other functional specialties besides systematics.⁷ But when such operations are performed by a systematic theologian, or when a systematic theologian relies on the labors of others in these distinct functional specialties, the goal remains systematic understanding. These dynamics require a more complete articulation.

And fourth, in many instances the meaning of the mysteries of faith remains *permanently* best expressed in symbolic, aesthetic, and dramatic categories. But then the question arises, How does one move from description to explanation with regard to meanings that are so expressed? Is an explanatory employment of symbolic categories possible, and if so, what are its grounds?

In the course of trying to answer such questions, I have begun to develop a proposal for what a contemporary systematics might be and do. Some of its principal features, as they have evolved to the present time, are presented here. Further features will probably emerge only in the course of attempting to do what is envisioned here. But I wish to emphasize the nature of this particular presentation. It presupposes and in many places simply repeats what Lonergan has already written on the method of systematic theology. As with previous contributions that I have attempted to make to Lonergan's project, I offer here, not suggested corrections of Lonergan's work, but suggested developments upon what already is securely in place in his writings. Any original

⁷ It would seem that the tasks that in pre-*Method* works Lonergan assigns to the *via inventionis* are included among the tasks fulfilled in what he came to conceive as the first six functional specialties: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, and doctrines. For a pre-*Method* account of the *via inventionis* in its theological employment as the *via dogmatica* and in its relation to the *via doctrinae* or *via systematica*, see Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* 33-42 (*The Triune God: Systematics* 59-77).

contribution that these suggestions may contain is offered to the theological community with the hope that publishing these reflections in their present form will allow still further questions to emerge. The exploration is still tentative but, I hope, programmatic, pointing Catholic systematics in a certain direction.

Systematics currently stands at a crossroad. Major transpositions and massive transformations of both method and content are required. It may take several decades before a new tradition in Catholic systematics is underway in a consolidated and not merely coincidental fashion, a tradition in essential continuity with past achievements but responding as well to contemporary exigences. Lonergan once made the intriguing comment that ‘today’s scholars seem to resemble twelfth-century compilers more than they do thirteenth-century theologians.’⁸ The context of this remark is an anticipation of a new step in theology’s comprehension of the meaning of dogmatic statements (and of Christian constitutive meaning in general). This step is analogous to, but goes beyond and sublates, the systematic leap that was prepared by twelfth-century compilers but that occurred only in the thirteenth century.

Besides systematic exegesis, there exists a historical exegesis that, so far from omitting the accidentals, includes them in a synthetic manner. Besides systematic theology, there exists a theology that is both more concrete and more comprehensive, one that considers and seeks to understand the economy of salvation in its historical evolution. This new step in comprehension has been in preparation for a long time,

8 Bernard Lonergan, *Divinarum personarum conceptionem analogicam evolvit B.*

Lonergan (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957, 1959) 19, translation mine. This work is an earlier version of the *Pars systematica* of *De Deo trino*. The section referred to here does not appear in the later work. But it is included in appendix 4 of *The Trine God: Systematics*. See p. 753.

thanks to so much biblical, conciliar, patristic, medieval, liturgical, ascetical, and other research; but its synthetic character has not yet clearly appeared.⁹

It is such a development, at least in part, that is anticipated in the present reflections.

It may be, then, that the most important service that can be performed at present is to offer suggestions pointing systematics in a certain direction. Lonergan's emphases, I am convinced, are crucial for this direction, and there is something of a danger that they will be overlooked. But they also need to be complemented by other concerns before their importance will be acknowledged and their efficacy realized. I am trying here to provide some of these complementary emphases. I do not claim to have treated all the relevant issues. These proposals invite conversation and development.

1 Principal Texts

The principal texts one would draw upon to interpret Lonergan's notion of systematics are (1) the first chapter of the *pars systematica* of *De Deo trino*,¹⁰ (2) the chapter on functional specialties in *Method in Theology*,¹¹ and (3) the chapter on systematics in *Method in Theology*.¹² But these must be supplemented by several other sources.

Thus, the first chapter of Lonergan's doctoral dissertation provides an early example of his concern with speculative *development* in theology.¹³ While Lonergan

9 Ibid., translation mine. Further reflection on these remarks appears below, in the section on anticipations.

10 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 6-123.

11 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 125-45 (chapter 5).

12 Ibid. 335-53 (chapter 13).

13 Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E.

never returned to the particular model of speculative development presented there – actually it is presented as more than a model – the issue of *ongoing sequences of genetically and dialectically related systematic positions* that he first raises there recurs in various other contexts in his work. The most important of his writings on this point is his presentation in chapter 17 of *Insight*¹⁴ of a generalized heuristic structure for the explanatory recovery of the emergence of meaning. While the context there is the dialectical history of metaphysics, the chapter offers an ontology of meaning that can be applied as well to the history of theology.¹⁵ But the question arises, Precisely where among the operations performed by theologians, and so among the functional specialties, does this systematic understanding of the history of theological meanings belong? It depends on interpretation and history, but its results are explanatory, while the results of interpretation and history are not. Is the historical but explanatory ‘theology of theologies’ itself a part of systematics? I think so, just as for Lonergan the historical but explanatory ‘philosophy of philosophies’ is part of metaphysics.¹⁶ It is part of the

Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) chapter II-1, ‘The Form of the Development.’

14 See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E.

Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) chapter 17, especially § 1 (Metaphysics, Mystery, and Myth) and § 3 (The Truth of Interpretation).

15 See Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) chapter 19, for an interpretation of chapter 17 of *Insight* as presenting an ontology of meaning, that is, a metaphysical account that offers a heuristic structure of the emergent probability that governs meaning itself. Chapter 20 of *Theology and the Dialectics of History* is also pertinent to the theological application of these concerns.

16 This is the point of the title of chapter 17 of *Insight*, ‘Metaphysics as Dialectic.’

systematic theology of witness to the faith, that part that treats the witness of understanding.¹⁷

Again, notes on courses Lonergan taught at the Gregorian University in Rome ‘De intellectu et methodo’ and ‘De systemate et historia’ would help raise several of the most important questions both about the same issue and about the general relation of systematics to history.¹⁸ The latter is an issue that Lonergan wrestled with in the late 1950s and through the first half of the 1960s. The jury is still out, I think, as to whether he ever resolved the question to his own satisfaction. In any event, it is an issue that we will face again here, and these notes provide some of the data on Lonergan’s reflections.

The book *Philosophy of God, and Theology*¹⁹ would supplement a suggestion that appears more compactly in *Method in Theology* regarding the relation between systematics and the philosophical knowledge of God. That suggestion can be generalized, as Lonergan himself says, so that it regards the integration into systematics of philosophical reflection on other issues as well, rather than the separation of the two into separate treatises and separate courses in separate departments of universities and schools of divinity.

17 Related questions regarding systematics have been raised by Philip McShane. I am not yet prepared to indicate the precise relation between my proposal and his. My familiarity with his emphases comes through conversation with him on a number of occasions.

18 The notes for ‘De intellectu et methodo’ were taken by students; the notes for ‘De systemate et historia’ are Lonergan’s own. (2009: See www.bernardlonergan.com at 48500DTL050 for ‘De systemate et historia.’ The notes for both will be published in volume 23 of Lonergan’s Collected Works.)

19 See above, note 2.

Finally, notes found in Lonergan's archival papers written at the time of his breakthrough to functional specialization suggest that systematics is to be a theological theory of history, that its 'mediated object' is *Geschichte*.²⁰ This suggestion never found its way into *Method in Theology*, perhaps because it says more about the content of systematics than about its method. But we must ask whether it did not remain quite central to Lonergan's notion of systematics. And it will definitely be central to the notion that I wish to suggest.

2 The Question

Despite the importance of these other works, the chapter from *De Deo trino* provides the most detailed exposition in Lonergan's work of an understanding of systematics. It provides a springboard to all of the other questions. It deserves to be regarded, I believe, as something of a classic exposition of one particular option regarding what systematics is and does.²¹ The position presented there on systematics does not undergo radical

20 See for instance www.bernardlonergan.com at 47200D0E060.

21 I intend 'classic' here in the sense that Lonergan quotes from Friedrich Schlegel: 'A classic is a writing that is never fully understood. But those that are educated and educate themselves must always want to learn more from it.' Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 161. Lonergan goes on to say: 'The classics ground a tradition. They create the milieu in which they are studied and interpreted. They produce in the reader through the cultural tradition the mentality, the *Vorverständnis*, from which they will be read, studied, interpreted. Now such a tradition may be genuine, authentic, a long accumulation of insights, adjustments, re-interpretations, that repeats the original message afresh for each age. In that case the reader will exclaim, "Did not our hearts burn within us, when he spoke on the way and opened to us the scriptures?" (Lk. 24, 32). On the other hand, the tradition may be unauthentic. It may consist in a

change in *Method in Theology*. There is, to be sure, in the latter work a vastly expanded notion of theology as a whole, and so a far more nuanced and differentiated presentation of the relation of systematics to other theological tasks. There are in Lonergan's notes, as I have just said, suggestions that would greatly expand and enrich his notion of systematics. But in fact there is little change between *De Deo trino* and *Method in Theology* with regard to the issue of the internal constitution of systematics, of what systematics is and how it is to be done. The exposition in *De Deo trino* was written before Lonergan arrived at the notion of functional specialization. It was written before he arrived at a conception of theology as mediating 'between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix.'²² It was written before he came to the position that theology finds its foundations in reflection on intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. It also has its own internal history: there was an earlier version of the same material that contained some emphases that were dropped in the 1964 version.²³ Yet the understanding of systematics itself survives essentially unchanged in the new framework opened up in *Method in Theology*.

watering-down of the original message, in recasting it into terms and meanings that fit into the assumptions and convictions of those that have dodged the issue of radical conversion. In that case a genuine interpretation will be met with incredulity and ridicule, as was St. Paul when he preached in Rome and was led to quote Isaiah: "Go to this people and say: you will hear but never understand; you will look and look, but never see" (Acts 28, 26).' Ibid. 161-62.

²² Ibid. xi.

²³ 2009 note: In a series of articles in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, I presented at least the beginning of an interpretation of the changes that occurred between the earlier and later versions of this chapter. These will be uploaded in this series of essays in systematic theology.

My question, in general terms, has been whether that is what ought to have happened. Or is it rather the case that functional specialization, the notion of mediation, and the articulation of ‘foundations’ in terms of conversion demand a more extensive notion not only of that whole (which Lonergan certainly does provide) but also of the functional specialty ‘systematics’ itself (which he does not provide)?²⁴ My answer to that question is qualified and nuanced. The principal function of systematics is precisely what Lonergan consistently says it is. The method for satisfying that principal function is the very difficult method that he proposes. Still, there is also a series of effects that functional specialization, the notion of mediation, and the new understanding of foundations have on systematics. These effects need further articulation beyond that afforded in the chapter of *Method in Theology* devoted to this functional specialty. And further material must be included in ‘foundations’ if some of these effects are to be realized.

My intention, then, is not to question whether Lonergan’s basic conception of systematics as an understanding of the mysteries of faith is correct. It is. The principal function of systematic theology is the *intelligentia mysteriorum* that constitutes the seventh functional specialty, systematics: the imperfect, analogical, hypothetical, synthetic, and gradually developing understanding of the mysteries of faith to which informed doctrinal assent has already been given. Lonergan presents a relentlessly consistent account of this option. The option remained essentially unchanged throughout

24 Again, the question could be phrased in the terms used by Lonergan in his exposition of the classic. Does the chapter on systematics in *Method in Theology* exhibit the accumulation of insights, adjustments, reinterpretations demanded by functional specialization itself, by the notion of theology as mediation, and by the new proposal that Lonergan offers for foundations? If the answer is no, what must be done to rectify the omission? These are my questions.

his career, from his doctoral dissertation on Aquinas to his writings even after *Method in Theology*. Particular elements within his notion of systematics underwent development, and new features were added. His vision of the whole of theology underwent dramatic change with the idea of functional specialization. His understanding of what constitutes scientific knowledge progressed through ever more nuanced qualifications on the position that classical Catholic theology had inherited from Aristotle (a position present even in 1964, where science is still *certa rerum per causas cognitio*).²⁵ But through all of these developments, systematic theology remains the imperfect, analogical, obscure, but

25 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 6-7. Contrast the position presented just a year later in the lecture 'Dimensions of Meaning,' in Lonergan, *Collection*, vol. 4 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 232-45, esp. 238-40. It must be said, of course, that Lonergan had already moved far beyond the classical definition of science when he composed *Insight*, not only in principle but also in his explicit formulations. Why the old definition remains in his Latin theological treatises is a question worth pondering. (It can be found as well in Lonergan, *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica* [Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1956, 1960, 1964] 28, now available in the *Collected Works* as vol. 7, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002] at 48 and 49.) It provides perhaps the key element in Lonergan's interpretation of Aristotle, but when Lonergan employs it in these works he is doing more than interpretation. Perhaps it was useful to him when, even in these works, he is offering what in fact is an analogy of science. But if so, that usefulness seems to have disappeared after 1965. What seems to remain constant in his analogy of science is the distinction between the two ways of ordering ideas: the way of discovery (*via inventionis*) and the way of teaching (*via doctrinae*).

extremely fruitful and gradually developing understanding of the mysteries of faith, precisely that understanding recommended and praised by the First Vatican Council (DS 3016).²⁶

Now these mysteries, affirmed as true by the community and so given the status of doctrines, are constitutive of the community that gathers in the world in the name of Christ Jesus. Systematics is a particular form of witness to the truth of the doctrines, the witness of understanding. As such it is a witness to realities whose affirmation in doctrines establishes the core meanings constitutive of the Christian community. The understanding that it reaches is, primarily, an understanding of the revealed divine mystery. The synthesis that it expresses is centered in the mysteries of faith, in meanings that we would not attain at all were they not revealed. As such, systematic understanding must remain permanently imperfect, hypothetical, analogical, and open to development.

The further points that I would emphasize do not run counter to Lonergan's notion of the principal function of systematics. Rather they bring to the fore some elements in that notion that otherwise are all too easily overlooked, and they promote others that have been left undeveloped. I will suggest seven ways of building on his

26 'Out of the Augustinian, Anselmian, Thomist tradition, despite an intervening heavy overlay of conceptualism, the first Vatican council retrieved the notion of understanding. It taught that reason illumined by faith, when it inquires diligently, piously, soberly, can with God's help attain a highly fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith both from the analogy of what it naturally knows and from the interconnection of the mysteries with one another and with man's last end (DS 3016).

'The promotion of such an understanding of the mysteries we conceive to be the principal function of systematics.' Ibid. 336.

It is clear from the context that by 'mysteries of faith,' as the expression occurs in this quotation, Lonergan means primarily the truths expressed in dogmas.

position. None of these is without support in Lonergan's work; but, in my view, they need greater emphasis than they receive in his writings about systematics. The entire issue is one of emphasis. Highlighting other features of systematics, while never losing sight of its principal function, will provide us, I believe and hope, with a more rounded and more complete notion. My work is intended, then, as a small contribution to the 'accumulation of insights, readjustments, re-interpretations' that can keep alive in a cultural tradition the essential inspiration of a set of classic texts.

3 Dogma and Mystery

The first point has to do with the relationship between dogmas and the mysteries of faith.

Lonergan correlates 'mysteries' with 'dogmas,' in the sense that a Church doctrine qualifies as 'dogma' if and only if it expresses a mystery so hidden in God that we could not know it at all had it not been revealed by God.²⁷ But it is clear that this is for him a one-way correlation. Dogma is limited in fact as well as in principle to certain affirmations, and at times (as in the conciliar definitions establishing christological and trinitarian dogmas) clarifications, of mysteries of faith. But the mysteries of faith, even some of those included in the creed, include more than the realities affirmed and clarified in explicitly dogmatic pronouncements.²⁸ While dogma is dogma because it affirms mysteries, mysteries extend beyond what has been clarified or perhaps ever will be expressed in dogmatic statements, and this in at least two ways. First, there are elements of Christian constitutive meaning that have received and perhaps will receive no

27 '... the dogmas of DS 3020 and 3043 refer to the Church's declarations of revealed mysteries.' Ibid. 322. 'The meaning of a dogma is not a datum but a truth. It is not a human truth but the revelation of a mystery hidden in God.' Ibid. 323.

28 For example: 'On the third day he rose again from the dead.' 'For us and for our salvation ...' Etc.

dogmatic status. Second, the element of mystery is a permanent feature even of those elements of Christian constitutive meaning that *have* received such status in the Church. And the principal function of systematics is the understanding of the mysteries of faith, whether a clarification of these mysteries has been explicitly affirmed in dogmatic pronouncements or not.

We can agree with Lonergan that systematics does best to draw its central problems from the dogmatic statements themselves, and still ask about the rest, about the mysteries that have not received, and in some cases perhaps will not receive, such dogmatic formulation, and about the element of mystery that will remain permanent even once a particular dogmatic pronouncement has been made.

None of this is alien to Lonergan's concerns. He draws on Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Humani generis* to affirm that the fountains of revealed doctrine contain so many and such great treasures of truth that they will never adequately be exhausted (DS 3886).²⁹ In *Insight*, even prior to discussing explicitly theological issues, he affirms the permanence of mystery no matter how clear and precise our concepts become.³⁰

First, then, there are mysteries expressed in the scriptures and in the Church's tradition, in doctrines affirmed as constitutive of the community of faith, that never have been and in some cases perhaps never will be defined as dogma. There is no defined dogma, for example, that does for the *pro nobis* of the redemption, for the elemental meaning of the Paschal mystery, what Nicea and Chalcedon do for the incarnation and the ontological constitution of Christ. The nature of that *pro nobis* remains an open question for theologians, in a manner that simply is not true of the ontological constitution of Christ.³¹ Nicea and Chalcedon express, not a systematic meaning, but

29 See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 35.

30 See Lonergan, *Insight*, § 1.6 ('The Notion of Mystery') of chapter 17.

31 For Lonergan's own acknowledgment of the plurality of theologies of the redemption,

definitely at least a 'post-systematic meaning.'³² There may never be this kind of dogmatic definition of the redemption. Perhaps there *cannot* be such a definition. Perhaps its meaning is forever the meaning of a dramatic deed, a deed that is true but that will never be defined. There are scriptural doctrines on the redemption. There are theological doctrines found in many (sometimes conflicting) forms in the Church's tradition with regard to its meaning, its immanent intelligibility. But when Lonergan, for example, expresses that immanent intelligibility in terms of the just and mysterious law of the cross,³³ the affirmed truth that he is attempting to understand is not one that has ever been given the conceptual, post-systematic, defined doctrinal clarity that *homoousion*, correctly understood, provided in answer to the questions that it resolved.³⁴

and for his affirmation of the permanent character of mystery in the redemption, see his lecture, 'The Redemption,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 3-28, esp. 24-28.

32 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 312: 'In general, the meaning of these doctrines is not systematic but, commonly, it is post-systematic.' 314: '... the ongoing context that runs from Nicea to the third council of Constantinople derives from the doctrines of the first three centuries of Christianity but differs from them inasmuch as it employs a post-systematic mode of thought and expression.' 278-79: '... there is theoretically differentiated consciousness. As already explained, there was a slight tincture of this in the Greek councils at Nicea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, Constantinople III.'

33 Bernard Lonergan, *De Verbo incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) thesis 17.

34 Lonergan himself mentions the redemption as an example of a mystery of faith that has not received the kind of dogmatic formulation that christological and trinitarian affirmations have been accorded. See *The Triune God: Systematics* 34-37. On

That affirmed truth resides more in the domain of *permanently elemental meaning*, meaning that perhaps forever will be better expressed in the very symbolic, aesthetic, dramatic terms of scripture than in any possible dogmatic clarifications.³⁵ It may be that the most that dogma could do for that truth would be to protect it against error or aberration. It may be, too, that a dogma that affirms the *need* for redemption would be salutary at the present time. But it may be argued that *homoousion* does considerably more regarding the ontological status of the incarnate Word, since it responds to an exigence for positive clarification that could not be satisfied without the move to at least a ‘tincture of systematic meaning.’³⁶ The mystery of redemption is one whose articulation, precisely as a mystery, remains perhaps forever the *symbolic* expression of a ‘position,’ the *aesthetic* and *dramatic* presentation of a truth that, affirmed as truth, is constitutive of the community of believers. Perhaps its truth is primarily what Hans Urs von Balthasar calls the truth of a divine deed (in a sense, he hastens to add, quite different from Faust’s and Fichte’s ‘in the beginning was the Deed’).³⁷ ‘... the drama between

Athanasius’s further clarification of the meaning of Nicea’s *homoousion*, see Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, vol. 11 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009) in ‘Prolegomena,’ section 6, ‘Of One Substance.’

35 On elemental meaning, see Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 63 (in the context of a discussion of *art* as a carrier of meaning) and 67 (in the context of a discussion of *symbols* as carriers of meaning). When in *Insight* Lonergan speaks of the *permanence* of ‘mystery,’ he is referring to what we here call ‘permanently elemental meaning.’ See above, note 30.

36 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 329.

37 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, vol. 1 in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, ed. Joseph Fessio and John

God and man is itself already *logos*, meaning, word ... in the sense of a word that happens, *a word that possesses one dimension more than the word that is witness.*³⁸

Perhaps we may extend to this mystery what Lonergan says about understanding the Marian doctrines. He makes the intriguing suggestion that ‘the refinement of human feelings is the area to be explored in coming to understand the development of Marian doctrines.’³⁹ If this is the case with regard even to some elements of the Church’s

Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), on the last and unnumbered page of the ‘Foreword.’

38 Ibid. Emphasis added, to indicate that Balthasar here expresses precisely what I am saying. The emphasized words coincide with Lonergan’s emphasis on the permanence of those symbolic presentations of positions that he calls ‘mystery,’ and bring out an essential aspect of the category of ‘elemental meaning.’

39 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 320. The full context of this remark is important. If it is not attended to, the comment may simply reinforce a mistaken view of Lonergan as a Catholic Schleiermacher – as if there could be such a creature! The remark comes at the end of a brief section on the development of doctrines. Lonergan says: ‘In closing this brief section, I note Prof. Geiselman’s view that the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and of the Assumption of our Lady differ from those defined in ecumenical councils. The latter settle controverted issues. The former repeat what was already taught and celebrated in the whole Catholic Church. Accordingly they are named by him “cultic.” Their sole effect was that the solemn teaching office now proclaims what formerly was proclaimed by the ordinary teaching office. Perhaps I might suggest that human psychology and specifically the refinement of human feelings is the area to be explored in coming to understand the development of Marian doctrines.’ This is in contrast to the refinement and appropriation of cognitional operations that is required to understand the development of the christological and

constitutive meaning that in fact have received dogmatic expression, then surely it might be true also of other elements that, while constitutive of the community, have never been and perhaps will never be given such dogmatic articulation.

Second, I must draw attention briefly to the permanence of the element of mystery even around the meanings intended in dogmatic pronouncements. After Athanasius, the meaning of *homoousion* is clear: the same things are to be said of the Son as are said of the Father, except that the Son is Son and the Father is Father. But there is an entire and inexhaustible reservoir of meaning surrounding the trinitarian and christological mysteries that will never be captured in such expressions. That reservoir is, as Balthasar has emphasized, aesthetic and dramatic in its character. The theological treatment of these mysteries must stress first their aesthetic and dramatic character, which itself must find a place also in systematic theology.

My first point, then, is that, while dogma defines mysteries of faith, the element of mystery extends beyond what has been or will be formulated in explicit dogmatic pronouncements, and that systematic understanding must find a way to include these elements as well as those that have been dogmatically affirmed. If systematics is an understanding of the mysteries of faith, it includes an understanding of these permanently nondogmatic elements. A methodological statement on systematics must account for such understanding. What is it that grounds and makes possible the synthetic inclusion in systematic theology of elements of the Christian mystery that have not and never will be, perhaps even cannot be, formulated in dogmatic pronouncements? Where do these elements belong within a systematic theology that would be a *Glaubenslehre*, an understanding of the mysteries of faith? How are they related intelligibly to those elements of the mysteries of faith that in fact have been given dogmatic formulation? How does one reach a systematic understanding of meanings that perhaps must remain

trinitarian doctrines.

elemental, symbolic, aesthetic, dramatic? Particular parameters around the understanding of redemption are just as central to the constitutive meanings of the Christian community as are the *homoousion* of Nicea and the ‘one person in two natures’ of Chalcedon. Some ways of understanding redemption in fact amount to a denial of the meaning that is constitutive of the community.⁴⁰ What enables one to tell the difference between an understanding that witnesses to the truth affirmed in the Church and an understanding that denies the truth or waters it down? And, once such nondogmatic elements of Christian constitutive meaning have been properly (*convenienter*) understood, what enables one to relate them systematically to those elements that are strictly dogmatic? Such questions push us back to the *grounds* of understanding many of these nondogmatic elements, grounds that more often than not have something to do with ‘the refinement of human feelings,’ with the emergence of a Christian religious *sensibility*, with the aesthetic and dramatic constitution of Christian living. This marks out the further area of ‘foundations’ to which I referred earlier, beyond those that Lonergan has explicitly articulated in speaking of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, an area that, for better or for worse, I have called ‘psychic conversion.’⁴¹

40 I would argue, for example, that while Jesus is the revelation of what God is always doing in the world, a *purely* revelational soteriology is not sufficient. It is just the easy part, if you will, of soteriology. The hard work of determining precisely in what lies the salvation that God has wrought in Jesus remains to be done, even after one has affirmed its revelatory value. The issue will be of extreme importance in the dialogue of religions, where one tendency, quite popular today among correlationists, will be to limit the Christian contribution to soteriology to a merely revelational account.

41 The most complete articulation of what I mean by psychic conversion is found in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapters 2, 6-10.

4 Theological Doctrines

While systematics is centered in an understanding of the mysteries of faith, it is not limited to such mysteries, even when ‘mysteries of faith’ include more than dogmas. There are other doctrines, both theological and ecclesial, that systematic theologians attempt to work into their synthesis, besides those that directly express the mysteries of faith. In particular, there are *theological* doctrines from the tradition and from one’s contemporaries, perhaps even ‘from’ oneself. They are not scriptural doctrines or Church doctrines or dogmas or even nondogmatic mysteries of faith. They are, rather, theological interpretations of such doctrines. Nonetheless they are among the doctrines that one will attempt to understand in systematics. Moreover, these appropriated theological doctrines themselves have systematic implications, so that elements of other systematic syntheses are already part of the doctrinal inventory of a contemporary systematic theologian. If the expression ‘mysteries of faith’ names the nonnegotiable elements, whether dogmatic or nondogmatic, that constitute the core of systematic theological meaning, nonetheless no systematic theology begins *simply* from these core meanings. A contemporary systematic theology stands within a history of other attempts to understand the Christian faith. It is also in dialogue with other contemporary efforts to understand the same faith. In this sense, to use a contemporary buzzword, it is inescapably intertextual (though not, as some who use the buzzword might want to say, solely intertextual: theological understanding terminates not at words, but at realities). These past and present *theologies* exhibit genuine achievements of understanding that, once they have been accepted and affirmed as such, assume *for the systematic theologian* a certain doctrinal status. This is the status not of a Church teaching, and certainly not of a Church dogma, but of theological doctrines that have passed the tests required if they are to be affirmed *by a theologian*.

Again, the general movement from dialectic through foundations to doctrines and systematics demands the inclusion of such theological doctrines among the affirmations that systematics would understand. This is often overlooked in the interpretation of what Lonergan means by the ‘doctrines’ of his sixth functional specialty: theology itself provides some of the doctrines that contemporary systematic efforts attempt to understand.⁴² And in doing so it provides as well, and grants something of a doctrinal status to, the systematic framework in which these theological doctrines were expressed.

One could reinforce the doctrinal status of some systematic achievements, at least in this limited, mitigated, and technical sense of the word ‘doctrines,’ by reflecting on what Lonergan has to say about the detrimental effects *for the faith itself* of poorly understanding a genuine systematic achievement. In *The Triune God: Systematics*, he outlines the steps that lead from poorly understanding a genuine systematic achievement to rejecting that achievement, and from rejecting a systematic achievement to denying the very facts that are understood in the achievement, that is, mysteries of faith themselves.⁴³ This reinforces my present point that other theological achievements and their systematic frameworks and implications assume a certain doctrinal status for the contemporary systematic theologian.

42 ‘There is a fifth variety of doctrines, the ones meant in the title of the present chapter [‘Doctrines’]. There are *theological doctrines* reached by the application of a method that distinguishes functional specialties and uses the functional specialty, foundations, to select doctrines from among the multiple choices presented by the functional specialty, dialectic.’ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 298, emphasis added.

‘Theological doctrines’ here includes also Church doctrines and dogmas, of course, but is not limited to them.

43 Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 24-29.

Let me give three examples, the first two from the theological tradition and the third from the contemporary theological and ecclesial scene.

In the sets of operations that Lonergan calls dialectic and foundations, a theologian determines the particular theological tradition in which he or she stands. Better, when one is making such a crucial determination, one is in effect operating in the functional specialties of dialectic and foundations. One is deciding whom and what one is for and whom and what one is against, and one is articulating the grounds of that decision. Now, let us assume that a particular systematic theologian (for example, the present author, who is intended now when I write ‘he,’ ‘him,’ or ‘his’) has determined that the overall theological tradition in which he is working is defined by Lonergan’s implementation of the Leonine *vetera novis augere et perficere*. That is, he has determined, with certain qualifications, that he stands in the tradition of Aquinas as this tradition has been made available through the interpretations of Lonergan and advanced by Lonergan’s developments of some of its essential inspirations.⁴⁴ For such a theologian basic formal-methodological *and doctrinal* components have already been determined, and the affirmation of the doctrinal components extends to content beyond the mysteries of faith themselves. Nor is that determination arbitrary: one has considered the multiple options (dialectic) and discerned the ground for the determination (foundations).

The present point, however, is that the ‘doctrines’ of such a theologian include some of the achievements arrived at in previous attempts of other systematic theologians to *understand* the mysteries of faith. In particular, if those achievements are judged to have brought closure to a particular theological debate, then, whether or not they have or ever will become Church doctrine or dogma, they have achieved a certain doctrinal status

44 For Lonergan’s nuanced articulation of his relation to Aquinas, see ‘Aquinas Today: Tradition and Innovation,’ in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 35-54.

for the systematic theologian who makes that judgment. So – and here is my first example – he might accept the theological doctrine on operative and cooperative grace, habitual and actual, that Aquinas expresses so succinctly in the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*, q. 111, a. 2. And he might accept that doctrine precisely as Lonergan has interpreted it. This means that he would regard as settled by this interpretation previously long-standing and seemingly interminable acrimonious theological debates (all of them post-Aquinas) on the relation of divine grace and human freedom. Thus he would not revisit those debates in direct discourse, and so in systematics, except to say that they have been settled and to present his understanding of why this is so. Precisely because, in his judgment, they have been settled, he already has a doctrine in their regard. The doctrine is not Church dogma or even, directly, Church doctrine, though it is not contrary to either of these; but once it is judged to have brought closure to a series of theological debates, it is theological doctrine. In itself it may be hypothetical, analogical, obscure: it is, after all, a piece of systematic theological understanding. Yet in affirming it precisely as such, one gives it a certain doctrinal status. One might revisit the debates in interpretation and history, and so in indirect discourse, but interpretation and history are not systematics. If he regards those debates as over, if, for example, he judges that Lonergan's interpretation of Aquinas has brought definitive closure to the *de auxiliis* controversy (a closure that pronounces a pox on both houses), then that very interpretation is among the affirmed doctrines that in systematics he would attempt to understand. These affirmations on the systematic theologian's part are doctrinal, not in the sense of assent to scriptural doctrine or to Church doctrine or to dogma, but in the sense of assent to a particular theological achievement. They are doctrinal, not in the sense of providing an element of the Church's own constitutive meaning, but in the sense of being affirmed as a probable approximation to the correct understanding of that meaning. They certainly do not run counter to scriptural doctrine or to Church dogma or to other Church doctrines, but they also are not, as such, included among these forms of

doctrine, and probably never will be. Yet these affirmations, by being affirmed, are constituted among the elements that, as a systematic theologian, one would attempt to understand.

Such a theologian would, in fact, be following Lonergan's own example. Lonergan has not only traced the development of Aquinas's thought on operative grace and related it to the preceding tradition. That is, he has not only contributed interpretive and historical monographs on the issue.⁴⁵ He has also included his interpretation of Aquinas's final position on this issue among the doctrines that his own systematic understanding of grace would comprehend.⁴⁶ Aquinas's final theological doctrine on operative and cooperative grace, both habitual and actual, is not itself scriptural doctrine or Church doctrine or Church dogma. It is the theological doctrine of a particularly authoritative theologian. It is itself the hypothetical result of a systematic effort to understand scriptural, patristic (especially Augustinian), and Church doctrine. But especially because one judges that it has ended a particular theological dispute, it assumes something of a doctrinal status. One may disagree with it without denying the faith. Within limits, one may arrive at a different theological understanding of the relation of grace and freedom without compromising the faith. In all likelihood, neither Molina nor Bañez was a heretic. Certainly, neither of them denied either divine grace or human

45 See Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* (see note 13 above). Part 1 consists of articles based on Lonergan's doctoral dissertation and originally published in *Theological Studies*. Part 2 presents the dissertation itself.

46 See Bernard Lonergan, 'De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum,' to appear in vol. 19 of Lonergan's *Collected Works, Early Latin Theology*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto, forthcoming), in particular thesis 5. Just as pertinent is Lonergan's 'De scientia atque voluntate Dei,' which will appear in the same volume.

freedom. But Lonergan may well have demonstrated that neither of them correctly understood either the relation between human freedom and divine grace or what Aquinas eventually came to say about that relation. And my option will be that Aquinas's position on the issue, precisely as retrieved by Lonergan, closes that particular debate, and so is to be affirmed among my own doctrines. Thus, it must be among the elements that I would understand in a systematic synthesis.⁴⁷

47 Lonergan's point about the long-term detrimental effects of poorly understanding a legitimate systematic achievement introduces complex nuances into the dialectical evaluation of such figures as Molina and Bañez for the doctrine of the faith itself. Ultimately, the issue is probably one of understanding the history of Scotist influence. Lonergan writes in his dissertation, '...it is precisely in the Scotist field of a mistaken concept of eternity and of prior and posterior *signa* that the whole of both Bannezian and Molinist thought moves' (*Grace and Freedom* 328, note 29). It is interesting that Lonergan and Balthasar concur in their respective negative assessments of the long-range effects of Scotism. For Lonergan, consult the indices in both *Insight* and *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). For Balthasar's scattered references, see *The Glory of the Lord 5: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991) index under Duns Scotus. Surely it is time for a major dialectical study, especially because of the currency of similar mistakes. Consider, for example, the cognitional theory, the relation of 'word' and 'idea,' in Wittgenstein-influenced literature; and see Lonergan's brief (but in principle complete) response in *Method in Theology* 254-57. Consider too, the conceptualism of methods of correlation and 'model' thinking. Consider that Heidegger was more familiar with Scotus than with Aquinas, and it is little wonder that he was so passionate about the destruction of metaphysics. But what he is

My second example is similar, but worth mentioning in that it provides another indication of where I would head in my own systematic theology. It has to do with the psychological analogy for the systematic understanding of the trinitarian processions.

There are three major moments in the history of this analogy. There is the presentation in Augustine's *De trinitate*. There is Aquinas's metaphysical promotion of essentially the same analogy, as found concisely in *Summa theologiae*, 1, qq. 27-43. And there is Lonergan's further promotion of the analogy in the *pars systematica* of *De Deo trino*, a promotion grounded in the interiorly differentiated consciousness that the book *Insight* would bring forth in its readers. The latter advance consists in a more explicit and more explanatory appeal to the processions of word and love in human consciousness (and especially the procession of the inner word) than is found in either Augustine or Aquinas. Each of the subsequent moments (Aquinas and Lonergan) is engaged in 'advancing the positions' in the preceding moment or moments.

In addition, the potential for a fourth major moment in the history of the analogy appears in one of Lonergan's late works, where he expresses yet a further promotion or advancement of the analogy, one whose implications have yet to be explored. He

destroying is Scotist metaphysics, Suarezian metaphysics, conceptualist and essentialist metaphysics, not the metaphysics of Aquinas. Consider that Chicago correlationism and Yale cultural-linguistic emphases, seemingly at loggerheads with one another, are both variants of conceptualism. Finally, consider the following statement from *Insight* 396-97: 'Five hundred years separate Hegel from Scotus ... that notable interval of time was largely devoted to working out in a variety of manners the possibilities of the assumption that knowing consists in taking a look. The ultimate conclusion was that it did not and could not.' For Lonergan's appeal for a study of the effects of Scotism, see *Verbum* 39, note 126.

proposed an analogy that would move, as it were, from above in human consciousness rather than from below.⁴⁸

The psychological analogy has fallen on hard times in theology. But the major twentieth-century contributions to understanding it have not yet received the attention they deserve.⁴⁹ Lonergan's work on *verbum* in Aquinas shows in intricate detail how Aquinas understood the procession of the eternal Word by the analogy with the procession in human consciousness of two kinds of inner word from two quite distinct acts of understanding.⁵⁰ Lonergan's *Insight* promotes the same two processions to a new level of reflective exactness. Frederick Crowe's work on complacency and concern in Aquinas shows what Aquinas meant by the procession of Love in God and by the analogy in human consciousness of the procession of love from inner word.⁵¹ Lonergan's systematics of the Trinity advances the Thomist analogy into the explicit realm of meaning governed by interiorly differentiated consciousness. And Lonergan's late work on the relation of love and knowledge, where he insists on a particular relation of love

48 See Bernard Lonergan, 'Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,' in *A Third Collection* 74-99, at 93-94.

49 For a serious, balanced, and insightful attempt to draw serious attention once again to this analogy, see Anne Hunt, 'Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology,' *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 197-218.

50 Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*.

51 Frederick E. Crowe, 'Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas,' *Theological Studies* 20 (1959) 1-39, 198-230, 343-95, now available in Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, Supplementary volume of *Lonergan Workshop 16*, ed. Michael Vertin, pp. 71-187. See the third paper referred to in note 56 below, now uploaded on this website as the third in this series of Essays in Systematic Theology.

and knowledge that, it would seem, neither Augustine nor Aquinas grasped,⁵² opens the possibility of an analogy ‘from above.’ This analogy, as I have said, is one whose implications have yet to be explored. I believe that the implications will link the psychological analogy in immensely fruitful ways to contemporary concerns in trinitarian theology. But my present point is that such achievements as those of Lonergan and Crowe are rarely referred to in contemporary criticisms of the analogy. They are not understood, and so have for the most part simply been passed by.

The issue of why this is the case is complex. Not only are there influential ‘counterpositions’ on the contemporary scene, most of them variants of or reactions to Scotist mistakes. There is also enormous resistance among theologians, even systematic theologians, to make the move to theory, the move from description to explanation, the move that acknowledges the systematic or theoretic exigence. There is resistance as well to the move to interiority, the move that acknowledges the critical and methodical exigences. There are, of course, toasts to ‘spirituality,’ but there is little enthusiasm for explanatory syntheses of spiritual reality, and even less acknowledgment that ‘the spiritual’ includes such operations as inquiry, understanding, conceptualization, formulation, reflection, grasp of evidence, and judgment, and that to neglect these is to invite spiritual bankruptcy, even and especially in so-called ‘spiritual theology’ or spirituality.

At any rate, the affirmations made in the preceding few paragraphs reflect theological doctrines. A renewal and advancement, a further promotion, of the Augustinian-Thomist-Lonerganian psychological analogy represents the way forward, not backward, in trinitarian systematics. No doubt, many issues are being raised in trinitarian theology today that provide the potential for a vast enrichment of the systematics of the Trinity. But I do not believe that a truly synthetic, systematic

52 See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 122-23, 278, 283, 340-41.

statement can successfully negotiate these issues unless it is rooted in an understanding and development of the psychological analogy. This is probably a minority position among systematic theologians working in trinitarian theology, and to argue it is not the present point. At the moment it is being offered simply as an example of the way in which strictly theological doctrines are part of what a systematics attempts to understand.

Again, the psychological analogy itself is not Church dogma or Church doctrine. It represents a genetic sequence of efforts to appeal to operations and *operata* in human interiority in order to reach some imperfect, analogical, obscure, but developing and fruitful understanding of the trinitarian processions. And, as will soon be obvious, I think it represents a very fruitful starting point for systematic theology *tout court*.

My third example will be presented more briefly, not because it is less important but because it is probably more familiar to most contemporary readers.

Contemporary theologies of liberation have developed a theological doctrine that affirms both a preferential option for the disenfranchised in the Church's ministry in the world and a hermeneutically privileged position of the marginalized in the Church's interpretation at least of contemporary situations. These theologies, and theologians influenced by them, are also at least moving to theological doctrines that would extend that hermeneutic privilege to the Church's retrieval of its own tradition. The preferential option for the poor has become part of official Church teaching. Moreover, some of the contemporary official Church apologies for past mistakes are in effect promoting the movement to make the hermeneutic appropriation of the experience of the oppressed a part not only of our reading of contemporary situations but also of our critical retrieval of the history of our faith community. None of this has achieved the status of dogma. Perhaps it will, and perhaps it will not. But whether it does or not, it is bound to have profound and inescapable implications for the praxis of the community. Again, whether it reaches dogmatic status or not, it is already doctrine, and in this case both theological and ecclesial doctrine. It is doctrine in a sense less strenuous than 'dogma' but, we may

hope, equally influential in the determination of the community's praxis. In some ways it articulates an assent to the mysteries of faith themselves that has not yet reached dogmatic formulation. But whatever its doctrinal status may come to be, it must certainly now be included in any authentic synthetic understanding of the community's constitutive meaning, and so in any contemporary Catholic systematic theology. An understanding of such doctrines must be included in any contemporary systematic synthesis of Christian constitutive meaning.

If these three examples suffice to illustrate this second point, then we must raise the question, What is the relation of theological doctrines elaborated by other theologians or perhaps by oneself to the mysteries of faith whose understanding is the principal function of systematics? These theological doctrines are themselves the result of systematic attempts to understand the mysteries of faith. But once the contemporary systematic theologian affirms them, they assume the status of doctrines whose further understanding one would pursue in systematics. How are these theological doctrines to be related as doctrines to the central mysteries that one is attempting to understand? The question opens onto the issue of the ontology of meaning, the question of the place in systematics itself of an explanatory history of genetically and dialectically related systematic witnesses to the faith of the Church.

5 The Transposition of Categories

A third development has to do with the transposition of categories. Like the first two points, this one is rooted in Lonergan's own statements, and I am doing little more than heightening its importance. Let me stay with the same examples.

Lonergan's systematic understanding of the doctrine of grace is probably most fully expressed in the schematic supplement 'De ente supernaturali' that he wrote for a seminary course in 1946. But, no matter to what extent one agrees with the positions

there put forth, it will not do simply to translate that supplement into a contemporary vernacular and offer it as a satisfactory systematics of grace. Why? Because the metaphysical categories in which the systematic understanding of that treatise is expressed, while not being jettisoned or rejected, must be grounded in terms and relations derived from what Lonergan calls interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness.⁵³ The first thesis of ‘De ente supernaturali’ affirms that there exists a created communication of the divine nature through which operations are elicited in us by which we reach the very being of God. The second thesis affirms that this created communication of the divine nature is absolutely supernatural. With both of these affirmations concerning habitual grace I would agree, and my systematics would attempt to explain what they mean. But there would be a difference between my way of trying to explain their meaning and the way that Lonergan adopted in ‘De ente supernaturali.’ For I would have to answer a question that, at least in that supplement, Lonergan did not face: How may we speak *in the terms of interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness* about an absolutely supernatural ‘created communication of the divine nature’? Are there

53 See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343: ‘... for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.’ For explicit statements on the bases of the categories employed in theology, see *ibid.* 282-83. 2009 addition: Some terms and relations having to do with the special categories, with their basis in religiously differentiated consciousness, will have a corresponding element, not in intentional but in nonintentional consciousness. The gift of God’s love, the Ignatian ‘consolation without a cause,’ is a consolation with a content but without an apprehended object, and as such is an instance of a nonintentional state in human consciousness itself. Ultimately, of course, it proceeds from divine knowledge and from the *Verbum spirans Amorem*, but its appearance in human consciousness is pure gift.

referents, in interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness, of the metaphysical terms and relations that Lonergan uses to speak about sanctifying grace? In Scholastic metaphysical terms we are talking about an entitative habit rooted in the essence of the soul. But one can accept that Scholastic metaphysical analysis in its entirety and still not have fulfilled the contemporary demands. These will not be fulfilled until some corresponding element or elements in intentional consciousness and/or religious experience have been indicated, however elusive these elements may be. Only then will the contemporary reader have some idea of precisely what is being affirmed. It is the task of systematic theology to answer that question on the level of one's own time: What in the world do these doctrines mean?

Let me stress the difficulty of this exigence. Lonergan writes in the first chapter of his doctoral dissertation that nothing is more difficult than the initial discovery of the proper analogies to be employed in systematic theology.⁵⁴ Well, if anything is indeed more difficult, it is the transposition of at least some of the categories of a metaphysical theology into the grounding categories of a methodical theology. On precisely the question under discussion, I have made three successive attempts at an approximation to adequate formulation, mindful that further development is still required.⁵⁵ The issue is one of finding terms and relations in religious experience itself that correspond to the

54 '... the use of such analogies seems an extremely simple matter. In point of fact there is nothing more complicated and difficult than their first emergence.' Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* 175.

55 See Robert M. Doran, 'Consciousness and Grace,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11 (Spring 1993) 51-75; 'Revisiting "Consciousness and Grace,"' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 13 (Fall 1995) 151-59; and "'Complacency and Concern" and a Basic Thesis on Grace,' *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997) 57-78. 2009: These are the first three Essays in Systematic Theology uploaded on this website.

distinction of sanctifying grace and charity that Lonergan in ‘De ente supernaturali’ takes from Aquinas. Lonergan’s own expressions in terms of Romans 5.5 do not seem to me quite to do the job.

Augustine expressed the issue as follows.

There is not one who does not love something, but the question is, what to love. The psalms do not tell us not to love, but to choose the object of our love. But how can we choose unless we are first chosen? We cannot love unless someone has loved us first. Listen to the apostle John: *We love him, because he first loved us.* The source of man’s love for God can only be found in the fact that God loved him first. He has given us himself as the object of our love, and he has also given us its source. What this source is you may learn more clearly from the apostle Paul who tells us: *The love of God has been poured into our hearts.* This love is not something we generate ourselves; it comes to us *through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*⁵⁶

Only an explicit connection with the trinitarian procession of the Holy Spirit will provide the satisfactory conceptualization. What is required is an articulation that, however haltingly, speaks of the experience of being on the receiving end of what theology will recognize as the actively spirating love of Father and Son, the experience that, upon reflection, can be called one of being *recipients* of the mission of the Holy Spirit. What is there in consciousness itself that corresponds to that mystery? If the mystery names an entitative habit, it extends beyond consciousness. But it also must have some implications that can be specified in terms of religious experience. Sanctifying grace is the created participation in and imitation of active spiration. What emanates from it is the habit of charity, in a manner analogous to the procession of the Holy Spirit from active

56 Augustine, Sermon 34, quoted from *The Liturgy of the Hours*, vol. 2, Tuesday of the third week of Easter (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1976) 712.

spiration in God.⁵⁷ Only interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness will provide the terms and relations for expressing such an understanding of these doctrines.

This example is perhaps sufficient also for speaking of the categories to be employed in the psychological analogy. For it is clear that such an understanding of the trinitarian mystery must turn to interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness for its basic terms and relations. It has also done so, whether in Augustine or in Aquinas, albeit without the technical precision of interior differentiation that is made explicit in Lonergan's work.

Again, with reference to my third example, what are the grounds in interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness for the theological, and now ecclesial, doctrine of the preferential option for the poor and for its systematic understanding? Such a question must be faced when one is engaged in explicit synthetic understanding of the Church's constitutive meaning. I have attempted to answer this question by appealing to Lonergan's notion of a normative scale of values. This notion is rooted in Lonergan's intentionality analysis, and so appeal to it satisfies the demands we are making in this third point, that the categories of a systematic theology must be derived from interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness.⁵⁸

While we are on the subject of categories, another point can conveniently be made. It has to do with the necessity of employing general categories in theology, and especially in systematic theology. If systematics shies away from employing the categories that are provided to theology by other disciplines, then it is also reneging on its responsibility to provide for the realities affirmed in doctrines the witness of

57 2009: Some changes were made at this point from the *TS* article.

58 See Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapter 4, and parts 3 and 4 passim. The basic statement on the scale of values is Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32.

understanding. A systematic theologian who is wary of employing general categories supplied by the best scientific opinions of his or her own time is being irresponsible. Because the understanding that systematics reaches and expresses is at its core an understanding of the divine mystery, systematic theological synthesis must remain permanently imperfect, hypothetical, analogical, and open to development. Because it is hypothetical, it *can* employ categories derived from contemporary worldviews without compromising the faith affirmed in the doctrines whose truth it would understand.⁵⁹ And because it is a witness to the truth, it *must* employ at least some of these categories, even while at times refining their meaning; for it is an attempt to understand that truth *on the level of one's own time*.

6 *Vetera et Nova*

Fourthly, then, categories transposed from the theological tradition in which one stands must be integrated with contemporary developments, whether on the part of others or even on the part of oneself. As the example from liberation theology shows, contemporary theologians propose new theological doctrines, and some of these new theological doctrines are among the doctrines that one attempts in systematics to understand. The same example shows that some of these new theological doctrines become part of the teaching of the Church, while others remain affirmations that one may or may not hold without being in conflict with the Church's official teaching. The systematic theologian will accept some of these doctrines among those that he or she tries to understand; and in fact, in some cases the systematic theologian will even propose some such doctrines for the first time. But the present question is, How are they to be

⁵⁹ Contrast the position of Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960) 3-19 passim. Barth, like so many others, does not distinguish systematics from doctrines, understanding from truth.

integrated with the doctrines that one accepts from the tradition? To stay with and expand on two of the examples I have employed, we can ask, How are the liberation emphases that we have stressed to be integrated with dogmas, Church doctrines, and past theological doctrines regarding grace and the Trinity? Operative and cooperative grace, both habitual and actual, obviously can be integrated with the psychological analogy for understanding trinitarian processions, but what does either of these systematic positions have to do with the preferential option for the poor? Theology is in effect today developing a social doctrine and systematics of grace, a theology of grace that would correspond to earlier developments regarding the social constitution of sin. Theology today is also highlighting the social and historical dimensions of the trinitarian doctrines. Theology must integrate the affirmations it accepts from the tradition with developments going forward in our own time. A contemporary systematics that would reach a synthetic statement of the community's constitutive meaning must contribute to that development.

We may summarize the first four points as follows. Systematic theologians attempt to understand, not only Church dogmas – this particular function Lonergan explains better than anyone else I have read – but also (1) mysteries of faith that are not expressed in dogmatic pronouncements, (2) ecclesial and theological doctrines from the tradition that they affirm but that are not included among the mysteries of faith whether dogmatic or not, and (3) new theological doctrines that have been developed in their own time, whether by their contemporaries or by themselves, irrespective of whether these doctrines have or will become Church doctrine. And they attempt to integrate all of these affirmations with one another, by deriving the appropriate categories from the basic terms and relations provided by interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness.

7 Mediation

Fifthly, there is the function of mediation, and it is intimately related to what we have just said about systematic theological understanding.

Lonergan writes in an often quoted sentence at the beginning of *Method in Theology*, ‘A theology mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion in that matrix.’⁶⁰ But seldom has there been faced the question, What kind of mediation is performed by theology, and especially by systematic theology? In a posthumously published paper entitled ‘The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,’ Lonergan distinguishes four kinds of mediation: simple mediation, self-mediation, mutual mediation, and mutual self-mediation.⁶¹ Without going into detail now on these distinctions, I wish to call attention to the significance of the distinction between self-mediation and mutual self-mediation. The mediation of faith and culture that theology in its entirety is, is a mutual self-mediation. It is not simply an intramural self-mediation of Christian constitutive meaning from revelation to the contemporary faith of the Church (as might be the case, for instance, in the theology of Karl Barth). It is also a mutually illuminating dialogue between the contemporary faith of the Church and the contemporary cultural matrices within which the faith community lives and operates. And in its function of memory (research, interpretation, history, and dialectic) it is a mutually illuminating dialogue not only between the contemporary faith of the Church and the cultural elements that were appropriated by the Church but also between the contemporary faith of the Church and elements in previous cultural matrices that may have been overlooked, bypassed, or neglected by the Church or by theology. So today theology helps the Church apologize for past mistakes, both doctrinal and pastoral. So too, at least in the future if not now, theology will be allowed to help the Church apologize for the mistakes it is making today. Yet, despite the opening sentence of *Method in Theology*, which speaks of what in fact is a mutual self-mediation, the

60 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* xi.

61 Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Mediation of Christ in Prayer,’ in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964* 160-82.

mediation that Lonergan actually explicates in the book, at least until the final chapter, *Communications*, is a self-mediation from the data on revelation to the contemporary faith of the Church. That is, it is a mediation *within the religion*, rather than a mutual self-mediation that contributes, however remotely, to the constitutive meaning of both the faith community and the contemporary cultural matrix.

If I may give one concrete instance, let me ask whether *Method in Theology* provides explicit materials for an operational, methodological understanding of the kind of development that John Courtney Murray achieved in the Church's teaching on religious liberty. Murray was working as a systematic theologian in dialogue with his culture, and his work entailed a mutual self-mediation between that religiously pluralistic cultural matrix and the significance and role of his own religious community within that matrix. His work involved more than the operations that Lonergan would include in the functional specialty 'communications.' For out of that dialogue he developed a new *doctrine* regarding religious liberty, and he attempted to express an *understanding* of this new doctrine in a fashion that certainly could be called systematic. His new doctrine called for a change in the Church's official teaching. After some severe opposition from Church authorities, his doctrine became, at the Second Vatican Council, the official teaching of the Church. It is not dogma, and in all likelihood it never will be. But it is doctrine. It is no longer simply the theological doctrine of a particular theologian; it is now part of the doctrine (though not the dogma) of the Church. But even before it became Church doctrine it was a theological doctrine that Murray not only put forth but also labored to explain, to understand, and to communicate to his contemporaries. In all of this, I suggest, he was doing the work of the systematic theologian. But I do not believe that this particular type of set of operations is adequately accounted for or at least sufficiently stressed in Lonergan's work. And the reason may have something to do with the difference between (1) theology's function in the self-mediation of the Church's constitutive meaning from the past into the present and (2) its function in the mutual self-

mediation between that constitutive meaning and the meanings and values that one discovers and affirms in one's contemporary cultural matrix, a mutual self-mediation that contributes to the meanings and values of both the Church and the cultural matrix.⁶²

8 Structure

Sixth, there is the question, What determines the overall shape of a systematic theology? Here I build on two quite explicit affirmations that appear in very different places in Lonergan's writings.

First, in a pre-*Method* exposition of methodological considerations regarding systematics, Lonergan affirms, with some qualifications, that the systematic theologian does best to look to the dogmas themselves for the central problems to be addressed in a systematic theology.⁶³ That is, the systematic theologian should make his or her central

⁶² Lonergan does distinguish a mediating and a mediated phase in theology. The first phase (research, interpretation, history, and dialectic) mediates from the past into the present. The second phase (foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications) expresses the results of that mediation on the level of one's own time. My point is, however, that in either phase there is involved more than a self-mediation of Christian constitutive meaning. There is involved also the mutual self-mediation between that constitutive meaning and the meanings and values constitutive of particular cultural matrices, whether past (first phase) or present (second phase). Let me add, though, that this statement, with regard to the first phase, must be carefully nuanced: the aspect of mutual self-mediation emerges in dialectic; it cannot be allowed to control the methods or results of interpretation and history, whose questions, respectively, are simply, What does so-and-so mean? and, What was going forward? The evaluative aspect of mutual self-mediation becomes explicit only in dialectic.

⁶³ See Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 39.

problem the issue, What do the dogmas mean? Other considerations, such as those that I have already outlined, should be addressed around this central core. And in attempting to understand what the dogmas mean, the systematic theologian should proceed, as much as possible, according to the *ordo doctrinae*, ‘from above’ as it were, beginning with that element or those elements whose understanding does not entail the understanding of anything else but is rather the basis of understanding everything else. As chemistry texts begin with the periodic table, which itself is the product of an entire history of work in the *via inventionis*, the way of discovery, so systematic treatises should begin with achievements that themselves may have taken centuries to develop, but which, once understood, provide the key to understanding other elements.

Let me point, then, to a possible core set of systematic theological meanings that would fulfil these methodological prescriptions. Consider the following synthetic statement, buried obscurely in the midst of a chapter on the divine missions in Lonergan’s *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*. Ask whether it could not function as the central statement, the core set of meanings, of a systematic theology, at least given the qualification we have already mentioned regarding the grounding of categories in the basic terms and relations of interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness.

... there are four real divine relations, really identical with the divine substance, and therefore there are four quite special modes that ground the external imitation of the divine substance. Next, there are four absolutely supernatural realities, which are never found uninformed, namely, the secondary act of existence of the incarnation, sanctifying grace, the habit of charity, and the light of glory. It would not be inappropriate, therefore, to say that the secondary act of existence of the incarnation is a created participation of paternity, and so has a special relation to the Son; that sanctifying grace is a participation of active spiration, and so has a special relation to the Holy Spirit; that the habit of charity is a participation of passive spiration, and so

has a special relation to the Father and the Son; and that the light of glory is a participation of sonship, and so in a most perfect way brings the children of adoption back to the Father.⁶⁴

Second, however, it is necessary to choose a framework within which such a synthetic statement would be unpacked. If, for example, the philosophy of Aristotle provided an overall general-categorical framework for Thomas's synthetic statement in the *Summa theologiae*, what might perform a similar function in a contemporary systematic theology? There are indications in some notes that Lonergan wrote at the time of his breakthrough to the notion of functional specialties that a contemporary systematic theology in its entirety would be *a theological theory of history*. The core set of dogmatic meanings would be fleshed out in the categories of a theory of history. Into this theory of history there would be inserted, each in its proper place, the other constitutive meanings of the Christian community that a systematic theologian would attempt to understand.⁶⁵ The 'mediated object' of systematics, Lonergan says in these notes, is history itself. This position corresponds with the option I have already taken in *Theology*

64 Ibid. 471, 473. Notice that at least at two places here, there is mention of specifically *theological* doctrines. In the notion of *esse secundarium* Lonergan is affirming, not a Church dogma or even a Church doctrine, but a particular theological doctrine that Aquinas proposed at a certain point in his own development. Lonergan takes over this theological doctrine and makes it central to his own understanding of the ontological constitution of Christ. And in the distinction of sanctifying grace from charity, he is agreeing with Aquinas and disagreeing with Scotus.

65 Derivation of categories is one of the functions, not of systematics, but of foundations. My own attempt to derive some of the general categories of a theory of history, an attempt that builds on and presupposes Lonergan's own efforts in this regard, is presented in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

and the Dialectics of History, where some of the general categories of such a systematics of history are worked out.

9 Anticipations

In the seventh place, the level of our own time imposes at least three expectations that someone beginning such a theology today must anticipate meeting.

First, the ground is now available to enable a contemporary systematic theology to anticipate *an ongoing genetic sequence of interrelated systematic positions*.

Words like ‘ground’ and ‘foundations’ are, of course, problematic in contemporary theology. I do not intend to engage here in any rigorous dialectical exercise on the issue of anti-foundationalism. For it is enough, I believe, to distinguish *inevitable pragmatic engagement* in certain operations and certain states or dispositions from ‘the view that for such intellectual activities as science or philosophy solid bases do exist, in empirically observable facts, for instance, or self-evident ideas or a priori truths.’ The latter view is ‘foundationalism’ as an epistemological position that attempts to justify our positions by giving or finding such indubitable foundations.⁶⁶ The protestations of anti-foundationalists simply do not apply to the notion of foundations employed here. The pragmatic engagement to which, following Lonergan, I appeal has always been and will always be operative in theology. But it has functioned more *in actu exercito*, as the Scholastics might say, than *in actu signato*. That is to say, theologians have minds, and they use them; but they use them more often than they explicate what they are doing when they do so. With few exceptions, the foundational reality to which Lonergan appeals has enjoyed only more or less coincidental appropriation on the part of theologians. Making it explicit is what enables us to anticipate an ongoing genetic

66 See Martin Henry, ‘God in Postmodernity,’ *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 63:1 (1998) 11.

sequence of systematic theologies, a collaboration over time that, in the ideal order, would never cease. For it provides an ever-developing articulation of the sources of such a sequence. The anticipation is simply one of successive systematic expressions of theological understanding, all of them building on the same engagement in the operations that are constitutive of cognitive, moral, religious, and affective integrity, and so of the *imago Dei* that we are. And the articulation of those operations and their concomitant states can itself be expected to be constantly unfolding and developing. ‘Foundations’ as a functional specialty in theology will itself be no more immune to development than systematics itself.

A second anticipation is intimately related to the first, and in fact has the same ground. It is reflected in a little-known passage in Lonergan’s work to which we have already referred: ‘today’s scholars seem to resemble twelfth-century compilers more than they do thirteenth-century theologians.’ The accomplishments of exegetes and historians stand to what is coming in theology (or at least to what could come if Lonergan’s method is implemented) as the Lombard’s *Sentences* stood to the *Summa theologiae*. This new step in understanding constitutes a second anticipation: in addition to the doctrinal movement toward establishing the Church’s constitutive meaning and the systematic movement toward understanding it (movements with which we are quite familiar), there will emerge soon enough, Lonergan is saying, a new movement in theology. It will emerge because of a systematic exigence awakened by positive research itself.

What is he talking about? Perhaps we might call it explanatory history, a systematic ‘take’ on the history of salvation, the history of the Church, and the history of theology itself, and all of these in relation to ‘general history.’ Explanatory history would exhibit all the concreteness that we find in ordinary historical narrative. Yet it also would be governed by a set of heuristic notions that, when applied to data, could establish the genetic and dialectical relations that obtain among various stages in the evolution of Christian constitutive meaning. It is explanatory, because it relates these stages to one

another. The theology that emerges from such an advance will not be systematic theology in the traditional sense of that term. It will include such systematic theology, of course, because it will understand the genetic and dialectical relations among various systematic theologies. But in itself it will be something new. Not only will it anticipate an indefinite *future* series of genetically related synthetic statements, as our first expectation does; it also will comprehend the historical economy of revelation and salvation itself, as well as the past history of theology, in a synthetic and explanatory manner. As twelfth-century collections of theological materials laid the groundwork for thirteenth-century systematic speculation, so twentieth-century scholarship, when its results are joined to the appropriate ‘upper blade’ of method, will yield a more concrete explanatory presentation of the emergent meanings that have come to constitute the Christian community. Thus, if the first anticipation regards foundations that render possible a way of directing the process of further developments, both doctrinal and theological, this second anticipation appeals to what we might call the ‘ontology of meaning’ to enable as well an explanatory recapturing of the past.

The emphasis that Lonergan is stressing in such a statement resembles the methodical and scientific hermeneutics of philosophical statements that he proposed in chapter 17 of *Insight*. Unless I am mistaken, it is an emphasis that remained important to him, but also, if not tentative, at least undeveloped. In fact, the section of *Divinarum personarum* that mentions this anticipation does not appear in the 1964 edition of the same material, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*. It has always been surprising to me that the chapter on interpretation in *Method in Theology* mentions this emphasis only at the very end.

What is needed is not mere description but explanation. If people were shown how to find in their own experience elements of meaning, how these elements can be assembled into ancient modes of meaning, why in antiquity the elements were

assembled in that manner, then they would find themselves in possession of a very precise tool, they would know it in all its suppositions and implications, they would form for themselves an exact notion and they could check just how well it accounted for the foreign, strange, archaic things presented by the exegetes.⁶⁷

The paragraph in *Method in Theology* that follows these remarks asks whether such a project is possible, but then offers barely more than a few suggestions as to how it might be carried off. And my present question is, If indeed such an explanatory history is possible, what is its relation to systematic theology? While it is indeed different from systematics as traditionally conceived, is it also different from systematics as that discipline or ‘functional specialty’ is emerging, or is it part of the latter? To say that it constitutes the entirety of that discipline as it is emerging is, I think, to court idealism of a Hegelian sort. But does this mean that such an explanatory history belongs only to a phase of theology in which theology mediates the past? Or is it *part* of what is mediated into the present as theological direct discourse? My option is to include it in the latter phase, as a systematic theology of theological witness itself.

In many ways this option speaks to (and transcends) so-called postmodern appeals to intertextuality. It speaks to them insofar as it relates to one another both texts and other expressions or carriers of meaning. It transcends them insofar as it is a theology of witness, where witness is not to words but to realities meant by the words. Ultimately, appeal to ‘mere intertextuality’ lacks, if not good judgment itself, at least a theory of judgment.

Thirdly, if Lonergan has called attention to an analogy of *method* between our theological situation and the one that prevailed at the end of the twelfth century, there are also similarities between the two situations that have to do with the very *content* of systematic theology. I can mention at least three. Together they constitute a third

⁶⁷ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 172-73.

anticipation.

First, as at the end of the twelfth century, so today in Catholic systematic theology there are several strands of inquiry and argument that will be seen to have validity and perhaps even permanent significance, but that still are related to one another in a purely coincidental fashion. In a moment we will speak of three of these.

Second, unless a way can be found to relate these currents systematically to one another, there is a danger that they will confront each other in a conflictual manner that, at least in principle, is entirely avoidable.

Third, even the emergence of what in principle is a coherent ordering cannot guarantee its own acceptance on the part of the theological community. Eventually, the issue will be ‘pushed back,’ as it were, to the level of foundations and method.

First we will mention the twelfth-century analogues.

Regarding the first point, Yves Congar has shown that, by the end of the twelfth century, there had arisen at least the potential for a significant alternative to monastic and contemplative theology. For there had emerged in theology the logical, dialectical, and methodological techniques that could give rise to the sort of speculative synthesis that was soon to be found in the work of Aquinas. Yet these two strands or currents of theological thought went their own way, without integration. And this did not have to happen.

With regard to the second point, in fact over time the new techniques came to be strenuously opposed by the representatives of monastic and contemplative theology.⁶⁸

With regard to the third point, while Aquinas actually went a long way in integrating Augustinian and Aristotelian influences on his own thought,⁶⁹ he was not able

68 Yves M.-J. Congar, *A History of Theology*, trans. and ed. Hunter Guthrie (New York: Doubleday, 1968) 84.

69 For one instance of such integration, see Lonergan’s ‘Introduction: Subject and Soul,’

to forestall the unfortunate divisions between these two traditions in theology. Rather, his own work became for a time (in some ways, for seven centuries) a victim of these conflicts.⁷⁰

Lonergan has argued that the integration of the various currents came in principle with the discovery by Philip, Chancellor of the University of Paris, of the theorem of the supernatural. At the end of the twelfth century and in fact down to about 1230, the theology of grace (to take the clearest example) was standing particularly poised for a clarification that would, at least in principle, settle problems that had been building for about eight centuries.⁷¹ But the issues had not yet settled into place. Two things were required. First, Philip's discovery of the theorem of the supernatural settled in principle problems that previous positions and emphases had not been able to address in a satisfactory fashion. But second, Philip's discovery had to be integrated with the previous insights. The synthesis in the area of the theology of grace comes, Lonergan says, only in the *Prima secundae* of Thomas's *Summa theologiae*. Moreover, the theology of grace was not the only domain of theology that exhibited a coincidental manifold of tendencies, views, and doctrines that could be systematically ordered only after a breakthrough to a specifically theological principle. There can be found, Lonergan writes, 'in the writings of Anselm and of the twelfth-century theologians a nest of antinomies that center round the couplets "grace and freedom," "faith and reason," to

in Lonergan, *Verbum*.

70 If I may repeat something that Lonergan once said as he was heading to give a lecture:

'They asked me to speak about the demise of Thomism. I had a mind to say that we are marking its seventh centenary!'

71 See the first chapter of Lonergan's doctoral dissertation (chapter II-1 in *Grace and Freedom*), where Lonergan proposes one example or model (his claim, in fact, is much stronger than this) of the kind of explanatory history that I commented on above.

make the very conception of these terms paradoxical and to render an attempt at formulating the theological enterprise either heretical or incoherent.⁷² Lonergan

72 Bernard Lonergan, 'Method in Catholic Theology,' in *Philosophical and Theological Papers: 1958-1964* 44. See also Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, chapter I-1. In a moment I will speak of the potential complementarity of Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar. It may be asked, however, whether Balthasar appreciates the seriousness of the methodological issue in medieval theology. He presents a different and far more positive reading of Anselm's position on freedom in his chapter on Anselm in *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*, vol. 2 of *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988). See also the comment on Anselm (in the context of a discussion of Boethius) in vol. 4 of the *Aesthetics, The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989) 328. Within the total problematic of grace and freedom, Anselm's definition of freedom is incoherent. He is speaking psychologically of freedom as a quality of graced habits. What was required, Lonergan emphasizes, but had yet to emerge, was a philosophical doctrine of freedom as a natural potency. Anselm's emphasis left anomalous certain aspects of the relation of human freedom with divine grace. Only with Philip's discovery of the theorem of the supernatural was speculation on nature itself freed to make a purely philosophical analysis of freedom. Anselm's theological emphasis (rooted in Augustine) on a freedom that is an ease of good action is, surely, a valid emphasis; but it could not solve some of the problems on which it was brought to bear. It is integrated by Aquinas when the 'specific theorem' on grace that derives from Augustine is finally integrated with the 'generic theorem' released by the theorem of the supernatural. The result is Aquinas's position on moral impotence and the liberation effected by grace, a position of which Lonergan makes capital again in chapter 18 of *Insight*.

consistently emphasizes that the dividing line that enabled theology to move to some kind of systematic consolidation came with Philip's discovery.

Now the discovery of a theorem is not the uncovering of further data. A theological theorem no more adds to the data than the concept of temperature changes our sensations of hot and cold or the notion of acceleration changes our experience of going faster or slower. The theorem of the supernatural named what it is that makes a question or a discussion distinctly theological. It gave theology access to what Lonergan would later call its special categories, those categories that are proper to theology.⁷³ At the same time it freed human speculation to investigate what is not supernatural, what belongs to the domain of 'nature' – to investigate it in its own right and to relate it to the realities that could be included under the rubric of the supernatural. Thus it freed theology to employ general categories as well, that is, those categories that theology would share with other disciplines, and especially (at that time) with philosophy. Some of these categories would be employed in the analogies that theology would rely on in order to reach some imperfect understanding of the mysteries. But beyond this, the derivation of these categories is essential, because the realities named by the special categories must be related in theology to the realities named by the general categories. The real dividing line in the Aristotelian-Augustinian split in medieval theology was over the issue of whether and to what extent general categories may be employed in theology. The issue endures into our own day, certainly, for instance, in any dialogue with Barth and his followers. And even if one comes down in favor of the use of the general categories, the complications of the issue are not yet resolved. For methods of correlation have emerged that would deny or water down the distinct significance of the special categories. This is not unlike what the Augustinians feared in their own context in the thirteenth century.

⁷³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 288-91.

My reason for dwelling on this point is not only to call attention to the abiding importance for systematics of the theorem of the supernatural, but also to emphasize that in our situation we have yet to find or at least to exploit the principle that will make possible the intelligible interrelating of the most significant prevalent *contemporary* emphases. Something must happen in theology today that has an effect on the entire field similar to that which the theorem of the supernatural had in the thirteenth century. In addition, of course, there is some reason to fear that we may lose hold of the medieval synthetic principle, the theorem of the supernatural itself. Certainly this is what has happened in many instances of what is known as the method of correlation. We may want to come up with another name for the medieval discovery, but the reality that was named 'supernatural' is lost only at the cost of giving theology nothing more to do. But some *further* principle or set of principles is required in order to integrate the major theological achievements of our age. It may be that the principle or principles that would enable an intelligible relationship among the valid theological advances of the twentieth century have yet to be discovered and named. It may be that the core of a synthesis has in fact already been articulated but has yet to be acknowledged as such and exploited for all that it is worth. In either case, there is a similarity to the situation that prevailed at the end of the twelfth century, in that the explicit influence of an ordering principle is required. Moreover, as in the medieval situation, so too today the tendencies that could be united in a higher synthesis can also become antithetical to one another if the higher synthesis is not achieved or if, once achieved, it fails to take root and become fruitful.

More specifically, there are, I believe, at least three permanently valid but still largely unrelated tendencies that have emerged in the Catholic theology of the twentieth century and that await the discovery, articulation, or successful application of the principle or principles that will enable them to be intelligibly ordered to one another. The first two are similar, respectively, to the Aristotelian and Augustinian emphases that contended so mightily in the medieval period.

Contemporaries must always wager, of course, when it comes to determining ‘what is going forward,’ especially in intellectual and doctrinal movements. Only the hindsight of history will indicate whether such a wager is correct. With this important caveat, then, we present our own wager. It is a wager regarding not only what will survive from twentieth-century Catholic theology – in fact, a great deal more will survive than the emphases I am highlighting – but also what will prove to be the most influential Catholic theological achievements of the century.⁷⁴ But more than anything else, it is a wager that theology will go forward precisely to the extent that it is able to integrate these achievements with one another.

First, there is a distinct brand of basically Thomist thought that extends, roughly, from Pierre Rousselot through Joseph Maréchal to Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan. Often this tradition is called ‘transcendental Thomism.’ I do not think this is a particularly felicitous designation. There are clear differences and distinct inspirations behind the various accomplishments. A label such as ‘transcendental Thomism’ tends to flatten out these distinct emphases. Moreover, the label has come to be used in an extremely dismissive manner by reactionary Catholics who mask their fear of subjectivity

⁷⁴ It is interesting to note that all three of these achievements, at least in the form that I am emphasizing, came into prominence only after the Second Vatican Council. None of them was a formative influence on the Council itself. Two of the figures whom I am singling out (Balthasar and Lonergan) had already done a great deal of their work by the time the Council began and were later named by Pope Paul VI as original members of the International Theological Commission. But neither of them nor any theologian of liberation played a prominent role at the Council. Lonergan was officially a *peritus*, but he remained very much in the background. As hard as it may be to fathom, Balthasar was not even invited to the Council, despite the enormous contributions that he had already made to theology and to the Church.

by claiming that Rahner and Lonergan, for example, are ‘Kantian.’ Nothing could be further from the truth.⁷⁵ But what can be said, I believe, is that there is an effort represented by these and other figures to retrieve basic Thomist insights in the light of questions raised by Kant and, at least in the cases of Rahner and Lonergan, also by Hegel. Partly because Lonergan has done more than the others to appropriate the methods and categories of contemporary natural and human science and historical scholarship, his work is methodologically by far the most important within this tradition. In the long run it will, I believe, have the most impact, at least if Lonergan’s students will get on with the enormous work that he left for them to do instead of watering down or dogmatizing his achievements in ‘Lonerganism.’

Lonergan uncovered the transcendental aspirations of the human spirit that are so momentarily overtaken and overshadowed by divine revelation and grace. As I have previously argued,⁷⁶ he did so in a way that does not run the risk of subordinating the divine initiative to human transcendental aspirations. Moreover, he has elucidated the dynamics of human intentional consciousness in a clarification that is, I believe, unparalleled in the history of thought. He makes sense of and relocates previous philosophical epochal advances, and in principle his work grounds a new stage of philosophical and theological discourse. He provides new basic terms and relations both for direct discourse in these disciplines and for the hermeneutic reappropriation of past

75 For a clear statement of the differences between Lonergan and Kant, see Giovanni B. Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, trans. Joseph Spoerl, ed. Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Chapter 1 is sufficient to establish the present point.

76 Robert M. Doran, ‘Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations,’ *Theological Studies* 58 (1997) 61-84 (2009: now the fourth of the Essays in Systematic Theology on this website).

achievements, particularly in the realm of the general categories. And he does all this without succumbing to the danger frequently encountered in or suspected of 'transcendental' approaches, the danger, namely, of making the divine initiative a function of human aspiration, subject to the criteria uncovered in intentionality analysis.

Second, there is the *ressourcement* project of *la nouvelle théologie*. It is associated with such names as Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar. In particular, Balthasar's presentation of the aesthetic and dramatic character of many of the specifically theological categories has yet to be exploited by theology in the manner it deserves. Nor will it be properly exploited until it is related to the realities named by the general categories. This Balthasar did not do in any systematic fashion. But his salutary emphasis on the absolutely free initiative of trinitarian love and of its revelation counters attempts to regard that initiative as simply the fulfilment of human transcendental aspirations and anticipations. And his insistence on and practice of a continual *ressourcement* as intrinsic to and partly foundational of direct discourse in theology fulfils the best intentions of the school of *la nouvelle théologie* of which he is one of the most illustrious members.

Third, there is a praxis component, and in particular the insistence emergent in liberation theologies on the preferential option for the poor in Church ministry and in our retrieval of the gospel. Despite continued official ecclesial reluctance to acknowledge the theology of liberation by name (and it *is* an ambiguous category), this particular insistence has in fact already become part of the Catholic Church's official teaching. But it has yet to be integrated with the most significant theological achievements of the Catholic tradition past and present, including the recapturing and updating of those achievements that have occurred in the work of Balthasar and Lonergan.

Theology, at least Catholic theology, will be able to go forward confidently into the future, with some hope of generating a sequence of interrelated systematic positions, to the extent that some principle or set of principles can be expressed that will relate these

three emphases to one another and integrate them. On the other hand, no Catholic systematic statement of Christian constitutive meaning on the level of our own time and in harmony with the principal theological achievements of the twentieth century will be possible until such an integrating focus is discovered and exploited. This is my wager.

Balthasar's emphasis, by and large, uncovers the grounds of those categories that are specific to theology. It renames the ground that Philip the Chancellor discovered in a metaphysical context when he articulated the theorem of the supernatural. It points to and begins to clear the aesthetic and dramatic field whose appropriation will constitute a genuine Christian rendition of 'religiously differentiated consciousness.'

Lonergan's emphasis, on the other hand, uncovers the grounds of the categories that theology shares with other sciences and disciplines. It does in our day for the development of systematic meaning in philosophy and theology what Aristotle was able to do for Aquinas once the theorem of the supernatural freed theologians to study 'nature' on its own terms.

The legitimate emphases of liberation theology name a new and lasting insight into a dimension of the distinctive praxis component that must permeate any contemporary Catholic systematics.

But as yet these three developments have not been consistently and intelligibly related to one another. Until they are, theology will remain in a position that bears some resemblance to the state of the discipline at the end of the twelfth century, with all the promise and all the danger inherent in such an unfinished position. The integration of Lonergan, Balthasar, and central liberation insights is the way forward for Catholic theology, the most fruitful way to proceed at the current juncture in the history of Catholic systematics. There is, in fact, a certain urgency for the sake of the Church that exists around the tasks (1) of integrating what Lonergan and Balthasar stand for and represent, (2) of drawing out the implications of their respective emphases for the concerns of liberation theology, and (3) of highlighting the balance that the latter

concerns bring to the work of these two great theologians. These three major twentieth-century developments must be allowed to complement and, where necessary, correct one another. It is in this mutual reciprocity and correction that Catholic systematic theology will find its way forward.

10 Conclusion

I have listed seven areas in which I would expand on elements already given at least marginal status in Lonergan's writings about systematic theology. Let me indicate my position with regard to other elements in Lonergan's thought as they are pertinent to systematic theology.

I would take over in full Lonergan's cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, and his general notion of the structure of theology and of its method and foundations. On the intellectual or cognitional-theoretic component of foundations, little development is needed.⁷⁷ I believe that Lonergan's two approaches to the moral component of foundations, one early and one late, can be integrated with one another in a manner that he did not pursue. The first formulation of the moral component

⁷⁷ In my view perhaps the most significant real *addition* that has been made to

Lonergan's cognitional theory is the contribution of William Rehg, which is itself a result of bringing Lonergan's work into dialogue with that of Jürgen Habermas, and by this encounter highlighting the communal nature of the process that leads to reflective understanding and judgment. See Rehg's paper, 'From Logic to Rhetoric in Science: A Formal-Pragmatic Reading of Lonergan's *Insight*,' in *Communication and Lonergan: Common Ground for Forging the New Age*, ed. Thomas J. Farrell and Paul A. Soukup (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1993) 152-72. This is, in my view, an extremely important contribution not only to the field of Lonergan studies but also to Lonergan's own project.

is found in chapter 18 of *Insight*, and the second in chapter 2 of *Method in Theology*. The integration would come from relating these formulations, respectively, to what Ignatius Loyola in the *Spiritual Exercises* calls the third and second times for making an election.⁷⁸ And, as I have already indicated, further precision can be added to what Lonergan wrote about the religious component of foundations. There are elements in the metaphysical account of grace, especially in the distinction between sanctifying grace and charity, that are not adequately captured in Lonergan's later writing about religious love.

Lonergan was the first to admit that his work was but a beginning, and I have long maintained that there are areas where his work, even his heuristic and methodological work, needs to be complemented by other emphases. My own work has introduced, with his blessing, the notion of psychic conversion as complementing his notion of foundations. It adds to Lonergan's account of foundations an aesthetic-dramatic component, indeed operator, of foundational reality. Coupling psychic with intellectual conversion presents a fuller and more nuanced account of history's dialectical structure than is present in Lonergan's work.⁷⁹ I see all of this work, not as negating or criticizing Lonergan's work, but as implementing it. But the implementation of Lonergan's work

78 2009: I have argued this in greater detail in 'Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan,' *Toronto Journal of Theology* 22:1 (2006) 39-54, and in Ignatian Themes in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan: Revisiting a Topic That Deserves Further Reflection,' *Lonergan Workshop* 19, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College, 2006) 83-106. Both of these will be included in these website Essays in Systematic Theology.

79 On psychic conversion see Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, chapters 2 and 6-10; on dialectic, *ibid.*, chapter 3 (and *passim*). Differences that have arisen among some Lonergan students concerning what I have written about dialectic are rooted ultimately in the acceptance or rejection of the notion of psychic conversion.

(part of which he would call implementing the integral heuristic structure of proportionate being through the reorientation and integration of scientific thought and the brands of common sense) has hardly begun. A foundational instance of what such implementation might mean, one that is part of or flows from explicit metaphysics, entails the reorientation of depth psychology necessary to account for psychic conversion.⁸⁰ But the construction of a systematic theology is another of the tasks of implementation. And the very question of what systematic theology is, is an area where Lonergan's work stands in need of development and expansion.

In summary, then, I am working from a broader notion than is emphasized in his writings of the theological doctrines that systematics attempts to understand. There are at least three sources for that broader notion. First, the very internal dynamic of the overall theological method that Lonergan proposes demands, I believe, that we highlight the role, as theological source, of the situation or cultural matrix with which a theology mediates the significance and role of Christian constitutive meaning. That mediation, I would argue, is in fact at least in part a mutual self-mediation (a claim supported by the final chapter of *Method in Theology*). And such a notion of mediation means that the theological doctrines that systematics attempts to understand include also new theological doctrines that arise principally from reflection on situations in light of the doctrines appropriated from the tradition. Such an expanded notion of the doctrines meant in the functional specialty that goes by that name, and so also in the systematics that would understand these doctrines, can be supported, I believe, by the dynamic movement of *Method in Theology* itself. Included in this first emphasis, of course, is the complex question of the relation between new theological doctrines and the mysteries that have been expressed in the Church's dogmatic pronouncements.

80 Ibid. chapters 7-10. See also Robert M. Doran, *Psychic Conversion and Psychic Conversion* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), especially chapter 5.

Second, I have affirmed the possibility of a systematic understanding not only of explicitly dogmatically formulated mysteries of faith but also of other dimensions of the constitutive meaning of the Christian community, and especially of the elemental revelational meanings that have never been formulated into Church dogmas but that are absolutely constitutive of Christian existence. The faith that seeks understanding in systematic theology is more than, but includes, assent to truths formulated in dogmatic affirmations. Psychic conversion will, I think, be crucial in grounding this expanded notion of ‘mystery,’ especially because many of these meanings are themselves elemental, and even at times derived from nonintentional root experiences.⁸¹

And third, I am suggesting a praxis component that is only potential in Lonergan’s various formulations of a systematic ideal.⁸² Systematics is proximate to communications, in the very structure of theology that Lonergan presents, and so it must be oriented to the faith praxis of the Christian community. One example of this praxis component of systematics appears in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, where I argued that, if one is informed foundationally by an objectification of psychic conversion,

81 If Lonergan (and Karl Rahner) are correct in speaking of Ignatius Loyola’s

‘consolation without a preceding cause’ as having a content but no apprehended object, then Ignatius is speaking of a nonintentional state. It does in fact have a cause, but it ‘does not presuppose and arise out of perceiving, imagining, representing the cause.’ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 30. On Ignatius, and on Rahner’s interpretation of Ignatius, see *ibid.* 106. The identification of such consolation as a nonintentional state would be missed if one limits one’s understanding of such states to the kinds of examples that Lonergan gives: ‘fatigue, irritability, bad humor, anxiety.’ *Ibid.* 30.

82 For example, Lonergan speaks (*The Triune God: Systematics* 113) of a ‘theology which more profoundly spirates and more efficaciously illuminates charity.’

then one's systematic understanding will be invested with an explicit acknowledgment of a preferential option for the poor and marginalized.

Let me add that the notion of psychic conversion is central to all three of these developments. Psychic conversion is a release and appropriation of a dramatic-aesthetic operator of human development and integrity. It not only permits but also demands an expansion of the notion of systematic theology beyond what is found explicitly in Lonergan's writings. Foundations are foundations (in part) for systematics, and so an expanded foundations will entail an expanded notion of systematics. While the expansion of systematics builds on Lonergan's understanding of this particular theological discipline or functional specialty, it also will resolve, I think, some long-standing questions regarding his notion of systematics. It is, I think, wholly in accord with the overall thrust of his elaboration of theology's method, and, I dare say, more faithful to the sweep of his intentions than was his own chapter on systematics in *Method in Theology*. I am convinced that Lonergan needed psychic conversion to realize the full significance of his own breakthrough, and I think he came to acknowledge this. Be that as it may, psychic conversion enters into the very base of the vision of systematics proposed here, and it will be my claim that this vision will better match the sweep of Lonergan's advances than did his own presentation of an understanding of systematic theology.