

**Essays in Systematic Theology 9: The Truth of Theological
Understanding in *Divinarum personarum* and *De Deo Trino, Pars
Systematica*¹**

This article follows on two earlier contributions to this journal.² I am trying to interpret the differences that appear in the two versions of the first chapter of Lonergan's systematic treatment of the Trinity.³ In the first article I stated a hypothesis that, if correct, would go a long way toward explaining these differences. In the second I presented evidence to support the hypothesis, and commented especially on Lonergan's understanding of the intellectual virtues of *sapientia*, *intelligentia*, and *scientia* (wisdom, understanding, and knowledge) in section 3 of the later version. I suggested that the understanding of these intellectual virtues that appears in that section was influenced by his efforts to clarify the relation between his thoughts on method and the demands and

1 This paper first appeared in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20:1 (2002) 33-75.

2 Robert M. Doran, 'The First Chapter of *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*: The Issues,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 18 (2000) 27-48; '*Intelligentia Fidei* in *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*: A Commentary on the First Three Sections of Chapter One,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19 (2001) 35-83. 2009: These are reprinted on this website as 'Essays in Systematic Theology' 7 and 8.

3 The earlier version is found in *Divinarum personarum conceptionem analogicam evolvit B. Lonergan* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1957, 1959). The later version is found in *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964). 2009: The later version is now available as chapter 1 of Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, vol. 12 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour. Appendix 4 of that volume contains the sections of *Divinarum personarum* that were changed in the later version.

ideals of contemporary symbolic or mathematical logic. Those efforts are expressed in the first five chapters of *Phenomenology and Logic*,⁴ and their influence on Lonergan's thought on theological method at this time is particularly clear in the first part of his 1959 course 'De intellectu et methodo,' where he is clearly wrestling with this question. The notes on 'De intellectu et methodo' are evidence not only that the treatment presented there of the relation of systematic theology to logic influenced the changes in the chapter under consideration but also, and ultimately more importantly, that confronting this problem was a very important factor in the later breakthrough to functional specialization and to a new notion of foundations. The emerging notion of foundations is clearer in 'De intellectu et methodo' than in *De Deo trino, Pars systematica*, where logical considerations seem to prevail in a way that is unusual in Lonergan's writings.

The present article moves to section 4 of the later version, comparing it with the corresponding section 3 of the earlier version. The differences between the two versions of this section are intimately related to the same efforts to relate method to logic. This is particularly true of the most significant difference. There is mention in the earlier version of the promise of a new, more concrete, and more comprehensive theological synthesis than we have known to date, a synthesis that owes its concreteness and comprehensive character to an advance in understanding. The understanding of what Christians hold to be true can go beyond what systematic theology has traditionally achieved. There is emerging a theology that exhibits a synthetic appropriation of the concrete results of modern and contemporary exegesis and history. The new synthesis becomes possible as theologians grow more familiar with the genuine systematic achievements of the past,

4 Bernard Lonergan, *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, vol. 18 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

through a kind of *ressourcement*.⁵ But more than *ressourcement* is required: scholarly efforts are inviting synthetic thinking to advance to a new level of achievement where it can take the results of scholarly investigation into account *in the very development of systematic thought*. The work of exegetes and historians is portrayed as standing to a future comprehensive and concrete theological synthesis much as the collections of ‘sentences’ stood to the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas: as data for a new form of comprehensive, synthetic understanding.

That fascinating programmatic suggestion has always seemed to me to be something that *must* be right, *must* be on target, even if we are still struggling to understand how what it proposes can be achieved. Still, it is dropped entirely from the later version. Moreover, a few related changes occur in subsequent sections of the revised chapter, and in these changes, which will be studied in detail in a later article⁶ and which might appear to be slight but are actually quite significant, the place of history in the theological enterprise is devalued in comparison with the position that it held in the earlier version.

The displacement of history because of concerns with logic was, I believe, a very short-lived phenomenon in Lonergan’s development. It was quickly rectified. The tension is obvious in ‘De intellectu et methodo,’ more than in the chapter that we are studying here. And, it seems, this displacement may have been ‘necessary’: the position of *Method*

5 Lonergan does not use this term, but it is not impossible that in *Divinarum personarum* he was subtly trying to acknowledge the contributions of *la nouvelle théologie*, while at the same time pointing those contributions forward to a new kind of systematics.

6 2009: This ‘later article’ never appeared, but the effects of the study that would have led to it are clear in some of the subsequent ‘Essays in Systematic Theology’ on this site.

in Theology on the place of history in theology may not have emerged had this step not taken place. History *does* have a different role in the entire theological enterprise from the one that Lonergan assigned it in the earlier version of the chapter under investigation, and that role may not have become clear had Lonergan not originally shifted the place and function of the *via historica* under the press of logical concerns.

Nonetheless, with the emergence of the logical concerns the more concrete and comprehensive synthesis that historical scholarship makes possible is eclipsed, at least temporarily. Key questions in Lonergan studies and scholarship are, What happens to this vision? Does the conviction resurface in *Method in Theology*, and if so where? What is its relation to the vision of systematics presented in *Method in Theology*? Is that vision another throwback to an earlier conception?

So much for a general statement of the hypothesis of the present article and of the way in which this hypothesis points forward to other problems that have to be studied later.

1 Textual Issues

First I must say a bit more about textual matters. The third section of the 1964 version of this chapter ('De quaestione seu problemate'), which was the principal focus of the previous article in this series, does not appear at all in the earlier version. It is reasonable to assume that its addition to the 1964 version provides the key element in interpreting most if not all of the differences between the two texts. The third section of the earlier version is entitled 'Ulteriora quaedam de eodem actu,' that is, further considerations regarding the act of understanding as that act reaches some imperfect and analogical grasp of the mysteries of faith. This section considers matters that in 1964 are treated in section 4. The principal topic of the section in both versions (the 'ulteriora' of the earlier version) has to do with the relation of theological understanding to truth, and this is

reflected in the new subheading that the section is given in the later version: ‘De veritate intelligentiae,’ ‘On the Truth of the [Theological] Understanding.’

In 1964 the issue of theological truth is treated under three questions: (1) Is systematic theological understanding true in itself or on its own (*secundum se*)? (2) Is what is understood true? (3) Is the understanding of the true itself true?⁷ The earlier version does not divide its treatment into these three questions. In a somewhat less organized fashion it addresses in ten points the question of the truth of theological understanding. Still, the first four of these points correspond exactly, word for word, to the four considerations offered in 1964 in response to the first question, Is systematic theological understanding true *secundum se*? Only after that do the significant differences between the two texts appear, and the critical point about these differences is that the 1964 division of the issue into three main questions leaves no room for the fascinating questions that Lonergan raised in the tenth point of the earlier version. Those questions do not fit the framework of the three main questions of the later version, and so the material found in the tenth point of the earlier version of this section – material that has to do with the more concrete and more comprehensive synthesis rendered possible by modern and contemporary exegesis and history – is not mentioned at all in 1964.

2 Is Theological Understanding True in Itself (*Secundum Se*)?

‘Theological understanding’ (*intelligentia theologica*) is the term that Lonergan uses to name the objective of speculative or systematic theology – that is, of what later would be the functional specialty ‘systematics.’ That objective is an analogical, imperfect, obscure, gradually developing, but highly fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith. It is centered on those mysteries that are expressed in the dogmatic formulations of the

⁷ In Latin, ‘(1) *utrum secundum se vera sit*, (2) *utrum verum sit quod intelligatur*, et (3) *utrum vera sit veri intelligentia.*’ Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* 19.

Church, and it proceeds from an antecedent affirmation of the truth of those doctrines. The truth of the doctrines and the truth of theological understanding are two quite different matters, however, and the latter truth is the issue addressed both in the third section of the first chapter of *Divinarum personarum* and in the fourth section of the first chapter of *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*. As in the later relationship between the functional specialties of ‘Doctrines’ and ‘Systematics,’ the truth of doctrines is affirmed prior to attempts at systematic theological understanding, whereas the truth of theological understanding itself is consequent upon the understanding.⁸ The questions of what are here called antecedent and consequent truth are quite distinct: antecedent truth is the truth of what is to be understood, while consequent truth is the truth of that understanding itself.

As I have already mentioned, in 1964 (as contrasted with the earlier version) the question, Is theological understanding true in itself? constitutes the first of three questions used to structure the section, and the four points under which that question is answered are exactly the same as the first four of the ten points in which Lonergan faces the entire issue in the earlier version. Thus the material covered in this section of the present article is identically the same in the two versions.

In summary the four points are: (1) in itself theological understanding is neither true nor false; (2) the inner word in which this understanding is expressed is neither true nor false; (3) the outer words expressing theological understanding are in themselves neither true nor false; and (4) as theological understanding itself is imperfect, analogical, obscure, and gradually developing, so the consequent inner word and outer words are

⁸ In fact, the truth of theological understanding receives scant mention in *Method in Theology*.

imperfectly, analogically, and obscurely understood.⁹ We will treat each point in some detail.

First, the understanding reached in systematic theology is in itself neither true nor false. In Aristotelian terms, it pertains to the ‘first operation’ of the mind. In Lonergan’s own terms, it occurs at the ‘level’ of understanding, in response to a question for intelligence. Truth and falsity, on the other hand, are found formally only in the ‘second operation,’ at the ‘level’ of judgment, in response to questions for reflection. As long as any proposed answer to a question for intelligence (What? Why? and so on) is considered simply at the level of understanding, it cannot be called true or false. It might be designated complete or incomplete, proportionate or analogical, clear or obscure, but to say whether it is true or false involves a subsequent set of operations, where ‘Is’ questions are asked, where evidence is pondered, and where judgment is proffered. This is not to say, of course, that one will not move to that distinct level of operations while doing systematic theology; but it does mean that distinct criteria have to be assigned for pronouncing on the truth of theological understanding, criteria that pertain not to that understanding itself but to the subsequent set of operations, at the level of judgment.

Second, whatever we understand we also speak, express, manifest, in an inner word. But there are two kinds of inner word. For it is one thing to grasp a cause or reason or intelligibility, and it is quite another to grasp sufficiency of evidence for a judgment.¹⁰

9 It is entirely in keeping with Lonergan’s position on the relation between understanding and expression that the parallel can be extended to include the gradual development of the formulations in which theological understanding is expressed. See below, note 13.

10 In the course of the treatise on the Trinity that follows this chapter, these two types of inner word are further differentiated, to allow for an inner word that results from practical understanding, an inner word that results from existential self-understanding,

There is a simple (*incomplexum*) inner word uttered at the second level of consciousness when one defines something on the basis of grasping its immanent intelligibility, or when one arrives at a hypothesis because one has grasped a possible answer to a question for intelligence. And there is a compound (*complexum*) inner word uttered when what has been defined or entertained as a hypothesis is then affirmed or denied, that is, when the synthesis defined or surmised in the ‘first act’ is posited or rejected in the ‘second.’ As understanding is of itself neither true nor false, so the simple inner word (*verbum interius incomplexum*) that expresses this understanding is of itself neither true nor false. For a true or false inner word, one must proceed to the word that issues from one’s grasp of evidence; and such a word proceeds at a level subsequent to the level of direct understanding, that is, at the level of reflective understanding issuing in judgment.¹¹ So

and an inner word that issues in a judgment of value. The structure is the same; the content differs. The psychological analogy that Lonergan employs for understanding the divine processions is centered on *the inner word that issues in the judgment of value regarding existential self-constitution*. This point is easily overlooked in discussions of his trinitarian theology, or for that matter in discussions of the resources inherent in the tradition that has embraced the Augustinian-Thomist psychological analogy. Lonergan is tapping those resources in a new and extremely creative way in his own analogy, so much so that it makes sense to regard his work in *De Deo trino* as the third major moment in the history of this analogy, and his late suggestions regarding an analogy ‘from above’ as heralding a fourth moment. For the latter suggestions, see Lonergan, ‘Christology Today: Methodological Reflections,’ in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 74-99.

¹¹ The basic text here is Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), chapters 1 and 2.

the inner word that issues from theological understanding cannot be called true or false; 'true' and 'false' pertain to the yes or no of the compound inner word.

Third, what we conceive in an inner word we also express in outer words. Since the inner word *can* be discovered in subsequent reflection to be true or false, outer words tend by metonymy also to be called true or false. But this usage is misleading if we attend to the words themselves rather than to the intention of the one that speaks them. If there is no complex *inner* word of affirmation or negation, no *positing* of a mental synthesis, then outer words manifest only a simple word, one that in itself is neither true nor false, since it does not entail affirmation or negation. If one is merely uttering a definition or a hypothesis that one is considering, or if one is repeating someone else's opinion without taking a stand on it, there may be many words, and they may include 'is' and 'is not,' but they are not true or false words, for they do not manifest an intention to assert but merely an intention to consider things or to report on another's views. Not even by metonymy can the outer words that express theological understanding as such be called true or false. For that, one must move beyond mere consideration to the next level of consciousness, to affirmation or negation.¹²

Fourth, just as theological understanding itself is imperfect, analogical, obscure, and gradually developing, so the consequent inner word and outer words are themselves understood only imperfectly, in an analogical manner, and obscurely; and theological

12 Lonergan is clearer on this distinction than are Aristotle and Aquinas. The distinct act of positing synthesis is emphasized in the second chapter of *Verbum* more than in the texts of Thomas on which that chapter is based. See also Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006) 335, where he states that the view that understanding is the 'faculty of judgment' has some basis even in Aristotle and Aquinas.

expression of systematic understanding advances through the ages to an ever more exact articulation.¹³

3 Is What Is Understood True?

The second question raised in 1964 about the truth of theological understanding is, Is what is understood true? Or again, how is theological understanding related to the antecedent truth of doctrines?

It is here that the two texts diverge. In the earlier version, this question did not receive the separate treatment that the later version accords it. None of the points from 5 through 10 in *Divinarum personarum* takes up this question explicitly. There the truth of the doctrines that one attempts to understand in systematics is more or less taken for granted. The issues associated with that antecedent truth do not receive detailed treatment. In 1964, in contrast, not only is the matter treated, but three distinct points are made in response to the question. The first has to do with the difference between beginning from data and beginning from truth. The second regards the relative merits of turning to scripture and turning to the dogmas in order to find the basic problems for

13 Lonergan's text (p. 20) reads, 'Quarto, sicut ipsa intelligentia theologica est imperfecta, analogica, obscura, *pedetentim sese evolvens*, etc., ita etiam consequens verbum interius et consequentes voces exteriores sunt imperfecte intellectae et analogice et obscure' (emphasis added). The parallel between understanding and its expression should be drawn further, as I have tried to do in my text. As understanding slowly develops (*pedetentim sese evolvens*), so do the ways of expressing it. In the terms that Lonergan uses in *Insight*, there are 'levels and sequences of expression' in theology as in any other field, and there is a complex interpenetration of understanding and expression. See Lonergan, *Insight* 576-81.

systematic understanding. And the third touches briefly on other theological loci as sources of these basic problems.

3.1 *Data and Truth*

While the earlier version acknowledges the different starting points for theological science and other sciences, only in the later version is the issue accorded separate treatment.

First, then, theological science differs from natural and human science in that it begins not from data but from truths.¹⁴ Natural science seeks understanding of what is given to the senses. It moves to truth only by understanding sensible data. It hopes to attain greater probability through successive and ever better hypotheses and theories.¹⁵ In human science, one does not begin from bare sensible data but rather from sensible data endowed with human meaning and significance. But the meaning with which the data (for example, the writings of a philosopher) are endowed is not accepted as true from the outset, and so human science, like natural science, intends a move to truth through ever more probable theories. But the meaning found in the word of God proceeds from divine and infallible knowledge,¹⁶ and so theology, which begins from revealed truth, is

14 Needless to say, the generality of this statement was modified by the time Lonergan wrote *Method in Theology*, where the statement holds for systematics (see *Method in Theology* 347-48, on data and facts) but not for theological knowledge in general. The first functional specialty, research, has precisely the task of making the *data* available; the second functional specialty, interpretation, has to do with understanding the data, and so on.

15 Note that this is a major qualification of Lonergan's use earlier in this text of the Aristotelian definition of science as *certa rerum per causas cognitio*.

16 See Lonergan's statement in a lecture roughly contemporaneous (1963): 'The word of

subalternate to divine knowledge.¹⁷ So too, the first sense in which theological understanding can be said to be true is that it consists in understanding divinely revealed truth. (More is understood in theology, of course, than the truth revealed by God, but that further understanding is not ‘theological understanding’ in Vatican I’s precise sense of the understanding of the mysteries hidden in God that could not be known unless they were divinely revealed.)

3.2 *Scripture or Dogmas?*

The second point under the question of the relation of systematic understanding to the prior truth of doctrines has to do with the relative merits of scripture and the Church’s teaching authority as the sources of doctrinal truth from which the theologian learns the mysteries the understanding of which is sought in systematic theology. Lonergan’s

God, whether taken as the word of the Bible, or the word of tradition, or the incarnate Word that is the incarnate meaning of the Son of God – that meaning is not only given, not only has a meaning, but also has a value, a truth, that has a divine origin.’ Bernard Lonergan, ‘The Analogy of Meaning,’ in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, vol. 6 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996) 206.

¹⁷ See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 2 c. Again, on Lonergan’s later understanding in terms of functional specialization, this statement would hold for systematics, and perhaps for the rest of the ‘second’ or ‘direct’ phase of theology. It would hold for the first phase (research, interpretation, history, and dialectic) *only* for those whose horizon is such as to enable them to accept as well the conclusions of the second phase. The methods of exegesis and history will remain the same for both believing and unbelieving exegetes and historians; the data studied may be the same; but the results will differ because of who the interpreter or historian is.

position on this issue at this point in his own history is more complex than might appear on a first reading. Elsewhere, I have affirmed the basic point he is making and tried to indicate how it can be developed.¹⁸ Here I will simply present it as I understand it, while drawing attention to the fact that emphasis was placed on this matter only in the 1964 text, and so only after there was dropped from the text the programmatic suggestions of a new, more concrete, and more comprehensive synthesis rendered possible by, among other things, modern biblical exegesis.¹⁹

Church teaching holds that what is proposed by the Church to be believed by all as divinely revealed is also contained in the fonts of revelation (DB 1792, DS 3011). It is Church teaching too that what is so proposed is defined by the Church in the same sense that it has in those fonts (DB 2314, DS 3886). It follows that with regard to the truth and its meaning it matters not at all to which of these sources one goes; one will find the same truth and the same meaning in both sources.

Still, ecclesiastical statements of doctrine are often much closer than biblical statements to the task and role of *systematic* theology. The reason has to do with the respective categories employed in the two sources. While biblical categories reflect the immediate usage of the everyday life of particular writers and readers at particular times, in particular places and circumstances, on particular occasions, with particular goals in mind, the Church has arrived at other categories that can be called ‘catholic’ (with a small ‘c’), that is, categories that have a universality about them that enables them to be

18 Robert M. Doran, ‘Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology,’ *Theological Studies* 59:4 (1998) 570 (see ‘Essays in Systematic Theology’ 5). See also the forthcoming article in *Lonergan Workshop*, ‘Reflections on Method in Systematic Theology’ (‘Essays in Systematic Theology’ 10).

19 This does not invalidate the point that Lonergan is making, of course, but I do wish to raise the question whether the relationship is merely coincidental.

understood and employed more broadly. The Church has discovered the pertinence of these categories precisely as it has faced some of the difficult problems of a universal community dispersed over the face of the earth and destined, so it believes, to last until the end of time. The meaning of the biblical categories may have been clear for the early Christians who were addressed in these terms, but in some instances we can assimilate their meaning today only through long and difficult study. So-called ‘catholic’ categories, on the other hand, have a certain interior clarity that allows their meaning to be grasped by anyone who has successfully completed a certain amount of study (*studia media*). Biblical categories regard God in such a way that they simultaneously tell us what to feel, say, and do; catholic categories expound the divine reality in itself, *secundum se ipsam*. We can more clearly grasp the theological problem *precisely as a problem for systematic understanding* when it is affirmed that the Son is consubstantial to the Father than when we read in the Letter to the Hebrews that ‘he is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being’ (Hebrews 1.3). And so systematic theology does better if it takes its beginnings and its problems from the definitions of the Church rather than from biblical studies.

The relationship between scriptural categories and the categories that Lonergan here calls catholic are spelled out in greater detail in a later section of the chapter, in which some of the complex relations between the *priora quoad nos* (first for us) and the *priora quoad se* (first in itself) are discussed. That treatment appears in both versions of this chapter, with several small but significant differences. But in the earlier version the relationship between biblical and ‘catholic’ categories comes up for discussion *only* in the sections that are concerned precisely with the historical vagaries of theological thinking and expression, that is, in sections 7 and 8 of the earlier version of the chapter, and only after Lonergan has proposed a vision of a new form of theological synthesis that relies on the fruits of biblical exegesis. All other uses of variants of the word ‘catholicus’ in the earlier version refer, not to a transcultural intentionality but to the Catholic Church. In

sections 7 and 8, which correspond (with a few important differences) to sections 8 and 9 of the later version, Lonergan is presenting in effect a theological understanding of theological history, and *in that context* he uses the word ‘catholicus’ to refer to the transcultural problem and its solution. But in section 4 of the later version, which I am summarizing here, he prescind almost entirely from the historical question and offers an abstract comparison of the symbolic and commonsense categories of scripture with the quasi-systematic (later, ‘post-systematic’) categories of the dogmas. He does this before any detailed treatment is given to history in its significance for systematic theology. The presentation is ahistorical, logical, static, and abstract. This is not to deny that the historical significance of the transcultural problem and its solution are important in the later sections of the 1964 version. But I will argue in a later article that the small differences from the earlier version mask a larger difference that has to do with that importance. And the point that I am making now is that the solution to the transcultural problem in terms of ‘catholic’ categories is introduced early on in the later version and in a manner that is independent of any discussion of historical contexts. It almost seems to be a negation of the earlier version’s vision of an emerging synthesis based on biblical exegesis and historical scholarship. I do not think it too much to say that there is a residual classicism, not in the point itself that Lonergan is making, but in the way he is making it. In the earlier version historical particularity and difference could be incorporated in a synthetic mode of understanding; in the later version that affirmation seems to be dropped.

Thus, while I agree with the basic point that Lonergan is making regarding the accessibility in dogma of the problems for systematic understanding, I would also urge that the affirmations that he makes need delicate nuancing. This material does not appear at all in the earlier version of this chapter, in which Lonergan also anticipated *a more concrete form* of synthetic theological understanding than is found in either dogmatic or systematic theology as these were traditionally (classically) conceived. Again, in that

earlier version, his concern was not to come to grips with a logical ideal. It seems clear that there is some connection between the absence in the later version of the material regarding a more concrete theology and the presence in that same version of the position that we are now reviewing. Lonergan has, at least temporarily, dropped any mention of the more concrete form of synthetic understanding to which he alluded in the earlier version, a synthetic understanding rendered possible precisely by advances in exegetical and historical methods. Those methods yield to synthesis as a way is found to move from their results (which often have to do with the ‘accidentals’ of history) to the explanatory understanding of history that would qualify in its own way (a new way) as a dimension of systematic (or at least synthetic) theology. Is it possible, with such an anticipation, that one could turn just as fruitfully to biblical categories as to the post-systematic categories of the dogmas, in order to find the problems that set the agenda for systematic theology? Is it possible that a ‘catholic’ (small ‘c’) understanding of the symbolic categories of the scriptures is possible? Was Lonergan vaguely anticipating such an affirmation in the earlier version? The only understanding of biblical categories, or of aesthetic and symbolic categories in general, that is acknowledged in this section of the 1964 version is exegetical understanding in the usual meaning of that term, as a specialization of commonsense understanding, and that type of understanding does not yield explanation or synthesis. If one wants explanation or synthesis, one must (according to the 1964 text) move beyond symbolic categories to, for instance, the metaphysical (later called ‘post-systematic’²⁰) categories that are employed in dogmatic statements. The possibility of *resolving symbolic categories into a source in interiority so as to yield explanation* is not alluded to at all, whereas it is at least hinted at in the earlier version.²¹ Why should

20 See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 304, 312, 314.

21 My own position on such matters is found in chapters 19 and 20 of *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). See also ‘Psychic

metaphysical categories alone be capable of being resolved into transcendental sources? Or, more precisely, why should it be necessary to find the metaphysical equivalents of other categories before these other categories are resolved into their critical grounds?²²

Despite these qualifications, however, we must remember that here Lonergan's principal concern is with where systematic theology should go in order to find its *problems*. And on this point I have registered a basic agreement with his position. In fact, I have proposed that we take as part of the core statement of systematics a four-point hypothesis that is found later in both versions of Lonergan's Trinitarian systematic theology, a hypothesis that is an attempt at a synthetic understanding precisely of *dogmatic* statements.²³ It is around that four-point hypothesis, joined to a theory of

Conversion and Lonergan's Hermeneutics,' in *Lonergan's Hermeneutics: Its Development and Application*, ed. Sean E. McEvenue and Ben F. Meyer (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989) 161-208, reprinted in Robert M. Doran, *Theological Foundations*, vol. 2, *Theology and Culture* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1995) 439-500.

22 On metaphysical equivalence, see Lonergan, *Insight* 521-33.

23 See Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* 234-35, *The Triune God: Systematics* 470-73. The hypothesis relates the four divine relations to four created supernatural realities: the *esse secundarium* of the assumed humanity of the incarnate Word (a created participation of paternity), sanctifying grace (a created participation of active spiration), the habit of charity (a created participation of passive spiration), and the light of glory (a created participation of filiation). I regard this hypothesis as a portion of the basic systematic conception, where by 'basic systematic conception' I mean what would stand to systematics as the periodic table stands to chemistry. The other component of the basis systematic conception is the theory of history found in Lonergan's analysis of progress, decline, and redemption and in the developments

history, that I propose we construct a systematic synthesis. And so my practice will indicate that I am not departing very widely from Lonergan's own affirmation here, if that affirmation is understood as answering the question, Where does systematic theology most profitably derive its core problems?

But the reference to 'catholic' categories raises a greater difficulty. Lonergan clearly means the categories of Scholastic philosophy and theology, but his own thought even at the time he wrote this material was more nuanced on this issue than some of these statements might lead one to believe. One need only think of the grounding that we find in *Insight* of such Scholastic categories as potency, form, and act, a grounding that is original with Lonergan, but that also makes possible a new and quite contemporary appropriation of these categories within the context of modern science.²⁴ The problem of 'catholic' categories did not go away for Lonergan, but it becomes far more nuanced in the question of a transcultural base in interiority for general and special categories. Categories have a transcultural base to the extent that they are derived proximately from interiorly or religiously differentiated consciousness. As Lonergan in *Insight* is able to derive the principal categories of metaphysics (central and conjugate potency, form, and act) from interiorly differentiated consciousness, and thus to endow these categories with a validity that they might not otherwise have for many a modern mind, so later 'for every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.'²⁵ All of this must be kept in mind if we are to give the best possible interpretation to what Lonergan is saying at this point in *De Deo trino*.

proposed in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.

24 See Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 456-63.

25 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343.

Moreover, Lonergan immediately shows that he understands that the issue is more complex. The systematic theologian cannot always begin from Church statements. Scripture contains so many and such great treasures of truth that they are never adequately exhausted ('tot tantosque ... thesauros veritatis ut numquam reapse exhauriantur': DB 2314, DS 3886). There is much in scripture that the Church has never defined, and it is matter that is not of lesser moment than what has been defined.²⁶ Some mysteries, such as the redemption, are so fully expounded in scripture that there has hardly been a debate about their reality, and so only a few magisterial statements have been made about them, and those rather brief. But other mysteries, such as the Trinity, are expressed more indirectly in scripture and treated in steps, rather than all together and from a single viewpoint. It is these mysteries, Lonergan says, that have aroused wonder, doubts, and disputes, and from the disputes the church has not infrequently reached clear and exact statements. So we have an immediate qualification to the previous answer to this question: whether one should go to scripture or to magisterial statements depends on what one is studying.

However, Lonergan says, when we do go to scripture to learn of the mystery whose understanding we seek, we must not confuse the systematic task with that of biblical theology. If we fall into this confusion, we will never arrive at the goal that is proper to systematic theology. Dogmatic and systematic theologians seek to attain from scripture what would not have to be sought if the matter had been defined, that is, what in itself is clear, that whose meaning can be expressed in 'catholic' categories, what surely has been revealed.²⁷ Technical methods are thus required, methods that arrive not at what

26 *De Deo trino, Pars systematica* 21: '... multa sane sunt in scripturis quae nondum ab ecclesia definita sint; neve haec omnia dicas minoris esse momenti.' 2009: See *The Triune God: Systematics* 34-35.

27 It is a matter for serious question, I believe, whether the scriptural affirmation of the

is probable or more probable but at the certain. The systematic theologian seeks what regards divine reality. So when he or she investigates the mind of Mark, of Paul, of John, or of any other biblical writer, it is not in order to understand a particular author's mentality, but rather to proceed further, to determine what is clear and certain about God and about divine realities, where such truths are mediated through the particular writings under consideration.²⁸

3.3 *Other Loci*

The third major point in the 1964 version under the question of the relation of systematic understanding to the revealed truth proposed in dogmas is that the divinely revealed

redemption, which is very clear in the sources, can ever be expressed in the 'catholic' (that is, metaphysical) categories that Lonergan is thinking of. Lonergan's own theology of redemption, as presented in thesis 17 of *De Verbo incarnato* (on the Law of the Cross) is not metaphysical, but (to use Balthasar's term) dramatic.

28 At this point Lonergan adds a paragraph that I will simply translate: 'So much, then, for the end. But regarding the means to be employed in pursuit of the end there is required a longer and more difficult disquisition. For in contemporary studies the dogmatic theologian is something of a stumbling block. The character of modern investigations and modern sciences is such that they attend very exactly to positive data and proceed effectively to promote understanding of the data, but find themselves unequal to the task of determining positively and with any certainty just what is true. Thus what modern methodology omits is what the dogmatic theologian must do. But just how one would be able to do this can be treated neither briefly nor easily. And so I have thought it better to leave this question for another occasion than to treat it here all too quickly.' 2009: The translation is my own, written before the publication of *The Triune God: Systematics*. Compare the translation given there, at p. 37.

mystery is found not only in scripture and the infallible pronouncements of the Church but also in other ‘theological loci’ or sources. The systematic theologian must employ all of these to learn the mystery whose understanding is sought. It is doubtful that Lonergan is using the term ‘theological loci’ in the precise sense that derives from Melchior Cano. It is more likely that he is referring simply to other sources to which the theologian will look in order to reach an understanding of the mysteries: the liturgy, the daily life of Christians, the lives of the saints, and so on. It is even possible that he would include the teaching of other theologians, and so what later came to be called theological doctrines.²⁹ But his position is that one will be in a better position to avoid misunderstanding and pseudo-systems if one takes one’s *fundamental problem* in any treatise from the dogmas of the Church and derives connected and consequent problems from the fundamental problem. Then too, one can relegate to subordinate status those problems that arise more from human opinion than from truths revealed by God, and so avoid incurring the difficulties treated earlier in the chapter when Lonergan addressed the topic of ‘the misunderstanding of a system.’³⁰

29 Lonergan does not explicitly mention ‘theological doctrines,’ that is, the doctrines that have already been proposed by other theologians and that constitute part of one’s own doctrinal mindset. Yet it must be asked whether Lonergan himself really begins his Trinitarian systematics (for example) from dogmatic pronouncements of the Church or from his own acceptance of the theological doctrines found in Thomas’s Trinitarian systematics, that is, from what is already a systematic understanding of Church dogma, just as Thomas began his own Trinitarian systematics with more than an implicit acceptance of what Augustine had worked out at the conclusion of his ‘way of discovery’ in *De Trinitate*.

30 See my earlier article, ‘*Intelligentia fidei in De Deo trino*’ (‘Essays in Theological Understanding’ 8 at pp. 57-58).

4 Is Understanding of the True Itself True?

The third major division of material in the later version's treatment of these issues has to do with the question, How is theological understanding related, not to the antecedent truth that belongs to doctrine, but to the *consequent* truth, that is, to the judgment that will be passed on theological understanding itself? What in itself is neither true nor false nonetheless participates in truth not only 'antecedently,' insofar as it is understanding of revealed truth, but also 'consequently,' if in fact it is judged to be a true understanding of a true mystery. This is the only issue treated in the corresponding section of the earlier version, and as we have seen, the first four of ten points devoted to it are identical with the four points that Lonergan presents in the later version in response, not to this question but to the first question treated there, that is, whether theological understanding is true *secundum se*. In the later version, Lonergan treats under twelve points (which do not include the four just mentioned) the issues surrounding the judgment that concerns the truth of theological understanding.

I see no way of proceeding here except to set forth the data first, and then to comment on them. So I will list first the twelve points of the 1964 treatment of this third major question in the section, and then I will list points 5 through 10 of the earlier version. Comment will follow this presentation of data. It will be around point 10 of the earlier version, which is completely missing from the later version, that the most significant differences occur.

4.1 The Treatment in the Later Version

The first point made in the later version's treatment of the issue is that the truth of theological understanding is not the truth that belongs to *common metaphysical principles* that regard the transcendentals (*ens, unum, verum, bonum*) and that are employed explicitly or implicitly in every human inquiry (for instance, the principles of

contradiction, identity, and sufficient reason). These principles articulate the very constitution of human intelligence and rationality. They enunciate the conditions of possibility of any human knowledge. The theologian necessarily uses them at least implicitly, like everyone else, for we all necessarily rely on the constitution of the mind that these principles articulate. These principles include everything about everything. Theological understanding, on the other hand, involves some *determination* of these principles, and so the consequent truth of theological understanding is not the same as the truth of these principles. Rather, it has to do with this determination.

Second, the truth of theological understanding is not the truth that proceeds either from grasping the essence of something or from demonstrating a property derived from an essential principle. We are talking about the understanding of divine mystery, and we do not know God immediately by essence but mediately by analogy. Understanding divine mystery is not grasping the divine essence or deriving anything from it.

Third, the truth of theological understanding is different from the truth attained in natural theology (philosophy of God). In fact, three types of theological knowledge can be distinguished. What natural reason conceives of God and demonstrates about God by analogy from creatures is something quite different from what cannot be known by us unless it is divinely revealed and received by faith. But in addition to both of these, there is what reason illumined by faith comes to understand when it inquires about mysteries in the strict sense. This is something different from either of the first two types of theological knowledge. While it involves analogies, the analogies are not at all of the same order as those involved in the natural knowledge of God.³¹

31 This seems to be all that Lonergan says at this point regarding the relation between systematics and philosophy of God. In *Method in Theology* and more completely in *Philosophy of God, and Theology*, he will offer a far more complex proposal regarding the role of philosophy of God *within* systematics. Still, the later methodological

Fourth, the truth of theological understanding is different from the antecedent truth that is understood. The latter is the divine mystery itself revealed by God and received in faith. As such it is what we are seeking to understand. The consequent truth is the truth of that understanding. If the antecedent truth is dogma, it is assigned the theological ‘notes’ *fide divina et forte etiam catholica* (of divine and Catholic faith), while the consequent truth more often than not is no more than probable, the best available understanding. Moreover, the object of divine faith does not change in the course of time;³² dogmatic declarations propose only the same truth understood in the same sense;³³ but theological understanding, knowledge, and wisdom concerning the doctrine of the faith grow and advance in individuals and in all, in the single person as well as in the whole church, according to the degree proper to each age and each time.³⁴

objectification of this relation specifies a set of dynamics that was always operative in his ‘practice’ as a systematic theologian. Thus, for instance, *Philosophy of God, and Theology* names a set of relationships that can already be found in the *pars systematica* of *De Deo trino*. For even later thoughts on a ‘new’ natural theology, see Lonergan, ‘The Scope of Renewal,’ in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 16:2 (1998) at 91 and 98-101 (See Bernard Lonergan, *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, 2005] 295-97). It remains to be seen what this late proposal means for systematics, but this is not the place to explore that question.

32 DB 1800, DS 3020.

33 DB 1792, 1800, 2314; DS 3011, 3020, 3886.

34 DB 1800, DS 3020. Lonergan here uses the order of the terms found in the council document: *intelligentia, scientia, sapientia*. For the issue around his use of these terms earlier in the chapter, see Doran, ‘*Intelligentia Fidei in De Deo Trino*’ (‘Essaus

In asking about the consequent truth of theological understanding, we are asking about the truth of this growing understanding.

Fifth, all the characteristics of a hypothesis are verified in theological understanding, and so the consequent truth of theological understanding is per se (*quod ex ipsa rei natura oritur*) the truth that belongs to a hypothesis. The characteristics of a hypothesis are:

- (1) a hypothesis is a conceptual and verbal expression proceeding from an act of understanding and enunciating a principle;
- (2) it solves some problem;
- (3) in itself it is neither true nor false, but it can be true;
- (4) it is more probable the more problems it solves virtually; and
- (5) it attains more to certitude the more every other way of solving the same problems as well or better is excluded.

When one attains the theological understanding praised by the First Vatican Council, all the characteristics of a hypothesis are present in one's understanding.

- (1) There proceeds from such understanding an inner and an outer word, a conceptual and a linguistic expression.
- (2) One is speaking of the same things concerning which earlier one had inquired seriously, devoutly, moderately; but before one reached understanding one spoke of a problem to be solved, whereas now that understanding has been reached one is speaking of a problem that has been solved.
- (3) Whoever has some understanding of divinely revealed mystery understands truth (antecedent truth), but that understanding is in itself neither true nor false; it pertains to the 'first operation,' the operation concerned with the question, *Quid sit?* The second operation, concerned with the question, *An sit?* follows, and truth is formally attained

in Systematic Theology' 8).

only in the second operation. But this understanding *can* be true. In the subsequent operation one *can* respond affirmatively to the question, *An sit?* One can affirm that one's systematic understanding of doctrine is itself true.

(4) If one is seeking a most fruitful understanding and finds it, one solves one problem not in such a way that the solution is sterile and without ulterior fruit, but in such a way that the direct solution of one problem is also the virtual solution of others. The more numerous the connected and consequent problems for understanding that are resolved, the more probable is one's hypothesis.³⁵

(5) This affirmative response gets closer to certitude the more every other way to understanding is excluded. Theological understanding, then, clearly is hypothetical.

Sixth, as the First Vatican Council teaches, understanding, knowledge, and wisdom grow and develop over time.³⁶ There is a historical series of discoveries. The fruitfulness of theological understanding of the mysteries of faith is, then, twofold: not only are many problems solved as this understanding grows, but also earlier and less perfect stages prepare, promise, and in some way even contain later developments.

It is in connection with this point that we will find what for our purposes are the most important differences between this section of the 1964 text and the corresponding material in the earlier version. Recall that the present section of the 1964 text was not in the earlier version. A first observation is that this sixth note may be related to a relocation of the 'via historica' in later sections of the chapter. In the earlier version the 'via historica' was one of the ways to the goal of systematic understanding. In the later version it is *prior* to the two procedures (analytic and synthetic, or dogmatic and systematic) that lead to the strictly theological act of systematic understanding. But even more significant is the difference in the way in which earlier and later stages in

35 Consider the synthetic nature of the four-point hypothesis mentioned above.

36 Again, note the order in which these virtues are mentioned.

theological understanding are discussed. Here they are developments in *intelligentia*, *scientia*, and *sapientia*, that is, in the three intellectual virtues that in my previous article I argued were given a meaning in this text that was heavily influenced by Lonergan's attempts to relate his thought on method to contemporary developments in logic. Thus earlier and later stages in theological understanding are limited to developments in *systematic theology as the latter has traditionally been understood*. But as we will see, the corresponding section of the earlier version speaks of a *new* kind of synthesis possible in our time, a synthesis that is beyond both dogmatics and systematics as these have been traditionally understood, and that is both more concrete and more comprehensive than either of these, even as it remains an understanding of the same divine mystery. For some reason this discussion is eliminated entirely from the 1964 version of this chapter.

In the 1964 text, then, with its focus on the developments that have occurred and can occur with systematics as this has traditionally been conceived, Lonergan treats earlier and later stages in terms of (1) the object understood, (2) the analogy employed to understand the object, and (3) the perfection achieved in the understanding itself.

(1) The object that is understood is always the same. Earlier and later stages agree *in eodem genere, eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*.³⁷ It is always the same divinely revealed mysteries that theologians are seeking to understand.

(2) But there are developments in the analogies employed to understand the mystery. Theology proceeds from a multiplicity of analogies to an agreement that one analogy is better than the rest or perhaps even that it is the only satisfactory analogy. First

37 Translated (from Vincent of Lerins) in the Roman Liturgy of the Hours for Friday of the twenty-seventh week in ordinary time: 'along its own line of development, that is, with the same doctrine, the same meaning, and the same import.' In *Method in Theology* 323 there is a suggestion that the last three of these be translated 'the same dogma, the same meaning, the same pronouncement.'

many different ways are tried, then the agreement grows that perhaps a certain analogy is to be preferred to others, and finally understanding advances as this analogy is proposed more profoundly and more exactly.³⁸

(3) The growth that the First Vatican Council spoke of affects not only *understanding* as theologians penetrate the principle more fully and more profoundly, but also the subsequent *knowledge* that draws conclusions from the principle and the *wisdom* that orders the totality of the subject matter. Thus, to use Lonergan's example, Augustine and Aquinas tried to understand the same trinitarian dogma, and they employed essentially the same psychological analogy. But Augustine expressed the analogy psychologically (and, we might add, only at the conclusion of the lengthy *De Trinitate*), while Aquinas was able to express it both psychologically and metaphysically (and at the very beginning of the treatment of trinitarian theology, in question 27 of the *prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*). To this extent at least, there is in the work of Aquinas a fuller understanding of the principle, a broader ordering through wisdom, and a more exact

38 This presupposes, of course, that theology is developing. Earlier in the chapter, Lonergan had treated the alternative possibility: genuine advances in analogical understanding are not understood by later generations; the misunderstanding of a system leads to its rejection; and, finally, the rejection of the system leads to a rejection of the dogmatic truths that the system was attempting to understand. In '*Intelligentia Fidei in De Deo Trino*' I mentioned how Karl Rahner's failure to understand the Thomist *emanatio intelligibilis* was followed by efforts based in Rahner (though very much against his own intentions) to reduce the 'immanent Trinity' to the 'economic Trinity,' and finally by denials that there is any immanent Trinity to be understood. But I must also stress that one who wishes to maintain the continuing vitality of the psychological analogy has to be prepared to show its relevance to contemporary issues. That will demand some serious work.

deduction of conclusions. And a similar point may be made, I believe, in comparing Lonergan with Aquinas (though Lonergan might not have made the claims for himself that I am making for him here). There are advances in Lonergan's employment of what is essentially the same analogy, since it proceeds from an explanatory understanding of interiority, from an interiorly differentiated consciousness that is not to be found as such in Aquinas. Moreover, Lonergan's later thinking moved to yet more profound levels of understanding: his later use of what essentially is still the same analogy is 'from above,' and as such is more satisfactory and more faithful to biblical data than the uses 'from below' that are found in Augustine, Aquinas, and even the earlier work of Lonergan himself. But this is an area of development that Lonergan left to others to explore.

I will return to this material later, when discussing the corresponding section in the earlier version.

Lonergan's seventh point is that no limit is to be placed on the increasing and advancing understanding, knowledge, and wisdom.³⁹ Various possible sources of such limitation are considered, and all are ruled out. (1) The *object* to be understood certainly imposes no limit, since a divine mystery reveals the infinite. (2) The *analogy* that one employs is not a source of limitation. Even if we can show that only one analogy will do, still that analogy is derived from what reason knows naturally, and reason can always understand natural realities more perfectly. (3) No limit is placed on theological understanding by the *sources*, the fonts of revelation, since they contain so many and such great treasures of truth that they will never be exhausted. (4) No limit is imposed by *wisdom* as it organizes the structure of theological thought, since the more reason penetrates what is natural and analogous, and the more the study of the sources lays open

39 And so on systematic theology as traditionally understood. Again, no mention is made of the new, more concrete, and more comprehensive synthesis of which the earlier version spoke.

their treasures, to that extent growing and advancing wisdom has more material that can be ordered. And (5) no limit accrues from theological *understanding and knowledge*. Where wisdom poses a problem to understanding, reason illumined by faith, when it inquires seriously, devoutly, and moderately, can hope to reach some understanding by God's grace; and where the understanding of the principle is attained, there spontaneously follows a knowledge of conclusions. If I may employ language that I have used in expressing my own anticipations,⁴⁰ there is in principle no reason not to expect an ongoing genetic sequence of systematic theologies.

Eighth, besides growing and advancing understanding, there is also poor understanding, with the consequences we have seen: pseudo-problems and pseudo-systems.

Ninth, the judgment on the consequent truth of theological understanding proceeds chiefly from three sources.

(1) We can judge this consequent truth by asking, What per se flows from this theological understanding? Does it solve a particular problem? Is this problem a divine mystery that can be understood by us in this life mediately, imperfectly, analogically, obscurely? Is this a fruitful understanding of the mystery, one that virtually solves other connected problems? Is there another analogy that resolves the problems better or just as well, or is there no other analogy that can be known by us in this life that does the job this well?

(2) We can appeal to historical comparisons. Was the same problem considered earlier? Was it considered directly or indirectly, in the same or in another complex of

40 See Doran, 'Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology' (above, note 18). See also Robert M. Doran, 'System and History: The Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology,' *Theological Studies* 60: 4 (1999) 652-78 ('Essay in Systematic Theology' 6 on this website).

problems, with the same or another analogy? If the analogy is basically the same, is it now being penetrated more profoundly? Have new aspects been added because of advances in the natural and human sciences or in scriptural, conciliar, patristic, medieval, etc., studies? Does the understanding of the principle truly ground the deduction of the other conclusions throughout the rest of the work? Are there now more and fuller deductions than before? Is there attained a better single insight into and grasp of the whole subject matter? Can there now be grasped further problems that both invite and demand further advance in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom?

(3) We can consider the pseudo-problems and pseudo-systems that have arisen and been promulgated in the area under investigation and that perhaps still influence theological thought. Are all the questions that were ever raised about the issue still being given equal treatment, or is there now possible a selection so that some are treated as principal issues and others as annexed questions while still others are finally being put to rest? Does the selection simply follow common use, or is it determined by some principle? The principle should be the fact that an understanding of a divinely revealed mystery is being sought. For then problems arising from poor understanding will be treated only to the extent that impediments to understanding the mystery need to be removed.

Lonergan is providing criteria by which certain theological formulations can be given doctrinal status, that is, criteria for the establishment of theological doctrines. I have suggested in addition that this theological understanding can be granted something of a doctrinal status for the systematic theologian, that is, the status of theological *doctrine*, if it brings closure to a theological debate, if it provides the only really satisfactory analogy for understanding a divine mystery, or if it articulates an inevitable practical conclusion or implication of the gospel of God in Christ Jesus.⁴¹

41 Each of the three examples of 'theological doctrines' that I discuss in the article

Tenth, we can compare the judgment on theological understanding with other theological judgments. Four considerations obtain here.

(1) This judgment differs from all theological conclusions. Such conclusions are easy: given the premises, the conclusion either follows necessarily or it does not; if it does not, it is invalid; if it does, it is no less true than the premises. But a judgment about theological understanding is extremely difficult. Such understanding treats a principle, not a conclusion. The principle may enunciate a possible hypothesis; the hypothesis may be more or less probable; at the very least it may be a step along the way that alone leads to the kind of understanding that the First Vatican Council praises. Part of the *habitus* of systematic theology is the facility to discriminate the weight of various theological hypotheses.

(2) A judgment about systematic theological understanding differs from what can be known about God through the mediation of creatures by the natural light of reason. The difference here has to do with both the problem and the solution. It has to do with the problem: the problem for theological understanding arises solely from what has been revealed; eliminate revelation, and there are no problems regarding the triune God, the incarnate Word, the grace of Christ, the sacraments, and so on. And it has to do with the solution: philosophical knowledge of God neither introduces nor systematically develops hypothetical and internally obscure analogies; what it affirms to be in God analogously it also demonstrates, something that systematic theological understanding does not even begin to do. Thus philosophical knowledge of God demonstrates that God is conscious,

‘Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology’ meets one of these criteria. The theological doctrine of Aquinas on operative grace, as interpreted by Lonergan, brings a closure to the *de auxiliis* debate. The psychological analogy is the best analogy for understanding Trinitarian processions. And the preferential option for the poor is an inevitable practical consequence of the gospel.

but it cannot demonstrate that God is dynamically conscious in the sense that a divine Word proceeds from a divine *Dicere* or that *Amor* proceeds from the divine *Dicere* and the divine *Verbum*.⁴² There is no valid reason for the philosopher as such to suppose that this is the case. The systematic theologian, on the other hand, presupposes, on dogmatic grounds, that God is dynamically conscious in precisely this fashion, along the lines of the intelligible emanations of word from insight and of the act of love from insight and word together. The reason he or she presupposes this is not that it can be demonstrated, or even that it can be clearly understood – it cannot be. The reason rather is simply that one finds in this obscure element, in the analogy of intelligible emanations, the root of all the other obscure matters that one believes must be affirmed about the triune God. Without this one principle, the other matters cannot be understood; with it, some very imperfect, analogical, obscure, and gradually developing understanding becomes possible. Understanding his principle, the analogy of intelligible emanations, does not presuppose understanding anything else but rather is essential if we are to understand anything else. Understand this, and the rest of a systematic theological treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity tumbles out; neglect it, or fail to understand it, and you are on the way to the effects that Lonergan speaks about when he treats what happens when a system is poorly understood.

(3) The judgment on theological understanding differs from all dogmatic determinations, not with respect to the problem but with respect to the solution. There is no difference in the problem: both dogmatics and systematics posit questions that disappear with the elimination of revelation, questions that regard divine realities themselves. But there is a difference in the solution: dogmatic determination occurs through a revealed truth or at times through a naturally known truth,⁴³ while theological

42 For details, see Lonergan, *Verbum* 201-204.

43 Thus Lonergan in *De Deo trino*. In *Method in Theology* he limits dogmatic

understanding adds a further hypothetical element which the sources do not contain with any certainty and which reason cannot demonstrate.

(4) We can relate the dogmatic question and the systematic question not only to one another but also to the biblical question.⁴⁴ The dogmatic question and the theological question both differ from the biblical question; they regard divine realities themselves, not the mind of an author regarding divine realities. The biblical exegete investigates the ways in which, for example, various biblical authors used the term ‘Son of God.’ The doctrinal question asks about the reality itself of Jesus of Nazareth. And systematic answers differ even from dogmatic solutions. For example, the doctrine, in stating that the Son is not made but begotten, is introducing nothing hypothetical but is gathering, pondering, affirming what has been revealed. But the systematic question asks, What kind of generation is involved? What kind of begetting can there be in God? How can the affirmation that the Son is begotten be true? Many other questions are posited virtually with the explicit positing of this question. They do not all immediately come to mind, of course, but they are added in the course of time. The initial problem cannot be solved until one thinks out clearly and distinctly the type of generation that is completely singular and completely unknown to us from any other source. This is a problem, the

determinations, at least in fact and probably in principle, to mysteries that are so hidden in God that they could not be known at all were they not revealed. And he bases this limitation on his exegesis of the texts of the First Vatican Council regarding dogma. In our age of ‘creeping infallibility’ it becomes clear how immensely salutary this limitation is.

44 This type of relation would become in *Method in Theology* the distinction of two phases: doctrines and systematics belong to the second phase, the phase of direct discourse, whereas biblical interpretation belongs to the first phase, where investigators are concerned to relate the views of others.

answer is a hypothesis, and from the hypothesis as from a principle many other things flow. Some of them are matters of faith, some are matters concluded from faith, and some are simply matters that are not demonstrably contradictory to reason. Thus it is that the hypothesis becomes a theory that is verified in many ways.

In the eleventh place, Lonergan insists that so-called ‘conclusions theology’ not be regarded as constituting the structure of systematic theology. ‘Conclusions theology’ distinguishes theology both from reason and from faith. It allows theology no principles except those that can be derived either from reason or from faith. It lets theology be only about conclusions from these principles. And it insists that these conclusions are either pure (where both premises are from faith) or mixed (where one principle is from faith and one from reason).

The first reason for abandoning such a notion of theology is that it is not what Vatican I spoke of when it spoke of theological understanding. The Council did not say that reason illumined by faith, when it assumes premises from the fonts of revelation and perhaps joins to them another principle from reason, arrives at a most certain conclusion by observing the laws of logic. It said rather that reason illumined by faith, when it inquires reverently, diligently, and modestly, achieves by God’s grace a very fruitful understanding of the mysteries, both by analogy with what is naturally known and by the connection of the mysteries with one another and with our last end. It is one thing to inquire so as to understand, and it is quite something else to grasp something in such a way as to be able to demonstrate conclusions. It is one thing to seek an analogy for an imperfect understanding of mystery, and it is quite something else to pluck premises from scripture and reason. It is one thing to expect understanding by God’s grace, and it is quite something else to attain certitude by observing accurately the rules of logic. The council’s intention is not obscure: before it condemned semirationalism,⁴⁵ it wished to

45 DB 1816, DS 3041.

present positive Catholic doctrine, and so it distinguished two orders of knowledge⁴⁶ and taught the part of reason in cultivating supernatural truth.⁴⁷ Nor is it obscure how the understanding of these mysteries is related to pure and mixed conclusions. When deductions are made from the revealed mysteries themselves, one is simply stating the *problems* more clearly and more distinctly. The more numerous and more exact are such deductions, the more numerous and more difficult are the problems that systematic theological understanding must tackle. Since the problems are manifested because the premises narrate divine mysteries, they cannot be resolved unless some understanding of the mysteries is attained. When this understanding is attained by analogy with what is naturally known, a hypothetical element is introduced. Even if the same analogy is materially pointed to, insinuated, suggested, even clearly indicated, in the sources, it is not formally shown to have been there with all its systematic implications.

Nonetheless, the deductions that enable the problems to be exhibited more clearly and distinctly are a step toward the theological understanding that is desired. For such conclusions provide, not the understanding of the mysteries, but one or other element that will enable us to achieve such understanding. But they do this *by exhibiting the problem itself more clearly and more exactly*, not by providing a solution to it. One of the clearest examples one could ask for of this is presented in the second chapter of *De Deo trino, Pars systematica*. Lonergan begins the first assertion of his systematic treatment of the Trinity in this work – the treatment is a good deal more complex than in the earlier version – by stating that the divine processions must be *per modum operati*. That is, divine procession is not to be conceived at all along the lines of the emergence of the act of understanding from inquiry (*processio operationis*): that emergence is an emergence of act from potency. Nor is it to be conceived as *processio operati*, such as the procession

46 DB 1795, DS 3015

47 DB 1796, DS 3016.

of inner word from understanding in human dynamic consciousness, since such a procession is the emergence of act from act, and in God there is only one infinite act. But it is to be conceived as an internal procession in which the originating act and the originated act, while really distinct, are distinct not absolutely (there is only one God) but by relation (*secundum esse relativum*): as the Council of Florence says, in God *omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio*, all things are one unless the opposition of relation dictates otherwise.⁴⁸ This conclusion, that divine processions are *per modum operati*, is, Lonergan says, a strict deduction from the truths of faith through notions and metaphysical principles known to all of us. As such it is theologically certain. It is a perfect example of what he means by a theological conclusion. But that conclusion is far from providing the *hypothetical understanding of the mystery that the systematic theologian seeks*; it provides only a translation of the category ‘divine procession’ into the systematic category *per modum operati* that will enable the analogy of intelligible emanations, in which the understanding consists, to be elaborated. The statement that divine procession is *per modum operati* (along the lines of a *processio operati*) provides no more theological understanding than the assertion that there are processions in the one infinite divine act. What it does provide – and this it does precisely as a conclusion strictly deduced from the mysteries of faith – is the transposition of the category of ‘divine procession’ into a category that will enable the analogy to be constructed.⁴⁹

48 DB 703, DS 1330.

49 Actually, the transposition is more complicated. The doctrine itself (‘God from God’) provides a natural and external determination of the procession. The metaphysical transposition to *per modum operati* offers an external and metaphysical determination. And this determination enables us to see how an analogy is possible that provides a *natural and internal determination* (‘*secundum emanationem intelligibilem*’). But these are details for systematic Trinitarian theology itself.

So it is not true that theology is simply about pure and mixed conclusions. From the revealed mysteries there logically follows the clear statement of the problems whose solution will occur only through understanding the mysteries. And when the solution introduces a hypothetical element, there is posited a properly theological principle which is neither from faith alone nor from reason alone, but from reason enlightened by faith and inquiring reverently, diligently, and modestly. For example, ‘The divine processions, which are processions according to the mode of a *processio operati*, are understood in some measure on the basis of a likeness to intellectual emanation’ – part of Lonergan’s first assertion.⁵⁰ Concluding from what is believed that the processions must be *per modum operati* enables one to conceive them by analogy with the intelligible emanations in human consciousness of word from insight and of the act of love from insight and word. Theological conclusions clarify the problem so that one may more readily proceed to theological understanding; but the conclusions do not themselves yield that understanding.

‘Conclusions theology,’ the assumption that systematic theology consists only in drawing conclusions from the mysteries, has caused a great deal of harm. First, it has fostered a tendency to impose later systematic discoveries on earlier authors. If one loves the systematic yet knows no other method of proof than deduction from the sources, one tends to find one’s own systematics already at work in scripture or in the Fathers or in the medieval authors. Second, since not all systematic theologians are of one mind and heart, they end up, as a group, imposing on the sources not one system but many different systems. Third, since the true criterion of a valid system is not deduction from sources, ‘conclusions theology’ cannot refute poor systems and offer serious arguments for better ones. Fourth, exegetes and historians regard theologians who deduce systems from their sources as incompetent in exegetical, patristic, medieval, and other historical matters.

⁵⁰ Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 145.

Fifth, if exegetes and historians know no other argument for a system except deduction from the founts of revelation, they will call every system vain speculation. But if the view that systematic theology is only about pure and mixed conclusions could be abandoned, systematic and positive theology could be of mutual aid rather than at odds with one another. Understanding a doctrine and understanding the history of a doctrine are closely related to one another. When the doctrine is the same, and when understanding, knowledge, and wisdom regarding it grow, then positive and systematic theologians have no reason to oppose each other. What now is understood by the systematic theologian was already being prepared in the course of history, and so by understanding history the systematic theologian acquires full and exact understanding of his or her own task. From understanding earlier solutions the positive theologian can more clearly grasp and more confidently judge what the earlier states of affairs were and in what direction they were headed.

In the twelfth place, there are two supreme criteria of the truth of theological understanding that have yet to be mentioned. One of them regards human nature, and the other the divine source of revelation.

Human nature, however, presents a problem. Our immersion in the sensible creates for us a peculiar kind of problem. The questions and solutions expounded in the schools lie beyond the horizon of one who has not undergone something of an intellectual conversion, and so they appear to be distant from reality, from serious living, from usefulness. We insist that what we want and need is something completely different from what we hear the theologians teaching. It is our existential problem that we need to emerge from the sensible so as not only to say but also to agree and, as it were, *even to feel that the real is made manifest not through data but through truths*. But this existential problem can be transferred to or projected upon the objective field. Then it is supposed that what is at issue is, not the intellectual conversion of the subject but the very subject matter of theology. Then there has begun a most serious deviation, one that very easily

will find almost innumerable followers (as any professor of serious systematic theology knows).

With regard to the divine source of revelation, the meaning of any truth is to be measured by the understanding of the one from whom that truth proceeds. Since a revealed truth proceeds from divine understanding itself, its meaning is to be measured only by divine understanding. The Catholic theologian believes that God has entrusted divine revelation to the church, and that the church is charged with the mission of guarding it faithfully and declaring it infallibly. And this means that the theologian cannot put an ultimate and absolute trust solely in his or her own intelligence and wisdom but must always acknowledge that the meaning both of the revealed truth and of the sacred dogmas is to be determined solely by the teaching authority of the church.⁵¹

4.2 The Treatment in the Earlier Version

In the earlier version, as we have seen, the first four points that are given in the third section (which corresponds to section 4 in the later version) are identically the four points that in the later version are listed in response to the first question, Is theological understanding true in itself? Those points, again, are: first, in itself theological understanding is neither true nor false; second, the inner word in which this understanding is expressed is neither true nor false; third, the outer words expressing theological understanding are in themselves neither true nor false; and fourth, as theological understanding itself is imperfect, analogical, and obscure, so the consequent inner word and outer words are imperfectly, analogically, and obscurely understood.

The fifth point excludes from theological understanding some other forms of truth, and so concludes to the only possibility that is left. From theological understanding as such there flows neither a self-evident truth nor a mediate truth certainly demonstrated

⁵¹ DB 1788, 1800, 1818 (DS 3007, 3020, 3043).

from intrinsic reasons nor a hypothesis whose intrinsic possibility is clearly grasped. If these are all ruled out, then theological understanding can yield only a hypothesis the very intrinsic possibility of which is imperfectly, analogically, and obscurely conjectured.

Let us investigate in greater detail each of the forms of truth that are excluded.

(1) Theological understanding cannot involve a truth that is self-evident or that is expressed in analytic principles.⁵² Self-evident truths and analytic principles are absolutely certain, and they admit no development, for they issue from an understanding that is complete, clear, and proportioned to what is being understood. Theological understanding, on the other hand, is imperfect, analogical, obscure, and gradually evolving.

(2) Theological understanding also cannot result in demonstrations that proceed with certitude from intrinsic reasons or causes or immanent intelligibilities. The force of a syllogism is extensive, not intensive. That is, what is known through the premises is extended to the conclusions, but the conclusion always has the force of the weaker premise. Since theological understanding cannot found premises that are self-evident for our knowledge, it cannot ground conclusions that can be certainly demonstrated from intrinsic reasons or causes.

(3) Theological understanding cannot lead to hypotheses whose intrinsic possibility can be clearly and perfectly grasped. A hypothesis is a simple inner word in which the content of a direct insight is uttered. The inner word proceeding from

⁵² Lonergan offers a thorough treatment of analytic principles in chapter 10 of *Insight* and again in chapter 3 of *Phenomenology and Logic*. ‘By an analytic principle is meant an analytic proposition of which the partial terms are existential; further, the partial terms of an analytic proposition are existential if they occur in their defined sense in judgments of fact, such as the concrete judgment of fact or the definitively established empirical generalization.’ *Insight* 331.

theological understanding cannot itself be other than imperfectly, analogically, and obscurely understood, because the understanding itself can be no more than imperfect, analogical, and obscure. Thus the intrinsic possibility of what is understood in this way cannot be grasped perfectly and clearly.

Again, once these have been ruled out, the only possibility that remains is that theological understanding can yield only a hypothesis the very intrinsic possibility of which is imperfectly, analogically, and obscurely conjectured.

In the sixth point of the earlier version's treatment of this question, Lonergan offers some suggestions regarding criteria that must be met if the theologian is to grant something of a truth status to a particular systematic proposal. These are quite different from the considerations that in 1964 were listed under the ninth point in Lonergan's treatment of these same issues.

Thus, theological understanding *can* acquire truthfulness from other sources, and this in three ways. First, there is a broad basis and starting point for theological understanding in naturally known truths about God and about other things in relation to God. But this basis is incomplete and does not include within itself any of the truths that we believe with supernatural faith, and so it is by no means sufficient. The best it can do is support and reinforce the truth of strictly theological understanding.⁵³ Second, the fonts of revelation and their infallible interpretations contain many certain truths about God and about other things in relation to God. From these truths taken as premises, it can be determined with certitude or at least with probability whether the *ratio veri*, the formality 'true,' can be conceded to a given theological hypothesis. Third, from theological hypotheses deductions can be made, and the more fully and accurately the conclusions of such deductions agree with what we believe or know from other sources, the more

53 As we stated above, the relations between philosophy of God and systematics are presented in much richer detail in Lonergan's later work.

probable is the hypothesis. These are ways of ascertaining the likelihood that one's theological hypothesis may be on target.

Seventh, there can be progress from the fragility of hypothesis to the dignity of theory if several conditions are met: first, if theological understanding attains a synthesis in which other revealed truths are understood together; second, if this synthetic understanding can be expressed through an integral system; third, if the system can be derived in part from what can be naturally known, and at the same time if it can agree with supernaturally known truths; and fourth, if it receives the approval or even the mandate of the teaching church.

Eighth, the truth of any system is derivative and not equally certain in all its parts, and so we must distinguish between what is revealed and believed by divine faith, what is defined by the church and believed by Catholic faith, and what is accepted by theologians with certain qualifications.

Ninth, the meaning of any truth is measured by the intelligence from which that truth proceeds. Revealed truth is measured by the divine intelligence alone from which it proceeds. No theological system determines the meaning of revealed truth and of sacred dogma. That, says Lonergan, is the responsibility entrusted to the church's own teaching authority.

We come, finally, to the tenth point. The major differences between the two texts' treatment of the issue of the truth of theological understanding is that the later version eliminates much that Lonergan said in this tenth point of the earlier treatment. The focus of the tenth point is on the assertion that there is no contradiction in the fact that theological understanding, knowledge, and wisdom can increase while the sense of revealed truth remains the same, dogma remains the same, and the meaning of the faith remains the same. An increase of theological understanding, knowledge, and wisdom consists not in the fact that by means of increasingly probable theories we draw closer to a hitherto unknown truth, but rather in the fact that the same truth, which has always been

believed, becomes more and more comprehensively known, understood, appreciated. The variation is not in the object that is understood but in the manner of understanding. Those who progress in the understanding of revealed truths understand not one thing now, and then another, but the same thing ever more comprehensively. The same object, understood in the same sense, can be understood in a different manner.

The difference between the two texts lies not, of course, in any later denial of this point, but rather in the earlier treatment's inclusion of one particular manner of understanding the meaning of revealed truth that is not even alluded to in the later version. More precisely, in the earlier version Lonergan gives four examples of the manner in which theological understanding, knowledge, and wisdom can increase even as the meaning that one understands remains the same, and the fourth of these is not mentioned at all in the 1964 version's treatment of the growth of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom; it is not featured there as one of the ways in which that growth can occur. Moreover, while it will resurface to a certain extent in notes that Lonergan wrote as he prepared to write *Method in Theology*, it does not appear as such in that book. Yet I have to ask whether it remained intrinsic to Lonergan's ultimate systematic goal, even if he never found the adequate means to express it in his later writings.⁵⁴

54 The paragraphs that outline these four ways of understanding appear in smaller type in Lonergan's Latin text, and so perhaps may be more tentative or not central to his argument. But perhaps they are in smaller type simply because they provide examples of the point he is making, namely, that progress in understanding revealed truth does not mean understanding different things but rather understanding the same thing ever more comprehensively ('... qui in revelatis veris intelligendis proficiunt, non aliud et aliud sed idem magis magisque comprehensive intelligunt' -- see Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 750).

In addition, this section, which was dropped in 1964 to be replaced there by the section on the problem or question, treats four manners in which theological understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, *mentioned in that order*, can grow. I argued in the previous article in this series that the 1964 treatment, in the new section 3, of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (in that revised order) was forced and artificial, a contrivance developed in order to address logical issues that were very much on his mind at the time. Now I am asking whether the section of *Divinarum personarum* that we are discussing, a section in which the same three qualities are treated in a manner that accords more clearly with the meaning of Vatican I, should be regarded as a more satisfactory presentation of this material than what replaced it in 1964. With that question I am also bringing to center stage the historical emphases that appear in a remarkably provocative fashion in the fourth of the examples that Lonergan presents at this point.

The issue, then, is: How does theological understanding grow? One answer is presented in *Divinarum personarum*, and another in *De Deo trino*. Are they compatible or mutually exclusive? Why did the presentation change? These are the questions.

In *Divinarum personarum* we are asked first to consider someone who reads scripture and correctly understands its individual statements. Such a person understands many things correctly, but each of them separately, and so lacks comprehensive understanding.

We are asked to consider next someone who reads scripture and correctly understands individual statements, but who also compares texts, prescind from accidentals, and finds over time that the same thing is being said in many places and in many different ways. Such a person is moving toward dogmatic apprehension. Then if one goes on to conceive this identity of meaning in such a way as to express it in technical terms, one is performing the role of the dogmatic theologian. The same truth as that found in scripture is being expressed; it is understood in the same sense; but it is understood in a different manner. One is prescinding from the accidentals: who is

speaking, with whom the speaker is conversing, on what occasion, in what circumstances, with what intention. One is prescind from the actions that are narrated and from the images, figures, or parables that are used to convey a meaning. One is prescind from the emotions, sentiments, and affections aroused. One is attending only to the essentials, but whereas in the first example one used biblical words and concepts to express these, now one is using new and more technical terms, more remote but perhaps also more essential concepts. One is moving from commonsense apprehension to at least a tincture of systematic or technical meaning.

Third, one can go deeper. One can grasp revealed truths in their inner coherence. The technical dogmatic exegesis⁵⁵ that constituted the second step, where scriptural truth is affirmed in concepts that are pertinent to all of biblical revelation, here gives way to systematic understanding. One who grasps the essentials of what is said in scripture can provide a technical dogmatic exegesis. Such a one enters on the way of 'dogmatics.' But dogmatics is also the discovery of theological *problems*, that is, of problems that give rise to further questions for understanding. One who seeks that coherent and synthetic understanding of what scripture teaches to be true has entered on the way of systematic theology. God is one, but God is also three. Christ is God, but Christ is also human. All depends on the gratuitous will of God, and yet our own merits will determine our reward. How are such affirmations to be understood? Something new is being demanded at this point, something beyond dogmatic grasp and affirmation of common assertions. A new kind of understanding is being called for, beyond the type of exegesis that yields dogmatic comprehension. Again, the person who understands the core meanings of what is said in scripture is engaged in technical dogmatic exegesis, and is finding theological

55 Lonergan refers to this exegesis as 'systematic exegesis,' but to prevent confusing it with 'systematic theology,' I have adopted the phrase 'technical dogmatic exegesis.'

problems, but only the one who attempts to answer the questions raised *by these problems* is doing systematic theology.

Still, although a new kind of understanding occurs at this point, it is still an understanding of the same revealed truth. Theological understanding does not change the meaning of revealed truth. Rather, the revealed truth, understood in the same sense, is grasped more clearly, more fully, and more systematically. Systematic theology, in the sense that Lonergan intends when he writes of systematics, has begun.

Now, to this point Lonergan is talking simply about the systematics whose methodological prescriptions he is attempting to uncover in the chapter under investigation. In the fourth step, however, he suggests something further, but mentions it only by way of anticipating a development that we may expect to occur. This is the step that has become so important in my own considerations. One can go deeper still, Lonergan says, and take a new step in comprehension. Here we meet head-on one of Lonergan's clearest statements of some of the problem that can be summed up in the expression 'system and history.'

Thus, besides the technical dogmatic exegesis of step 2 that leads to doctrines (and we might add, besides the exegetical and historical work that qualify as what later would be the functional specialties of interpretation and history), there is the possibility of a *historical exegesis that includes the accidentals in a synthetic manner*. The historical exegesis that Lonergan speaks of here is beyond the work later spoken of as the functional specialties of interpretation and history, precisely because it is *synthetic*. It is explanatory. Only at the very end of the chapter on interpretation in *Method in Theology* is the possibility raised of explanation, and then only in a tentative and almost apologetic fashion. Dialectic, of course, is headed toward explanation, and the paragraph in *Divinarum personarum* that we are here summarizing finds its ultimate development in what Lonergan wrote about that fourth functional specialty. But it is salutary to call attention to the problems and possible resolutions as they emerged in his own mind, for

one can read and reread the chapter on Dialectic in *Method in Theology* and still not grasp how it is promoting the same more concrete and more comprehensive theology that Lonergan here, for a brief moment, glimpses as a possibility. Not only is there a historical *exegesis* that is beyond the technical dogmatic form of interpretation that was discussed in step 2. In addition, besides the systematic understanding of step 3 there is a more concrete and comprehensive *theology* that considers the economy of salvation *in its historical evolution* and seeks to understand it *synthetically* in these terms. Steps 2 and 3 involve universal, and to that extent abstract, considerations, but this fourth step is concrete. The *synthetic* character of such theology, Lonergan is quick to add, has not yet clearly appeared. But this kind of theology has been in preparation for a long time, thanks to so much biblical, conciliar, patristic, medieval, liturgical, ascetical, and other research. It is at this point that Lonergan makes the remark that today's scholars resemble twelfth-century compilers rather than thirteenth-century theologians. But, he adds, those who today with solid scholarship engage in biblical studies, patristic exegesis, and other areas of history relevant to theology can look forward to *a future theology in direct discourse that will be more concrete and more comprehensive than what we have come to know as dogmatic and systematic theology*. The fruit of exegetical and historical scholarship will not be lost *in and for speculative theology itself* (whether exegetes and historians want to be so remembered or not!). True progress in knowledge always includes with some exactness the achievements of the past. Theology wants only to understand the truth more fully, and this fourth step represents an advance on the second and third, that is, on dogmatic and systematic theology as we have known them up to this point.⁵⁶ For it includes a synthetic understanding of historical concreteness and particularity.

56 Lonergan's wording of this fourth way recalls a distinction from Aristotle that

Lonergan cites around this same time in other contexts: the distinction between science in potency and science in act. '... science is twofold: for science in potency is

The analogy with science is clear. Before the discovery of the calculus, certain data were judged to be beyond scientific understanding. The differential calculus provided an ‘upper blade’ that enabled those data to be explained. Lonergan is inching his way toward the enunciation of an upper blade that would enable a synthetic, explanatory understanding of historical concreteness and particularity. It is my contention that he intends at this point in his development that a new *systematic* theology would include that understanding along with the understanding of doctrines that has always been its concern. After presenting the four successive deepenings of understanding, he writes, ‘These observations on the act by which the goal is attained should suffice. For understanding the mysteries is the first operation of the intellect, is imperfect, analogical, obscure, gradually developing, synthesis, fruitful.’⁵⁷ The fourth step, not just the third, has to do with the act by which theological understanding is attained. In one sense we reach systematic understanding at step 3; but we reach it more profoundly at step 4.⁵⁸ The issue is clear: What are the methodological grounds of step 4? How is such a theology to

one thing, and it treats only of universals, while science in act is something else, since it is now being applied to particulars. (‘... duplex est scientia: alia enim scientia est in potentia, cum tantummodo universalium sit; alia autem scientia est in actu, cum iam particularibus applicetur’ [Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics* 752].) The text moves directly from an appeal to this distinction to the affirmations that constitute the fourth way in which the same truth can be understood.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 755.

⁵⁸ To these four ways in which the same revealed truth can be ever more comprehensively understood, Lonergan then adds the manner in which God understands revealed truths and the manner in which the blessed participate in God’s own understanding. He adds these considerations simply in order to amplify his main point that the same truth can be understood in different manners.

be derived? What are its principles? What are its foundations? What is its relation to the doctrinal and systematic theology that Lonergan speaks of so clearly not only in *De Deo trino* but also in *Method in Theology*?

5 Conclusion

There is little or no substantive difference between the 1964 text and the earlier version on the precise issue of the relation of systematic understanding to the dogmas that it attempts to understand. But we saw in an earlier article that section 3 of 1964 did not appear in the earlier version, and with it there are introduced concerns that I have interpreted in terms of Lonergan's interest in addressing issues raised in his study of symbolic or mathematical logic. Together with the introduction of such concerns, there is the omission of the important statement in the earlier version regarding the possibility of a more concrete and comprehensive synthesis that would find some way of taking into account the particularities of history. My hypothesis is that there is a connection between these two differences.

Further articles on the same chapter will raise more explicitly the problem of the relation between system and history. But we should note that a number of comments relevant to this issue have already been made in the sections we have just reviewed: Lonergan has spoken of such matters as the dialectical history of systems, the historical development of the analogies employed in systematic understanding, the subsequent historical effects of advances and setbacks in theological understanding, and so forth. But the theme of historical movements in general, and the relation of history to system in particular, are treated more explicitly in the material we will see in later articles.⁵⁹ No

59 2009: These 'later articles' were never written, at least partly because my own position on these issues became secure enough for me to move out on my own as I completed the text of *What Is Systematic Theology?* Later 'Essays in Systematic

solutions are given there to the problems that we have already raised; but it is clear that Lonergan is aware of the question. The very fact that the two versions of the chapter present such different treatments of the question is reason enough to expect that the issue is not yet settled and that what is going forward in his own development will entail further clarifications on this issue. It remains to be determined, of course, just how complete was his final answer to the question. It may be the case that he never resolved it to his own satisfaction, but it may also be the case that the answer is obvious when we trace the very development of his thinking on the issue. As there is a more concrete historical exegesis of biblical and other sources that attains a synthetic understanding of the commonsense religious development of the authors, and as there is a more concrete synthetic theology that grasps the evolution of the economy of salvation and of the Church's appropriation of it, so there is a more concrete interpretation of a thinker like Lonergan that grasps in the very interpretation of the data on his development the systematic links that bind elements of that development to one another. It is those links that I am searching for in these articles.

Theology' will illustrate steps in that development.