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Prolegomena to the Study of the Emerging Religious Consciousness of Our Time

- 1 The effort is to provide a framework within which the several contributions on the issue might come together. There is as yet no possibility of synthesis, for the contributions to the discussion are still underway.
  
- 2 'Consciousness' here means, at least at first, both knowledge and awareness of self – elsewhere, and later, he uses 'mindedness' to convey what 'consciousness' conveys here: 'Historical Mindedness.' 'Emerging consciousness' means that knowledge and awareness of self are both changing, and on the part of a number of people. 'Emerging religious consciousness' means that some change is happening in the realm of knowledge and awareness of self (mindedness) as religious, on the part of a number of people, due to the coalescence of outer [sociocultural] and inner [religious] factors. '... the inner religious and outer sociocultural factors come together to constitute a new religious consciousness inasmuch as (1) the inner religious factor resembles an infrastructure while (2) the outer sociocultural factor makes possible, or begins to countenance, or expresses, or interprets the religious experience.' 'Emerging' means that changes are taking place in these two dimensions in 'our time,' that is, in both the inner religious factor and outer sociocultural interpretations. 'Emerging religious consciousness' might mean 'the transition from lesser to greater luminousness, intensity, clarity, fulness' (59). This may be 'in response to social change. It may be released by cultural difference. It may remodel any of the previously existing forms of religious belief and practise, or scatter into idiosyncratic particularisms, or move (enthusiastically or reluctantly) towards ecumenism or universalism' (59-60).
  
- 3 One of these sources is studied in the section 'Social Alienation' (60-63). Ours is a time of very large establishments: in finance, industry, commerce, in government, in health care, in education, in care for orphans, the sick, and the aged, in religion. Large establishments are organized by bureaucracy. Large establishments and their bureaucratic organizations are a fourfold source of 'that conjunction of dissatisfaction and hopelessness that is named alienation and foments revolutions' (61): (1) the establishment's products and services are specified by universals, but the good is always concrete; (2) its mode of operation is rigid with little tolerance for discretionary adaptation; (3) its capacity for the more alert observation and the more critical reflection that generate revised ideas and remodeled operations seems no greater than that which Kuhn found in the scientific community; (4) its size, complexity, and solidarity with other large establishments and bureaucracies provide a broad field for the ingenuity of egoists, the biases of groups, the disastrous oversights of 'practical' common sense (see 63 for this summary of the section). (RD: all of this is at the level of 'social values.')

- 4 There is emerging at the superstructural level of culture (and so in the realm of cultural values) what Lonergan refers to as a second enlightenment. It might have some relevance to the social alienation discussed above. It begins, however, in much more rarefied domains: with the relativization of Euclidean geometry, which now became ‘just one of many possible geometric systems deduced from freely chosen postulates’ (63-64). Then Newton’s mechanics became relativized by Einstein’s special relativity, the notion of ‘necessary laws’ fell before Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, and the iron laws of economics were simply ignored by Keynes as he wrote in the Depression. Darwin’s chance variation gave way (in Lonergan) to the probability of the emergence of new forms, and Darwin’s survival of the fittest to the higher probabilities of survival. ‘A deductivist world of mechanist determinism was making way for the probability schedules of a world in process from lower to higher species and ecosystems’ (64). (In other words, *Insight* has something to offer to the second enlightenment!) In philosophy, meanwhile, emphases on pure reason and rationalist systems gave way to an insistence on will, faith, conscience, action, etc., i.e., human freedom and autonomy. Human studies also shifted from abstract philosophies of history to concrete historical scholarship: the interpretative reconstruction of the constructions of humankind. Reductionist positivism is being set aside gradually in psychology, sociology, studies of consciousness. This second enlightenment of itself is culturally significant, but it may also have a social mission. ‘Just as the first enlightenment had its carrier in the transition from feudal to bourgeois society, so the second may find a role and task in offering hope and providing leadership to the masses alienated by large establishments under bureaucratic management’ (65).
- 5 ‘Emerging religious consciousness’ is then discussed, but, following Robley Edward Whitson, it is discussed in the context of ‘a thrust towards world community in contemporary consciousness’ (65), and again against the backdrop of social alienation due to both isolated individualism and totalitarianism. Matching this is the seven-point formulation of Raimundo Panikkar, the interest in the work of Teilhard, and the interfaith dialogues between Christian and Zen masters written up by William Johnston. There is ‘an area that, as experience, is common to East and West, morally uplifting, cosmic in orientation but, when interpreted, takes on the distinctiveness of diverse traditions. It is at this point that we meet what, on the one hand, is religious in its distinctiveness and, so to speak, its essence but, on the other hand, has not yet become the infrastructure incorporated within an interpretative suprastructure’ (67). Johnston spoke of ‘religious experience that is incorporated in different interpretations’ and Panikkar of ‘what remains when the opposing interpretations are removed’ (68). There is, says Lonergan, ‘not too great a difference’ between them. There is a common factor that need not become, or perhaps cannot as yet become, an objectifiable common ground, but that can already be the basis for a really open dialogue even if the meeting ground may first have to be created. So Whitson calls for theologians to promote the ‘coming convergence of world religions’ (68), where we will not leave or abandon traditions but expect that when they are no longer isolated they will have even greater significance in interaction with the others. And in Christian ecumenism there is the example of the Kimbanguist Church in the Congo.

6 All of this is leading up to the ‘schematic framework’ with which Lonergan ends the paper (70-71). The long-term approach to some common theology or style of religious thinking is represented by Panikkar and Whitson. At the present time we have to adopt the formulations of our specific traditions at least as temporary conventions. At least in some areas Christianity will continue to be the most relevant tradition, and then Romans 5.5 may prove helpful: ‘As infrastructure it is the dynamic state of being in love in an unrestricted fashion, a conscious content without an apprehended object’ (71). The distinctiveness of Christianity lies not in this infrastructure but in its interpretative superstructure, trinitarian and christological. The universalism to which Christianity in its authenticity aspires is due to the fact that salvation is in and through charity, and this gift of charity as infrastructure is the Christian account of religious experience in all people.

### Christology Today: Methodological Reflections

- 7 The paper is concerned with what is new in Christology (or was at that time). There is special concern with Schoonenberg’s book *The Christ*, with which he is clearly not in sympathy; but he hopes to proceed positively rather than negatively, concluding with the question, Can one truly be a human being without being a human person?
- 8 There are three prolegomena. The first has to do with psychology, and it asserts that the Aristotelian psychology grounded in metaphysics is not sufficient to meet present-day questions in Christology. ‘... one must go beyond a metaphysical view of the person, a metaphysical account of human perfection, a metaphysical account of the life of grace’ (76), since ‘the essence of the challenge is an assumption (1) that a person is the psychological subject of interpersonal relations, (2) that human development is entry into a symbolic world, a world mediated by meaning, (3) that one cannot be truly a human being without being a human person’ (76). The appropriate psychology would proceed from the data of consciousness. Its basic terms would name conscious operations, its basic relations conscious processes; its account of human development has to do with conscious subjects moving cumulatively through their operations to the self-transcendence of truth and love (see 76). Advance in development is ordinarily from below upwards, but not exclusively so. In fact, insofar as the transformation of love is effective, development will be more fundamentally from above downwards. ‘It is on the analogy of such transforming love that perhaps we can gain some imperfect understanding of the mystery that the life lived by Jesus of Nazareth really was the fully human life of the second person of the Blessed Trinity’ (77).
- 9 A second prolegomenon has to do with philosophy. When theology deprecates any intrusion from philosophy, the result is not a lack of philosophy but unconscious philosophy or bad philosophy. The confusions can often be traced to our inadvertence to the distinction between the world of immediacy and the world mediated by meaning. Schoonenberg has done away with a Christology having to do with being in favor or a Christology of presence. But the presence of Christ to us is not presence in

the world of immediacy but is mediated by meaning, tradition, dogmas, liturgy, etc. And development in that world mediated by meaning is not only from below upwards but also from above downwards, so that 'in theology ... one proceeds not only from the data of revelation to more comprehensive statements but also from an imperfect, analogous yet most fruitful understanding of mystery to the syntheses that complement a *via inventionis* with a *via doctrinae*' (80).

- 10 The third prolegomenon has to do with history, and in this instance with the history that is written. The development of historical method has involved a shift from history as a matter of believing testimony to history as a matter of understanding evidence. Scripture as inspired is mainly evidence on the faith of the early church. 81: 'In the first instance it reveals what was believed at the time a given book was written, diffused, accepted. At a second instance it reveals what was believed at the time and place of earlier strata found in later writings. At a third instance it provides premises for inferences on still earlier knowledge or belief.' Not even moderately conservative exegetes believe that all the NT titles ascribed to Jesus are attributed to Jesus himself. Some believe a few less significant ones may be, and some believe none may be. For the approach now is not to view the NT as testimony to be believed because it is credible, but as evidence to be understood regarding the three instances mentioned above. Moreover, on this basis the psychology of Christ as human now has to be understood in accord with the rule, 'similar to us in all things but sin.' 82: 'If we are to think of Jesus as truly a man, we have to think of him as a historical being, as growing in wisdom, age, and grace in a determinate social and cultural milieu, as developing from below as other human beings and from above on the analogy of religious development.'
- 11 The next point is Christology as a *religious* question. The challenge that this presents to theologians is clear: 'to find the approach that can select what is valid in current views without becoming [doctrinally] involved in positions open to radical change' (82). Lonergan attempts to delineate this approach in four steps. **First**, there is 'post-Kantian transcendental method' embracing in their complementarity *both* human beings as attentive, as intelligent, as reasonable, as responsible *and* the human world as given and as structured by intelligence, by reasonable judgment, by decision and action, in other words the isomorphism of intentional structure and intended world. The **second** step concludes a complex argument with 'the currently common view that the NT pertains to the genus, *Heilsgeschichte*, that it centers on a *kerygma* addressed to *Existenz*' (83). The **third** step notes 'that the message is at once simple, radical, and intensely personal, that it stands in correlation with the response it elicits, and in that response there emerges the message as message-for-us' (83-84). To the message the essential answer is action, deed, which begets further answering action, including 'acclamations acknowledging Jesus as Lord, ... confessions that God has quickened him from the dead, ... gradually developing and expanding formulas of belief ... it was to provide a context for such acclamations, such confessions, such formulas, to clarify their meaning and preclude misinterpretations, that memories of Jesus' earthly ministry were recalled and gospels were written' (84). The **fourth** step is to note that the NT is also a personal invitation and that the appropriate response to it is a personal

commitment. ‘So ineluctably there arises the question, Who is this Jesus?’ It is a question asked in the NT itself on a number of occasions.

- 12 A next question is Christology as a *theological* question. We have been treating Christology as a religious and personal question, but it is also a theological question. As such it involves such prior issues as: the contrast between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, the option between a functional and an ontological Christology, the problem of uniting the concern of the inquiring subject with the objective wealth of scriptural scholarship, through the elaboration of a heuristic structure of Christological method.
- 13 The contrast between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith vanishes, at least as a radical opposition, when (1) religious people correct their precritical views of history and (2) learned people come to recognize in the NT contemporary and so firsthand evidence on the beliefs of the early church. This gives us the clue to Christological method, which, Lonergan says again, involves ‘selecting what is valid in current views without becoming involved in positions open to radical change’ (86). The incipient and still tentative reconstruction of the thought and language of the Jesus of history is open to radical change. But what is valid in current views is based on the contemporary and so firsthand evidence we possess on the beliefs of the early church. 86: ‘By discerning Christian tradition in that evidence, by coming to grasp its immanent structure and intelligibility, by leaving open the questions still to be settled by the reconstruction of the Jesus of history, the theologian ... will find a first and basic component in a methodically developing Christology.’
- 14 Next, is NT Christology ontological or functional? It is neither merely functional nor yet strictly ontological. A merely functional Christology would acknowledge no more than a series of religious events, i.e., the acts of believing of early Christians. But salvation history is not a factual history of acts of believing. It is history of what actually happened, on the evidence believers discern in the light of faith. But NT Christology is also not strictly ontological. It does not go into metaphysics.
- 15 Next, the heuristic structure of Christological method. 87: ‘A heuristic structure ... is a conjunction both of data on the side of the object and of an operative criterion on the side of the subject. Accordingly, a Christological heuristic structure will be a similar conjunction giving rise to the succession of Christologies set forth in New Testament writings and further developed in the formulations of individuals and of communities down the ages.’ On the side of the data we discern (1) that Jesus is named time and again from different viewpoints and in different contexts the Son of God, (2) that we through faith are children of God and by baptism are one in Christ, that God sent his only Son that we might acquire the status as children, and (3) that the Spirit we have received from God knows all and has been given us that we may know all that God of his own grace gives us. In correspondence with such data there arises in us our heuristic structure: How are we to understand Jesus as Son of God? Is it a mythic or merely honorific title? Does it simply denote the mission of the Messiah? Or does it point to an inner reality such as is our own divine status as adopted children through

Christ and in the Spirit, so that as God in us is the Spirit, so God in Jesus is the Word? Or does the sonship of Jesus mean, as the church for centuries has understood it, that Jesus was truly a man leading a truly human life but his identity was the identity of the eternal Son of God consubstantial with the Father?

- 16 A first criterion is our own experience of our own status as adopted children (Lonergan: 'sonship.') If the Spirit in us is God, surely God was in Jesus too. Further, the Spirit of God in us enables us to discern what the spirit of the world cannot discern. It is in the progressive clarification of Christian experience and in the continuous exercise of spiritual discernment in the Christian community that Christological doctrine developed. And in our time there is an exigence for further development. 'There are windows to be opened and fresh air to be let in. It will not, I am convinced, dissolve the solid achievement of the past. It will, I hope, put that achievement on a securer base and enrich it with a fuller content' (89).
- 17 What, then, is the meaning of Chalcedon? It has the meaning of a dogma. But what is that? Schoonenberg seems to belong to the group that simply does not advert to the very notion of dogma, to the notion that propositions can be true or false, and as true or false they refer or do not refer to reality. The meaning of a dogma is not the meaning of a pattern or model. 90: 'The deeper issue at Chalcedon is that its decree is dogmatic and that its pattern results from earlier dogmatic decrees. It results from the affirmation of Nicea that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, that he is not made but begotten ... It results from the rejection by Nicea of those that claimed there was a time when the Son did not exist or that he did not exist before he was begotten ... It results from Ephesus and from the *Formula unionis* on which Alexandrines and Antiochenes agreed in the spring of 433 that Jesus Christ the only Son of God was consubstantial with the Father according to his divinity and consubstantial with us according to his humanity ...'
- 18 Finally, there is the issue of the meaning of person. For Schoonenberg also asks whether one can lead a truly human life without being a human person. The dogmas teach one person in two natures, where the one person is divine. And today we have to be able to say just what it means for a divine person to live a fully human life. For Lonergan, the key statement here is the following: 'the person of Christ is an identity that eternally is subject of divine consciousness and in time became subject of a human consciousness.' The statement is explained by speaking of (1) identity, (2) human consciousness, (3) human subjectivity, (4) divine subjectivity, and (5) the compatibility of one identity with the two subjectivities.
- 19 *Identity* means 'one' not in the sense of 'instance' or in the sense of 'intelligible unity' but in the sense of 'one and the same,' undivided in itself and distinct from everything else. *Human consciousness*: our sensitive, intellectual, rational, and moral operations are both intentional and conscious. As intentional, they make objects present to us. As conscious, they make us present to ourselves. But the word 'present' is used here in two distinct ways, one referring to objects and the other to the subject. In adult consciousness subject and object are already distinct, but coincidence

preceded distinction, and knowledge is a process of objectification. More radically, there is a process of becoming oneself, so that we cannot conceive subject and object as fixed and immutable things. The world mediated by meaning is reality as known, where the knowing is ever in process. The subject that mediates the world by meaning is also in a process of self-realization through self-transcendence. This necessitates a distinction between subject and *human subjectivity*. ‘Subject’ denotes the identity, while ‘subjectivity’ denotes the intelligible unity that already is teleologically what it eventually is to become.

- 20 Having treated three of our five topics (identity, human consciousness, and human subjectivity), ‘we may note that part of our objective has already been attained. For in a truly human life there is identity. I am no longer an infant, a child, a boy, a young man, but however great the differences in my truly human living, I am still the same I that I was from the beginning. Nor is this identity diminished by the fact that the differences are not confined to differences in abilities and skills and habits, that they involve the becoming and the stability of my ego, my personality, what I can call myself. For such differences regard not the identity of the subject but his subjectivity. He remains himself though he truly transcends himself’ (93).
- 21 The main component in the hypostatic union is approached by asking if we can speak intelligibly of three distinct and conscious subjects of divine consciousness. For Lonergan the answer is yes, and there is his late statement on 93-94 of the psychological analogy that enables us to do so. Q.V. And if that is possible, then ‘perhaps now we can begin to discern, however imperfectly, the possibility of a single divine identity being at once subject of divine consciousness and also subject of a human consciousness’ (94). The paradox of the implication that a man lived a truly human life without being a human person is removed by the distinction between identity and subjectivity. His identity was divine, but he had a truly human subjectivity that grew in wisdom and age and grace and that was similar to our own in all things save sin. Nor is the timeless and unchanging subjectivity proper to the divine identity in conflict with the developing subjectivity of a human life, for (Chalcedon) although the identity is without distinction or separation, still the subjectivities are without modification or confusion. ‘Moreover, the human subjectivity of Christ conforms to the divine. For the eternal Word is Son, and it is that very Son that introduced into human language prayer to God not simply as Father but as a child’s Father, as Abba; and as the Son as man prayed to Abba, so we in the Spirit of the Son also cry, Abba! Father! Again, as the eternal Word is the eternally true expression of the value that God as *agapē* is, so the Word as man by obedience unto death again expressed that value by revealing how much God loved the world ... Finally, in his resurrection and exaltation he beckons us to the splendor of the children of God for which up to now ‘the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pangs of childbirth’ ... In that beckoning we discern not only the ground of our hope but also the cosmic dimension in the new creation of all things in Christ Jesus our Lord’ (94).

## Healing and Creating in History

- 22 The topic has to do with healing and creating in human affairs in general. For Bertrand Russell and many church people the problem with the world is that we are clever but wicked, where as for Karl Popper it is that we are good but stupid. Lonergan agrees with both, since there is both a darkening of intellect and a weakening of will. But diagnosis is one thing, healing and creating another.
- 23 The need for human creating is illustrated from the contemporary economic situation and the power of the multinational corporations. They are built on long-accepted principles, but the principles are inadequate and suffer from radical oversights. Their rigorous application on a global scale is heading us for disaster, but the new system needed for our collective survival does not exist. When survival requires a system that does not exist, then the need for creating is manifest.
- 24 The creative process itself ‘is a matter of insight, not of one insight but of many, not of isolated insights but of insights that coalesce, that complement and correct one another, that influence policies and programs, that reveal their shortcomings in their concrete results, that give rise to further correcting insights, corrected policies, corrected programs, that gradually accumulate into the all-round, balanced, smoothly functioning system that from the start was needed but at the start was not yet known’ (103). Often the flow of fresh insights takes its rise from a creative minority, but the success of their implementation wins the devoted allegiance of the people.
- 25 With the distinction of insight from slogan and again from concepts, we approach the concrete: ‘... the good is never an abstraction. Always it is concrete. The whole point to the process of cumulative insight is that each insight regards the concrete while the cumulative process heads towards an ever fuller and more adequate view. Add abstraction to abstraction and one never reaches more than a heap of abstractions. But add insight to insight and one moves to mastery of all the eventualities and complications of a concrete situation’ (104).
- 26 The problem is that the flow of fresh insights can dry up; the challenges may continue, but responses now fail; a minority that was creative ceases to be creative and becomes merely dominant. Why? ‘... there is one ultimate answer that rests on the intrinsic limitations of insight itself. For insights can be implemented only if people have open minds. Problems can be manifest. Insights that solve them may be available. But the insights will not be grasped and implemented by biased minds’ (105). The biases are the familiar four: dramatic, individual, group, and general. All such bias has a distorting effect on the whole process of growth: ‘Increasingly the situation becomes, not the cumulative product of coherent and complementary insights, but the dump in which are heaped up the amorphous and incompatible products of all the biases of self-centered and shortsighted individuals and groups. Finally, the more the objective situation becomes a mere dump, the less is there any possibility of human intelligence gathering from the situation anything more than a lengthy catalogue of the aberrations and the follies of the past. As a diagnosis of terminal cancer denies any prospect of

health restored, so a social dump is the end of fruitful insight and of the cumulative development it can generate' (105-106).

27 Toynbee's *Study of History* reveals at this point a new style of human development: '... out of the frustration and disgust of the internal proletariat there come the world religions and a new style of human development' (106). Here is where Lonergan gives one of his earliest presentations of human development from above downwards (106). Then: '... just as the creative process, when unaccompanied by healing, is distorted and corrupted by bias, so too the healing process, when unaccompanied by creating, is a soul without a body' (107). And this means, in terms of the economic problem raised by the multinational corporations, that economic theorists have to provide a new and specific type of analysis that reveals how moral precepts have both a basis in economic process and so an effective application to it; and that moral theorists have to provide specifically economic precepts that arise out of economic process itself and promote its proper functioning (108). '... when the system that is needed for our collective survival does not exist, then it is futile to excoriate what does exist while blissfully ignoring the task of constructing a technically viable economic system that can be put in its place' (108). So all that is needed (!) is 'an interdisciplinary theory that at first will be denounced as absurd, then will be admitted to be true but obvious and insignificant, and perhaps finally be regarded as so important that its adversaries will claim that they themselves discovered it' (108).