

## Chapters 1-4 of *What Is Systematic Theology?*

**Preface, pp. 1-2:** The book envisions ‘a complete reconstruction of the discipline or functional specialty of systematic theology,’ not by an individual but by a community. The new systematics will be ‘entirely continuous with the permanent achievements of the past,’ achievements, however, that ‘were reached in stages of meaning that are now part of history.’ The ultimate arbiters of meaning are found in ‘interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness ... in the personally appropriated structure of one’s own cognitive and deliberative operations and in the gift of God’s love as one has made that gift one’s own and followed it where it leads one.’

**Chapter 1:** The book works from the presumption that there is a certain amount of unfinished business in what Lonergan wrote about systematics (3). His notion of systematics remained unchanged throughout his career, but his own development in other areas raises further questions about systematics. For one thing, more will be included among the tasks of systematic theology than he ever explicitly acknowledged. For another, the dynamic of *Method in Theology* currently is interrupted by the chapter on systematics, and I would like to rectify that. ‘More precisely, there are operations that systematic theologians perform that Lonergan does not account for at any point in his presentation of the method of systematics, or for that matter anywhere else’ (4). One result of this effort would be ‘to open the presentation of systematics to the issues of **cultural and religious pluralism and interreligious dialogue**’ (4). 4-5: ‘Perhaps no area of theology in direct discourse is of greater importance at the present time and for the foreseeable future than this, and I am convinced that Lonergan’s own suggestions concerning the direction that Christian theology must take on these issues are still the clearest I have seen and make more sense than any others, even as they are compatible with the best thinking on the part of people who have specialized in this set of questions.’

This is by no means a rejection of Lonergan’s emphases. 5: ‘I insist on the necessity of preserving his distinct emphases.’ ‘I have no quarrel with what Lonergan *does* say about systematics. I am rather noting the absence of certain key elements from his work. I want him to say more. He *can* say more. The “more” is waiting to be said. Clearly, I cannot make him say more, so I will try to say more myself.’

Lonergan’s ‘most detailed single exposition’ of an understanding of systematics is contained in the first chapter of *The Triune God: Systematics*. Much happened between 1957 and 1972, and yet the understanding of systematics remains unchanged. This is the problem I am addressing. *Bring to level of 1972 + then to level of 2005.*

Q. More particularly, the breakthrough to functional specialization, the notion of mediation, and the foundation of systematics in conversion demand a more extensive notion of systematics than is found in chapter 13 of *Method in Theology*, an accumulation of insights, adjustments, re-interpretations around the notions of systematics. I register agreement with the proposal that the **principal function** of systematics is the understanding of the mysteries of faith affirmed in ecclesial and theological doctrines.