

What is Divine Justice? Insights from Lonergan's Text *The Redemption: A Supplement to De Verbo Incarnato*

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I. Introduction

Among Lonergan's unpublished works is a Latin manuscript written during his years at the Gregorian University (1953-1965). He did not give a name to this work. In early circulation it was known as *De bono et malo*, or simply *De bono*, the title of the first of the six chapters.¹ Lonergan handed this text over to Frederick Crowe in August 1972, stating that the text was to be an addition to his book *De Verbo Incarnato* with the purpose of explaining the "historical causality" of Christ.² The work was never added to the book. But his intention is consistent with how he once summarized his own lifework. He once said to his friend Eric O'Connor, "All my work has been introducing history into Catholic theology."³ *De bono et malo* was part of Lonergan's project aiming at a *theology of history*. Today we have a working yet unpublished English translation from the Lonergan Research Institute, Toronto, with the title "*The Redemption: A Supplement to De Verbo Incarnato*."⁴ The title reflects Lonergan's words that this was to be an additional thesis to *De Verbo Incarnato*. So for this reason I will refer to the text simply as the *Supplement*. The University of Toronto Press, in collaboration with the Lonergan

¹ Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., *Christ and History: The Christology of Bernard Lonergan from 1935 to 1982* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2005), 102.

² Crowe, *Christ and History*, 100.

³ R. Eric O'Connor, *Curiosity at the Center of One's Life: Statements and Questions of R. Eric O'Connor*, ed. J. Martin O'Hara (Montreal: Thomas More Institute, 1984), 427.

⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *The Redemption: A Supplement to De Verbo Incarnato*, unpublished English translation of *De bono et malo*, trans. Michael G. Shields, S.J. (Toronto: Lonergan Research Institute, 2000). Hereafter cited in text as *Supplement*. I will rely on Shields's translation in future references to the *Supplement*. Page numbers will reference both the original Latin text and Shields's English translation. Lonergan's original Latin text will be referenced as *De bono et malo*, abbreviated *DBM*. Lonergan numbered the first 179 pages (Chapters 1 to 4). From page 180 on I will add an asterisk (*180, *181, etc.). Shields's English translation will be referenced as the *Supplement*.

Research Institute, plans to publish this text as volume 9 of the Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (*CWL*), under the general editorship of Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe.

The dating of the text is somewhat of an enigma. When Lonergan handed the text to Frederick Crowe in 1972, he stated that the text dated to 1963-1964. However, from 1956 to 1958, in at least three letters from Rome to Fr. Crowe, Lonergan spoke of a major work he was preparing on redemption. In the last letter dated May 25, 1958, he told Fr. Crowe that he has got 6 chapter and 45 articles pretty well.⁵

The *Supplement* as we have it today includes forty-five articles arranged over six chapters. The six finished chapters in the English translation come to eighty-thousand words, a decent sized book in itself. The six chapters, in the English translation, are titled as follows:

- Chapter 1: Good and Evil (articles 1 – 8)
- Chapter 2: The Justice of God (articles 9 – 15)
- Chapter 3: On the Death and Resurrection of Christ (articles 16 – 21)
- Chapter 4: The Cross of Christ (articles 22 – 25)
- Chapter 5: The Satisfaction Given by Christ (articles 26 – 34)
- Chapter 6: The Work of Christ (articles 35 – 45)⁶

Given this brief background on the *Supplement*, my purpose in this presentation is interpreting Lonergan’s understanding of divine justice in this text. My primary source is chapter 2 of the text titled “The Justice of God.” My presentation addresses two primary

⁵ Crowe, *Christ and History*, 100. The dating of the text requires us to critically review whether this text was indeed intended as a “Supplement” to *De Verbo Incarnato*, despite Lonergan’s remarks to Fr. Crowe in 1972. My working hypothesis is that a draft of the text was completed in 1958, prior to the publication of *De Verbo Incarnato*, first published in 1960. In all likelihood this text, as a whole, is *not* a Supplement to *De Verbo Incarnato*. Perhaps only the last chapter, which deals explicitly with the historical causality of Christ, may have been edited in the early 1960’s by Lonergan and intended as a Supplement or additional Thesis to *De Verbo Incarnato*. These historical issues however are outside the scope of the current presentation.

⁶ Shields’s introduction to the English translation states that Lonergan handed to Frederick Crowe a folder titled ‘De Opere Christi (art. 35-44),’ which comprises chapter 6, Lonergan evidently rewrote article 44 (‘*De Fine Incarnationis*’) and divided it into two articles, article 44 titled ‘*De Fine Incarnationis*’ and article 45 titled ‘*Cur Deus Homo*.’

questions. First, what *is* Lonergan’s understanding of divine justice? Second, what purpose does this understanding serve in the wider context of the *Supplement*?

II. Lonergan’s Understanding of Divine Justice

Lonergan’s chapter on the Justice of God begins with a brief introduction. He begins by stating that word ‘justice’ conjures up thoughts of law codes and lawyers, judges and juries, prisons and prison-guards, hangmen and gallows. He states that such a general notion of justice is quite inadequate in dealing with the justice of God. What the Apostle Paul calls “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10) must be understood as being at the same time the law of God’s justice. In itself it is simple and infinite, but so long as we are in this life we cannot contemplate it as it is. We must proceed, rather, by way of analogy. But not all created things are equally helpful to us in this endeavor. In this chapter, therefore, Lonergan states that we shall move step by step from a consideration of order in the world, of the actual human condition, and of God’s personal justice, while leaving room for the further development of this idea which can and must be made in treating of the Incarnate Word.⁷

Now I would like to make four comments on Lonergan’s introduction. First, when Lonergan refers to what St. Paul calls the “manifold wisdom of God” and then states that this must be understood as the law of God’s justice, he is appropriating the thought of Aquinas. For Aquinas, it is impossible for God to will anything but what God’s wisdom approves. This is the law of justice, that divine will follows divine wisdom.⁸

⁷ Lonergan, *DBM*, 66 [*Supplement*, 27].

⁸ *ST*, I, q. 21, a. 1, ad 2m.

Second, when Lonergan states that we must proceed by way of analogy he reveals his own understanding of the method of systematic theology. Throughout his career, despite development in his vision of the whole of theology which came with his breakthrough to functional specializations, systematic theology for Lonergan always remained the imperfect, analogical, obscure, but extremely fruitful understanding of the mysteries of faith, as articulated at the First Vatican Council.⁹

Third, Lonergan refers to world order, to the actual human condition, and to God's personal justice. These three correspond to the universal, historical, and personal dimensions of divine justice Lonergan treats in the chapter. As I go through this presentation I will clarify the meanings of these dimensions.

Fourth, Lonergan refers to further development in the idea of divine justice by treating the Incarnate Word. The point here is that Lonergan's chapter on the Justice of God is not his final word on divine justice. In a later chapter, on the Cross of Christ, he will state that we have another analogy, and a loftier one at that, to come to know God's justice. Again, I will treat that dimension later in this presentation. For now I would like to discuss specifically the universal dimension of divine justice.

1. The Universal Dimension of Divine Justice

Given Lonergan's understanding of systematic theology, it is no surprise that the first article of Lonergan's chapter on the justice of God has as its primary purpose to identify the analogy by which we can come to some imperfect and analogical understanding of divine justice. Lonergan begins with a consideration of which divisions of human justice are appropriate analogies. Human justice is divided into commutative,

⁹ Robert Doran, *What is Systematic Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 7-8.

legal, distributive, and social justice. Lonergan determines that only distributive justice can be attributed to God.¹⁰ I do not have space here to review Lonergan's entire argument, but I can state that for Lonergan there is distributive justice when the unity and whole are correctly related to many individuals. And since God is the source of all gifts, and since distributive justice refers to the right *ordering* of these gifts, then distributive justice can be applied to God. The emphasis here is on the notion of order. And for Lonergan, this right ordering among God's gifts is discerned in the operation of the whole created universe. So for Lonergan, the universal dimension of divine justice is going to be understood by discerning God's operation in the functioning of the order of the universe. The first article makes at least eighteen explicit references to the teachings of Aquinas. The vast majority relate to the order of the universe. In this regard I would summarize Lonergan's appropriation of Aquinas as follows: Since that which is best in all creation is the good of order of the universe, this order must necessarily be in itself directly intended by God, the cause of all things. In the divine mind, therefore, there is the idea of the order of the universe, and that idea itself contains within it the idea of all other sub-orders and all other created things.¹¹

In the second article of the chapter Lonergan continues to explore this universal dimension of divine justice. Here he leverages the findings of contemporary science. Beings have innate forms or laws. And in the order of this universe, there exist natural or classical laws governing this order and the relationship between beings. Furthermore, the natures of individual beings are interrelated in complexes of natural laws, and some beings operate to fulfill the conditions under which other beings begin to operate.

¹⁰ Lonergan, *DBM*, 67 [*Supplement*, 27].

¹¹ *ST*, I, q. 15, a. 2.

Through Lonergan's consideration of the order of this universe, he makes two key statements on the universal dimension of divine justice.

The first statement is that this world order does not come about by chance. The order of this world is the proper effect of God produced through secondary causes.¹²

In the second statement, Lonergan enumerates four basic aspects on the nature of divine justice. First, the ultimate end to which all things are directed is the manifestation of divine goodness. Second, the means used by divine wisdom to attain this end is the nature of things and natural laws. Thirdly, divine wisdom does not learn by trial and error, but in one immediate intuition has foreseen, ordered, and commissioned all things from the very first beginnings of the universe right down to the end. Fourth, the purpose of this one plan is to arrange and connect things as to result in either serial or circular patterns of operations in the course of time and in a co-temporal hierarchic order that the common course of events and order of the universe results.¹³

In my interpretation of Lonergan, these statements reveal two major themes in the universal dimension of divine justice.

1a. The First Major Theme: World Order is the Proper Effect of God Produced Through Secondary Causes

For Lonergan, the fact that all causes except the highest are instruments represents the meaning of quote "the proper effect of God." He made this explicit statement in his dissertation where he took up the question of development in Thomas Aquinas's

¹² Lonergan, *DBM*, 77 [*Supplement*, 31].

¹³ Lonergan, *DBM*, 77 [*Supplement*, 31].

understanding of operative grace.¹⁴ Thus any secondary cause is an instrumental cause. And since the whole universe is the proper effect of God, then *all* causes in the universe other than God are instrumental or secondary causes. This represents Aquinas's notion of universal instrumentality: all causes in the universe, except the highest, are instruments.

Now what we have just discussed reveals a fundamental aspect of Lonergan's thought on the relationship between order and essence in the divine mind, and this is essential to interpreting Lonergan's understanding of divine justice. To state that anything is a proper effect of God means that the effect is directly willed by God in accordance with divine wisdom. It is Aquinas's teaching that in God's intention, the order of the universe is prior to essences.¹⁵ Aquinas makes this argument in the *Summa contra Gentiles* (SCG, II, c. 42). There he states that the first cause of the distinction and diversity of things in this universe is not caused by secondary agents, but the inverse is true: the actions of secondary causes are on account of the order of the universe. Thus divine wisdom *intends world order prior to essences*, and Lonergan has appropriated this teaching of Aquinas. This notion is no doubt operative in Lonergan's thought on the universal dimension of divine justice. This notion was also operative in Lonergan's essay "The Natural Desire to See God." Lonergan did affirm the existence of a natural desire to see God. My purpose here however is not to defend Lonergan's thesis nor enter into the debate about this disputed question in Catholic theology. My point is to make a judgment, based on an interpretation of Lonergan, that when he speaks of world order as quote "a proper effect of God," that this is equivalent to his appropriation of Aquinas's

¹⁴ Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. Edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 83 n. 83.

¹⁵ Lonergan, *De ratione convenientiae*, 4.

teaching that divine wisdom conceives world order prior to finite natures. Of course this does not suggest any temporal order in the divine mind. But it does suggest an ontological order. The order of the universe is not a coincidence. It is not arbitrary. It is not a byproduct of individual essences coming together accidentally into some intelligible order. The order itself is directly intended by God.

1b. The Second Major Theme: What does this World Order Reveal about the Universal Dimension of Divine Justice?

Understanding world order is a means to understand divine justice because of the prior judgment that there is no higher rule for divine justice than divine wisdom, and divine wisdom has conceived this world order. Lonergan's method of arriving at a concrete understanding of world order is through the use of three successive approximations. Any single approximation does not account for the concrete order of reality. All three approximations are needed.

The first approximation is that within the order of this universe there are individual beings having innate forms or essences and there are natural laws governing this order. The second approximation includes two insights. First, beings are interrelated and interconnected resulting in a concatenation of several natural laws in mutual operation. Second, there must be a particular combination or conjunction of factors to fulfill the conditions necessary for a complex of laws to be operative.¹⁶ With this insight Lonergan is introducing the notion of statistical laws. The third approximation is the insight that there is not a single complex of laws operative in the universe, but many. These complexes are often interconnected. For example, the complex of laws governing

¹⁶ Lonergan, *DBM*, 70 [*Supplement*, 29].

the sun and its planetary system is interconnected with the complex of laws governing the circulation of moisture over the earth, giving rise to plant life. And complex of laws governing plant life is interconnected with the complex of laws governing animal life.¹⁷

Lonergan's three approximations clearly depend on the complementary intelligibility of natural and statistical laws. The complementary intelligibility is what in *Insight* Lonergan calls *emergent probability*. World process reveals an order, a design, an intelligibility.¹⁸ Emergent probability is Lonergan's worldview articulating this intelligibility.¹⁹ Furthermore, there is a directed dynamism of emergent probability, an upthrust if you will, from lower intelligible schemes to higher intelligible schemes.²⁰ In *Insight* this directed dynamism goes by the name of "finality,"²¹ and in other works "vertical finality."²² For example, the atomic level is taken up into a higher intelligible unity of the molecular level. The molecular level is taken up into a higher intelligible unity of the chemical level. The chemical level is taken up into a higher intelligible unity of the biological level. The biological level is taken up into a higher intelligible unity of the psychological level. And the psychological level is taken up into a higher intelligible unity of the human being. Each higher level represents a more comprehensive scheme. Each level is able to relate events in a systematically intelligible way that could not otherwise be systematically related at the lower level. Now the term "vertical finality" is not found explicitly in the *Supplement*. The concept is nevertheless operative in

¹⁷ Lonergan, *DBM*, 72 [*Supplement*, 30]

¹⁸ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. Edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1992), 149.

¹⁹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 138.

²⁰ Lonergan, *Insight*, 472.

²¹ Lonergan, *Insight*, 472.

²² Lonergan, "Finality, Love, Marriage," *Collection*, vol. 4 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. Edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 19-23; "Mission and the Spirit," *Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 24.

Lonergan's thought when he judges that the common course of things and the order of the universe results from a co-temporal hierarchic order.²³ This directed dynamism which Lonergan calls vertical finality does not originate from some blind force of the universe. The ground of vertical finality is divine wisdom and providence.²⁴

Now I would like to situate Lonergan's effort in a larger context. I would argue that Lonergan's understanding of the universal dimension of divine justice through his theory of emergent probability exemplifies his adoption of the Pope Leo XIII's program *vetera novis augere et perficere* – to enlarge and enrich the old with the new. In the Christian tradition, redemption and divine justice have always been closely linked. The category of divine justice took on a particular emphasis with St. Anselm's work *Cur Deus Homo*. Lonergan is faithful to the tradition, which for him is primarily represented by Aquinas, yet incorporates knowledge from contemporary natural and human sciences to enrich our analogical understanding of divine justice. As Robert Doran has noted, we could say that Lonergan's openness to using the natural and human sciences to develop general categories for systematic theology is solidly within the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition as opposed to an Augustinian/Bonaventurean tradition more hesitant and perhaps reluctant to incorporate knowledge from natural and human sciences.²⁵

Now as I mentioned earlier, Lonergan's understanding of divine justice includes three dimensions: the universal, the historical, and the personal. What we have discussed

²³ Lonergan, *DBM*, 77 [Supplement, 31].

²⁴ Lonergan, *DBM*, 72-73 [Supplement, 30]. See also Lonergan, *DBM*, 74 [Supplement, 31].

²⁵ Robert Doran, "The First Chapter of *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica: The Issues*," *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, v. 18, 1 (2000), 41. See also Lonergan, "Method in Catholic Theology," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, vol. 17 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*. Edited by Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 45-46.

thus far has dealt with the universal dimension. Now we will treat the historical and personal dimensions of divine justice.

2. The Historical and Personal Dimensions of Divine Justice

In Lonergan's chapter on divine justice, there is an article titled "The Historical Order of Justice." Lonergan's purpose in that article is to apply what he has said about the universal nature of divine justice to human history. He notes an isomorphism between the three levels of the human good and the three elements in his universal understanding of divine justice: (1) a particular good follows the operation of some law of nature; (2) the external good of order is a certain schematic pattern, serial or circular; (3) the cultural good is concerned with spreading and perfecting that interior order by which human beings, in exercising their reason and will, provide for themselves and also, in some way, participate in divine providence.²⁶

As evil is also part of human history, evil is not outside the order of divine justice. God makes use of human free will but human free inclines toward evil. Nevertheless, the fact of evil does not invalidate the order of divine justice. God has arranged the order of this universe such that not only does good result from good, but good may also come out of evil. In his discussion of the historical order of justice, Lonergan responds to a hypothetical objection that the historical order of justice is too general and it fails to take into account the personal order of justice. In other words, the objection would have it that the historical order of justice is not just with respect to individuals. For example, the consequences of personal evils go way beyond the person culpable, hurting innocent victims. Lonergan's response situates the individual in the context of human history. An

²⁶ Lonergan, *DBM*, 81 [*Supplement*, 33]. Lonergan references *ST*, I-II, q. 81, a. 2.

individual's human nature is not abrogated from the development that all other material creatures must endure through historical process. The whole person, in body, mind, and through relationships belongs by his or her very nature to the historical-cultural process. As such, his or her inclusion within this process and subordination to its laws and order is both wise and just.²⁷ To fully appreciate what Lonergan means here we need to consider his treatment of the personal order of justice, and God's will in relation to human actions.

Human beings are part of the historical order of justice in order that they may be taken up into another order. All our actions in the historical order of justice can be reduced to good or evil. Good acts consent to the dictates of reason, making oneself an intelligible work. A well-ordered, intelligible individual had made herself or himself a person in whom sense is subordinated to reason, and reason is subordinated to God.²⁸ On the other hand, persons who commit evil acts refuse to consent to the dictates of reason. Through evil acts one makes oneself an unintelligible work and withdraws from the intelligible order conceived by divine wisdom. The work of any person, whether intelligible or absurd, will endure. This is the ground of the personal order of justice.²⁹ What we make of ourselves in this life, whether good or evil, intelligible or unintelligible, shall remain in the life to come.³⁰

Now since we have mentioned the word evil, this naturally raises the question of how we reconcile the existence of evil with a just universe conceived by divine wisdom. Is God the author of evil? Well, we know the answer to that. Of course God is not the

²⁷ Lonergan, *DBM*, 84 [*Supplement*, 34].

²⁸ Lonergan, *DBM*, 87 [*Supplement*, 35].

²⁹ Lonergan, *DBM*, 89 [*Supplement*, 36].

³⁰ Lonergan, *DBM*, 92 [*Supplement*, 37].

author of evil. But how does Lonergan reconcile divine justice with the presence of evil. He does so by discussing what he calls “The Just Will of God.”

When we consider the heinous evils that have occurred in history it is natural to ask why God chose this order of reality and not some other. Lonergan answers that God could have instituted another order, so long as this involved no internal contradiction.³¹ But as to why God chose this particular order and not some other, we are up against mystery, and our inquiry must give way to humble submission. Lonergan recalls the wisdom of St. Augustine: even if God had created a different order, it would still have failed to satisfy our wisdom.³² And following Aquinas, Lonergan appeals to the distinction between indirect and direct willingness in the just will of God. God directly wills the good. God in no way wills the evil of sin, neither directly nor indirectly.³³ And God only indirectly wills the evil of punishment and the evil of natural defects. God indirectly wills these evils because each is connected to a prior good that God does will, namely the goodness of personal freedom and the goodness of the order of this universe.³⁴ In everything we have said thus far regarding Lonergan’s understanding of the universal, historical, and personal dimensions of divine justice, we can discern four sub-orderings with the one order of divine justice. These sub-orders are not mentioned in the *Supplement*, but they are implied in Lonergan’s thought and he made them explicit in Thesis 16 of *De Verbo Incarnato*. The first order is that good follows good. The second order is that evil follows evil. The third order is that evil follows good. The fourth order is that good follows evil. The first two orderings represent retributive justice. The third

³¹ Lonergan, *DBM*, 93 [*Supplement*, 38].

³² Lonergan, *DBM*, 94 [*Supplement*, 38].

³³ Lonergan, *DBM*, 97 [*Supplement*, 40]. Lonergan references *ST*, I, q. 19, a. 9.

³⁴ Lonergan, *DBM*, 96 [*Supplement*, 39].

ordering occurs whenever God permits the evil of sin. The fourth ordering, where good comes out of evil, is our redemption, and this is that special facet of divine justice revealed by God when we consider the Incarnate Word.

Now some clarifications are in order regarding these sub-orderings. The first two sub-orderings can collectively be understood as retributive justice and they are part of the historical dimension of divine justice. But for Lonergan they are *most* clearly evident in the Last Judgment or what Lonergan calls the personal order of justice. Furthermore, specifically in regards to the second sub-ordering where evil follows evil, we need to note that the two evils are not the same. The first is the evil of fault, or the evil of sin. The second refers to the consequences of sin. From medieval teaching, the evil of sin always has consequences, even if those consequences harm innocent persons. Aquinas calls this *malum poenae*, the evil of punishment. Lonergan also uses this language in the *Supplement*. In *Insight* however he refers to this as moral evils. The language of punishment can be problematic today because our English word punishment does not accurately mediate to our contemporary culture the medieval understanding of the *malum poenae*. God's allowing of moral evils as a consequence of the evil of sin is part of the just order God has chosen to establish, but we qualify this by stating that God only indirectly wills moral evils because God directly wills the good that is human freedom. This of course raises the question whether or not God should permit the evil of sin. For Lonergan, the answer to this question is that it is a good thing that there exists rational creatures that are truly free and who can sin, and it is also a good thing for the evil of sin to be transmuted into the goodness of redemption.³⁵ Now with this last statement Lonergan is speaking of the fourth sub-order within divine justice: good follows evil.

³⁵ Lonergan, *DBM*, 99 [*Supplement*, 40].

This is restoration, redemption. This is the dimension of divine justice Lonergan refers to as that special facet of divine justice that he intends to develop later in the *Supplement*. It is the divine justice revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Now I would like to look deeper at this special facet of divine justice by including it within a wider discussion of Lonergan's intention to develop an understanding of divine justice that avoids the problems of anthropomorphism.

3. Dispelling Anthropomorphic Understandings of Divine Justice

Our English word "justice" originates from a Latin root meaning "right," "rightness of order," or "law." Traditionally the word is associated with legal rights or retributive justice: it is making things right through the assignment of reward or punishment. Lonergan's purpose is not only to develop an understanding of divine justice, but specifically an understanding that dispels anthropomorphic understandings based exclusively on legal analogies. We can too easily conceive God's justice as *only* retributive or legal justice. Divine justice *does* include retributive justice, but retributive justice does not exhaust the meaning of divine justice.

For Lonergan the cross reveals a special facet of divine justice, the wisdom of God discerned in Christ crucified. Now what is this special facet of divine justice discerned in the wisdom of Christ crucified?

First, let us discuss what it is not. In the *Supplement's* chapter on the satisfaction given by Christ, Lonergan repeatedly contrast what he calls the "Justice of a Judge" with the "Justice of the Cross." When Lonergan refers to the justice of a judge, he is referring to retributive justice. As we have seen, retributive justice means that good is returned to

good, and evil to evil. But the Justice of the Cross reveals a unique aspect of divine justice, and it is *not* retributive justice. This justice revealed in the cross of Christ is what in both the *Supplement* and in *De Verbo Incarnato* Lonergan calls the law of the cross. What is this law? The law of the cross is the voluntary transformation of good from evil through a victory of the will in self-sacrificing love. The law of the cross is the refusal to return evil for evil, because if one did this, evil just spreads. The victory of the will is conversion to God and restoration of rational consciousness. The victory of the will does not suspend the laws of nature, because those laws are just: it accepts, in obedience, these laws. In other words the law of the cross is an acceptance of the intelligibility of world order. Thus a victory of the will that transforms evil into good is a conversion to divine justice: to an acceptance of the divine will that has chosen this intelligible order conceived by divine wisdom. The victory of the will refuses to consider the absurd as intelligible, and the intelligible as absurd. In other words, the victory of the will is the refusal to rationalize absurdity. It is also a *voluntary* acceptance of suffering. Over time, the effects of sin corrupt the external situation. This social proliferation of evils means that we are going to suffer, and this suffering is not easily tolerated. For Lonergan, we incline toward sin because we either knowingly shrink from suffering,³⁶ or because the corrupt situation is absurd, our intellect cannot find intelligibility in the situation and so finding no intelligibility, we substitute one unintelligible situation for another. When we refuse to shrink from suffering we deny that the absurd is absurd and therefore to be endured.³⁷ Now we need to be careful here. This does not mean we become doormats, that we remain passive victims of abuse or unjust social structures. But it does mean that

³⁶ Lonergan, *DBM*, 60 [*Supplement*, 25].

³⁷ Lonergan, *DBM*, 61 [*Supplement*, 25].

we confront evil with self-sacrificing love, even if that needs to take the form of nonviolent action. Jesus embodied and revealed the law of the cross. But many others in history, many unknown, some well-known, also lived the law of the cross. Mahatma Gandhi in India. Maximilian Kolbe at Auschwitz. Martin Luther King in the civil rights movement. They did not shrink from suffering. The way leading from evil, that breaks the vicious circle of evil, is the law of the cross, a voluntary acceptance of suffering for the sake of bringing good out of evil.³⁸ This is divine justice *par excellence*.

For Lonergan, the law of the cross is the intrinsic intelligibility of redemption. It is just because it is a special facet of divine justice. It is also a law because it is the highest principle governing the economy of salvation, and thus it is a precept and example addressed to all who wish to authentically follow Christ. But in order to grasp the meaning of this law we must free ourselves from the anthropomorphic tendency to limit the understanding of God's justice to retributive justice. What Lonergan is doing in his development of an understanding of divine justice is redeeming the notion of divine justice itself, challenging anthropomorphic understandings which grasp too easily on analogies of law codes and lawyers, judges and juries, prisons and prison guards. Such notions of God's justice on their own are inadequate for understanding the justice of God, and as such they are neither adequate for understanding redemption nor for understanding how we are to cooperate with God.

And we should also note that it is Lonergan's method that allows him to reach this judgment. The method has to do with one's choice of analogy to understand divine mysteries. Divine justice is a supernatural reality. A divine mystery. We can only understand it analogically. But where does the theologian get his or her analogies?

³⁸ Lonergan, *DBM*, 60 [*Supplement*, 25].

Lonergan does use the analogy of the created order of the universe. But he does not stop there. He recognizes that the revelation of Christ himself is an analogy to understand divine justice, and I would suggest to you that it is part of Lonergan's brilliance, though it is rather basic in hindsight. Its beauty is its simplicity. For Lonergan, the revelation of Christ through word and deed offers a loftier analogy to understand divine justice. This revelation does not abrogate the fact that the mysteries of faith, including redemption, can only be known imperfectly and analogically per the teaching of the First Vatican Council. But this does not limit our analogies to *purely* natural realities. The Incarnation is a supernatural reality, yet because the mission of the Son involves a created, contingent reality which is the human nature assumed by the Son, God has entered the created order as intimately as God can. Anything in the created order is a candidate for an analogy of understanding the mysteries of faith. The point here is that for Lonergan, even though the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ is one of our divine mysteries to be understood through analogy, this same incarnation, death, and resurrection *is itself* an analogy, specifically an analogy to understand divine justice. And it is a loftier analogy than the order of the universe, although the former in no way diminishes the understanding we can achieve from the latter. It does expand our understanding of divine justice beyond what the analogy of the order of the universe can give us. Lonergan's method reveals Lonergan's own adoption of an axiom that human wisdom, where possible, must yield to divine wisdom in theological reflection.

III. Lonergan's Understanding of Divine Justice in the Wider Context of the *Supplement*

For Lonergan, his understanding of divine justice is a theological principle for

understanding redemption. Understanding is only as good as the principles to which they are connected. If divine justice is misunderstood, redemption will be misunderstood, including the historical causality of Christ. In my interpretation, Lonergan's understanding of divine justice addresses what is perhaps the first question or problem one needs to address if one wants to understand the historical causality of Christ. I would express this question as follows: *In general, how does God operate in our world to advance God's purposes?* For Lonergan, the answer to this question is grounded in his understanding of divine justice: there is an intelligible unity in the common course of things and the order of the universe, and this common course and order are the proper effects of God produced through secondary causes. Therefore *any* aspect of redemption will be in harmonious continuation with this order because divine justice has no higher rule than divine wisdom, and divine wisdom has conceived the order of this universe in one intuitional act.

Redemption, like the order of the universe itself, is not absolutely necessary, *but it is intelligible*. But if an understanding of divine justice is plagued with the error of voluntarism, there results a too superficial understanding of intelligibility to sufficiently grasp the intelligibility of redemption. In short, voluntarism ignores the significance of intelligibility and exaggerates the role of the divine will, resulting in an obscured notion of divine justice.³⁹ Let us dwell for the moment on the significance of intelligibility in Lonergan's thought. *Every* event in history directly willed by God is related to God in exactly the same way, because anything directly willed by God is intelligible.⁴⁰ Charles Hefling explains, and I quote:

³⁹ Lonergan, *DBM*, 104 [*Supplement*, 42].

⁴⁰ Hefling, "Philosophy, Theology, and God," *The Desires of the Human Heart: An Introduction to the Theology of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Vernon Gregson (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 137.

In the universe that actually exists, every event that actually occurs is related to God in exactly the same way. That is what it means to affirm that God is the First Agent. The Big Bang, biological evolution, my writing this chapter and your understanding it – if any of these is occurring or has occurred, it is intelligible, and God is the reason *why* it is intelligible. But the same thing is true, in the same way, of miracles, revelation, religious conversion, and the Incarnation. The sense in which these are acts of God is no different from the sense in which falling sparrows and lilies of the field are acts of God. Even “salvation history,” in other words, belongs to the intelligible, emergently probable universe.⁴¹

The cardinal point here is that anything in the created order, including salvation history, belongs to the intelligible unity of the one order of the universe conceived, chosen, and effected by God. The historical causality of Christ is intelligible in itself and intelligibly related to the intelligible unity of this universe. Why? Because the historical causality of Christ is a proper effect of God which means that it *is* part of God’s choice of a wise order, it *is* part of the course of things and the order of the universe. As such, it *is* intelligible. If it is not intelligible, it is not just. We can conclude that the historical causality of Christ, as an aspect of redemption, is in harmonious continuation with the intelligible unity of the order of this universe. Thus the historical causality of Christ will depend on statistical laws which govern the fulfillment of conditions not only with respect to Christ as historical agent, but also with respect to human agents who cooperate with Christ. To understand what we mean by the fulfillment of conditions, let us consider Lonergan’s general notion of agency which he develops in the final chapter of the *Supplement*. There he distinguishes between agents acting through nature and agents acting through intellect.⁴² Human beings are agents acting through intellect. An agent acting through intellect not only intends specific effects, but he or she can also come to knowledge of the requisite conditions that must be fulfilled, and see to their fulfillment, so that their intended effect can be actualized. An agent acting through nature does not

⁴¹ Hefling, “Philosophy, Theology, and God,” 137.

⁴² Lonergan, *DBM*, *239 [*Supplement*, 100-101].

have this ability. Now since God is absolutely the first historical agent in every respect, human beings are not only agents by intellect, but if we choose to cooperate with God we become ministerial historical agents. Let us recall what a minister is. A minister, in the theological sense, is an agent, a servant of God. And ministry, in the theological sense, is certainly not limited to pastoral or practical theology. I would hope that theologian, and specifically the systematic theologian, considers herself or himself a minister. But what type of ministry is systematics? It is an intellectual ministry. When mediated through what Lonergan would call the functional specialty communications, systematic theology can promote the changing of hearts and minds, changing the meanings and values of a culture such that, in the words of Robert Doran, we can evoke an alternative situation in the world that more closely approximates the reign of God in human affairs.⁴³ This means that we broaden our understanding of praxis. In his book *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, Doran states that situations are constituted by meaning, and a change in constitutive meaning is in the long run the most effective form of praxis.⁴⁴

So persons and communities who choose to cooperate with Christ in God's ongoing plan of redemption in history are not only agents by intellect, but ministerial historical agents, including theologians. God is certainly the absolute, first historical agent. But as Lonergan's understanding of divine justice asserts, it is God's way to act through secondary causes and in accordance with their natures. This is particularly important to acknowledge when it comes to human communication. Communication is required for the transmission of beliefs. The transmission of beliefs is integral to our understanding of the historical causality of Christ since the proclamation of the gospel is

⁴³ Robert Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 4.

⁴⁴ Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 3-4.

central to the mission of the Word. The good news is proclaimed so that it might be believed. And belief is integral to the operation of the world order God has conceived and chosen. Lonergan once said that ninety-eight percent of what a genius knows, is believed, not immanently generated knowledge.⁴⁵ The good news, as with knowledge in general, is propagated through history by human beings who act as secondary causes.⁴⁶ And this is why in Lonergan's understanding of divine justice God himself became human that he might be a secondary and proportionate cause in restoring all things (Eph 1:10) and making all things new (1 Cor 5:17).⁴⁷ Lonergan's assertion that the requisite conditions need to be fulfilled for a cause to have an effect still holds to be true even for Christ. Perhaps this helps us to understand the biblical idiom, "in the fullness of time." Even though time is required for conditions to be fulfilled for certain effects to be actualized, divine wisdom has conceived everything in one intuitive act. Denying this is an anthropomorphic error. Divine wisdom does not learn by trial and errors. As Lonergan states in *Insight*, there are no divine afterthoughts.

In conclusion, the intelligibility of divine justice is a theological principle for understanding redemption. The redemption is ongoing. This is why Lonergan is interested in explaining the historical causality of Christ. Divine justice as a theological principle lays the foundation of how God operates in this world for God's purposes. Divine justice has chosen to bring good out of evil through the just and mysterious law of the cross, a law we are invited to embrace if we desire with complete authenticity to be ministerial historical agents of God. Thank you.

⁴⁵ Bernard Lonergan, "An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.," *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J.* Edited by William Ryan and Bernard Tyrrell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 219.

⁴⁶ Lonergan, *DBM*, 79 [*Supplement*, 32].

⁴⁷ Lonergan, *DBM*, 78-79 [*Supplement*, 32].