

Bernard Lonergan's *The Triune God: Systematics*¹

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Chapter 1 The Goal, the Order, and the Manner of Speaking

1. The Goal

Lonergan begins his study of the theology of the Trinity on a methodological note. He begins by clearly distinguishing systematic theology from dogmatic theology.² The difference or distinction between the two has roots which can be traced to Aquinas and a differentiation which he achieved when, in his day, he clearly distinguished between these two basic kinds of theology. Dogmatic theology has to do with affirming truths of the faith and with providing arguments which demonstrate why it is reasonable to believe that a particular dogma is true and why also it is unreasonable to hold a contrary thesis. Every well rounded discussion about a particular issue in dogmatic theology presents both kinds of arguments. Systematic theology, on the other hand, attends to a species of analysis which seeks a greater understanding about what has been already professed in the dogmas that one believes in. The object is intelligibility, the meaning of received truths. Recall the Augustinian maxim: "I believe in order to understand." In systematics, a different kind of question is asked. Instead of asking "why is this true?" or "how can this be true?", one asks "what is the meaning of this particular truth?" or "how does the meaning of this truth relate to the meaning of this other truth?" "How do these things fit together?" One wants to grasp a greater whole of some kind which can reveal a greater significance in the faith that one professes, a significance which raises one's understanding and which allows us to live one's faith more fully and authentically.

¹Please note that this compilation of notes on the first chapter of Lonergan's *The Triune God: Systematics* was written to help beginners – persons who are attempting to work through Lonergan's theology of the Trinity with little or no previous understanding of Lonergan's philosophy and theology. Lonergan's theology of the Trinity is seeped in Aquinas and, by using Aquinas to help explain Lonergan's own thought, one has a perhaps useful tool in aid of better understanding the significance of Lonergan's own contribution – how it builds on the earlier work of Aquinas and how it works from a more nuanced understanding of human cognition in a way which reveals why a systematic theology of the Trinity can continue to work from a heuristic that is grounded in the meaning of psychological analogies if one wants to move toward a more profound understanding of divine things as this applies to the Christian doctrine of God. Please note, however, that this text should not be read as a substitute for not working or reading through Lonergan's original text as this is given in his *The Triune God: Systematics*. One works and reads through Lonergan's text with the possible help that can be given through consulting these explanatory notes. In preparing this edition, special thanks are owed to Mr. Anthony Russo and Mr. Ron Shady for all the proofreading which they had done and for their suggestions about how things can be explained in a better way. In order to improve the quality of anything that is said in these notes, it would be an act of charity if you, as a reader, would contact us to inform us of any errors which have been overlooked or which have somehow crept in as a consequence of any misinterpretation or lack of understanding. If the work of theology can be regarded in its own right as a vocation, this is especially verified in the experience which we have of our having always to move toward a deeper understanding of many different issues. Every experience of understanding seems to suggest that there is more to be understood.

²See also J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 3-4, for an account on what Lonergan has to say about the difference between dogma and speculation.

Recall a decree issued by the First Vatican Council on the relation between faith and reason entitled, *Dei Filius*. As Lonergan quotes from *De Filius* (4th paragraph of chapter 4 “On faith and reason”) on the kind of understanding which is the object of systematic theology:

Reason illuminated by faith, when it inquires diligently, piously, soberly, reaches with God’s help some extremely fruitful understanding of the mysteries both in virtue of the analogy of things it knows naturally and in virtue of the interconnection of the mysteries with one another and with man’s last end.³

In often frequently referring to *De Filius*, Lonergan argues that, while an exhaustive understanding of divine things is never given to us in this life (to our created human understanding), any advance whatever in our understanding is of the greatest value for us as we can be changed by our understanding in a way which can help us live better, more joyful lives.⁴

As Lonergan argues in his exegesis of Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, 4, q. 9, a. 3, one type of theological inquiry which seeks to remove doubts is to be distinguished from a second kind of theological inquiry which seeks understanding.⁵ In trying to remove doubts about disputed questions and issues, one wants to have a knowledge of things that is characterized by a total lack of doubt and this lack of doubt is known as certitude. Something can no longer be doubted since one has shown how its truth can be regarded as self-evident. A grounding can be traced back to some kind of basic, first principle which cannot be doubted without risk of contradiction. With respect to matters of faith then, one shows that a particular teaching is grounded in scripture or in apostolic tradition. Something has been revealed as a truth of faith. A proposed article is shown to belong within the deposit of faith because a chain of reasoning has reached back to a set of primary sources or, through another chain of reasoning, one can move from a set of primary sources to a proposition which states a belief or dogma. However, if the object of one’s theological inquiry is a grasp of relations which can reveal how different things are joined with each other in a previously unknown inward unity, instead of lack of doubt, the object is a lesser degree of obscurity. One desires experiences of meaning which reveal a new, larger world within which one can believe and live. Instead of confusion and disorder, new distinctions, as they are apprehended, introduce clarifications or they reveal nuances in the meaning of things. Previously unsuspected depths of meaning present themselves to create a new context for living

³Bernard Lonergan, “Doctrinal Pluralism,” *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Express, 2004), p. 90. See also Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 321, where this same issue is discussed.

⁴See Aquinas, *Super Boethius De Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 7 where St. Hilary of Poitiers (d. c. 368) is quoted by saying (in his *De Trinitate* 2, 10): “He who in pious spirit undertakes the infinite, even though he cannot attain it, nevertheless profits by advancing,” as cited by Douglas C. Hall, *The Trinity An Analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas’ Expositio of the De Trinitate of Boethius* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), p. 73, n. 64.

⁵Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 9-11. See also Frederick E. Crowe, *Lonergan and the Level of Our Time*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), p. 452, and how he discusses Lonergan's exegesis with respect to what Aquinas says and means in his *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, 4, q. 9, a. 3.

one's life. Through an uplifting of one's understanding which one has been somehow received, one usually becomes more willing to engage in new possible courses of action that one would not otherwise do. In speculative or systematic theological activity, the object ceases to be an experience of truth but an experience of rationality: reasons which can indicate the greater goodness and value of those truths that one has already come to believe but which, until now, one has not understood very well.

To understand better the greater difficulties which attend the asking and answering of systematic questions versus the asking and answering of dogmatic questions, let us take a concrete example and compare a dogmatic question which asks "Is Christ, the Son of God, equal in divinity to God the Father?" with one which asks "Why is God the Son equal in divinity to God the Father?" The first question initiates a search for evidence by way of a reduction to some basic set of first principles (or primary sources). Scripture, for instance, presents itself as one primary source. However, the second question requires a spirit of reflection which is both imaginative and exacting. One seeks to link variables through one or more acts of understanding. The greater the number of variables which can be related through acts of understanding, the more sophisticated will be one's understanding. In systematics, one moves beyond dogmatic affirmations without in any way seeking to diminish any truth that is being affirmed in any given dogma or doctrine. If questions about fact elicit a form of investigation which resembles a judicial inquiry, questions about meaning require a form of investigation that calls for considerable creativity in the human minds of theologians.

2. The Act Whereby the Goal Is Attained

In engaging now in an analysis which attempts to explain the nature of systematic theological understanding (as distinct from the nature of dogmatic theological understanding), Lonergan makes two closely related points. First, systematic, speculative theological understanding is not unrelated to truth. Or, to put this in another way, it is not unrelated to the kind of understanding which is peculiarly characteristic of dogmatic apprehension as this occurs typically in dogmatic theological activity. Before one engages in systematic theological activity, one must know that one is working with a mystery of faith which is true, a belief which one has accepted as true and which one has come to know through some kind of faith instruction that one has received and whose words one has correctly understood. Truth exists prior to systematic theological activity and after systematic theological activity and also within systematic theological activity. Within systematic theological activity questions also naturally arise about truth--the theological truth which also possibly exists about the speculations that one could be having about the meaning of the faith that one is professing and which one is now seeking to understand more deeply. As Lonergan goes on to argue later on in his *Method in Theology*:

Systematics aims at an understanding of the religious realities affirmed by doctrines. It wants its understanding to be true, for it is not a pursuit of misunderstanding. At the same time, it is fully aware that its understanding is bound to be imperfect, merely analogous, commonly no more than probable.⁶

⁶Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 142, as quoted by Peter Beer, "Meaning in Our Relation to the Trinity," *Trinification of the World: A Festschrift in Honor of Frederick E. Crowe*, eds. Thomas A. Dunne and Jean-Marc Laporte (Toronto: Regis College Press, 1978), p. 3. As Beer goes on to note and as he argues about Lonergan, theology should not solely "concern itself with what it can be certain about." Understanding is key. It is more fundamental than certitude. From understanding comes

Second and most crucially, the distinction which is drawn between systematic and dogmatic theological activity is grounded on human cognitional fact—fundamental human cognitional fact with respect to how our minds work. Two basic operations of the human mind are to be clearly distinguished from each other in the order or the structure of human cognition as this exists within human subjects. Understanding, acts of understanding, on the one hand, respond to a specific type of question and judgment, acts of judgment, on the other hand, respond to another specific type of question. This thesis was first postulated by Aristotle and then it was later taken up and developed by Aquinas in a context which led to a development in the methodology of Catholic theology.

Tersely put, when Aristotle investigated the nature of scientific inquiry in the *Posterior Analytics*, he first postulated that all questions can be reduced to four basic types: whether there is an *X*; what is an *X*; whether *X* is *Y*; and why *X* is *Y*. But then, if one examines these questions one finds that they reduce to two basic types. The first basic type groups together “What is an *X*” and “why *X* is *Y*” since these can only be answered by an hypothesis which can relate a number of elements or parts into a relation. The second basic type groups together “whether there is an *X*” and “whether *X* is *Y*” since these can be answered by only saying either “yes” or “no.”⁷ Two distinct kinds of questions having two distinct objects ground two distinct kinds of mental operation. Hence, in both Aquinas and Lonergan, a position on the nature of human cognition grounds a position on the nature of understanding in theology. But, this critical distinction is never to be understood as a separation since, as already noted above, each operation of the human mind interacts and conditions the other to give to human knowing a unity that, otherwise, it would not have. Apprehensions of understanding or meaning which occur in the first operation of the human intellect lead to the reflective understanding of judgment in the second while, at the same time, apprehensions of truth which occur in second operations of the mind lead to new questions about meaning and significance which trigger new instances of first operations. A mutual priority or mutual causality seems to best explain how these two basic operations interact with

certitude. To this effect, as Bernard Lonergan notes in his *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 218:

...without in any way deprecating certitude or even solidity, one may point out that the cult of certitude, the search for rigorous demonstration unaccompanied by a greater effort to understand, has been tried and has been found wanting. It is the secret of fourteenth-century skepticism. Moreover, the same result follows from the same cause at any time; for one can be certain only because one understands, or else one believes someone else who certainly understands. It is only as different concepts proceed from one act of understanding that different concepts are seen to be joined by a necessary nexus. Remove the effort to understand, and the understanding will decrease; as understanding decreases, fewer concepts are seen to be joined by a necessary nexus; and as this seeing decreases, certitudes decrease. To stop the process, either one must restore the effort to understand or one must appeal not to intellect but to some higher or lower power.

⁷Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 2, 2, 89b36-90a34; Aquinas, *In Aristotelis libros Posteriorum analyticorum*, 2, 1.

each other in an ongoing way (not only in theology but in every other field of human activity). This same mutual or reciprocal priority also accordingly explains why questions of truth are not absent from the context of any speculation as this occurs within systematic theological inquiry or systematic theological thinking.

In speaking about these cognitional acts or operations, Lonergan speaks here about four kinds of object in connection with human knowing: agent objects, terminal objects, proper objects, and final or formal objects.⁸ Agent objects act as movers or catalysts; they elicit or trigger acts of understanding and judgment in human beings. First operations of the human mind are triggered by images or phantasms that are grounded in acts of sense. An intellectual nature suggests itself through how it presents itself in a material, incarnate way. Second operations are triggered by evidence which presents itself as a basis or sufficient reason for making an affirmative or negative judgment. Terminal objects refer to what proceeds as a kind of product either in first or second operations of the mind. With understanding in terms of what or why, an inner word refers to the apprehension of an idea; with judgment in terms of yes or no, a second kind of inner word refers to a truth that is now apprehended (wherein, through truth, something of reality is known). Proper objects refer to a connatural, proportional relation which exists between the embodied character of human knowing (the soul informing a body) and the embedded existence of forms within matter which is then to be properly understood as the proper object of human knowing. Final or formal objects refer to being or reality itself as the formal object of the intellect in its understanding (whether the intellect is human, angelic, or divine).⁹ It is in order to know being that human beings engage in a distinct set of cognitional activities which points to a recurrent normative structure that is constitutive of all human knowing. A desire for truth as a goodness worth seeking in its own right gives a finality to human knowing; it imparts a direction or orientation.

All these things being said, since systematic theological inquiry is primarily interested in asking

⁸Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 13; p. 203. Please note that when Lonergan speaks about “objects,” he is employing traditional philosophical language--a language which Aquinas had known and which he had used in the context of his philosophical and theological discussions. Metaphysical terms are used to speak about philosophical and theological issues although, in the context of his own work, Lonergan prefers to speak about acts or operations and not so much about objects. Editorial footnote #5 speaks about the shift which exists in Lonergan’s thought given Lonergan's desire to emphasize the importance of first advertent to cognitional operations before one adverts to anything else. Instead of moving from objects to cognitional operations (the traditional approach), one moves from cognitional operations to objects in a manner which is grounded in human acts of inquiry and the different kinds of questions which human beings ask. Lonergan’s emphasis on the primacy of cognitional theory does jar with earlier approaches which had wanted to speak about the primacy of metaphysics although Lonergan's understanding of human cognition and his use of it as a “first philosophy” should not be understood as a repudiation of metaphysics. In Lonergan, yes, one moves from subject to object. Authentic subjectivity leads to objectivity. “Objectivity is the fruit of subjectivity.” Cf. Bernard Lonergan, “An Interview with Fr. Bernard Lonergan, S.J.,” *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.* eds. William F. J. Ryan, S.J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), p. 214. But, as one speaks about acts or operations of the human subject, one must also speak about objects. Human inquiry always supposes that there is something other which one questions or asks about.

⁹Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 7.

questions about the meaning of dogmas (rather than the truth of dogmas), systematic theology is to be primarily identified with the first operation of the human intellect which asks “what/why” questions and which falls into a form or structure that is governed by this basic interest. In the context of his trinitarian theology, Lonergan identifies ten attributes or properties that properly belong to the act of understanding which exists in systematic theology.

First, the agent object of theological understanding is a truth of faith that has come to us in a mediated way through words, signs, and symbols. To some extent, the agent object is definitely related to receptive acts of sense. Truths of faith do not come to us immediately or directly from God. Rather, from God, the truths of faith come to us in a context that is informed by spatial and temporal coordinates. Our senses, in and through a material universe, play an active role in helping us move toward an understanding God's truth.

Second, since theological understanding on our part is always a created thing which exists by way of a created participation in God's understanding of himself, our understanding of divine things will always remain imperfect. One can even argue that, even within the beatific vision, our understanding of divine things will always be limited since no created intellect is able to have an exhaustive understanding of something that is not created or is not limited in any way.¹⁰

Third, since the proper object of human understanding is always a form or an intelligibility that exists within matter, it is only indirectly, by analogy, that our human understanding can come to some kind of understanding about the meaning of divine things. As Aquinas notes, for instance, in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 93, a. 2, ad 1:

We cannot know the things that are of God, as they are in themselves; but they are made known to us in their effects, according to Romans I, 20: *The invisible things of God...are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.*¹¹

Fourth, with every advance in our limited understanding of divine things comes a growing realization that the unrestricted intelligibility and goodness of divine things is not to be compared with the intelligibility and goodness of created things. As one moves analogically from created to uncreated things, the transcendence of divine things presents itself with a kind of heightening effect. Or, to try to use other words, the mysterious of God's mysteries becomes more patent, awesome, and wonderful.¹²

¹⁰As Aquinas argues in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 7, a beatific knowledge of God that can be given to one after death is not to be equated with an unrestricted knowledge of God which only God has through the unrestricted act of self-understanding that only God possesses.

¹¹As Lonergan goes on to note in *The Triune God: Doctrines*, trans. Michael Shields, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), p. 639: because “our knowledge of creatures arises either from our external sense experience or from our interior experience, our consciousness,” for these reasons we conclude that “all analogies by which we conceive God are reduced to two kinds, one that begins from sensible data and the other that begins from psychological data.”

¹²Hence, as the Fourth Lateran Council declared in 1215: “between Creator and creatures no similitude can be expressed without implying a greater dissimilitude.” Cf. Frederick E. Crowe, *Lonergan and the Level of Our Time*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press: 2010),

As Aquinas argues in the *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 8, a. 7: “in this life, the better we understand God to transcend whatever is grasped by intellect, the more perfectly also do we know him.”

Fifth, as theological understanding moves from one issue to another and as the discovery of one set of distinctions occasions the apprehension of other sets, a clarity in theological understanding emerges, a clarity that gives way to progress—a progress that builds over time. A number of theological problems are solved and, gradually, as this occurs, realizations dawn to the effect that developments in understanding have truly taken place.

Sixth, with every advance in our limited understanding of divine things comes an understanding that wants to understand how an increasing number of things can be related to each other in a greater unity that has yet to be discovered. It beckons us forward.

Seventh, with the growth of understanding that understands many different things together comes the need to understand these many things in a more comprehensive way. The limitedness of our understanding (as it is compared to the unrestrictedness of divine understanding) does not preclude making further progress toward a better understanding of all things together by way of one, overarching scheme which would refer to some kind of universal order.

Eighth, deepening widening theological understanding confers highly fruitful benefits in all areas of life as one’s understanding and knowing conditions one’s willing and doing in all things which are inherently and naturally connected with each other and which are ordered to transcendent ends.

Ninth, the effort itself to try to move toward theological understanding is of no slight benefit since an intrinsic goodness exists in the orientation that such an effort imparts to our lives. The effort changes us in many good ways--in ways that lead ultimately to God-- since God naturally exists here as the goal of our seeking and striving. Aquinas speaks of a natural desire for God which can only be properly fulfilled in a supernatural way.¹³

Tenth, the possibility, better, the reality of systematic theological understanding is authoritatively affirmed by the First Vatican Council and, as authoritatively affirmed, it is also encouraged by Church authority. As taught by the Church, it can be regarded as part and parcel of the Church’s faith which comes to us all ultimately from Christ.

3. The Question or Problem

In the context of a study that looks at the phenomenon of human inquiry and which goes into greater detail about the kinds of questions that are asked, Lonergan engages in an analysis that focuses on the kinds of questions that are endemic to systematic theology and which are to be contrasted with other kinds of questions. At the same time, he gives an account or a little history which explains how and why systematic theology arose in the life of the Church in the time that it did and as a response to certain conditions which favored its appearance.

First, with respect to questions in general, Lonergan identifies three stages or points of transition which

p. 403, n. 17, citing DS 806.

¹³*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 1; a. 4.

occur in the conduct of human inquiry. First, inquiry is identified as something which is both completely spontaneous and completely natural—to the extent that every human being enjoys a level or degree of conscious existence which transcends the life of a plant or animal. Beyond the sensitive psychology of animal behavior and existence, a rational psychology is to be distinguished in the life of human beings when human beings begin to wonder about the world that exists around them and about how they should fit into the world that they find themselves in. As Aquinas notes in his *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 3, 55 (which comments on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*), human inquiry (*inquisitio*) begins with wonder and wonder, from a sense of ignorance that one wishes to escape from. Human wonder, by its very nature, anticipates that something is to be added to the data of one’s sense experience or imagination.¹⁴ In wonder a cognitive desire exists,¹⁵ a desire which is to be distinguished from any irrational forms of curiosity which want to understand causes which are of less importance than causes which exert a more primary influence in determining the meaning and existence of things which exist as effects stemming from causes.¹⁶

Second, when this wonder as an inner experience of puzzlement is put into speech or, as it is externalized in words that can be communicated to other persons and to one’s self in a conversation that one can have with one’s self, it comes to enjoy a specification and a differentiation which it did not have before. A person begins to identify more exactly what one seeks to understand and know. What is not understood becomes more well known as something that is not understood and what has yet to be understood becomes more well known as an object towards which one wants to move. A question becomes more conscious with its conceptualization and articulation and, consequently, it begins to enter a human culture and to inform a society as it becomes a focus of attention for more than a single individual. The asking of different sets of questions can be used as a heuristic for determining what developments have occurred in the history of any given society.

Third and lastly, when questions are posed because reasons are assigned for why they should be posed (reasons which specify why other questions should not be asked and why one must begin with an ordering of questions which says that, first, this question must be asked before this second or third question can be asked), questions assume a scientific or critical form which leads to the birth of science and philosophy. If questioning is to proceed in a more fruitful way than would otherwise be the case, it needs to be properly ordered. A strategy needs to be thought about; it needs to be postulated and evaluated; and then it needs to be put into effect. The inquiry needs to be more intelligent than what it initially had been before. In scientific inquiry, a vast ordering begins to occur, an ordering which is highly significant as a heuristic for understanding how Aquinas constructs his theology and puts things together. An initial understanding of things sheds light on other issues and questions and how these are to be ordered to each other.

Turning then to a question which now asks about reasons, the availability of different kinds of reasons explains why different kinds of scientific questions can be distinguished. As Lonergan has already noted (drawing on Aristotle and Aquinas), “what/why” questions can be clearly distinguished from “is it so” questions. Each seeks a different reason. Different rational principles are involved. However, if one wants to move toward a deeper understanding about how these two kinds of question apply in theology, one can specify that questions about coherence act as an initial catalyst for the emergence of

¹⁴Stebbins, p. 22.

¹⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 32, a. 8.

¹⁶*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 167, a. 1 & ad 3.

these later questions which ask about “what or why” and “is it so.” An experience of incoherence acts as a trigger for these later developments as disjunctions and contradictions are noticed in the meanings and understandings of things that one already has and which have been inherited to some extent within a tradition of meaning that is one’s home.¹⁷ For this reason, Lonergan is able to speak about three kinds of problem which can be revealed in the questions that one asks. In Lonergan’s words, a question can be understood as either a problem about coherence, a problem about understanding, or a problem about fact or judgment.¹⁸

The first kind of problem (which needs to be identified as a stage or element in the history of theology) is one which asks about coherence within a context that is governed by strictly logical concerns and interests. In logical thinking, one is primarily concerned with determining whether or not arguments flow from premisses to conclusions in a way that avoids contradictions. A logical argument is one which can admit that a conclusion states nothing that is not already found in the statements that are constitutive of one’s premisses. And so, for this reason, it can be said that the basic law of logic is A equals A; in other words, the principle of identity. If A equals A, A cannot be equated with what is not-A. From being and non-being (which exclude each other), or from what is and what is not, a principle of non-contradiction can be formulated which is to be understood as the most basic axiomatic first principle of human reasoning--a basic building block.¹⁹ The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time in the same way.²⁰ Truth is to be clearly distinguished from falsehood. Every contradictory argument is to be viewed as an invalid argument. In encountering contradictory propositions, their truth is not to be assumed or concluded to.

The reception and influence of Aristotle’s works on logic in 12th Century western Europe accordingly explains why the coherence of church doctrines became a major question and a topic of concern for Catholic theologians.²¹ In the *Sic et non*, the *Yes and No* of Peter Abelard (1079-1142), 158 theological propositions were both affirmed and denied with texts and passages being collected from the Scriptures and the Church Fathers and arranged to reveal a wide range of real or apparent contradictions.²² To cite some examples:²³

1. That faith is to be supported by human reason, *et contra*.

¹⁷Please also note here that grasping or seeing a contradiction in one’s thought or expression often tends to require a prior development in thought and expression which can more clearly distinguish the meaning of ideas and concepts from each other. Contradictions can exist that one might not be aware of but which, later, are noticed by others within new later contexts of meaning. Clarifications in thought and expression that arise through later developments in understanding eliminate many contradictions. See Frederick E. Crowe’s *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity* (Willowdale, Ontario: Regis College, 1965-1966), p. 63; p. 82, and examples that he draws and gives from the history of theology with respect to the theology of the Trinity.

¹⁸Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 21.

¹⁹*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 65, a. 2.

²⁰*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2; 2a2ae, q. 1, a. 7.

²¹Charles Haskins, *The Renaissance of the 12th Century* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Co., 1963), pp. 345-346.

²²Lonergan, “Lecture 2: The Functional Specialty ‘Systematics’,” *Papers 1965-1980*, p. 185; Philip A. Egan, *Philosophy and Catholic Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville: Minnesota: 2009), p. 130.

²³Haskins, pp. 354-355.

- 5. That God is not single, *et contra*.
- 32. That to God all things are possible, *et non*.
- 55. That only Eve, not Adam, was beguiled, *et contra*.
- 58. That Adam was saved, *et contra*.
- 106. That no one can be saved without baptism of water, *et contra*.
- 115. That nothing is yet established concerning the origin of the soul, *et contra*.
- 122. That marriage is lawful for all, *et contra*.
- 141. That works of mercy do not profit those without faith, *et contra*.
- 145. That we sin at times unwillingly, *et contra*.
- 154. That a lie is permissible, *et contra*.
- 157. That it is lawful to kill a man, *et contra*.

Arguments are then given by Abelard drawn from scripture, patristic writings, and reason in support of each contradictory proposition pro and con in a dialectical analysis which emphasized the existence of incoherence and contradiction and which thus cast doubt on the reliability of received church teachings. The Church's theological tradition in its mass now became a problem which needed to be addressed in a way that could find principles of explanation which could resolve differences that cannot be resolved on the basis of an inquiry that restricts itself to only an application of logical principles.

In the subsequent work of Gilbert of Porrée (d. 1154), a theological question is defined: it is said to exist when one can prove "from authority or from reason that the same proposition should be both affirmed and denied."²⁴ Before the 12th Century ended, numerous commentaries began to appear which tried to effect reconciliations of one kind or another, the most famous being the *Libri quattuor sententiarum*, the *Four Books of Sentences*, of Peter Lombard (d. 1160) which has been described as "a compilation of biblical texts, together with relevant passages from the Church Fathers and many medieval thinkers, on virtually the entire field of Christian theology as it was understood at the time."²⁵ By way of a kind of opposition to Abelard's dialectical approach, the object was a work that could reconcile differences and disagreements in a manner which accordingly explains why Lombard's *Sentences* became a standard textbook for theology until about the 16th Century.²⁶ Its four books respectively dealt with God and the Trinity, the Creation and the Fall, Christ's Incarnation and morals, and the sacraments and last things. In the discussions which arose, a tripartite form or method began to structure all arguments and discussions: begin with a proposition, state the opposition, and suggest a solution. If a solution cannot be effected in a purely logical way, try some other way. Look for another method. And so, if one compares logical analysis which occurred in the 12th Century with the speculative analysis which began to arise in the 13th Century, one finds that logical analysis reveals a certain limitedness in what it can do although, at the same time, it does serve to reveal problems and difficulties that can only be resolved by other kinds of intellectual activity--other kinds of intellectual operations. Logical operations should be distinguished from rational, non-logical operations.²⁷ A

²⁴Lonergan, "Systematics," *Papers 1965-1980*, p. 185.

²⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Lombard.

²⁶Haskins, p. 357.

²⁷Please note that this distinction between logical operations and rational non-logical operations is best understood if one thinks of logical operations in terms of deductive logic and rational non-logical operations in terms of a so-called "logic of discovery" which inductively moves from acts of sense to acts of understanding. From the viewpoint of most logicians, the "logic of discovery" is a hotly disputed issue. But, in contrast, general agreement tends to prevail about the rules and norms of

methodology that accordingly solely relies on the laws and principles constitutive of deductive logic should be distinguished from other kinds of methodology which rely on other laws and principles.

Beyond problems of coherence and before one can speak about the possible truth of any given theory or explanation as a problem of fact (the third kind of problem that Lonergan acknowledges), the problem of understanding accordingly presents itself as an appropriate intermediary. It is the second kind of problem which Lonergan discusses and which he identifies with systematic theological inquiry. As public disputations and the writing of numerous commentaries revealed a greater number of conflicts and oppositions and the inadequacy of *ad hoc* solutions that were proposed here in this context and here in another context, a context was created which urged the necessity of a more radical approach. Try to go to the roots of problems and difficulties and begin to solve them. A general order of some kind needed to be introduced if the Church's teachings were to fit together in a tighter manner--in a way which could reveal a greater unity than what has appeared to be the case so far. The many, different theological questions which were being identified needed to be ordered to each other in a way which could facilitate their proper solution. One needed to identify which questions should be first discussed and settled. Then, one could determine which subsequent questions can be more easily understood and resolved because one has successfully dealt with an initial question. The solution which one has at the start can begin to act as a kind of first principle. From it, one could solve all other theological problems by an order which, in itself, exists as an intelligibility which reveals a universal scheme of things.

While Lonergan speaks about an initial "extremely fertile act of understanding," the context is Aquinas on the meaning and role of wisdom as the virtue of the "wise man" (who, in this case, is to be viewed as the "wise theologian"). *Sapientis est ordinare*: "it is the part of the wise to order [and to judge; and since lesser matters should be judged in the light of some higher principle, one is said to be wise in any one order who considers the highest principle in that order]."²⁸ In Aristotelian terms, if one understands a first or highest cause, all other causes are understood in terms of how they are all ordered and related to each other and in terms of how they all rely on the mediating activity of the first and highest cause. The wise man knows how to order critical inquiry in scientific activity and which first principles should be invoked in understanding anything. The wise man knows how to order first principles in terms how they relate to each other. Hence, if any of us could begin from a simple unadulterated knowledge of God, we would be able to judge and arrange all things in an order that would be measured by divine rules or norms (*regulas divinas*) that are constitutive of an unchanging, eternal law which belongs to God alone (as the proper term of divine understanding and which is also to be identified with God's being as an unrestricted act of understanding). However, since, in this life, we do not enjoy such a knowledge of God, systematic theology begins with a created human act of understanding which presents itself as a breakthrough of some kind. From a seminal act of understanding, two proper consequences follow. Lonergan speaks about two "proper eventualities."²⁹ First, very many things can be understood in a whole which only expands if one's initial seminal act of understanding is able to incorporate other acts of understanding as these exist in other departments and fields and ways of life. Second, as one's initial act of understanding or first principle of understanding

thinking which govern how logical deductions should best proceed.

²⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 1, a. 6, as cited by Leo Serroul in "*Sapientis est ordinare*": an interpretation of the *Pars Systematica* of Bernard Lonergan's *De Deo Trino* from the viewpoint of order (an unpublished dissertation presented at the University of St. Michael's College, Toronto, 2004), p. 35.

²⁹Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 25.

is in turn more adequately and fully understood in its meaning and significance, it is able to incorporate a growing number of variables or acts of understanding as these exist in other disciplines.

With respect to the inner nature of one's initial, basic, seminal act of understanding, within it (whatever it is), a basic set of terms and relations is grasped in terms of how these relate to each other in a matrix which presents itself as a kind of closed circle. The terms define the relations and the relations, the terms. Then, by its application, very many solutions are elicited and postulated in a manner that works with common technical vocabulary which, as an outer or external word, is derived from an initial conceptualization that has first articulated meaning which has been initially grasped in the content of one's first, basic, seminal insight. However, if one's initial seminal act of understanding is replaced by another, more seminal act of understanding (by another, new first principle), a new systematic ordering of things will be brought into being to replace the system that one had once known, applied, and appreciated.

To cite some examples which could illustrate what is meant by an "extremely fertile act of understanding," in Aristotle, in order to understand the movement of different kinds of physical objects which one finds in the world, Aristotle employs a first principle which says that every physical object desires to be in its "natural place."³⁰ Every object or "substance has its natural place in the universe."³¹ If any given object does not exist in its natural place, its movement will be such that it will try to return toward its natural place. The weight of a stone, for example, inclines it to downward movement so that it can come to a place of rest which is natural and proper to it. However, in attending to this principle or notion which speak about a "natural place" for physical objects, it should be noted that it is not accepted because it has been proved or verified. Instead, it is simply postulated as a hypothesis which, as a heuristic, functions as an organizing principle. It is an hypothesis which can be regarded as an assumption. It is concluded to as a theorem as one looks about the world and as one observes different kinds of motion which exists within it, and as one searches for a single principle which can be used to relate the motions of many different kinds of object into an intelligible whole that reveals a general order within all things that move (either through self-movement or through receptions of movement from other things). Although one does not really know if one's hypothesis is true or false, one can speak about its usefulness or fruitfulness if, by using it, one can relate a large number of variables into a unity which, otherwise, would not be known. If, at another point in time, another explanatory principle can be postulated which, in turn, relates a larger number of variables, it is to be preferred over the first principle which one had employed.³²

³⁰Isaac Asimov, *Understanding Physics Volume 1 Motion, Sound, and Heat* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1993), p 5.

³¹Asimov, p. 4.

³²Newton's first law of motion can be cited as a pertinent example here. *A body remains at rest or, if already in motion, remains in uniform motion with constant speed in a straight line, unless it is acted on by an unbalanced external force.* Cf. Asimov, p. 24. As an explanatory principle that is postulated but not proved, it supersedes Aristotle's earlier theorem which had supposed the existence of a "natural place" as a general explanatory principle from which many conclusions can be inferred about the movement of physical objects. As Asimov goes on to argue his case:

Newton's laws of motion represent assumptions and definitions and are not subject to proof. In particular, the notion of "inertia" is as much an assumption as Aristotle's notion of "natural place." There is

With respect to an “extremely fertile act of understanding” which exists in Aquinas’s thought, in Aquinas, such an act probably refers to an explanatory metaphysical insight which he had which apprehended a relation of mutual proportion respecting the principles of being or reality present in potency, form, and act. The meaning of each term is understood only in terms of how each is related to the other terms and vice versa. Terms and relations inseparably and mutually define each other in the context of one definition which one uses to speak of concrete things. As Aquinas avers, on the one hand, in the *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3, “what is intrinsically ordered to something else ‘cannot be understood apart from that other’.” Then, on the other hand and in addition, in the *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 9, 5, 1827-9, Aquinas speaks about how, by analogies grounded in things that we experience and know, one can grasp a meaning for these different metaphysical terms so that one has an explanatory first principle that can be used to understand the life of all concrete things which exist in our world. For example, in the following analogy, if one attends to the human experience of vision or sight, one can distinguish between eyes which are capable of seeing (potency) and sight as a nature or property which specifies what eyes are able to do (form). Then, on this basis, one can distinguish between sight as a nature and seeing as an activity or operation (act). Form can be understood as a first act or second potency since, with respect to matter or potency, form is what informs matter or potency to specify what something is. Then, with respect to act, form is to be understood as a second kind of potency since, with the reception of act, a thing exists or it operates or functions. With respect to the things of this world, no form can exist apart from its instantiation in matter (potency). In cognitional terms, the form of a material thing cannot be understood apart from its union with matter. At the same time, since contingent things cannot account for their own existence, act as an act of being or existence is to be postulated as a principle which accounts for the union which can exist between potency and form. In Aquinas (and not in Aristotle), act supplants form as a more primary, foundational explanatory principle. The eternity of forms in Aristotle is replaced by an eternal, unrestricted act of being from which all things flow.

With respect, however, to an “extremely fertile act of understanding” as this especially exists in Lonergan’s own thought, tersely stated, this probably best refers to an isomorphic structure that is postulated with respect how the order of being relates to the order of knowing and vice versa. The experiencing, understanding, and judging of human cognition is to be correlated to the potency, form, and act of metaphysics.³³

As Lonergan moves further on in his discussion, after speaking about the properties of a theological system (the properties of a theological ordering of basic terms and relations which is constitutive of an act of understanding in systematic theology), he then speaks about three problems which can arise in theology—three sources of difficulty which inhibit the ongoing development of understanding in systematic theology. First, at times, ongoing development fails to occur because seminal insights have not been well understood. What was understood say, by Augustine, Aquinas, or Newman, is not

this difference between them, however: The principle of inertia has proved extremely useful in the study of physics for nearly three centuries now and has involved physicists in no contradictions. For this reason (and not out of any considerations of “truth”) physicists hold on to the laws of motion and will continue to do so.

³³Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 521-533.

understood by later readers and students. Lonergan refers to a principle here that was frequently invoked and applied by Aquinas. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*.³⁴ “Whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver.” Hence, in knowing anything, or in thinking that one knows anything, a thing is known by a prospective knower according to the mode of a knower’s being where what is understood and known is regulated according to how a thing is known by a knower. In the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 4, this principle is stated in cognitional terms: “the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower.” *Cogitum...est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis*. Hence, when later students of theology fail to enjoy the same acts of understanding that had been enjoyed by earlier theological thinkers within the theological tradition, they will employ a truncated understanding of things in a way that will only create distortions. Pseudo-problems will be generated and, to address them, one’s mind will try to find provisional solutions which will create a new theological tradition, a tradition which will jar with the received theological tradition and which will emerge as a miscast tradition. Aquinas’s thought, for example, is replaced by Thomistic interpretations that present a sometimes consistent misunderstanding of things although it is claimed, at the same time, that everything is grounded in Aquinas’s texts and the true meaning of his texts. False controversies will begin to emerge at center stage as inquiries move toward apprehensions of meaning that will lead to experiences of skepticism that will encourage a later disbelief in the sense or meaning of the Church’s teachings in matters having to do with faith and morals.

To cite only one example which can be used to illustrate a very large and massive problem, in his *Divine Initiative*, Michael Stebbins attempts to explain one of Lonergan’s early works on grace, a Latin treatise, *De ente supernaturali: Supplementum schematicum (On Supernatural Being: A Schematic Supplement)* which he had written as a kind of textbook for students. In Lonergan’s study which Stebbins analyzes, the dispute which irrupted in the 16th Century between Molinists and Bannezians about the relation between grace and human freedom should be regarded as a false controversy because it proceeded on the basis of a number of shared misunderstandings. To cite one example here, both schools of thought adhered to a theory of human understanding which cannot be squared with Aquinas’s stated views. When human understanding is understood as a vital act, it is said that human understanding causes itself. It is essentially self-caused or self-willed.³⁵ But, the self-actualization of human knowing is not only a mistaken notion in itself but one which is doubly false if one tries to claim that it represents Aquinas’s understanding of human cognition. As Aquinas himself says, “the knower as such is not an efficient...cause.”³⁶ Human knowing is not to be equated with the activity or efficient causality of the agent intellect. Human knowledge is not essentially a product of human effort (as a human knower moves from not knowing or not understanding to knowing or understanding). As

³⁴*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5.

³⁵Stebbins, pp. 107-110. To see the Augustinian origins of this kind of thinking about human cognition, see, for instance, what Augustine says in the *De Trinitate* 9, 12, 18 where he speaks about human knowledge is something that begets itself. In human knowledge, a form of self-movement can be found and, if one takes this idea of self-movement and if one converts it into a first principle which is used to construct a general theory of human cognition, the resulting interpretation will suggest that human understanding occurs in a manner which exists essentially as a human project. Our understanding is entirely subject to our autonomous human control. Other factors need not be considered. See *Verbum*, p. 211, n. 90 on the Augustinian origins of an understanding of human cognition which thinks in terms of a theory of vital act.

³⁶Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 6.

essential as is the reasoning process for moving toward understanding, no one can know if understanding will ever come. The absence of any guarantees accordingly distinguishes understanding from any kind of human making or human producing.³⁷ There is nothing which a person can do whose term is necessarily an act of understanding (even if an act of understanding is personally possessed by a knower when it is enjoyed). Hence, as a consequence, understanding presents itself as a gift which can only be elicited (and not produced) by what human beings do. It cannot be earned. While given to persons who ask questions, it is essentially received. Understanding is essentially a reception; it is a “being-acted-upon.”³⁸ It is an act, not an action.³⁹ While an action is something which is produced (it comes from a subject or agent as its source or point of origin), as an act, understanding is more properly a passion (*passio*). It is a passive potency. It is something which a subject receives or accepts. It is the act of a subject which exists within a subject who, as a patient, undergoes and experiences what is undergone and experienced,⁴⁰ but who can only receive certain operations according to the form or nature which specifies a subject’s operations in terms of what can be received and what cannot be received by a given subject.⁴¹ “Act is limited by the potency in which it is received.”⁴² And, every form possesses an inclination of its own which specifies what it may properly receive.⁴³ Hence, until understanding dawns, one must continue to work and hope for it and, until it dawns, one cannot say what one has understood. The receptive character of human understanding accordingly explains why Aquinas speaks of understanding as a “movement to the soul” from an agent object instead of a movement “from the soul” to outer things.⁴⁴ Intellectual knowledge is received from external things in a way which shows that understanding operates “from things to the soul,” *via a rebus ad animam*.⁴⁵ If the receptive character of human understanding is accordingly thus not understood, it will lead to a false notion of human autonomy (an exaggerated notion of it) and, as a result, God’s grace will not be understood with regard to its full efficacy.

Second, another kind of problem which arises to impede the development of systematic theology has to do with how persons respond to theological systems which they may encounter in the course of their reading and discussions with other persons and which have been created as explanatory theorems by theologians who are trying to seek a greater understanding about how the Christian faith hangs together as a whole in its intrinsic meaningfulness. On the one hand, Lonergan admits that some persons may not have a good notion of order as a heuristic for understanding what a system is. Hence, they will be inclined to reject systematic understandings of things when these are encountered. However, more saliently and seriously, systems of thought within systematic theology are rejected because some persons cannot distinguish a first operation of the mind which seeks understanding from the second which seeks to make judgments that affirm facts or truths. As Lonergan so simply puts it, “they do not grasp what it means to understand.”⁴⁶ For some and possibly very many persons, statements of fact or

37*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 85, a. 2.

38*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 2.

39*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 28, a. 3, ad 1; *Sententia super Physicam*, 3, 5, 320.

40*De Veritate*, q. 26, a. 1; a. 3; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 41, a.1, ad 2.

41Stebbins, p. 107.

42Bernard Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 147.

43*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 4, ad 2.

44Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 6, a. un., arg. 14a.

45Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 9.

46Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 27.

conclusions about one thing or another are to be quickly arrived at. Snap judgments are very frequently made without much thought given to the value of engaging in prior, careful thought. This is true, however, not only when second operations of the mind are made irrationally (with little attention given to the saliency of any evidence) but also when questions are not asked that can trigger first operations of the mind which seek an intelligible unity in things that is grasped only in an inward way by an act of the mind (an act of understanding) and not by any act of sense that can only outwardly grasp unities that are strictly material (outward or external). In minds that are innocent of philosophic or scientific inquiry (who do not know what philosophy or science is), problems which exist within philosophy or science simply do not exist. And so, in the same way, for theology and in the life of the Church, the same basic kind of problem exists. Pragmatic, dogmatic considerations often tend to hold center stage. Systematic theology is not recognized for the tentative species of inquiry that it is and so, as a result, no attention is given to its possible value in the Church's life. Its work is not encouraged. Its conclusions are often regarded with suspicion and, at times, proposed meanings or understandings are rejected because they are confused with the necessity of belief in the truths of faith which belong to the Christian creed. To state this matter in another way, the necessity of belief with respect to matters of faith is not adequately distinguished from the provisional kind of belief that is urged by the intelligibility or the meaningfulness of a speculative understanding of things as this is given in the work of systematic theology.

When Lonergan concludes his discussion here by speaking about a theological decline which occurred in the 14th Century when theologians narrowed their focus to disputes about what is absolutely necessary or absolutely possible in the divine scheme of things, for a deeper understanding of the issues involved here, one might look at what Aquinas and Lonergan have to say about the difference between absolute and conditional necessity.⁴⁷ Understanding the difference between the two (absolute, natural necessity versus conditional, hypothetical necessity) allows one to understand why logically motivated forms of inquiry focus on certain issues (or values) which are other than the ordering which is sought by systematic forms of inquiry in theology.

Third and lastly, when belief becomes a problem for some persons and certain beliefs are denied, an inquiry about them within the context of systematic theology loses its relevance and soon ceases to exist. Where no faith exists, there is nothing for a systematic theology to think about. If, in such a situation, there is to be some kind of inquiry or search for meaning, it tends to follow a line of inquiry which is engaged in some form of self-questioning. A person begins to wonder about what one really believes in in conjunction with questions that ask about what one's life is really about. By effecting changes in one's self, one can begin to move into an altered conscious state and perhaps, by a conversion of some kind, a larger, new world of meaning is glimpsed and entered. Please note thus that when Lonergan refers to "Protestants, rationalists, liberals, atheists relying on humanistic optimism, modernists, existentialists, so-called 'critical' historians, and historical relativists," he is referring to points of view and outlook which should be regarded as restricted and narrow if these points of view are compared to apprehensions of meaning that can be given through good work that can be done in systematic theology and which, to some extent, has been accomplished in the work of the past.

To give an example, if, for instance, one were to look at Aquinas's notion of providence and how he

⁴⁷See, for instance, Aquinas in *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 3 & ad 1; q. 116, a. 3; and Lonergan in *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 106-8.

explicates this notion in terms of the relations between primary and secondary causes, one can come to a general understanding which can grasp a universal scheme of things. In the order of God's government, which exists in God's mind as a thought out idea or concept,⁴⁸ and which includes more than what God wills directly with respect to everything which exists in the world, nothing falls outside a divine scheme of things in a complex dialectic which is constitutive of human history.⁴⁹ Besides directly willing everything that is good and in the context of only directly willing the good, God indirectly wills the evil of natural defects and also the evil of punishment for sin,⁵⁰ while also permitting moral evil to exist,⁵¹ since, by all these means joined together, more good is brought about than would otherwise be possible. The indirect willing and permitting of God are themselves also goods since, by working through secondary causes which can sometimes fail, God's power and glory are more fully and wondrously revealed.

In concluding his discussion of "the question or problem," after summarizing what he has been attempting to say, Lonergan introduces a point that had been made by Cardinal Newman in his *The Idea of a University*. Lonergan wants to speak not only about the value of systematic theology but also about its necessity, its conditional necessity if certain goods are to be attained and certain evils avoided. If efforts are made to discourage speculative reasoning that tries to gain some deeper insight into the meaning of the mysteries of the Faith, if systematic theological inquiry is discounted or avoided, it will engender an omission in human knowing. A mutilation, a distortion will arise in the sum of what human beings claim to know—a distortion that will arise in a natural way since it is completely natural for human beings to ask questions about the meanings of things--questions which seek to put things together in order to find a deeper unity that can only be apprehended by self-transcending acts of understanding (as opposed to acts of sense). On this point, one can accordingly postulate that the birth of 18th Century Enlightenment philosophy (which rejected the validity of any revealed religion as a guide to life) can be explained to some extent by a dearth of understanding in systematic theology. An overemphasis on certitude as the goal of one's theological understanding took away from the kind of understanding that is germane to questions that ask about meaning and relations. As Lonergan had noticed, quoting Aquinas, certitudes (if this is all that one has) tend to create a hunger; they can leave one's soul empty in a way which can tell against the value of believing in the doctrines of faith that belong to one's religious tradition. Church teaching can come across as meaningless and, as meaningless, irrelevant. Then, all too easily, one can begin to look toward other possible sources of meaning in one's life, embarking on a journey that can create a new culture within which to live--a culture which turns away from higher orders of meaning that reveal transcendent spheres of meaning and value.

4. The Truth of Theological Understanding

In this new section, Lonergan addresses a question that had been raised in the previous section which had spoken about the nature of the problem or question as it exists in theology. Encounters with incoherence raised questions about coherence, and the subsequent inadequacy of logical analysis encouraged a subsequent asking questions that looked for some kind of deeper meaning. Systematic theology can accordingly be understood as a species of theological activity which seeks to grasp a

48*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 15, a. 2.

49*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 22, a. 1, ad 2.

50*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 9.

51*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3.

deeper meaning in terms of how the mysteries of faith relate to each other. However, at this point, a third kind of question or problem needs to be addressed. How does one cope with questions that ask about the truth or the reality of postulated theological understandings? While, obviously, questions about truth are more closely related to dogmatic theological activity (the second operation of the mind is correlated more with dogmatic theology than with systematic theology), at the same time, questions about truth cannot be banished from systematic theological activity. The second operation of the human intellect is a completely natural activity which occurs in all departments of human inquiry. Hence, how can one speak about the truth of understanding in systematic theological activity?

In speaking about whether or not any understanding in systematic theological activity is true or not, Lonergan first notes that the postulatory or speculative nature of every understanding in systematic theology is such that one cannot immediately say that, as postulated, it is to be regarded as either true or false. To speak about the truth or falsity of anything requires a second kind of inquiry which transcends an inquiry that only asks about a possible meaning or intelligible unity that is not grasped by any act of sense. No first operations of the mind entail any second operations which can only be initiated if persons are interested in asking questions about truth. Within the first operation of the mind, truth is not an issue and so, for this reason, it has to be said that every understanding in systematic theology is not *per se* either true or false.

Secondly, for the same reason as noted above, when acts of understanding occur in systematic theology to produce inner words (which inwardly express the meaning of bright ideas that have grasped the existence of an intelligible relation), this species of inner word is to be sharply contrasted with a second species of inner word which arises in the wake of reflective acts of understanding which occur in judgment and which pronounce on the truth or falsity of a given meaning. In judgment as a second operation of the mind, every prospective understanding which occurs within it takes an inner word which has been already grasped by a prior act of understanding (an act of understanding which is unlike the kind of understanding which occurs in judgment). Then, in trying to judge the reality or truth of this prior inner word, a reductive analysis occurs. From a postulated inner word, one tries to identify a responsible act of understanding, an act of understanding from which has come an inner word that one wants to evaluate and judge. But, from this originating act of understanding, one moves backwards to see if this act of understanding is itself properly grounded. Through a chain of reasoning, employing the kind of language which Aquinas uses, one returns to first principles present in sense and intellect. For example, in the case of theology, one returns to the data of revelation and, on the one hand, with respect to the first principles which exist in the intellect, one returns to the law or, better still, the principle of non-contradiction.⁵² The object is some kind of critical grounding--evidence which can trigger a reflective act of understanding that grasps or recognizes the sufficiency of evidence for either making a positive or negative affirmation--a judgment. Since reflective understanding, in its operation, presupposes prior direct acts of understanding, it is probably for this reason that Lonergan

⁵²Please note that, though the first principles of the intellect are frequently referred to as "laws," they are perhaps better referred to as "principles" since the first principles of the intellect are to be understood as conditions which exist for the purpose of constituting and creating laws. Intelligence is something more than intelligibility. Laws reveal the intelligibility of things which exist. But, on the other hand, principles exist in order to introduce an order within things. They effect or create laws by relating one species of object with another in a way which had not existed before. For a fuller understanding of the difference, see Lonergan, *Verbum*, pp. 46-47, as cited in editorial footnote 11 in *The Triune God: Systematics*, pp. 143-145.

speaks of simple inner words with respect to theological understanding in systematics versus compound inner words with respect to theological understanding as this occurs in theology wherever judgments are made (whether in systematics or in dogmatics).

To avoid any possible misunderstanding later about a controversial issue, please note that, in Lonergan's understanding of human cognition, conceptualization is to be distinguished from understanding. Conceptualization (which, broadly speaking, is concerned with forming of inner and outer words) is an activity that follows from understanding. The proceeding of an inner word (the translation of an idea into a concept) follows immediately and simultaneously every time an act of understanding comes to us. In every act of understanding, its term is experienced within human consciousness as something which is known as an idea.⁵³ The proceeding of an outer word, however, does not follow immediately or simultaneously since the putting of an idea into spoken or written speech is sometimes no easy task and its doing often requires subsidiary acts of understanding which can find or form the right words that are needed to express an idea that one has understood (once one has received a given act of understanding). On the basis of Lonergan's introspective analysis of himself engaged in acts of understanding, please note though that the forming of concepts in conceptualization should not be seen as taking center stage in human cognition. Acts of understanding are both prior and basic. On the basis then of Lonergan's self-understanding and also on the basis of his reading of Aquinas, it can be properly argued that Aquinas similarly holds to the priority of understanding in human cognition and to the fact that concepts (as inner words) follow *immediately* as an effect or consequence. Different texts can be cited from Aquinas by way of proof.⁵⁴

Thirdly, when the inner words of a systematic theological understanding are put into spoken or written words, care needs to be exercised that one does not confuse the statement of a hypothesis with an affirmation of fact. When the words of a statement speak of a relation between two or more things and even if verbs of "to be" are used, one should not be misled to think that some kind of fact is being stated. "To be" verbs are necessarily used to state judgments of fact, but they are often used to postulate relations which have been grasped by first operations of human understanding. As Lonergan urges, attend to the intention of a speaker to be sure about what is really being said when something is being said.

⁵³Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 18; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 15, aa. 1-2.

⁵⁴As Aquinas notes on the priority of understanding: *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 34, a. 1: "it is of the nature of a mental concept to proceed from something else, namely from the knowledge of the person conceiving"; *De Veritate*, q. 4, a. 2: "conception is an effect of the act of understanding . . . something expressed by intellectual knowledge"; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 14, 3: "a word does not arise from our intellect except in so far as it is in act; but as soon as it is in act, a word is conceived in it"; and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 11, 14: "for this intelligible reality (God) is identical with the understanding intellect, whose emanation is the conceived Word." On the priority of inner words with respect to outer words, Aquinas notes in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 34, a. 1: an "exterior vocal sound is called a word from the fact that it signifies the interior concept of the mind." Later on in the *Triune God: Systematics*, Appendix 2: The Act of Understanding and Appendix 2A, Lonergan explains how Aquinas understood the relation between an act of understanding and the necessity of an inner proceeding which occurs within every act of understanding and whose term is an inner word which can be viewed as a definition or proposition. See Appendix 2, p. 599, and Lonergan's citation of Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 5 which speaks about the intellect conceiving within itself "either a definition or proposition."

Fourth and somewhat obviously, Lonergan notes that the characteristics of an understanding in systematic theology is something that belongs to the inner and outer words of conceptualization. The inner and outer words of conceptualization share in the characteristics which are proper to the nature of understanding in systematic theology. If this were not the case, it would not be possible to speak about the necessary existence of inner words which proceed as by-products or as reflections of what is known in and through acts of understanding by way of acts of conceptualization which emerge from prior acts of understanding.

Antecedent truth

Turning to a second major consideration in reflections that speak about the truth of understanding in systematic theology, Lonergan speaks about the fact that systematic theological understanding is positively connected with what he refers to as “antecedent truth.” Three points are made by him. First, and by means of a very traditional statement of the case which he puts, because systematic theology begins with beliefs which are to be regarded as truths of faith, its activity is such that its point of departure is what God has revealed. Everything begins with the truths of revelation and works from there. In this conception or wording of it, theology does not begin simply from data (as the physical or natural sciences begin from the data of sense as their point of departure). Instead, theology begins from something that, by belief and the judgment of belief, is already known to be true. If one employs and adapts a notion of human science that was first proposed by the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (d. 1911) and which was invoked by Lonergan in his methodological reflections given in *Method in Theology* (published in 1972): systematic theology takes its rise not only from data that already possesses a meaning which one is aware of (data as the data of human science in Dilthey’s conception of it) but also from this same set of data which already possesses a meaning which, through the judgment of belief, is to be regarded as true. In this way, the traditional teaching about beginning from revealed truths of faith is preserved although in a new context. The data needed for systematic theology is correlated with truths of faith that must be accepted and believed. As has already been noted and as St. Augustine had taught: “I believe in order to understand.” In the traditional statement of this position which Lonergan repeats, God’s own truthfulness accounts for the truthfulness of what he has revealed.

Secondly, with respect now to the sources of revelation to which a systematic theologian turns, as the theologian turns to what God has revealed to become more familiar with what it is that he has to understand, Lonergan speaks about sources of revelation in a way which reveals a traditional Catholic understanding of it. Perhaps, in outlining this view, it is best to speak of it in the following series of steps. First, Lonergan emphasizes the value of turning to the Church’s promulgated teaching to find out what is proposed for all to believe. While Lonergan speaks immediately about scripture and the ecclesiastical magisterium, he speaks of the Church’s teaching in a way which presupposes that there is nothing in scripture which is not taught by the Church, either frequently and clearly, or rarely and briefly as the case may be.⁵⁵ Here, scripture and church teaching is not seen as juxtaposed to each other. Given what the Church is (the Church’s ecclesiology, the Church’s nature) and why it was brought into being by Our Lord in the first place, a juxtaposition or contrast is not to be supposed in the relation which exists between what scripture says and what Church authorities have said over the ages in matters pertaining to what Christians should believe about divine things and the order of redemption

⁵⁵Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, pp. 35-37.

which God has created. See John Henry Cardinal Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* for an exciting account which bears on this issue and which emphasizes a fundamental continuity as one moves through time from scripture into tradition. Admittedly, this point is disputed by some (especially, and traditionally, by believers who live outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church). However, for the sake of understanding Lonergan's position here, it has to be admitted that Lonergan espouses a traditionally accepted Catholic understanding of things which remains normative to this day within the Catholic Church. The Church is to be understood as a transcendent, mediating power and influence. Its sum is greater than any of its parts. To illustrate the point a bit with a story taken from history, in a conversation between the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and Cardinal Ercole Consalvi, the Pope's Secretary of State, the Emperor turned to Consalvi at one point and said to him: "Don't you realize that I have the power to destroy the Catholic Church?" And to this, Consalvi replied: "Your Excellency, even we priests have failed to do this in 18 centuries!"

Second, in systematics, a theologian normally begins with what the Church has taught in terms of how Church authorities have expressed themselves in the declarations which they have made over the years. For the Christian, scripture is best understood and expressed in through the Church's magisterium. In talking about this matter and to explain his position, Lonergan distinguishes between what he refers to as biblical categories and "catholic" categories.⁵⁶ Biblical categories refer to a mode of expression that is very concrete. Meaning is expressed in a manner that pertains to the immediate uses of life as these exist for particular writers, readers, times, places, occasions, and circumstances. However, as Christianity began to move into the gentile world and as it began to encounter different cultures, a different type of exegesis was needed by the Church in order to find answers for questions that could transcend cultural differences. And so, the result was a new species of exegesis (a Catholic type of exegesis) which sought to cull a strictly intellectual component from the texts and data of scriptural meaning and the characteristic mode of expression that normally belongs to scripture. The object was a new apprehension of meaning which could be understood by anyone with a functioning mind and which could be proposed and accepted as a true statement of fact. By employing a technical mode of expression, one could avoid ambiguous references. And so, as a result, a technical mode of expression became normative for any pronouncements or clarifications that the Church would introduce from time to time as problems or questions about right meaning or belief would occasionally arise in the course of the Church's history. For this reason thus it is said that, for systematic theology, the initial starting point is normally the Church's official teaching (where the truths of the Faith are declared and taught and where, at times, they carefully defined, declared, and taught).

Third, a systematic theologian also turns to scripture as a point of departure when he must deal with truths of faith that have never been officially defined (because they have never really been disputed by anybody interested in matters of Christian belief). As Lonergan argues, certain beliefs which have always belonged to the Christian profession have never been controverted or disputed. It has not been necessary for the Church to introduce clarifications about everything. If one looks, for instance, at the texts of scripture, only some of them texts have ever received an official interpretation. For instance, certain passages in scripture speak about Our Lord's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. See

⁵⁶For a fuller study of this issue, look at a lecture which Lonergan gave at Regis College in Toronto on September 3, 1963, entitled "Exegesis and Dogma," a lecture which has since been published in Lonergan's *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, edited by Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 142-159.

Mt 26, 26-28; Mk 14, 22-34; Luke 22, 15-20; 1 Cor 11, 23-25. Where passages have Jesus say “this is my body” or “this is my blood,” in response to those who say that these words have only a figurative or allegorical meaning, or that they should be interpreted as having only a figurative or allegorical meaning, the Church officially teaches that no figurative meaning is being stated or suggested. And so, by means of scripture and the common affirmations which exist within it, Christ’s Real Presence in the Eucharist is proclaimed as an apostolic teaching.⁵⁷ It comes from Christ.

However, as Lonergan notes, the study of scripture as this is done by biblical scholars is not to be confused with how scripture is to be studied by someone who is engaged in the work of systematic theology. A positive link of some kind exists between the two although an understanding of this link, as Lonergan suggests, is a very major issue which elicits a separate, distinct inquiry. Biblical scholarship, surely, is supposed to exist as a help for other theologians, and this would have to include dogmatic and systematic theologians although, at the same time, it should be said that biblical scholarship is not supposed to exist in an isolated manner, apart from what has been achieved in the knowing and understanding of faith as this has been achieved over the years by theologians who have been asking other kinds of questions. To the degree then that scripture scholars work from a more profound understanding of the meaning of their Christian faith, to the same degree then, a better context should exist for dealing with exegetical problems as these are encountered in reading scripture. Much later on, in his *Method in Theology*, Lonergan outlines a comprehensive notion of method in theology and, within the form that he gives there, scriptural studies and systematic theology each have a place, although, in the general scheme of things and in association with many other variables, each builds and augments the other in a somewhat complex, non-simple way.

Thirdly, beyond the Church’s teaching and scripture, Lonergan adverts to the fact that antecedent truth from which systematic theology begins is something which also exists in other sources. Lonergan here does not proceed to identify these sources although editorial footnotes amply do so in the citations that are given. What is of chief concern to Lonergan here is the problem of “poor understanding” since the absence of good ordering in one’s inquiry will undermine the fruits of any labor that is done in systematic theology. Hence, if systematic theologians are to make any real headway in the work that they do, they must first take time to take a possibly radical look at the heuristic which they have been employing in the inquiries which they have been conducting. In this respect then, it is an undoubted fact that, whenever any of us asks questions, we each work from some kind of heuristic (even if this heuristic has not be clearly adverted to, understood, and known). The heuristic that is employed determines one’s object of study (what it is that one is studying *as a formal object*) even if it is also true to say that one’s object of study *as a material object* also determines how one will conduct one’s inquiry through the heuristic that one is using. Some kind of interaction normally obtains between question and object. In any case, at a certain point, if any significant progress is to be made in systematic theology, some thought must be given to questions that ask about the character and nature of one’s method: what it is that one is doing. In the context of sources which serve as points of departure for systematic theology, Lonergan accordingly recommends an approach that is grounded in the Church’s teaching since, if one works from within this teaching, problems that are more proper to systematic theology will probably present themselves more readily than would otherwise be the case.

Consequent truth

⁵⁷Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Canon Bastible (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1960), pp. 374-375.

Turning now to the last major section in section 4 on the truth of theological understanding, Lonergan looks at the truth of systematic theology: what he refers to as the “consequent truth” of systematic theological understanding. One might refer to it as the truth of a truth since, as already noted, theology primarily begins with truths of faith in the hope of moving toward a theological understanding that possesses a truth of its own. Lonergan’s discussion is given in twelve points although, in the first four, the truth of theological understanding is contrasted with what it is not.

First then, it is said that the truth of this understanding is not to be equated with the truth of first principles. To explain a bit more what is meant by first principles, in Aquinas, the nature of first principles as these exist in the structure of human reasoning is discussed. In how reasoning occurs for human beings, a basic set of principles or laws methodologically grounds this reasoning process. Their foundational character explains why they are thus known as first principles (*prima principia*) which, at some level, are known and accepted by all persons who seek to come to know anything.⁵⁸ Two types of first principle can be distinguished. One refers to “common notions” or “common conceptions” which are variously cited by Aquinas as “first conceptions of the intellect.”⁵⁹ These refer to predicates or attributes which stand on their own (but which are needed for reasoning to make distinctions between one thing and another in order to move toward understanding and knowledge). Common notions are instanced by *being*, *one*, and *good* (what Lonergan refers to as “transcendentals”) although these are not the only examples which exist.⁶⁰ As a common notion, for instance, *being* (*ens*) is the first, primary, and most basic of all notions since the object of human understanding as understanding is knowledge about what could be the being of a thing or a cause.⁶¹ In moving toward an understanding and knowledge of any reality, a question about being implicitly informs and guides the meaning of any questions that are being asked. Hence, *being*, as an object of inquiry and understanding, can be regarded as the most formal and the most general of all possible categories.⁶² Everything known presents itself as an instance of being. However, although *being* is implicitly sought by every kind of human inquiry, knowledge about *being* as a fundamental category or predicate can only come from one’s self-reflection on the activity which is one’s performance and the experience of human inquiry. The same applies with respect to knowing the one, the true, and the good.

⁵⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 60, a. 2; q. 79, a. 8; 1a2ae, q. 63, a. 1; q. 94, a. 4.

⁵⁹*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2; a. 4; *De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1; *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4.

⁶⁰See Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 147 and p. 171, where Lonergan mentions a number of other common notions as in “the same and the diverse” [or “the same and the other”], “potency and act”, and “the absolute and the relative.” Lonergan admits that other common notions can be determined and identified. See also Joseph Owens, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 111-127, for a discussion about the nature of transcendentals as transcendental predicates. A predicate is a transcendental if it can be said of it that it “climbs across” or “climbs beyond” (transcends) all other categories.

⁶¹*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2; Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 575-576. Please note that, while in *Insight* Lonergan carefully distinguishes between a notion of being and a concept of being, in his writings Aquinas does not explicitly make such a distinction although one can argue that he was implicitly aware of this distinction. This issue is more fully discussed later in these notes in dealing with what Lonergan has to say in Section 9 on “The Object of Theology.”

⁶²*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 7, a. 1.

The second type of first principle refers to “judgments” or “axioms” (*dignitates*) which elicit a predicate from a subject to aver a truth about the nature of something.⁶³ These principles are all derivative since, from *being*, one moves toward a knowledge of other first principles which aver the rational necessity of having to draw certain conclusions in the conduct of one’s reasoning. For instance, from *being (ens)* and *not-being (non ens)* comes the axiomatic principle of non-contradiction and then, from this principle, all other axioms emerge. For instance, “every whole is greater than its parts” and “things equal to one and the same are equal to one another.”⁶⁴ All together, from these first principles, all else follows within the structure of human reasoning although, from these general principles, particular conclusions cannot be reached about any particular thing that one wants to study, understand, and know in any given discipline.⁶⁵ For this reason, it is said by Lonergan that theological understanding adds a determination or a specificity that comes from itself as another variable: a specificity which is not to be equated with the general, first principles of human reasoning.⁶⁶

Secondly, about the truth of systematic theological understanding, Lonergan notes that this understanding never grasps who or what God is. The divine essence is never understood by any of our acts of understanding.⁶⁷ Any understanding that we have of such a thing is very imperfect and partial since it always proceeds indirectly through analogies grounded on what is humanly known by us about the nature of created things. The contingency of created things is to be correlated with the contingency of human knowing, the proper object of *human knowing* being whatever exists as a form or nature that is embedded within matter. Hence, as Lonergan notes, the truth of an analogy (being provisional) cannot be compared with the absoluteness or the reality of God’s own truth: the truth of who God is in the knowledge which God has of himself since this knowledge exists in an unrestricted, non-human way. It is totally lacking in any conditions or limits. Since the absence of any contingency in God is thus to be sharply contrasted with the contingency of everything else which exists, in a similar way or, to state the matter in another way, the absence of any contingency in divine knowing is to be contrasted with the contingency of our human knowing. With coming to know anything about God, one also comes to realize how much more there is to be known.

Thirdly, in another contrast, the truth of a theological understanding in systematics is not to be compared with any kind of truth which can be reached by persons who try to come to some understanding of God in a way that is purely philosophic (prescinding or operating apart from what is known through revelation). As Lonergan states his case and as he also reiterates, systematic theological understanding is to be distinguished from what can be known from revelation and also from what can be known merely through our human reasoning (in a natural theology) as one looks about one’s world and asks questions about it.

Fourthly, and as a last point of contrast (which comes as a kind of conclusion given what has already been said), while systematic theology works from certitudes of belief (the truth of certitudes), theological understanding at best works for truths that are only probable. A conjecture is proposed and its truth is but a function of all the different good reasons that can be discovered to suggest that, in all

63*De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2.

64*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2.

65*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 33, a. 1.

66Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 41.

67Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 643.

probability or likelihood, it should be regarded as a true and right understanding of things.⁶⁸ For instance, to try and give an example taken from Aquinas, if questions are asked about the meaning or the intelligibility of Christ's incarnation, in many different texts, Aquinas argues that Christ's incarnation should be understood as a best and most fitting remedy for the mystery of evil as this exists in our human sin.⁶⁹ In contrast with other possible solutions, Christ's incarnation best draws human beings toward a life of virtue and away from sin.⁷⁰ From St. Augustine, Aquinas cites five different reasons which show why Christ's incarnation best brings human beings toward a knowledge and life of virtue which creates conditions which lead us to be delivered from the power of sin. However, in giving his reasons, Aquinas admits that his are not exhaustive. An infinitely valuable action has meanings which can be only grasped by an unrestricted act of understanding. As Aquinas argues, Christ's incarnation exists as a hypothetical necessity (and not as an absolute necessity). Given the concrete order of things which God as Creator has brought into being, such a means best works with the concrete order of the human good to promote the concrete human good in the lives of human beings.⁷¹ In the experience of rationality which is proper to systematic theology, nothing thwarts growth in understanding--moving toward and achieving an ever deeper understanding of meanings which, as meanings, do not change because they refer to eternal truths which are constitutive of the faith that one believes, loves, and adheres to.

Fifth, understanding in systematic theology is always provisional. Or, in other words, since every proffered understanding in systematic theology exists as a conjecture, theory, or hypothesis, the truth which properly belongs to it can be said to be only more or less probable. When any given understanding of things explains a greater number of things (or when more variables can be related to each other by an ordering of things which grasps a larger, greater whole), by the same degree, it can then be properly argued that a proposed understanding of things is more probably true than not true. It is more true than other possible explanations that one could offer or which others in the past have proposed. Tentativeness in understanding is matched by a certain tentativeness in judgment which acknowledges the fact that indirect, analogical forms of understanding are being used to move toward some kind of understanding of divine things which, as realities or things, transcend the reality of human understanding. As has already been noted, divine things in the way that they exist are not a proper object of human understanding and knowing in the context of our present life even if one must acknowledge that, in human beings, a natural desire exists for wanting to know the truth and cause of all things: "everything which belongs to the perfection of the mind."⁷² In God who exists as the supreme cause or first principle of all things, everything is understood.⁷³ The absence of a natural

68In the tradition of theology, this type of argument relies on the fittingness or the *convenientia* of an argument. Suggestive reasons elicit a kind of moral consent that comes from appreciating the sense or the wisdom that exists in the meaning of one or more truths. Cf. Gilles Mongeau S. J. "Lecture on 'A more Cosmopolitan Salvation: Aquinas, Formation for Beatitude, and the Cross,'" Lonergan Workshop, Boston College, June 2010.

69Aquinas, *In 3 Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 54, 8-9, *Compendium theologiae*, 1, c. 200; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 20, a. 4, ad 2.

70*Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 1, a. 2.

71Jeremy D. Wilkins, "Trinity, Mission, and Grace in Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Bernard Lonergan: The Reception and Transformation of a Tradition," (paper presented at the Third International Lonergan Workshop, Erbacher Hof, Mainz, Germany, January 2-7, 2007), p. 8.

72*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4.

73*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 25, 11 & 14; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 1, 4.

human facility in receiving an adequate understanding of divine things accordingly explains why achievements or receptions of understanding in systematic theology present themselves as more an effect or gift of grace than is the case with other, lesser acts of understanding.⁷⁴ In systematic theology, things are known in a more supernatural way. God's help is more urgently needed.

Sixth, the truth or the reality of an order that is grasped in an act of understanding in systematic theology manifests itself not only by its ability to order a greater number of variables in a greater whole but also through a history which manifests a wide ranging development. The development reveals the value of a consequent truth in a context which acknowledges how everything has descended from an original, seminal insight that was the beginning of an initial ordering of things into a comprehensive system.

Lonergan distinguishes three elements. First, what is understood is a constant in terms of a particular doctrine, teaching, or mystery which is the object of one's inquiry. It is what one is asking questions about. The truths of the faith, as eternal truths, necessarily possess a stability—a permanent meaning which endures through time and which is readily accessible to any and all believers at any point in their human history. In this regard, Lonergan adheres to the teaching of *Dei Filius* (as proclaimed by the First Vatican Council):

For the doctrine of faith, which God has revealed, has not been proposed as some sort of philosophic discovery to be perfected by the talent of man. It is a divine deposit, given to the Spouse of Christ, to be guarded faithfully and to be declared infallibly. Hence there is ever to be retained that meaning of the sacred dogmas that once was declared by holy mother church. From that meaning there is to be no departure under the pretext of some higher understanding.⁷⁵

Without a permanent meaning as a base from which to begin as a point of departure, it would not be possible for us to speak about any growth in understanding that one could have with respect to what one is seeking to understand.

Second, with respect to the use of analogies in theological speculation, different analogies can be identified as different persons make different attempts to find ways which would allow them to speak more intelligently about the meaning of certain teachings that are proposed by the Church for universal belief. Lonergan speaks here about a dialectical form of criticism that occurs in the history of theology as different kinds of analogy are first used and then found wanting and then, eventually, after much debate and further thought, a universal agreement gradually begins to emerge about what serves as an apt, better, or best analogy. To try to illustrate what is meant by this dialectic, if, for example, one reads through St. Augustine's work *On the Trinity*, the *De Trinitate*, one finds critical remarks here and there that disparage using material analogies for understanding how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to each other in the Trinity. Material or sensible properties admittedly have their place if one's object of study is a material or sensible thing. But, if one is trying to understand a spiritual thing (something that

⁷⁴*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 47, 3; 3, 48, 12-16; 3, 51-53; William E. Murnion, "Intellectual Honesty in Aquinas and Lonergan," (paper presented at the Third International Lonergan Workshop, Erbacher Hof, Mainz, Germany, January 2-7, 2007), pp. 8-9.

⁷⁵Lonergan, "Doctrinal Pluralism," *Papers 1965-1980*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 89, n. 26.

is totally lacking in material properties), its spiritual properties will not be understood for the different kind of nature that they possess. An errant, misleading understanding of things will easily arise and, with misunderstanding, an ordering of relations which jars and conflicts with the articles and teachings of one's faith. If, for instance, the relation between God the Father and God is Son is seen as akin to the relation between a root and its shoot; a spring and its stream; or the sun and a beam of light which emanates from it, one can begin to postulate an ordering of relations which suggests that God the Father is somehow more divine than God the Son (or God the Holy Spirit).⁷⁶ Father and Holy Spirit come to be seen as lesser deities in this type of approach. And so, Augustine's criticisms led him to postulate the more suitable aptness of a psychological analogy for understanding the relations which exist within the Trinity. An intellectual or mental analogy is offered instead of a material analogy,⁷⁷ and with its introduction into the history of theological speculation,⁷⁸ a heuristic is provided as a first principle for the reflections of later theologians.

Third and lastly, with respect to how a key analogy is used in the work of systematic theology, two

⁷⁶Tertullian *Against Praxeas*, 8; 97, 3 ff. For further discussions here, see Crowe's *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity*, p. 60.

⁷⁷For this reason, the psychological analogy (whose use was pioneered by St. Augustine) has sometimes been referred to as the "analogy of the intellect." In Aquinas, from the nature of human understanding, one moves to an analogical understanding of angelic understanding and then, from angelic understanding, one moves to an analogical understanding of divine understanding. However, if one begins from what human understanding is able properly to know and from what corresponds with human acts of experiencing, understanding, and knowing, one can work with an analogy which can be referred to as the "analogy of the intelligible." By means of this analogy, one begins with common matter and then, from it, one moves toward divine being by thinking about different kinds of intelligibility. Cf. Lonergan, "A Note on Geometrical Possibility," *Collection*, p. 274, editorial note q. From the intelligibility of what is properly known by us as human beings, one moves to think about the intelligibility of what is properly known by angels as disembodied spirits and then, from this intelligibility, one can begin to think about the intelligibility of what is properly known by God: God in terms of God's self-understanding and the unrestrictedness of this self-understanding from which certain things come.

⁷⁸Please note that, according to Lonergan, some evidence exists to the effect that a psychological analogy for understanding the Trinity was first thought about by Origen (d. 254) and also by Marius Victorinus (ca. 370). Cf. Lonergan, "Consciousness and the Trinity," *Papers 1958-1964*, p. 127. Origen, for instance, spoke about God the Father as *nous* and God the Son as *thelêma*. The Son as will proceeds from mind through a production (a generation) which occurs within the Godhead. Cf. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Doctrines*, p. 639; Origen, *On First Principles*, 1, 2, 6; 1, 2, 9, as cited by Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 27. See also R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 65-66. Ayres (p. 73), on the basis of his scholarship, also speaks about *The Divine Institutes* of Lactantius (ca. 310) which speaks about Christ's sonship in a manner which seems to point to an analogical psychological meaning. As Ayres summarizes Lactantius's position: "the Son is the intelligible Word from the mouth of the Father, representing the mind of the Father." Later, in the last half of the 4th Century, in the theology of Basil of Caesarea (d. 379), one can find suggestions to the effect that, from the nature and creativity of human rationality, one can find ways to speak about inner Trinitarian relations. Cf. Ayres, p. 209.

aspects need to be distinguished. First, for any given theologian, an analogy may not be well understood. As has been already noted, serious problems are created by a poor, inadequate understanding of first principles. With respect then to the question of subsequent truth, truer understandings of things are accordingly reached when the first principle present in an analogy is profoundly and thoroughly understood. Second, when the knowledge of a theologian is such that prudent conclusions are drawn from the application of an analogy as a first principle, and if these conclusions are then wisely ordered in a connection of terms and meaning, in this second way, truth is more fully and suitably approached. By a receptivity that can receive very many acts of understanding, a theological understanding of things (as this exists in a theologian) participates more fully in an uncreated, divine understanding of things that is always actual and never potential. In this way, one can speak about how the light of human understanding exists, in different degrees, by way of participating in a greater light which is the uncreated light of divine understanding.⁷⁹ As Lonergan goes on to speak about how the psychological analogy of St. Augustine was taken up in the subsequent history of theology, he notes that it was taken up by Aquinas who expanded its meaning by engaging in a psychological and a metaphysical analysis which drew on a number of Aristotle's insights taken from his psychology and metaphysics.⁸⁰ However, as one delves into Lonergan's own work in his theology of the Trinity, one finds that this same analogy is applied but in a richer context of meaning—a context that is found in Lonergan's very precise study of human cognition which is first given in his *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas* and which later is given in a much more sophisticated way in his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.

Seventh, the consequent truth of theological understanding in systematics is something which lacks limits (it can always grow) since further development is always possible even if one admits that our created, human understanding is always limited in its operations. Lonergan gives a list of reasons which, from different angles, reveal an inherent lack of limit in the continuous progress which is always possible (even if this possibility is not always fully actualized in the ups and downs of the history of theology). First, from the viewpoint of the mysteries themselves, their infinite meaningfulness is a potent factor. There is always more for us to understand as we try to more fully participate in an understanding of things which only God has and possesses. Second, nothing precludes the possibility that our created knowledge of created things is something that can always keep increasing and growing. How can we say, at any given time, that no further questions will ever arise about the meaning of any created thing or given in human history? For instance, while there exists no need for further questions to determine whether or not Caesar crossed the Rubicon River in 49 BC (with his army), further questions can always be asked about the meaning of this event. Why did he do it? What is its significance? How does it relate to other events? How does it affect their meaning? Even if contingent events *in their contingency* are supposed to possess limited meaning, as these same events are seen in wider, greater contexts of interest and concern, a greater meaningfulness begins to attend them. They soon participate in meanings that lack any restrictions. Third, the deposit of faith

⁷⁹*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 5; 1a2ae, q. 19, a. 4; q. 91, a. 2.

⁸⁰In "The Psychological Analogy for the Trinity: At Odds with Modernity," *Pacifica* 14 (October 2001): 282, Neil Ormerod notes that Aquinas takes up the psychological analogy early on in the *Summa Theologiae* 1a (in q. 27, a. 1) and then, from that point on, it is frequently employed as an explanatory principle in the subsequent explication of Aquinas's Trinitarian theology. In the *Summa Theologicae* 1a, subsequent references to the psychological analogy occur in q. 27, a. 2, a. 3, a. 4; q. 28, a. 1, ad 4, a. 4, ad 1; q. 30, a. 2; q. 33, a. 3, ad 1; q. 34, a. 1, ad 2, a. 3; q. 35, a. 2; q. 36, a. 1, a. 2; q. 37, a. 1; q. 38, a. 1; q. 41, a. 6; q. 42, a. 5, and q. 43, a. 5.

which exists in revelation has never been exhaustively catalogued in terms of all the truths that it contains. With growth in theological understanding, more truths are found. More are noticed and, as a result, more is believed. The deposit of faith acts as a ferment, as a kind of seed. For a concrete sense of what is happening here, compare the Apostles' Creed with the later Nicene-Constantinople Creed and then this creed with the Tridentine Creed of Pope Pius IV, and this later creed with the Creed of Pope Paul VI (issued in 1968). Fourth, as understanding grows with respect to the meaning of both divine and created things, a larger number of variables presents itself in a larger set of data which needs to be ordered. Optimally speaking, one ordering succeeds another through a heightening of understanding which recalls the ordering function of wisdom in Aquinas which can grasp how very many things are related to some kind of basic first principle which, in its application, reveals a divinely intended scheme of things that God has created. Fifth and lastly, with the discovery of a more profound ordering of many different variables, this ordering can itself be understood ever more profoundly and, from this more profound understanding, the operations of a higher wisdom or intelligence are more fully revealed. A supervening, supernatural understanding of things accounts for how everything fits together in an order which God, for his own reasons, has chosen to set up, sustain, and nourish in a movement that, in love, seeks to draw all things more closely to himself.

Eighth, in reiterating an earlier point, it has to be admitted that lack of understanding is a factor which also works against good judgment in appreciating the truth of a given theological ordering of things that is being proposed by a given theory in systematic theology. Naturally, where lack of understanding exists in apprehending the meaning of a proposed possible ordering of things, judgments will be inhibited and impeded all the more. Lack of understanding often leads to further lack of understanding just as understanding often leads to complementary increments in an understanding that one has.

Ninth, with respect to moving toward a prospective judgment that can rightly evaluate the possible truth of a proposed systematic theological understanding, three factors can be considered. First, one can take a proposed understanding of things and ask if its acceptance and application sheds light for us. Does it lead to further understanding? Are other issues understood? Does an order emerge from what appears to be a disorder or muddle of some kind where we might be tempted to think that something is missing in the divine scheme of things? To try to give an example here about what is meant, one can consider a seminal insight of St. Augustine who postulated that it is more wonderful to have a universe where good can come out from evil than to have one where evil cannot exist at all.⁸¹ Yes, God could have set things up differently.⁸² We tend to think here that we could have done a better job in setting up a universe. However, as Augustine argues in the *Enchiridion*, c. 27, "God judged it better to bring good out of evil, than not to permit evil to exist." As strange as it may seem, evil has a positive, mysterious role to play within the divine scheme of things which God has created and brought about. As Lonergan, in his *De Verbo Incarnato (The Incarnate Word*, p. 386), quotes from Augustine's *Enchiridion*, c. 11 (a text also cited by Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2):

For the almighty God who...has supreme power over all things, being himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among his works, if he were not so omnipotent and so good that he can bring good out of evil.

⁸¹Augustine, *Enchiridion*, c. 11; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 48, a. 2, ad 3.

⁸²Augustine, *De Agone Christiano*, 11, 12; *De Trinitate*, 13, 13; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 1, a. 2; q. 46, aa. 1-2.

As Aquinas goes on to argue in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2 and in q. 46, a. 1, God has ends and purposes of his own which know the good which he wishes to accomplish. This good is present to him in his unrestricted self-understanding. Admittedly, this good is not known by us in any direct way. As a transcendent reality, it surpasses the proportionality of what can be known by us in our incarnate human understanding. However, for us, some meaning, some understanding of it is grasped by our acknowledging the fact that no human agent is able to create a system of life and living whereby, as a consequence of failure, good can come about. Only a divine mind can accomplish such an incredible thing where from privation or lack of being, something exists or emerges.

Second, one can take a proposed understanding of things and also do a historical study. One attends to questions of origin and asks about what questions were being posed at one time and later at another. Lonergan lists a series of questions which one might very well ask in order to establish a line of development over time. Rival explanations were sometimes given to try and solve problems and one tries to see why a proposed understanding of things has tended to prevail over other explanations. As a possible example here about the kind of analysis that Lonergan has in mind, one can look at a history of interpretations pertaining to “why God became man in Christ’s incarnation.” A number of interpretations can be traced since the composition of St. Athanasius’s *On the Incarnation of the Word*. For Athanasius, God became man so that man might become deified. Later, in his *Address on Religious Instruction*, St. Gregory of Nyssa says the same thing although, in his work, he speaks about a debt or ransom that is paid to the devil who is somehow tricked by God to kill Christ though Christ is without sin. But, in his *Cur Deus Homo*, centuries later, St. Anselm of Canterbury speaks about paying a debt that is owed to God and not to Satan. From God, Satan receives nothing. St. Anselm gives a less anthropomorphic explanation and, by emphasizing Christ’s self-sacrificial love, a motivation is spoken about which is picked up by later theologians. In Aquinas, its echo is found in terms of a free necessity which is grounded in the reality of God’s love for what he has made. Where Anselm had spoken about the necessity of Christ’s saving death (as if our salvation could not occur in any other way), Aquinas speaks about a necessity that is conditional and not absolute.⁸³ God could have done things differently but, for reasons of love (what love is in its intrinsic meaning), it was most suitable and proper (and so, in this sense, necessary) that the means chosen should be Christ’s free offering of himself on a cross which can then establish a new order of redemption for the human race. Divine freedom is mated with divine loving and God’s wisdom to evince a species of necessity which cannot be used to suggest that, in some way, God was compelled to choose the means that were chosen to effect our salvation.⁸⁴

Third and lastly, instead of or in addition to engaging in a genetic analysis, one can take a proposed understanding and engage in a dialectical analysis which relates it to opposed points of view: other understandings which have falsely diagnosed problems which do not really exist and which have tried to create solutions for these problems which do not really exist. An example here is not easily given. However, if one looks at Stebbins’s *Divine Initiative*, one finds within it an analysis which compares Lonergan’s understanding of Aquinas on the efficacy of grace with deficient understandings of the same issue as this existed in the theologies of grace proposed by Luis de Molina S.J. and Domingo Bañez O.P. In both the Molinist and Bannezian theories of grace, there existed a common misreading of Aquinas on a number of basic issues (for example, the nature of human understanding) and, from

⁸³*Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 46, a. 2; Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 370.

⁸⁴*Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 18, a. 5; q. 21, a. 4.

this misreading and misinterpretation, serious contradictions arose in the history of the theology of grace with respect to how human freedom can be reconciled with divine omnipotence. As Lonergan states very early on in his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (p. 27), if, at the beginning of things, a number of primary issues are not clearly addressed and well understood (i.e., worked through), lack of understanding will easily, eventually creep into one's subsequent work. A displacement will begin to occur in the ordering of questions which is given in one's theology.

Tenth, in order to bring out more clearly what is properly meant by speaking about the subsequent truth or validity of a systematic theological understanding, Lonergan embarks on a comparison that compares this kind of truth with other kinds of truth. Or, to state the matter a bit differently, Lonergan compares the kind of judgment which occurs in systematics with the kind of judgment that occurs in other disciplines (within and outside the discipline of theology). Since every judgment rationally proceeds if it is moved by convincing evidence, a difference in evidence distinguishes different kinds of judgment from each other. In drawing his comparisons, Lonergan first notes that a judgment in systematic theology is to be contrasted with the drawing of conclusions as this is done in syllogistic logic. Every syllogism tries to state a truth by saying that a given conclusion naturally and rationally follows given what truths are stated in the premisses given in one's syllogism. A "middle term" connects two propositions with each other since these two propositions are joined by a common property or conjugate which each somehow shares. Hence, one speaks of a "middle term." In supplying or averting to basic premisses, one asserts something which is believed to be true. The truth of one's premisses is grounded either in a first principle of sense or in a first principle of reason.⁸⁵ One premiss might refer to a datum of sense. Another might refer to a datum of rational consciousness as this exists in the principle of identity or the principle of non-contradiction (which is constructed from the principle of identity). If A is A, A is not B. It is also not not-A and so it follows that the same thing cannot be and not be in the same way at the same time (the principle of non-contradiction). The terms of a premiss can include a meaning that has been somehow understood or grasped by an act of understanding although this meaning would ultimately also to be grounded in some way in acts of sense and reason (which function as first principles).⁸⁶ In syllogistic demonstrations, truth is always demonstrable. From incontrovertibly true premisses, an incontrovertibly true conclusion naturally, obviously follows. However, in sharp contrast with this type of thinking which identifies but one species or form of judgment, in systematic theology, judgment is not centered on drawing conclusions by logical inference but on trying to postulate regnant, pregnant first principles: a first principle of some kind (or fundamental theological reason) whose truth and power lies in its ability to order a large number of questions into an organized, coherent whole. The resonance sounded suggests the likelihood of possible or probable truth.

Second, judgment in natural theology (which refers to talk about God in philosophy) is to be contrasted with judgment in systematic theology. As has already been noted, natural theology talks about God apart from revelation although, more importantly, it is to be noted that talk about God in natural philosophy is largely concerned with establishing rational proofs for the fact of God's existence. Hence, according to traditional Catholic teaching (reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council), with certainty, reason can establish and prove God's existence. *Ratiocinatio potest cum certitudine probare*

⁸⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7; q. 79, a. 8; Patrick H. Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 92-101.

⁸⁶Lonergan, *Verbum*, pp. 26-27.

existentiam Dei.⁸⁷ In a specification of this position which had occurred in 1910, Pope Pius X spoke about how the natural knowability of God's existence is grounded in the principle of causality:

God, the beginning and end of all things can be known with certainty, by the natural light of reason, as a cause is known by its effects, from those things that are made, that is by the visible works of creation and can equally be demonstrated (to be).⁸⁸

As Aquinas had argued with respect to causality, "whatever is in motion is put in motion by another."⁸⁹ To speak of the matter a bit differently, it can be accordingly argued that contingent things cannot account for their own existence. The existence of contingent things implies that necessarily existing things must exist, things that have never been brought into being by another. In his *Insight*, Lonergan gives a rational proof for God's existence that is grounded in human self-knowledge: an understanding of human cognition which is able to acknowledge the complete intelligibility of being.⁹⁰ From the complete intelligibility of being, one would then argue that complete intelligibility can only exist in an act of understanding which is unrestricted in what it is able to understand and only a divine act of understanding is unrestricted. By thoughtful, careful reflection, one can move from self-understanding to posit an immaterial cause of understanding which accounts for the existence of understanding whenever it occurs in us as human beings. However, if one's thinking is informed additionally by revelation, what was arrived at with great difficulty without revelation is arrived at with much greater ease and much less difficulty. As *Dei Filius* had noted (at the First Vatican Council):

In the state of fallen nature it is morally impossible for man without Supernatural Revelation, to know easily, with absolute certainty and without admixture of error, all religious and moral truths of the natural order.⁹¹

However, in contrast with this type of analysis, since systematic theology is directly concerned with understanding things that can only be known through revelation and since it seeks not to prove anything but to propose possibly relevant intelligible orderings of things, the kind of judgment which belongs to it is not akin at all to demonstrative forms of argument which exist in natural theology.

Third and lastly, judgment in systematic theology is to be sharply distinguished from judgment in dogmatic theology. Although it has already been noted that systematic theology is primarily interested in understanding how things relate or connect with each other and dogmatic theology is primarily interested in establishing or proving a truth of faith (if it has been disputed), to the extent that both activities presuppose divinely revealed truths that are mediated to us through the life and history of the Church, Lonergan is able to say that both experience common problems. Both seek to understand what has been divinely revealed although each seeks to understand what is revealed in a different way. This difference in method and understanding accordingly explains why their mode of judgment differs. The certitude which is sought in dogmatic theology explains why all supporting evidence in any

87Ott, pp. 14-15.

88Ott, p. 15.

89*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 2, a. 3.

90See Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 692-699.

91Ott, p. 235.

argumentative proof needs to be as indisputable as what is said in one's conclusion.

In looking at points of contrast between judgment in systematic theology and judgment in dogmatic theology, some amplifications need to be introduced with respect the nature of judgment and how judgment relates to questions that ask about the truth of theological understandings.⁹²

With respect to the question of judgment in general and what had been said earlier about employing a chain of reasoning which tries to reduce everything to first principles of sense and intellect, this notion of judgment as a kind of circular return (*reditio*), a reduction or resolution to the first principles of intellect and sense, is a notion of judgment which Aquinas very frequently speaks about in his writings. The Latin speaks about a *resolutio in principia*.⁹³ A reduction to principles is effected by our human reasoning and in a way which recalls the basic structure of human cognition (a structure which Lonergan speaks about in his *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*).⁹⁴ Previous human reasoning moves from initial experiences of sense to later experiences of understanding.⁹⁵ Human knowing always begins with sense. But, later acts of understanding always presuppose first principles of understanding which, in themselves, contain simple apprehensions of truth. As Aquinas, for instance, argues in the *Super Librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus*, VII, lect. 2, no. 713:

...the investigation or 'discovery' of the reason is completed at the simple understanding of truth, just as what is considered in the first principles begins from the simple understanding of the truth; in this way, there is a certain 'turning around' as in a circle, while the reason begins from one thing, goes through many, and comes to a stop with one again.

As Aquinas typically speaks about his notion of judgment, he speaks of two major steps as judgment moves from effects or consequences to causes or sources. First, from one's understanding of something, one tries to identify the act of understanding which had led to a grasp of form or meaning (forms typically exist within matter).⁹⁶ One seeks to determine all relevant principles which had informed one's initial act of understanding which is now being judged.⁹⁷ From a form or meaning in one's mind, one moves toward those conditions which have to be met before one can argue to any valid assertions of fact. Since first operations of the mind typically begin with inquiry into sensible experience and then, from initial apprehensions of meaning, one moves toward conclusions on the basis of primary and secondary principles, prospective judgments first begin with which secondary principles have been employed to come to the meaning that now awaits judgment. Secondary principles are most immediately present since they are most proximate. And, from them, one then goes to more remote first principles which are also given in one's cognitive awareness. Together, all these principles need to be related or lined up with each other in a sequence which passes from one principle to another: from

⁹²See the third paragraph of my notes under the section headed "the truth of theological understanding."

⁹³Lonergan, *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, eds. Robert M. Doran and Frederick E. Crowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p. 109.

⁹⁴Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 305-306.

⁹⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7; q. 79, a. 8; cf. a. 12; 1a2ae, q. 74, a. 7.

⁹⁶*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9.

⁹⁷*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 47, 7.

secondary principles to primary principles. In the traditional language that Aquinas uses, one moves backwards from demonstrable first principles (whose conclusions have to be proved and argued) toward indemonstrable first principles (whose conclusions or whose truth does not have to be proved or argued).⁹⁸ One attends to how secondary principles are ordered to primary first principles. What principles must be invoked in order to move from common first principles to specific secondary principles and then to specific conclusions and what principles have, in fact, been invoked? What principles exist in one's intellectual consciousness which have led to conceptions whose truth one is now trying to judge where, by them, "we judge all things"?⁹⁹

Then and secondly, one works with acts and data of sense to determine relevant acts and data.¹⁰⁰ Since first operations of the mind grasp forms in suggestive images (insights into data as Lonergan speaks about this), the identification of first principles necessarily turns to acts of sense which have played a role in activities which have conditioned the workings of one's initial understanding (what Aquinas refers to as the agent intellect). As Aquinas argues, "since the senses are the first source of our knowledge, we must in some way reduce to sense everything about which we judge."¹⁰¹ For every act of sense, a corresponding content exists from which images have been received and which have been refashioned to produce suggestive images that have provoked initial acts of understanding. In judgment, a reflection occurs which connects data of sense with terms of understanding as these have been conceptualized in external words that reveal the meaning of inner words. By experiencing the interactive relation which connects data, on the one hand, with acts of understanding, on the other, a rational assent becomes possible through a new, second kind of intellectual emanation in judgment which compels a rational assent that grasps the reality of a proposed truth. The ground is a basis in some kind of experience. A retroactive analysis grasps all the necessary, facilitating conditions that are needed in a prospective judgment and, by referring to the data of cognitive awareness which are immediately available in the experience of a knower, one immediately knows if all these conditions have been fulfilled.

With respect then to judgment in dogmatic theology, Lonergan speaks about a kind of gathering which occurs in the determinations of dogmatic theology. One takes all available sources and one works through them to pull together all that is being said which could be relevant to settling a dogmatic dispute. The object is an assertion which clearly states a truth and, by means of truth, something belonging to the reality of one's faith is revealed. Lonergan speaks of "drawing together, pondering, and understanding what has been revealed."¹⁰² Dogmatic theologians, for instance, work through available scriptural sources so that they can rationally affirm the fact that Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God (and not merely a Son of Man). In Lonergan's *Incarnate Word*, however, a schematic summary is given which illustrates how the study of scripture by dogmatic theologians can lead them to speak of a divinely begotten divine Son as opposed to affirmations which speak about other kinds of sonship (as exists, for instance, in our becoming adoptive sons of God through faith and belief).¹⁰³ In perusing

98 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 112, a. 5.

99 *De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 7, ad 3 (4th set of objections).

100 *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 9.

101 *De Veritate*, q. 12, a. 3.

102 Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics*, pp. 51-53.

103 Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished manuscript translated 1989 by Charles C. Hefling, Jr. from the Latin of the *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964), pp. 28-31.

scripture, a development can be traced and picked out as one compares different accounts with each other and as one also employs a time line which detects gradual changes in terminology. Lonergan speaks of “a transition from ‘Son of man’ and ‘Son of God,’ through ‘Son of the Father,’ ‘his Son,’ ‘his own Son,’ to ‘Son’ without qualification.”¹⁰⁴ “God” in the Hebrew significance of God becomes known as “Father” and Jesus as “Son” as “God” ceases to be a personal name that belongs to monistic deity. In parallel and in intimate connection with how God as Son is named, “God” as a personal name becomes “God the Father” and then, finally, God the Father is referred to simply as “the Father.” One ends up with God in terms of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A distinct species of analysis characterizes how available sources are used to amass materials and evidence which can convincingly reveal the reality of a new dogmatic fact which is not to be confused with other dogmatic facts.

To grasp something more about the kind of argumentation that is needed to determine and posit the truth of a given position in dogmatics, perhaps, at this point, one can do no better than to quote what Lonergan says about the mind of St. Augustine in the work which he did, both as a bishop and as a dogmatic theologian, when, by his writings and sermons, he attempted to refute heretical Pelagian views on the sufficiency and necessity of grace.¹⁰⁵ As Lonergan avers:

The greatness of St. Augustine does not lie in any mastery of speculative technique, in the exactitude of explicit distinction, the elaboration of theorems, the synthetic apprehension of multiple correlations. On the contrary, his genius is precisely that, unaided by these devices of conscious reflection, he nonetheless is able to maintain a profoundly coherent position, not intermittently but through thousands of pages, not by oversimplification but by an intense and vital grasp of hundreds of passages from scripture, not by abstract formulations but by relentlessly tracking down, confronting, and confuting each assertion and each evasion of Pelagian thought.¹⁰⁶

If the work of dogmatic theology especially emphasizes the necessity and value of reducing one’s conclusions to first principles, systematic theology differs from this approach because it is chiefly concerned with postulating a hypothetical meaning which cannot be reduced to any datum of cognitional awareness (whether in consciousness or sense). In postulating a theorem or notion of possible relations which suggests a previously unknown possible ordering of things, nothing is being derived from what is already known. Derivation suggests a species of thinking that is dominated by logical, deductive models of analysis. And so, in contrast with this approach, in systematics an hypothesis is grasped which adds something new although what is added does not conflict with what is already known in a truth of faith or with what can be known by reducing conclusions to first principles.

¹⁰⁴Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 31.

¹⁰⁵Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁶Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 195.

¹⁰⁷In his “Meaning in Our Relation to the Trinity,” p. 2, Peter Beer notes that, as Fred Crowe understands how Lonergan understood the difference between dogmatics and systematics, in systematics, theological conclusions are not to be understood as deductions: “true deductions.” Citing Fred Crowe’s own words:

We are saying that *if* God is rational in the way described, *then* it will follow that there are two processions in the interior of the deity, which result in opposed relations, which relations constitute persons;

What is postulated retains a ground that is rooted in first principles although this groundedness differs from what exists in dogmatic analysis. Instead of a groundedness that is shaped by a desire for convincing evidence, the groundedness which belongs to systematics is one which emphasizes suitability and lack of contradiction. As has been already noted, experiences of confusion or contradiction in religious meaning present a problem and the postulation of a theorem or hypothesis proposes a solution which transcends confusions and contradictions. Judgments of truth are made to the degree that, from an hypothesis, more follows in terms of belief and faith and a fructifying understanding of things which continues to grow and expand.¹⁰⁸

To try to give an example of an explanatory theological theorem, one might refer to the theorem of the supernatural which was first postulated by Philip the Chancellor of the University of Paris approximately in 1230 and which was later taken up by Aquinas and employed in the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae* in his theology of grace.¹⁰⁹ According to this theorem, a hierarchy of being exists in the order of being and this hierarchy is to be understood in terms of a distinction which one draws between nature and supernature. For every grade or order of nature, a higher order or grade of being exists which is supernatural (relative to the lower order or grade of being that it transcends) until, at last, one finally comes to an order of being which is absolutely supernatural. This last order of being

and we acknowledge that the consequence is not a true ‘deduction.’

Cf. Crowe, *Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity*, pp. 141-142.

108As Beer goes on to quote Crowe to illustrate this very point (the difference between the rational grounds of judgment in dogmatic theology and the rational grounds of judgment in systematic theology):

[what is hypothetical in postulating a psychological analogy for understanding the Trinity] diminishes with the success of the hypothesis in giving a coherent view of the Trinity, in emerging over rival analogies as the most intelligible, the most far-reaching, the most faithful to the data of revelation, etc. And remember with regard to the ‘make-believe’ character of the ‘deduction’, that we are simply ordering our ideas, not ordering realities in God; our idea of revelations can follow from our idea of the processions, but in God relations do not follow from anything, they are eternal, subsistent, and identical with the divine essence.

As Crowe notes in his *The Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity*, p. 144, certain questions can be asked to test the validity of employing a psychological analogy in Trinitarian theology rather than trying to employ other analogies:

Is the analogy free of implications that are too material? Does it offer some understanding of the reason for processions? Or the reason there are two, neither more or less? Or the difference between the first procession and the second? Does it show why the term of the procession is God and a divine person? how the processions do not destroy the unity of God?

109Stebbins, p. 68.

is utterly transcendent since it exists or lies beyond the proportion of any finite, contingent being.¹¹⁰ Each order of being, as a distinct order, has its own laws or principles even as these sets of laws are ordered to laws and principles that belong to a higher order.

With respect to the theology of grace, prior to the postulation of this theorem of the supernatural in the 13th Century, all persons agreed about the doctrine of grace. Grace is gratuitous; it is necessary for salvation. Human freedom is always a given. However, given these doctrines, how do they relate to each other? How is the necessity of grace joined to human freedom? How is the gratuity of grace to be understood in light of the fact that everything comes to us from God as a free gift? What is a “free gift” and what is not a “free gift”?¹¹¹ In his reflections about the new problems which arose for theology in the wake of St. Augustine’s work on the doctrine of grace, Lonergan notes:

To know and unequivocally to state the doctrine of grace is one thing; it is quite another to ask what precisely is grace, whether it is one or many, if many, what are its parts and their correlation, what is its reconciliation with liberty, what is the nature of its necessity. These speculative issues St. Augustine did not offer to treat, and it is a question without meaning to ask his position on them.¹¹²

To understand thus what is at issue in speaking about the theorem of the supernatural, two points bear mention. First, to understand the supernatural theorem *as a theorem*, one must clearly grasp why description differs from explanation (since the supernatural theorem is to be understood as an *explanatory theorem*). Descriptive categories focus on how things relate to us but explanatory categories refer to relations which exist among things apart or independently of ourselves as observers. In *Grace and Freedom*, p. 15, Lonergan illustrates the contrast by adverting to the fact that our ordinary experience of the free fall of falling objects radically differs from speaking about an equation which correlates a relation between distance and time that determines a rate of acceleration in the free fall of falling objects. To appreciate the meaning of the law for the free fall of a falling object as this is expressed in an equation, one must have an intellectual experience or consciousness which is quite unlike sensible experience or sensible consciousness. An intellectual consciousness of problems and issues makes an enormous difference since, with it, a number of problems are revealed which, later, are resolved as soon as an explanatory theorem is discovered and invoked and, following from this, other problems are resolved as these arise later on in the history of one’s science. For example, with respect to Galileo’s discovery of a law for the free fall of falling objects, the falling of hailstones of different weights no longer puzzles observers as these are seen to strike the ground at the same time. Then, from a constant acceleration that is postulated in Galileo’s law, a more accurate science of ballistics becomes possible as this science investigates the movement of projectiles across surfaces of space. The targeting of artillery pieces becomes more accurate

Secondly, in moving from how an explanatory theorem functions in one of the sciences of nature, in a similar way, the supernatural theorem as it exists in the theology of grace can be seen to perform a like function. The distinction between nature and supernature allows one to distinguish between different

¹¹⁰Stebbins, p. 56.

¹¹¹Bernard Lonergan, *Caring About Meaning: patterns in the life of Bernard Lonergan*, eds. Pierrot Lambert, Charlotte Tansey, and Cathleen Going (Montreal: Thomas More Institute Papers, 1982), p. 91.

¹¹²Stebbins, p. 68.

orders of meaning although in a way which can understand how different orders are ordered to each other. A lower order is orientated to a higher order. A higher order of laws explains or accounts for events that cannot be fully explained by laws that exist at a lower order. At the same time, it can be seen how lower orders of meaning serve higher laws that belong to a superior order. On the basis of the supernatural theorem, natural and supernatural virtues can be clearly distinguished from each other. Created operations can be clearly distinguished from uncreated operations in a way which acknowledges two sets of operations that human beings can participate in (in different ways). A natural autonomy belongs to created existence although its laws are such that they can be brought to participate in a higher order of life and meaning. As Aquinas so frequently puts it, grace works with nature to raise it to a perfection which it cannot attain by itself.¹¹³ When, for instance, charity is given to persons through a kind of participation which persons can have in the love and charity of God, this charity serves as a form which transforms and perfects all the different human virtues that already exist in a person. All human virtues will then be effectively orientated toward God as an ultimate, supremely lovable good. In this context, charity is to be understood as an effect of grace. It is something that principally comes from God as opposed to what comes from ourselves and which would exist as “ordinary good will.”¹¹⁴ By applying the supernatural theorem to a wide range of problems that are encountered in the theology of grace, solutions emerge for problems which before were unresolved for want of critical distinctions that now reveal aspects of reality which before had been unnoticed. Into disorder and confusion, an order is introduced.

Eleventh, in the contrasts which Lonergan continues to make, Lonergan now very strongly distinguishes systematic theology from what he refers to as “conclusions theology”: a species of theology that was very dominant in Lonergan’s day when he was a student and when later he first taught theology in schools that were operated by his Jesuit religious order. This species of theology is no longer current in most schools of theology and most persons today are unfamiliar with it. To understand it, the following two points can be made. First, in the wake of pressures exerted by the Protestant reformation and, later, in responding to pressures exerted by the French Revolution, from approximately the 17th Century, a species of theological teaching arose which emphasized the truth of the Church’s teaching. Instead of teaching theology in a way which began discussions with provocative or controversial questions that would launch inquiry and debate (as had been the approach that Aquinas and others had used earlier on), the method of the question or “disputed question” (*quaestio disputata*) was replaced by the method of the thesis.¹¹⁵ A proposition of some kind was first asserted (a teaching or doctrine of Church’s faith) and then subsequent discussion sought to provide proof text arguments to prove the truth of the thesis which was being asserted, proclaimed, and communicated.¹¹⁶ In seeking to defend the truth of the Church’s teaching against critics (whether these

113 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 106, a. 1.

114 Bernard Lonergan, “Grace After Faculty Psychology, Interview in the course, *Fields of Action*, TMI, December, 30, 1971,” *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, 1987), p. 405. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 100, a. 10, ad 3. As Lonergan speaks about the order of distinctions that Philip the Chancellor was able to postulate around the year 1230: “grace is superior to nature, faith is superior to reason, charity is superior to ordinary good will and merit before God is superior to the good opinion of men.”

115 Egan, pp. 133-140.

116 In the summary which Egan provides with respect to the methodology of “conclusions” or thesis theology (as this had been spelled out by Melchior Cano OP in his *De Locis Theologicis*, first

persons were regarded as heretics or apostates), in this type of theology, dogmatic theology assumed an importance which eclipsed the value of doing any work in systematic theology. Systematic theology was regarded with suspicion and so it was widely discouraged in the Church's schools of theology (even if no official censures were ever pronounced against it). Catholic theology, for many years after the Council of Trent, was strongly influenced by apologetical concerns and interests as this can be demonstrated if one turns to the work of St. Robert Bellarmine and the publication of his *Disputationes de controversiis christianae fidei* in 1581-1593. In this massive multi-volume work, every disputed Catholic teaching is proposed and defended from a viewpoint that draws on as many sources as possible the better to show why the teaching of the Catholic Church possesses a legitimacy that cannot be seriously disputed.

Second, the kind of arguments used to defend the legitimacy of Church teachings emphasized the value of engaging in logical deductions which would apply the rules of logic to the wording of a text and, from it, show how a given teaching can be said to be virtually implicated.¹¹⁷ From the data which exist in scripture and tradition, texts are taken and employed as basic premisses. From them alone or sometimes by adding other premisses taken from the first principles of reason or intellect (for example, the law of non-contradiction), one derives or deduces conclusions which are to be viewed as proved with an evidence that is to be regarded as certain.¹¹⁸ In conclusions theology, very many conclusions

published in 1562), he notes that, according to Cano, if dogmatic theology is to be freed "from the vain disputes of this or that school of theology," theology needs to attend to its sources and, from these sources or *loci*, then develop a "a systematic presentation of the orthodox faith according to a uniform and coordinated method." The *De Locis* lists ten sources or *loci* which theologians need to refer to: "Scripture, oral tradition, the church itself, the councils of the church, the Fathers of the church, the Roman Pontiff, the scholastic theologians, natural reason, the authority of philosophers, and the authority of history." In the context then of this kind of methodology, in the wake of both the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, later theologians defended disputed points of doctrine by appealing to one or more of these different sources.

¹¹⁷Bernard Lonergan, "The Assumption and Theology," *Collection*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 77.

¹¹⁸Bernard Lonergan, "Theology in its New Context," *Second Collection*, p. 58. For a deeper understanding about what is meant by a theological conclusion which is to be regarded as certain, see attached Appendix 1 or on the internet: <http://www.the-pope.com/theolnotes.html>. In his *On the Value of Theological Notes and the Criteria for Discerning Them*, Fr. Sixtus Cartechini S.J. spells out a set of official guidelines that one should use to determine what kind of assent is give in dealing with different kinds of teaching which come to one's attention within one's religious life as a Catholic. A first context is created by religious belief. But, a second is added when one attends to the later development of Catholic theology and the contribution which it makes in helping one make judgments that, in some way, determine the kind of belief that one is to have as a believer. The first four theological notes refer to dogmas, doctrines of ecclesiastical faith, truths of Divine faith, and what is to be regarded as "proximate to faith." But, the last six refer to the truths of faith as these are understood in our theological understanding. Receptions vary as one moves from what is to be regarded as theologically certain (as in dogmatic facts or theological conclusions) to Catholic doctrine (Catholic teaching) and then, from there, to what is to be regarded as certain (common or theologically certain) and then, from there, to what is to be regarded as either safe, or very common/commoner, or probable. Later, when discussing what Lonergan has to say about the "Meaning of the Assertion" with respect to "Assertion 1" in the second chapter of his *The Triune God: Systematics*, more will be said about how one should

can be drawn from different texts depending on which texts one chooses to combine with each other or on what principles of reason are to be added as premisses in conjunction with premisses taken from scripture and tradition. The number of possible conclusions and their meaning, in turn, reveal two shortcomings that are endemic to the nature of this kind of approach. First, as more and more conclusions are drawn ever more precisely in the deductions which are made, a growing incoherence gradually fully presents itself in the mass of conclusions which can be drawn. Conflicts and contradictions begin to appear and if these conflicts and contradictions are to be overcome, other kinds of questions need to be asked. And so, in a kind of repetition, as the experience of contradictions in the 12th and 13th centuries had led to the appearance of a new theology which is hypothetical and systematic (as opposed to one which is certain and dogmatic), the more recent experience of contradictions in the wake of the widespread use of “conclusions theology” has created a new exigence in our own day--an exigence for a new, more profound species of systematic theology--a theology which, as in the days of Aquinas, is now able to propose solutions that are not derived solely from articles of belief nor from any first principles of reason but which is derived from “reason illuminated by faith,”¹¹⁹ a theology which is now able to cope with problems that have been generated by a contemporary historical consciousness which is not able to speak about how one can properly make value judgments in the study of human affairs (value judgments which can distinguish between progress and decline in human matters).

Second and lastly, when logical techniques are applied to truths of faith in scripture and tradition in a way which turns them into premisses and which tries to derive other truths of faith from them, a manner of procedure is used which supposes that the meaning of a given truth of faith is being adequately understood. However, each truth of faith refers to a divine mystery whose meaning can never be properly measured by human minds. The infinite meaningfulness which properly belongs to truths of faith accordingly precludes the use or value of employing a mode of procedure which tries to deny or restrict this meaningfulness, or which does not allow for the presence of this meaningfulness to more fully express itself in any subsequent development of human thought and understanding. The absence of an asymptotic approach in understanding divine mysteries precludes the possibility of any progress in understanding which can occur over time and which can give rise to developments that move from solving one problem to solving other problems as these arise in an ordering which reveals how God has created an order of redemption that is tailored to an order of creation which he has brought into being. To try and give a little example here about what Lonergan could be meaning with respect to the question of development and the value of an asymptotic growth in the development of a nuanced, theological understanding of things, in his *Grace and Freedom*, p. 66, Lonergan argues that in moving to understand how, in Aquinas, God’s government functions in the created order of things to realize divine objectives in a providential ordering of many different variables, a very precise understanding is needed of certain notions that are used by Aquinas as a basic set of heuristic tools. As Lonergan summarizes the matter, very clear ideas are first needed about “the nature of operation, promotion, application, the certitude of providence, universal instrumentality, and the analogy of operation.” Understand these things first and from an adequate understanding of them, an understanding of divine providence and all the ordering which it encompasses should emerge in a way which recalls how the pieces of puzzle fit together to reveal a general view.

Twelfth and lastly, Lonergan concludes his discussion about the truth of any teaching in systematic

receive a revealed truth of faith and a theological conclusion which is to be regarded as certain.

¹¹⁹Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 55.

theology by noting that a divine remedy has been given to us in terms of the Church's teaching authority and its reliability. Although no reference is made to Cardinal Newman, Lonergan restates an argument that had once been used by Cardinal Newman on the usefulness and the reasonableness of a divine decision. In the order of redemption which God has established, Christ Our Lord foresaw our broken human situation and our need for a reliable guide or way of solving problems so that, in this life, we would not make grave mistakes with respect to questions of faith and belief (in matters having directly to do with the salvation of our souls). And so, for this reason, to help us along in our earthly pilgrimage, a species of Church was established which ultimately enjoys God's protection and which participates in an understanding of things that can authoritatively declare what belongs and what does not belong to the deposit of faith which has been given to use by Christ. While the work of systematic theology is directed toward an ever growing understanding of how very many things are intelligently related to each other, the Church's teaching authority exists to render authoritative judgments about the validity or invalidity of what theologians have understood or have failed to understand. If one wants to refer again to two basic operations of the mind that are constitutive of human understanding, where theologians primarily seek an understanding of things which recalls the sword of St. Paul (truth cutting like a sword to separate flesh from sinew), the Church's teaching authority, as this is exercised by the Pope and all bishops in communion with him, engages in the reflective understanding which properly belongs to judgment in exercises which recall the keys given by Christ to St. Peter and how these are to be used to reveal a way which best leads to salvation: dispositions of body and soul that are most able to receive the many good things that come to us as an effect of God's grace.

5. The Twofold Movement toward the Goal

To understand what Lonergan means when he speaks about one movement of the mind which seeks to know certain truths with certitude and a second movement of the mind which seeks a more or less profound understanding of what is already known with certitude, please look at a table which has been constructed by Dr. Leo V. Serroul in a dissertation which he defended at the University of Toronto in 2004 ("Sapientis est ordinare': An Interpretation of the *Pars systematica* of Bernard Lonergan's *De Deo Trino* from the Viewpoint of Order"), a table which uses Lonergan's words to map out what differences and connections exist.¹²⁰ In Lonergan's discussion, very many points are recounted although in a context which tries to assemble everything together in order to give a more adequate account of how dogmatics is to be clearly distinguished from systematics in theology.

In this discussion, please note that Lonergan's account is deeply rooted in Aquinas who spoke about two different forms of reasoning that are endemic to the human mind's activities (respectively signified by what occurs in analysis and what occurs in synthesis).¹²¹ As Aquinas speaks about it, in any kind of

¹²⁰Go to http://www.lonergan.org/seminarnotes/OntheTrinity/Notes_wk5b.pdf on the Internet in order to see this table. For further information, see also Lonergan, "Theology and Understanding," *Collection*, pp. 114-132. When Serroul refers to this paper by Lonergan, he refers to it by using the abbreviations "TU." Its content complements what Lonergan says in *The Triune God: Systematics* on the differences between dogmatics and systematics in theology. In "Theology and Understanding," sections exist about "Understanding and Science of Faith," "Aquinas on Theological Understanding," "Consequences of the Thomist Position," and "Contemporary Methodological Issues."

¹²¹*De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 15; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 57; *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 10; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7. Please note, however, that the roots of Aquinas's understanding with respect to the difference between analysis and synthesis lie in certain distinctions that were made

inquiry or search for understanding, whenever anyone tries to move from a known to an unknown, two forms of reasoning are invoked as ways of knowing, now at one time and now at another, depending on the species of intelligibility that is being sought by questions which currently are being asked.¹²²

By analysis (signified as the way or order of resolution, *via resolutionis, modo resolutorio*), an inquirer moves from effects to causes (from multiplicity to simplicity, from particularity to universality, from what is complex and confused to what is simple and distinct, from what is later to what is earlier, or from a whole to a part).¹²³ One takes a compound and tries to break it down into its constitutive elements.¹²⁴ One looks for a set of basic explanatory principles. But, conversely, through synthesis (signified as the way or order of composition, *via compositionis, modo compositivo*), one moves from

by Aristotle. One movement of thought and inquiry moves backwards from sensed effects to intelligibly grasped causes and a second movement of thought and inquiry moves downwards from causes that are understood to effects that can be experienced as data of sense. If, in Aristotle's language (in his conceptuality), the effects can be referred to as "facts," the causes which explain the facts can be referred to as "reasoned facts." Cf. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, 1, 13; Patrick H. Byrne, *Analysis and Science in Aristotle* (Albany: State University of New York, 1997), pp. 201-203. Knowing in terms of discovery begins with what we first know or what is first given to us in the understanding which we have of the world. This knowing begins with effects or elemental facts and then, from these effects or first facts, by a process of reasoning, one can move toward causes which are first or primary in the order of being even as they are last or final in the order of our inquiring human cognition. What is first for ourselves gives way to what is first in itself. In Aristotle's own words: "what is last in the order of resolution or analysis is first in the order of becoming or production," or as Jeremy Wilkins translates what Aristotle says in this text (the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3, 3, 1112b24): "the first link in the chain of causes is the last in the order of discovery." Cf. Jeremy D. Wilkins, *Method, Order, and Analogy in Trinitarian Theology: Apropos Karl Rahner's Critique of the 'Psychological' Approach*, unpublished paper (Houston: University of St. Thomas, November 25, 2009), p. 13, n. 29. But, on the other hand, if one begins with causes or with what exists as a first principle or first cause in the order of being or reality, one begins with an explanatory principle or possibly a unified set of explanatory principles and, if, in turn, these are well understood, one can move into an unfolding of one's inquiry and understanding as later, subsidiary acts of understanding add or expand on what one has already understood. More and more variables are joined and linked together. More variables are found to be related to each other in a manner which is constituted by a new ordering of meaning that serves to reveal a new universe (a new point of view on the world which surrounds one). Then, as one comes to know this new ordering of meaning and as one comes to live within, a context is created whereby one moves from what is first in the order of being toward what is first in what one experiences and knows in the order of one's human cognition as this knowing begins with the acts and data of sense. The experience of one's world is approached from a new context of meaning which changes how this world is experienced and how it is being noticed and attended to.

If, for instance and by way of example, it is postulated that, in the context of God's unrestricted understanding, nothing happens in the world which is outside or beyond a divine scheme of things which only God wills and knows, then from this principle or on the basis of this principle, one can speak about God's providential government and how God wisely exercises this providential government. Everything is being used in some way to achieve a greater good that only God understands and knows and this ordering of many different things together occurs as God directly wills good deeds and actions, as God indirectly wills the good which comes from instances of physical evil

causes to effects (from simplicity to complexity and multiplicity, or from universality to particularity, from what is prior to what is later or posterior). One begins from an understanding that one already has of a cause or principle and, from this understanding, one goes into detail and moves toward specificity as one moves into secondary, subsidiary acts of understanding which grasp properties and implications that are somehow suggested or implied.¹²⁵ In either direction and reciprocally, a context for understanding and knowing is governed by the principle of causality (a principle which speaks of “cause and caused”).¹²⁶ While some effects are accidentally contained in their causes, others are virtually contained in their causes and so, as one comes to understand and know a given cause more fully, one should be able to identify what effects properly flow or accrue to the causes that one is trying to understand and move towards. Hence, with respect to the discursiveness of human reasoning, while one form of it is governed by temporal successions as one act of knowing comes after another, another is governed by a succession which lacks temporality. Its context is a causality where conclusions or consequences are formally linked to principles or causes that hopefully are well understood.¹²⁷ This difference accordingly explains why, in systematic thinking, by understanding an explanatory theorem that is employed as a basic first principle, it should be possible rapidly to grasp a whole range of consequences which reveals a previously unsuspected, unknown order of things.

Two differences should be noted between what Aquinas says about analysis and synthesis and what Lonergan has to say about these same matters. First, Lonergan's use of language is much more precise. From a more nuanced understanding of human cognition which proceeds from the depths of his interiority analysis, Lonergan is able to use Aquinas's language in a way which gives each traditional term a more precise, concise meaning. Each term has a specific meaning which differs in a complementary way from the meanings belonging to other terms. And so, in two sets, five different characteristics are identified. With respect to the second operation of the mind which exists in judgment, one speaks about analysis, the way of resolution, the way of discovery, the way of certitude, and the temporal way.¹²⁸ Then, with respect to the first operation of the mind which exists in

and punishment, and as God permits moral evil to exist in order to create conditions for the emergence of good from its absence (good from evil; being from privation). A more wondrous universe comes into being than would otherwise be the case if it were not possible to create a world and govern things within it in such a way that good is brought into being from conditions that tell against the possible emergence of any good. From the context of an unrestricted understanding and as one moves toward a better analogical understanding of this understanding, no evil can be experienced from which it is not possible to effect some kind of good.

122*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 58, a. 3, ad 2; 1a2ae, q. 14, a. 5.

123*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, Prologue.

124*Sententia Libri Politicorum*, 1, 16.

125*De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 15; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7; Stebbins, p. 33; Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 68.

126*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 108, a. 7, ad 2.

127Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy*, trans. G. Malsbary (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 295, n. 37; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7.

128In Lonergan's own words, p. 61: “This first movement has been called: (1) *analysis*, because it starts in a confused sort of way and moves to well-defined causes or reasons, (2) *the way of resolution*, because it resolves things into their causes, (3) *the way of discovery*, because previous unknown causes are discovered, (4) *the way of certitude*, because the ordinary pre-scientific knowledge

understanding, one speaks about synthesis, the way of composition, the way of teaching or learning, the way of probability, and the way of logical simultaneity. From such a standpoint, Lonergan gives a more nuanced and detailed account of the kind of understanding that belongs in theology to dogmatics versus the kind of understanding that belongs in theology to systematics.¹²⁹

Second, while in the application which he makes to theology Lonergan speaks about a fundamental unity which should exist between dogmatics and systematics (since, otherwise, a devaluation of one would lead to distortions in how the other develops), in Aquinas, texts can be cited which also speak about how, in human beings, these two operations of the mind constantly interact with each other. Hence, because this is so, by way of an application, one can speak about the value of an interaction

of things is most obvious to us and so the arguments we find most certain begin from such knowledge and go on to demonstrate matters that are more remote and more obscure to us, (5) *the temporal way*, because causes are not usually discovered instantaneously, any more than they are discovered by just anyone or without a certain amount of good luck.” For a slightly reworded account, Lonergan outlines these same characteristics in Appendix 4: Passages from *Divinarum Personarum* in Section 4: The Threefold Movement to the Goal, p. 757.

¹²⁹Again, in Lonergan’s own words, p. 61: synthesis “starts from causes that have been discovered (via analysis) and ends by understanding things in their causes. This movement is called: (1) *synthesis*, because fundamental reasons are employed both to define things and to deduce their properties, (2) *the way of composition*, because causes are employed to produce things or to constitute them, (3) *the way of teaching or of learning*, because it begins with concepts that are fundamental and basically simple, so that by adding a step at a time it may proceed in an orderly way to the understanding of an entire science, (4) *the way of probability*, partly because it attains no more than probability, but also because people frequently have no clear discernment of just where or when they have reached certitude, and (5) *the way of logical simultaneity*, because once the principles have been clearly laid down, all the rest takes comparatively little time; it can be accomplished in a few short deductions and applications.” With respect, for instance, to Sir Isaac Newton’s three laws of motion in physics, from an understanding which he had come to in his analysis which had moved from effects to causes, he then moved into a synthetic understanding of things which could move from causes to effects: from a general all-inclusive explanation to an understanding of things in their complexity and simplicity. By postulating three related laws about motion, he could introduce an ordering of relations which before had not been known with respect to the movement of moving objects. In a shift of focus, the object now is an intelligent and comprehensive presentation of things which can indicate how a large number of variables can be related together into a whole because one is employing an explanatory theorem which one had been discovered through inquiries which had asked about why certain things happen in the way that they do or why certain things exist in the way that they happen to exist.

If one wants to apply this schema of understanding to theology and to the ordering of cognitive causes as this exists in systematic theology, one can speak about an understanding of things which begins with some kind of first principle or explanatory theorem which is then used to understand very many things. What is known apart from everything else (or what is understood and known in a way which does not depend on the reasonableness of some other theorem or principle of explanation) analogously exists as a cause of knowing which exists in itself (as *causae cognoscendi priora quoad se*). From it, one can move to cognitional causes which exist more proximately to ourselves (*causae cognoscendi priora quoad nos*). See Philip McShane, “The Hypothesis of Intelligible Emanations in God,” *Theological Studies* 23 (1962): 559-560, for a fuller account about how one can speak about an

which should exist between dogmatics and systematics in theology. With respect to the structure of human knowing, even if, at a given time, one is primarily engaged in reaching an initial understanding of something, or if one is primarily engaged in moving toward a judgment about something, at times one will engage in activities that belong to the other operation of the mind. In Aquinas, for example, discovery in inquiry is not strictly correlated with analysis (*resolutio*) since discovery also occurs in judgment as prospective knowers move along a vector that takes them from what is given or what is posterior to what is earlier and prior--back toward sources or points of origin which are to be identified as cognitional causes.¹³⁰ Identifying these causes in acts of sense and understanding which a person experiences leads to the possible verification of a hypothesis and, with verification, a hypothesis becomes a fact.

Similarly, when synthetic thinking works from general causes toward a determinate knowledge of specific causes and forms, while the result is a loose form of deduction, this deduction also engages in some resolute analysis. As knowing moves here from general to specific causes, this same knowing also moves from a general, indeterminate knowledge toward a particular, specific knowledge. A resolute aspect functions within composition.¹³¹ At the same time, and more obviously, by employing loose forms of deductive reasoning which move persons toward conclusions from causes or forms, the results can encourage new questions for analysis as the insufficiency of earlier acts of understanding presents itself as a datum within one's consciousness. As a prospective judgment also attempts to reduce an idea or hypothesis to some kind of verification in first causes, synthetic reasoning can be also employed as a tool to find sensible and intellectual evidence of the kind needed which can then satisfactorily verify a proposed hypothesis. And so, as synthetic reasoning functions within theoretical reasoning to encourage new acts of resolute or analytic reasoning, it reveals a symbiosis between acts of analysis and synthesis which more fully represents how human reasoning functions in concrete human inquiry. Each form of reasoning intimately relies on the other as much as each form of reasoning is also always distinct.

In conclusion, as Lonergan ends his discussion in section 5, he notes how good systematic theology functions as an effective pedagogy for communicating the Christian faith both to believers and non-believers in a way which, from both parties, can elicit faith and observance. If an ordering of relations can be found which is intrinsically intelligible (it stands on its own and it does not require that anything else be understood), then, one can speak about the Church's faith in a way which more effectively communicates the depth of its meaning. It is a common complaint to meet persons who have been

order of cognitional causes within systematic theology. McShane acknowledges that, in trinitarian theology, one cannot properly speak about causes which exist within God and which are located outside of God in a way which can exert some kind of influence of who or what God is. However, in systematic theology, a proposed explanatory theorem can serve as a primary cognitive cause which, in our thinking, can be used to order very many things which can be said about God. One descends from an analogous knowledge of who God is in terms of his essence and then, from such a basis, one proffers a coherent theology of God which reveals a degree of understanding (a degree of understanding which suggests that one is in the presence of an explanation, an explanation which is to be distinguished from what is known through a description).

¹³⁰*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 7, 15, 1615; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 7; Edmund Dolan, "Resolution and Composition in Speculative and Practical Discourse," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 6 (1950), p. 40.

¹³¹Dolan, p. 30, 39.

raised in the Catholic faith and who say that, well, in the end, it does not really mean much to them. The absence of meaning leads to indifference and sometimes also to anger and opposition if absence of meaning is viewed as a barrier which thwarts possibly enjoying other meanings and goods that can be known and possessed. And so, if the truths of the Faith are to make much of an impact, their significance needs to be more deeply understood and attended to in a way which can reveal how the meaning of our created existence is best brought out by a life that is given to the worship of uncreated things. If, in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, God as being itself (*ipsum esse*) functions as a first principle for organizing everything else in an ordering which reveals an intrinsic, inherent meaningfulness, would a new, more adequate first principle be the nature of understanding where God exists as a pure, unrestricted act of understanding (God as *ipsum intelligere*) and human understanding exists as a gift or reception (as a passive potency)? From the limitedness of our human understanding and from our experience and knowledge of it, God's presence would then present itself in all its necessity and, also, at the same time, in all its richness. God is being itself and understanding itself but, as understanding itself and as the source of all understanding, God is also *ipsum Significare*, meaning itself.¹³² God is an unrestricted act of meaning. An unrestricted loving (an unrestricted act of loving) in turn belongs to God as an unrestricted act of understanding and, from this basic principle, very many things can be understood in terms of an order of creation that is joined and ordered to an order of redemption which ultimately brings all things toward a perfection which cannot be effected through any other means, by any other way.

6. Comparison of the Dogmatic Way and the Systematic Way

In this section, Lonergan goes into considerable detail to illustrate how the differences between dogmatics and systematics play themselves out in the theology of the Trinity. In the background exists Lonergan's desire to draw very clear distinctions since, with confusion, in the theology of the Trinity no real progress can be made either in dogmatics or systematics (each discipline having a different formal or intellectual object). Lack of development in one discipline adversely affects development in the other.

With respect now to the contents of this section, Lonergan compares the way of doctrine with the way of systematics on the basis of how each deals with different questions in the theology of the Trinity. See Leo Serroul's table as it begins with no. 45 (p. 5).¹³³ In dogmatics, in pursuing truth, one begins with New Testament testimony which speaks about the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, and from there one moves from the dogma of a Trinity in God toward persons, properties, relations and, lastly, the discovery of a psychological analogy which best reveals how relations of origin are to be viewed and understood. However, in systematics, the order of things is reversed and one begins not with any New Testament testimony about missions but with the one God from whom all things flow and to whom all things return. One begins with God and the proper attributes of God--God as a single, unrestricted source or act of knowing and loving. In attending then to an unrestricted knowing and loving which are intimately joined to each other in absolute unity, one then distinguishes intelligible emanations which allow one to speak of relations and then, from these relations, one can begin to speak about persons who, in the end, are compared with each other and with us after they are compared with what is already known about God's divine essence, God's proper attributes, and the so-called notional

¹³²Frederick E. Crowe, "The Gift of the Spirit," notes from a course of lectures at Regis College, 1971, p. 31, cited by Beer, p. 7.

¹³³On internet at http://www.lonergan.org/seminarnotes/OntheTrinity/Notes_wk5b.pdf

acts (i.e., paternity, filiation, active spiration, and passive spiration) which refer to the acts or emanations which belong to the different persons constitutive of the blessed Trinity.

If one looks at Lonergan's footnotes, one sees that the order of things discussed in a systematic theology of the Trinity (as Lonergan presents it) is all grounded in the order of questions which Aquinas provides in the first part of his *Summa Theologiae*. And so, in this way, Lonergan clearly indicates that the order of questions in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* presents a systematic theology of the Trinity and not a dogmatics. Instead of trying to remove doubts by beginning from what is most evident and, from there, proceeding to what is less obvious and apparent, Aquinas begins from a basic set of notions which explain themselves in terms of how different terms relate to each other. The relations reveal the terms and the terms reveal the relations. Nothing else needs to be understood. And so, from a basic set of notions, one has a first principle which one then applies in a way which includes and absorbs very many things within a single, unifying perspective. The vitality or usefulness of one's basic set of terms is revealed by its assimilative capacity: how very many things it is able to speak about and relate with each other. Recall Dmitry Mendeleev's discovery of the periodic table in chemistry and how, by using it, one can explain any given number of chemical transformations.

For a restatement of Lonergan's basic position here, see below the following long quotation:

Thomist Trinitarian theory is a clear instance of first an analytic movement and then a synthetic movement. In the New Testament what we are told regarding the Blessed Trinity is the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Ghost. After a series of Greek councils we arrive at three persons and one nature. There is nothing in the New Testament about persons or nature; these technical terms do not occur. Since the three persons are distinct, we find in the Cappadocian fathers the treatment of the properties of the distinct persons. Each person must have something proper to himself, otherwise he would be the same as the others. Further, both the Cappadocian fathers and Augustine had the idea that these properties must be relative. They cannot be something absolute, because God is simple; if these properties are to be reconciled with the simplicity of God, they have to be relative. Where do the relations come from? They come from the processions. Augustine explained the processions by a psychological analogy. He said they were something like the movement in the mind from understanding to conception, from judgment to willing. So first we have missions, then persons and nature, then properties, relations, processions.

What do we find in St Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*, part 1, questions 27-43? Thomas does not start out from the missions; missions come at the end, in question 43. He is making the other movement, from causes to things, synthesis. He begins from a psychological analogy and moves to the processions, to the relations, to the persons, to the missions. The order of discovery is just the opposite of the order of doctrine. In doctrine you start from principles and draw all the conclusions, but in discovery you discover one conclusion after another and gradually you move on to your principles.

In Trinitarian theory, then, we have analysis and synthesis. We have the analytic movement up to St Thomas, and the synthetic movement in St Thomas' *Summa*

Theologiae. But we do not have things, and we do not have causes. God is not a thing in the sense of the Aristotelian predicaments [ten descriptive attributes or predicates used to speak of things that are encountered in common human experience: substance, quantity, quality, relation, action, passion, place, time, posture, and habit], and the generation of the Son by the Father is not a matter of causality. The Son is not another God, and neither is the Holy Ghost. Things and causes vanish, but *analysis and synthesis remain*. [Italics mine]

Now we may take a scientific illustration. There are over three hundred thousand compounds known to present-day chemistry, and those are not mixtures but compounds. Chemists explain all of these compounds by a periodic table of about one hundred elements. On the one hand, there is the composition of the compounds from the elements, sometimes in fact and sometimes just in theory (for compounds cannot always be synthesized). On the other hand, there is the analysis of the compounds into their elements. But these elements are not Aristotle's things. In a chemistry course you may be given an introductory definition of hydrogen — hydrogen is an odorless gas with various sensible properties — but you very soon forget that definition, and operate in terms of atomic weight, atomic number, and other properties implicit in the periodic table. The one hundred elements are defined by their relations to one another; they are not defined in terms of substance, quantity, quality, and so on, as these terms are taken in their ordinary meaning.¹³⁴

Please note thus that, for Lonergan, scientific understanding in Aquinas does not significantly differ from scientific understanding in modern science. Despite a shift that has moved from Aristotelian notions of science to modern empirical notions of science, an explanatory perspective works from a basic set of terms and relations that is used as a first principle to understand and order very many things which, otherwise, would not be understood and ordered in terms of how they all relate to each other. The absence of a significant difference reveals a verity or a transcendence in the quality of Aquinas's theological understanding. As thoroughly as he may employ and work with Aristotelian notions of science, his thinking also transcends these limitations.

With respect to the meaning of concepts, when Lonergan speaks about formal differences with respect to concepts,¹³⁵ he speaks about how, in dogmatics and systematics, one tends to find the same language (the same terms) although the meanings of these terms will vary since, in a point of contrast between dogmatics and systematics, the language which is used is related to different acts of understanding and a different purpose or goal which specifies a different context for acts of understanding. In dogmatics, very minimal understanding is required if one begins by talking about the missions of the Son and Holy Spirit. One works from a commonsense apprehension of meaning-- a meaning which appears to be obvious as one reads the words of scripture. Lonergan refers here to a "simple narration of fact."¹³⁶ But, as one shifts toward the possible meaning of mission in systematics, one is working with a

¹³⁴Bernard Lonergan's *Understanding and Being: The Halifax Lectures on Insight*, eds. Elizabeth A. Morelli and Mark D. Morelli; rev and aug. by Frederick E. Crowe with the collaboration of Elizabeth A. Morelli, Mark D. Morelli, Robert M. Doran, and Thomas V. Daly (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), pp. 9-10.

¹³⁵Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, pp. 69-71.

¹³⁶Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 71.

meaning that is now being formed and informed by all the previous acts of understanding which have occurred as one has proceeded from a postulated, speculative first principle or theorem that is used to tackle how very many questions and issues can be ordered into a whole. A new, much more nuanced, technical meaning for mission emerges and a very significant difference should now be acknowledged as one moves from dogmatics to systematics. A much more profound meaning presents itself in systematics even if this meaning does not contradict and should not contradict the meaning that one had initially known and started from at the beginning of things in dogmatic theology. In any authentic development or growth in understanding, no meaning *as meaning* is ever truly lost even as meanings are transcended, or as they are enriched in their significance.

To understand how this works, look at Cardinal Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, chapter one, "On the Development of Ideas." Look at where he speaks about the question of development with respect to the meaning of ideas i.e., the assimilative power of certain meanings or ideas and the fact that legitimate development does not require rejecting or losing any previously understood meaning which has been known, accepted, and believed.

With respect to the question of truth in the context of theology about the Trinity (dogmatics versus systematics), Lonergan's discussion presumes what has been said earlier about the question of truth in systematic theology in general. However, Lonergan now explicitly refers to Aquinas and why the Church has decided to propose his work as a normative guide for the development of systematic theology with regards to the Trinity. In a point of difference between dogmatics and systematics, the ways and operations which belong to dogmatics can be more widely practiced by persons in general since, in trying to prove or establish whether or not something is really true, one acts as an investigator or as a scholar who tries to uncover and find evidence. However, postulating an explanatory principle is more directly an act of one's understanding. It is the reception of an insight that one has sought and yearned for. It comes more directly from something within a person--from a mind which is more able to receive a profound understanding from images or phantasms which cannot so easily trigger the same profound act of understanding in the mind of another person. The understanding which is achieved and received is much more rare.

To illustrate with an example, while it is said that the way of analysis in dogmatics leads to the psychological analogy as the best conclusion which can be reached as one moves from the missions of Son and Holy Spirit toward the being who is the Christian God, profoundly understanding this analogy is another matter. From a statistical standpoint, poor, inadequate understandings tend to exist far more commonly than understandings which are highly insightful and intelligent. These occur at a lower rate of incidence. And so, with the passage of time, it has been concluded that, in the order of wisdom, St. Thomas is to be preferred to all other thinkers, all other theologians. In the end, what counts is how very many issues and questions can be related together in a way which can move from God as he exists in himself to what God has created and then from what has been created back to God as he exists in himself. And, this is the order of issues and questions that Aquinas presents in his *Summa Theologiae*. A universal scheme of things is revealed and, within this scheme, where human beings live and how they fit in together.

With respect finally to the views of opponents and how these views are to be considered in dogmatics and systematics, in Leo Serroul's revised table, Cell 102 reads in total:

102. However, when one is aiming at extirpating errors so that others not be

deceived, one should seek the root whence the error assumes the appearance of truth and there apply the ax. Nor does it matter whether this or that opponent ever explicitly even adverted to that root, for one is not dealing with the intimate mind of this or that person but with the minds of those who either exist now or will exist. Thus, in Systematics we must attend not so much to opponents as to the roots of their errors [their counterpositions; see above n. 37 p. 17].

With respect then to note 37 which Serroul refers to, Serroul cites this note as it is given by him in his dissertation:

Lonergan calls opposed positions ‘counterpositions’ (see *Insight*, 413-15 passim; and the index, s.v. ‘Positions, vs. counterpositions’). Lonergan observes that ‘a basic counterposition . . . contradicts one or more of the basic positions. . . . Any philosophic pronouncement on any epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, or theological issue will be named a position if it is coherent with the basic positions on the real, on knowing, and on objectivity; and it will be named a counterposition if it is coherent with one or more of the basic counterpositions.’ *Insight*, 413. Counterpositions are discussed in chap. 2 below. For an exhaustive study of possible counterpositions, see Michael Vertin, ‘Dialectically-Opposed Phenomenologies of Knowing: A Pedagogical Elaboration of Basic Ideal-Types,’ *Lonergan Workshop* 4 (1983): 1-26.¹³⁷

In dogmatics then or, more precisely, in a history of dogmatic or doctrinal developments which attempts to show how theologians and the Church were able to move from apprehensions of meaning present in scripture toward apprehensions of meaning which grasp more exactly what Christians should truthfully believe, one attends to the nuances of the historical context. One wants to determine exactly what questions were being addressed in any given controversy and one wants to determine what writers were hopefully intending to accomplish in their different works and writings. By knowing all the various, intricate “ins” and “outs,” one discovers how and why disputes about evidence have been resolved in the way it was done. One grasps more fully why, in general, it can be said that all the evidence points to the truthfulness of a given disputed belief or creed. It is no accident, surely, that the history of dogmatic theology precedes the history of systematic theology since the deeper understanding of systematics can only be sought after once one first clearly knows what it is that one is supposed to believe (what the Christian or Catholic is supposed to believe).

However, as one shifts into systematics and the search for intelligibility, a deeper understanding of things, one attends to controversies about meaning from a different context (a different standpoint). A more basic explanation is sought about why sometimes controversies existed at fundamental levels and so, in seeking this kind of understanding, one tries to work from a perspective which attends to sources of meaning that exist remotely or implicitly in the minds of theologians and controversialists. To explain or to account for a history (as this exists with respect to a question about meaning), one moves into a kind of meta-history: a philosophy of history or, more simply, a meta-philosophy (a philosophy of philosophy) which exists to identify basic principles which can serve as a heuristic to indicate why some real differences exist in the human apprehension of meaning--differences which explain why real developments sometimes occurred and why, at times, they failed to occur. Instead of working, for instance, through a history of philosophy which works chronologically through time from one

¹³⁷“*Sapientis est ordinare*”: an interpretation of the *Pars Systematica* of Bernard Lonergan’s *De Deo Trino* from the viewpoint of order, p. 17.

philosopher to another, from one thesis to another, one breaks away from this more conventional approach and, from a higher order of reflection which presents itself as a kind of meta-philosophy, one has a basis for explaining the history of the different philosophies which together have been constitutive of the history of philosophy. Why did a given thinker fail or partially fail to move toward understanding in dealing with a particular issue or question? In the order of teaching which Lonergan thus talks about (an *ordo doctrinae* or *ordo disciplinae* as Aquinas speaks about it in the *Summa Theologiae*),¹³⁸ from such a perspective, students are given an overall view of things through an ordering of meaning (a metaphysics) which touches their souls in the human search and desire for meaning. A world of meaning (in its depths, connections, and links) reveals itself. For this reason then, in and from his study of human cognition (given in his *Insight: A Study of Human*

138Prologue, *Summa Theologiae* 1a. In the order of meaning which one finds, for example, in the ordering of questions which exists in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, its general form works from an explanatory perspective. One begins from what is most intelligible in itself (but what is most remote from ourselves in terms of our understanding as, through human inquiry and knowing, we move from effects to causes and then, through causes, to first causes or primary reasons as these exist within God). One works from effects which we encounter in the order of our human cognition toward first causes or primary reasons which explain why things are the way they are in the way that they happen to be. Cf. Guy Mansini, *The Word Has Dwelt Among Us* (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press, 2008), p. 50. On the one hand, God can be understood as the first cause of all things. All secondary causes can be reduced to a first or primary causality which refers to God. But, if the things of God are to be understood in themselves (at least to some extent), if the ordering of reasons which exists in God's understanding is to be understood (in an admittedly limited way), one looks for some kind of sound fundamental theological reason which can successfully order all other reasons and which can therefore shed light on why causes have been placed in an order of relations which they happen to have in the manner which we have found them to exist (both within the order of creation and within the order of redemption).

By way of illustration, in his exegesis of Aquinas, Mansini argues that, from God's desire to save the human race, one can then explain why Christ's assumed humanity existed in the way that it did—why, for instance, Christ always enjoyed an immediate knowledge of God—a beatific knowledge of God in the context of his earthly life--although this kind of knowing and understanding is not enjoyed by us as human beings within the course of our earthly lives. But, from a tentative understanding of God's purposes and mission, one can better understand the economy of salvation that has been chosen by God (even as God's reasons are never fully understood by us within the context of our present lives nor in the life that might come to us after death).

For an understanding about how a systematic ordering of questions and reasons is able to shed light on the Christian order of meaning as this exists with respect both to creation and redemption, one can perhaps do no better than to quote from the wording of Mansini's analysis (n. 17):

...consider the order of topics in the *Prima pars* [of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*]. What is closest to us is God's actual ordering and government of the universe (pp. 103ff.). But this is treated last. What is first treated are the principles that enable us to understand that order and governance in its causes: (1) proximately, the parts of the universe, spiritual, material, and composite (qq. 50-102); (2)

Understanding), Lonergan distinguishes a set of positions from a set of counterpositions. The positions refer to the what and why of knowing and what is known as a result of our knowing and the counterpositions refer to all contrary, defective points of view. On the basis partially of this earlier analysis, Lonergan organizes and presents a theology of the Trinity that is grounded in the Church's doctrinal and theological tradition.

7. A Consideration of the Historical Movement

The understanding of faith that today prevails among Catholics was not to be arrived at in a single intuition, like the manner of the angels. Rather over the course of the ages reason illuminated by faith has searched diligently, reverently, and judiciously, so as gradually in a human way, ever to argument and improve the old with the new.

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After discussing the ways and means of dogmatic theology and the ways and means of systematic theology and after illustrating how these differences are played out in the development of theology with respect to the Christian Trinity, Lonergan shifts into a discussion which acknowledges the fact that this theology is never done in a vacuum. Theological activity occurs always in varying cultural contexts which have shifted over time and which will continue to shift over time. In other words, if theological inquiry is to occur and if the reception of any theological understanding is to have an impact on others, some attention needs to be given to the whole question of reception as this exists as constitutive in human life. Each of us, as human beings, has been born into a particular culture which, in turn, has acted to condition how each of us lives, thinks, and understands. And then, given how each of us lives and how we each belong to some kind of social order which functions through some kind of self-understanding of itself (a self-understanding which presents itself as a culture), the existence of all these conditions creates a problem or a task for Catholic theology. In other words, how is the meaning of Catholic theology to be communicated in a way which transcends cultural differences? How can a properly Catholic theology exist if and as it tries to meet the needs and demands of a transcultural spiritual community, a community which identifies itself as the universal Catholic Church?

To begin then with this question of reception, a useful starting place presents itself in an understanding which Aquinas had enjoyed. *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*; "whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver."¹⁴⁰ In the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 4; 1, p. 51, a more specific application of this principle is made: "the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower." *Cogitum...est in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis*.¹⁴¹ In knowing, a thing is known by a knower according to the mode of a knower's being

remotely, the creation of these parts (qq. 44ff.); (3) more remotely, the creator of these parts, God (qq. 2-26). The power (q. 25), will (q. 19), intelligence (q. 14) of the Creator are similarly ordered: What is closest to creating and governing is the power of God; the principles of this are the will and wisdom of God; the final principle of all is simply the divine being (qq. 3-13).

139Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 77.

140*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5; 3a, q. 5.

141See also *Summa Theologiae* 1a, q. 14, a. 1, ad 3; q. 16, a. 1; q. 19, a. 6, ad 2; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 2, 79, 7; *De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 3.

where what is understood and known is regulated according to how a thing is known by a knower. Hence, in applying this principle as a heuristic principle of explanation and as an insight which Aquinas had in his own day, the receptivity of human agents, as this receptivity exists within persons within human history, and as this receptivity is conditioned by human history, is a factor which helps to explain why Christ's incarnation and death occurred when it did and in the way that it did.¹⁴² As Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* so succinctly puts it, Christ was sent into human history and became a man "when the fullness of time had come."¹⁴³ And, as Paul also notes in his *Letter to the Romans*, "for while we were still weak Christ died at the right time for the ungodly."¹⁴⁴ Explicitly in the mind of Aquinas and implicitly in the words of scripture, the temporality or historicity of human life and existence is a factor which is acknowledged in how things have been set up in the order of redemption which God has established. As revelation occurs within human history to change it from within, theological activity also occurs from within the meaning which is constitutive of human history and culture in order to effect a similar change. What before had not been said within a given culture is now said so that a given culture can be transformed *from within*. In the work of theology, supernatural meanings are introduced into the sphere of human meanings as a principle of order which can reveal how the human desire and striving for meaning is an inclination that can only be fulfilled in a context that attends to unrestricted meaning-- unrestricted understanding and unrestricted loving. The mediating function of theology (which includes the mediating function of systematics in the theology of the Trinity) requires that some attention be given to the nature of human culture and the conditions which are properly constitutive of every human culture.

In turning then to the nature of human culture, Lonergan very clearly distinguishes between the sciences of nature and the sciences of man (the so-called "human sciences"). From the viewpoint of the human senses in general, the exterior contingent world exhibits a regularity and stability that is not much disputed. Even as the sciences of nature have themselves developed and greatly changed to reveal a greater understanding of natural laws and natural processes, what is known or what is studied by these sciences has itself not much changed. The same sun lights the day and the same planets and stars reveal their heavenly movements and positions. However, this is simply not the case with the human world as it exists and with how this human world is changed as new ideas are entertained about how things should be in terms of how persons should relate to each other. A stable social order soon changes its form and structure as new meanings are grasped about values and beliefs which should be emphasized at the expense of previously accepted views. As changes in motion (whether as accelerations or as decelerations) have become the focus of modern physics since the 17th Century, in the same way and by a kind of analogy, changes in meaning have been identified as the focus of study in the human sciences as its practitioners seek to understand how certain changes have occurred within the human order of things (changes which perhaps were not too well expected or anticipated) and how also it is possible to introduce desired changes in a way that will not destroy the goodness of a currently existing social order. How, for instance, does one solve problems that exist within a given economic order without also destroying the productivity which already exists within a given economic order? In the study of human history, in his *How the Reformation Happened*, Hilaire Belloc begins his work with

142*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 55, 12; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 101, a. 2, ad 1.

143Galatians 4:4 (NAB); cited by the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 55, 12. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 35, a. 8.

144Romans 5:6, as cited by Peter Beer, "The Redemptive Vicarious Suffering of Christ: An Inquiry," *Australian Lonergan Workshop II*, eds. Matthew C. Ogilvie & William J. Danaher (Sydney: Novum Organum Press, 2002), p. 139.

a question which illustrates how historians are challenged in their study of human affairs. From a Protestant viewpoint, the Reformation does not present itself as a mystery. No explanation needs to be provided for it. But, for the Catholic, how is the repudiation of over a thousand years of religious belief and practice to be properly explained? In other words, what really happened?

In raising a question thus which asks about cultural relativity and about how cultural relativity can be transcended by human acts of understanding, Lonergan begins by making three points which perhaps can be summarized in terms of the need to develop a new differentiation of human consciousness: a scholarly differentiated pattern of human consciousness. Previously, in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 204-212, Lonergan had identified four distinct patterns of human consciousness (four distinct patterns of human behavior) which have emerged over the course of human history as human beings have moved from a pragmatic, undifferentiated mode of human thinking and acting to distinct modes of thinking and acting which are each denominated or formed by a dominant conation or interest of some kind that acts to reshape how human beings sense, think, understand, and act. In the birth of philosophy in the Greek world, for instance, once the appearance of things was clearly distinguished from the reality or truth of things, questions about truth emerged as a new dominant passion and, from this passion, a new species of sensing and thinking that revealed itself in terms of a theoretical mode of consciousness in the lives of philosophers and scientists. In the context of scientific inquiry, everything which is done is done for the sake of reaching an understanding that can withstand any criticisms which anyone might want to make.

Later, in his *Method in Theology*, Lonergan distinguishes five patterns of consciousness which have been differentiated from the pragmatism of common sense: religiously differentiated consciousness, artistically differentiated consciousness, theoretically differentiated consciousness, interiorly differentiated consciousness, and scholarly differentiated consciousness.¹⁴⁵ And so, with respect to inquiries that attempt to understand the life, times, and culture of another person or society, an initial bridge is built by someone who begins to live and function as a scholar and who, by scholarly activities, moves and begins to understand the commonsense of another person, place, and time. As, in ordinary life, each of us comes to a commonsense understanding of another's common sense (a personal, characteristic way of behaving), in the same way, through scholarly research and a degree of empathy that is engendered (i.e., through the operations of a scholarly differentiated consciousness), students of human affairs and the genesis of human meaning achieve the same kind of understanding. In a way which recalls the romantic hermeneutics of Friedrich Schliermacher (d. 1834), a person living at a later time in human history enters the mind and heart of somebody who lived years before in a very different cultural context. A scripture scholar attempts to put on the mind of St. Paul, or he or she tries to take on a semitic mentality which is to be clearly distinguished from other frames of reference. To adapt a phrase that has been popularized by Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (which had identified what conditions are needed if the understanding of another culture, time, and place is to occur), a "fusing of horizons," (a *Horizontsgeschmelzung*) cuts across linguistic and semantic divides.¹⁴⁶ A common understanding begins to join the mind of a scholar with the mind or mentality of persons who lived in an earlier era and whose writings are no longer immediately understood when they are read in the cultural contexts of later times.

In the context of this differentiation of consciousness, to understand the symbolic consciousness of

¹⁴⁵Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 273-275.

¹⁴⁶Egan, p. 116.

other persons, one works from a heuristic that is familiar with different forms of symbolic consciousness. Since all human symbols exist as human products (as human carriers of meaning), in an *a priori* way, one identifies elements of meaning within one's consciousness of self (in the living of one's life) as a basis or touchstone for understanding a wide ranging classification of different symbols. In his "The Analogy of Meaning," on the basis of Gilbert Durand's work in his *Les Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire: Introduction à l'archétypologie générale*, Lonergan identifies symbols of ascension and symbols of decline and fall which are all related to dominant reflexes in persons as they seek to maintain their physical balance when standing and walking and so avoid experiences of falling and losing their way.¹⁴⁷ As an understanding of human psychology and childhood development works to construct a valuable and even necessary heuristic for the inquiries that one wishes to undertake, in the same way (i.e., analogously), one works with all the other human sciences to find and adapt any suggestive clues or hints that could prove useful in revealing the fuller significance of a human meaning which, up to now, one only partially understands and knows. Through a commonsense understanding of other persons, places, and times, a beginning is made in terms of finding a means or way that can assist in helping one to communicate religious meaning which others will understand and appreciate.

However, as Lonergan goes on to argue, to understand meanings and values that belong to other persons and cultures, a scholarly or commonsense method of approach is not adequate. In understanding and identifying differing sets of material conditions, to some extent, one advances in one's understanding. The understanding *as understanding* always works to transcend any experiences of relativity that are encountered as one grasps meanings which are important for other persons and groups but which are not so important for ourselves (though they are important for us in our desire to understand other persons, times, and places). However, the understanding that can be given to us about material conditions is not something that directly understands spiritual or intellectual conditions which are also present in the fabric of human life and which exercise a greater causality in determining how persons live with each other. And so, if the meanings which are relative to other persons are to be adequately understood, an explanatory account of human meaning in general is needed in an *a priori* that, in itself, should be totally lacking in relativity. Transcultural problems with respect to differences and even conflicts in human meaning (as these occur over time and as they vary from culture to culture) are to be addressed by transcultural principles. Lonergan speaks here about the need to appeal to "absolute features that can be discovered in the interior life of human beings."¹⁴⁸

However, while an appeal to the principle of self-knowledge is not new in Lonergan's notion of hermeneutics (attending to one's self-experiencing as one experiences one's experiencing, understanding, and judgment which is engaged in knowing things which are other than one's self), Lonergan's proposed solution for an explanatory account of human meaning makes far more rigorous demands in terms of how deeply and thoroughly a person should engage in one's acts of self-experiencing, self-understanding, and self-knowing. In Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, when speaking about *development* in meaning, two kinds are acknowledged. In genetic development, later meanings emerge from earlier meanings in an evolutionary way. Orders of meaning (or laws) succeed and replace each other according to a higher rational principle. But, in

¹⁴⁷Bernard Lonergan, *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, eds. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 189-190.

¹⁴⁸Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 83.

dialectical development, later meanings (or laws) emerge as a result of conflict and experiences of difference that are a source of controversy and dispute. Orders of meaning succeed and replace each other but not necessarily or always in a way which abides by a higher rational principle that is very obvious from a strictly human viewpoint. Admittedly, a higher rational principle could be operative, but in ways that lie outside human calculation and control. For example, Aquinas's notion of eternal law accounts for the order of God's providence in a government that, in different ways, directs all things to one goal, one finality. As strange as it is for us to understand, it is a good that God permits moral evil to exist. Elsewhere, in his own writings, Lonergan speaks of progress, decline, and redemption as three vectors which constitute a comprehensive theory or theology of history (a theory or theology of history that can then be transposed into a comprehensive *a priori* theory of meaning).¹⁴⁹ While, for the sake of his argument, Lonergan juxtaposes philosophical judgment with relativism, the existence of the Catholic Church as a universal society is such that, for the sake of its mission, defensible philosophical judgments must be made if the Church's message is to penetrate the spheres or orders of meaning which exist in other persons and human societies so that all persons can be brought into a union which transcends cultural differences, a union which manifests itself as God's family or God's Kingdom on earth.¹⁵⁰

In a series of distinctions that Lonergan goes on to make in speaking about the relation between theology and culture and what transitions occur as shifts of meaning occur both within culture and theology, Lonergan employs an explanatory principle that he takes from Aristotle who had distinguished between "the things that are first in themselves" and "the things that are first in regard to us" (*priora quoad se* versus *priora quoad nos*).¹⁵¹ What is first for us refers to the world of our private, personal experience. What is first in itself refers to an explanatory principle: a reality of some kind which always holds. It is never relative. It is not relative to us. Its existence does not depend on us; is not conditioned by our existence. For a brief illustration here which is taken from a discussion on the nature of human cognition, it is accordingly said about human cognition that "what absolutely is *prior quoad nos* [in regard to us] is our intellectual light, by which the data of experience are rendered intelligible," but "what absolutely is *prior quoad se* [in regard to itself] is the Light of divine understanding, which causes substances [things] to exist."¹⁵² God's unrestricted understanding is the cause of all things and is conditioned by nothing. But, our human understanding exists only by way of participating in God's understanding though we only come to some sense or experience of divine

149Bernard Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 100-109.

150As a theologian, Lonergan refers to an encyclical of Pope Pius XII: *Humani generis* which rejects relativism in a forthright and outright manner. Cf. *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 81. Then, as a philosopher, he asks readers to refer to his book *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (pp. 366-371, 517-518, 585-618) where he examines and argues against relativism in all of its present forms. In general, Lonergan concludes his arguments by referring to the nature of judgment and by reaffirming the nature of what constitutes a true and sound judgment. From a true and sound theory of judgment, one has a basis for rejecting the relativist thesis as a sufficient, adequate philosophy. Cf. *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 83.

151Bernard Lonergan, *Doctrinal Pluralism* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1971), p. 17.

152Stebbins, p. 307, n. 59.

understanding if we work from and with the experience which we have of our own understanding.

Turning then to Lonergan's discussion, cultures exist in a purely relative sense. They refer to sets of meaning which vary through time and which are conditioned by the differing experiences that people have had of life and the different interpretations which persons have had in the lives which they lead. Each of us; in fact, all persons are born into a culture that is inherited and regarded as a given. Through it, a world is experienced, understood, and known. And so, Lonergan speaks about an "ancient Semitic or Palestinian mentality." With respect to culture, he distinguishes a "scriptural prior," a "patristic prior," and a "contemporary prior." Each refers to a different species of cultural mind-set which had once been dominant in the life of a people (in the history of western culture). If one wishes, one can also speak of a "medieval prior" which, in itself, refers to a distinct set of meanings that, for certain persons at one time, was regarded as normative for how a given social order was to be understood in terms of its meaning and significance.

In contrast with all this, an act of theological understanding (whether in dogmatics or systematics) *as an act of understanding* is a movement of mind which, as a reception, is to be understood as a transcending phenomenon. Why this is so is explained by the fact that every act of understanding, to the degree that it is always rational and wherever it occurs, is always an act which exists because it participates in a divine act of understanding (which is God's existence *qua* unrestricted act of understanding). While, in our world, images or phantasms function as material causes to elicit acts of understanding in human subjects, only God's understanding is fully complete and actual (and so lacking in all potentiality). As a formal cause (as something always in act), it accounts for all acts of understanding which occur among created rational beings, whether one talks about the understanding of angels or the understanding of human beings. The existence of rational life among human beings is explained ultimately by something that is both like and unlike: a rational principle which already always exists and which, as the primary cause of causes, is unrestricted in its range and depth. From a standpoint thus which accordingly recognizes the participative, created nature of acts of understanding as these exist in human beings, one can then begin to understand how theological acts of understanding can effect transcultural movements through developments internal to theology which find ways to reiterate the meaning of believed divinely revealed truths in new cultural contexts. Through acts of understanding in theology, the meaning of received truths is more adequately and clearly distinguished from other possible meanings and significances and, by this distinguishing, the meaning of these truths is more adequately and clearly understood.

With respect to this growth in understanding, Lonergan refers to it when he speaks about the operation of a "systematic prior." A theological movement, by way of faith seeking understanding, takes believers from the kind of meaning which is given in scripture to a new species of meaning that is given as an effect or result of theological understanding.¹⁵³ The asking of theological questions which

¹⁵³Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 85. To understand a bit better what is happening here, one can perhaps refer to a comparison which Lonergan draws between the development of theology and the development of the natural sciences. "Now, just as theology itself is analogous to the natural sciences, so also are there three movements in theology that are analogous to the three movements in a natural science." Cf. *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 759. As with the natural sciences, one begins from a pre-scientific knowledge of things. In theology, one begins with a knowledge of the Christian faith as this is possessed by all pious believers. Then, by asking theological questions, one moves into an apprehension of meaning that is far more precise. Then, from the vantage

seek a more precise meaning for things introduces a new species of meaning that then becomes constitutive of the Christian community and the self-understanding of Christian believers.¹⁵⁴ And then, lastly, when church authorities take these clarifications which have been laboriously developed by theological activity and when they affirm or confirm what has been postulated and understood, one can then speak about a dogmatic movement which is occurring in the life of the Church. The truths of the faith are more clearly known--through prior theological activity and through a ratification and proclamation which subsequently occurs in the Church's solemn judgments.¹⁵⁵ As Lonergan speaks about it, the same thing is believed by all through the course of time even as the exposition of what is believed varies and differs as one moves from questions and concerns belonging to one cultural context to questions and concerns belonging to another cultural context.¹⁵⁶ As much or as frequently as cultural contexts differ from each other, acts of understanding in theology *as acts of understanding* are always transcending or moving beyond the limitations which are present in any given physical or cultural context.

Hence, "bad theology" in the history of theology and in the history of the Church is to be explained by a principle which refers to certain lack of intelligibility or rationality which exists within it. But, where or whenever understanding does exist in any act of insight present in theology, a meaning presents itself which always transcends an immediately given, historically conditioned context. One has something that always belongs to God's own understanding of things. For a brief, well known example here, consider St. Augustine's notion of sin which exists not as something which exists as a being or reality but which properly exists only as a privation or lack of being or goodness.¹⁵⁷ As Aquinas would more explicitly aver, sin (moral evil) is to be understood as the absence of some kind of good which a given thing should have but which, in fact, it does not have because an operation of some kind is missing or deficient. In the end, sin (moral evil) is best defined as an absence or privation of meaning or intelligibility. It is a totally irrational thing.¹⁵⁸

The presence thus of this type of intelligibility and rationality in theology accordingly explains why

point of these new apprehensions of meaning, the truths of the faith can be proposed and communicated in an authoritative manner. The mode and manner transcends cultural barriers and differences.

154Lonergan illustrates this by referring to a shift which occurred as the three divine persons of the Blessed Trinity were conceived "as substantial," as Christ's Incarnation was conceived "as a union of two natures in a single person," as divine graces were conceived "as absolutely supernatural habits and motions," and as the sacraments were conceived "as efficacious signs of grace." Cf. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 85. The conceiving or conception which Lonergan refers to, and which will be discussed more fully in notes for chapter 2 of *The Triune God: Systematics*, refers to the proceeding of an inner word which is experienced as a meaning that is now known and which springs from a prior act of understanding.

155Lonergan refers to decisions made at the Council of Nicaea, the Council of Chalcedon, the Council of Trent, and the First Vatican Council. Nicaea "defined that the Son is consubstantial with the Father." Chalcedon "defined that Christ is a single person in two natures." Trent and Vatican I both employed a large number of theological terms that were found useful and even contingently necessary in order the more fully "to state and to define the faith." Cf. *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 85.

156Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 85.

157Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 2, 20, 54.

158*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 7, 1-12.

Catholic theology possesses a stability which is germane to its history and development. Insights and understandings never truly become truly dated or outmoded. For reasons having to do with the principle of intrinsic rationality, no advances in understanding can ever be abandoned. They cannot be rejected at will since the nature of the Church's life and mission is such that it needs to find a way to live within the sum total of human history (as this proceeds from its origins to its terminus). If the Church is to achieve its salvific purposes in a manner which jives with the created order of things that already exists, it must encourage a posing and asking of difficult philosophical questions so that a more sophisticated order can be established within theological inquiry--an order that more carefully distinguishes different sets of questions and tasks since, by an increasingly wise ordering of means to ends in the conduct of theological inquiry, a greater meaningfulness can gradually make itself present in Christian life. A new human culture can begin to appear as it experiences a transformation which directs all things toward God and the things of God.

8. A Further Consideration of the Historical Movement

As Lonergan goes more deeply into the question of development in the history of theology, a development that has had vast repercussions in the Church's doctrinal and dogmatic teachings, he notes that scant attention has been paid to the nature of this development by those who rank among its major contributors.¹⁵⁹ The argument given is one which says that no intellectual development can be properly or fully understood unless that development has fully come to term. Despite what increments of understanding can occur along the way, as long as a perfect coincidence does not exist between any movement seeking understanding and what is finally understood in an act of understanding, the movement, in its incompleteness and imperfection, is something that cannot be understood.

For a fuller and perhaps overly exhaustive understanding of the point that Lonergan is making here, one can attend to a distinction and arguments made by Aquinas when he distinguishes between an imperfect and a perfect movement or motion, a distinction that is then carried over into a distinction that distinguishes between a movement or motion and an operation. With respect then to a perfect motion or movement, in every act of sensing, understanding, or willing, an act is fully united to what is being experienced, understood, or willed.¹⁶⁰ Act is coincident with end and is not really distinct from its end and so is not on its way toward its end by a continuous kind of motion or process which consists of parts that succeed one another as one determines measurements of time.¹⁶¹ As Lonergan explains the difference between an incomplete action and a complete action in Aquinas in a distinction that Aquinas takes from Aristotle but which he uses for his own purposes:

¹⁵⁹Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 89. As Lonergan notes:

...there is nothing surprising about the fact that popes and Fathers of the Church and the greatest theologians have had practically nothing to say about the development of theology and of dogma, even though they were the ones who effected the development. Some human achievements are understood before they happen, while others have first to happen before they are understood. Every intellectual movement is of the latter kind.

¹⁶⁰*Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 12, 766.

¹⁶¹*Sententia Libri De anima*, 1, 6, 82; 10, 162.

One cannot at once be walking a given distance and have walked it, be being cured and have been cured, be learning something and have learned it. But at once one is seeing and has seen, one is understanding and has understood, one is alive and has been alive, one is happy and has been happy. In the former instances there is a difference between action and end, and we have either what is not properly action or, at best, incomplete action - such are movements. In the latter instances action and end are coincident - such are operations.¹⁶²

Hence, in Aquinas's words, "a movement is an act of something that is incomplete (*motus est actus imperfecti*) whereas an operation is an act of a subject already possessing full actuality (*operatio est actus perfecti*)."¹⁶³ While the first kind of act is an act that exists in potentiality, the second kind exists not in potentiality but in act.¹⁶⁴ It exists as an *actus existentis in actu*, an act of something that is already fully in act and so, as fully realized, is fully lacking in any potentiality.¹⁶⁵ In the language one uses, motion or movement as a change of location or physical place is not an appropriate hermeneutic for understanding changes that occur within human beings who engage in acts of experiencing, understanding, and willing. The transitions which occur here are best understood in terms of a complex shift which moves from potency to act. Since, thus, in human cognition, reasoning as a movement or incomplete act is to be distinguished from understanding as an operation or complete act, the nature or form of development in theology is something which cannot be fully understood by us at this time. In speaking about it, only some limited observations can be made.

In a context then which works from a partial or limited understanding of things, the historically conditioned character of development in theology can be understood from a context that acknowledges how all things are governed and brought to their completion through the unrestricted causality of God's unrestricted understanding. An infinitely wise, providential ordering of things accounts for a situation whereby, in the world which God has created, good is marvelously and mysteriously brought out of evil (being from privation) and, then, not even simply this. Not only is good brought out of evil (as Augustine had argued) but, as Aquinas adds and argues, from greater evils, greater goods are brought about. If God were to prevent certain evils, the existence of much good would be precluded. Certain goods would not emerge at all. As Aquinas states his case in one line of argument that he gives:

Since God, then, provides universally for all being, it belongs to His providence to permit certain defects in particular effects, that the perfect good of the universe may not be hindered, for if all evil were prevented, much good would be absent from the universe. A lion would cease to live, if there were no slaying of animals; and there would be no patience of martyrs if there were no tyrannical persecution. Thus Augustine says in the *Echiridion, sive De fide, spe et caritate*, c. 11: "God could have created a world without any evil whatever, but judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit evil to exist."¹⁶⁶

Hence, in seeing or in trying to see and understand things from a divine perspective, not only is

¹⁶²Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 112.

¹⁶³*Sententia Libri De anima*, 1, 6, 82.

¹⁶⁴*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 2.

¹⁶⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 18, a. 3, ad 1.

¹⁶⁶*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2.

doctrinal or dogmatic development to be seen as itself a good (in its achievements) but, in some extended, larger way, the historically conditioned way whereby things turn out in the way that they do in the history of theology is itself also to be seen as a species of good. The extent or experience of great difficulties is no argument which can be properly used to deny that some kind of higher understanding can be found, an understanding which will resolve and present things in a new, better way. The struggles possess a value of their own. They serve, they effect a higher, greater good.¹⁶⁷

In the lengthy remainder of section 8, Lonergan goes through the history of doctrine (or dogmatic development) in order to do two things. First, he provides an explanatory account of a phenomenon that traditionally, for any reader or student, has been very difficult to interpret and understand. The history is full of disputes and controversies and, as one wanders through it all, one wonders about what was really happening. In moving into a sea of information, at a certain point, one wants to move beyond a narrative, scholarly account and its descriptive correlation of effects and causes to an account that is properly explanatory: an account which works with a basic set of first principles to reveal the roots of all the difficulties which were being encountered. Second, in providing an explanatory account which transcends what is immediately given in human sense experience (which includes the given meanings which exist in any given culture that a person is born into), Lonergan wants to point to and refer all things to God's government of things which providentially functions in such a way that all things (good or bad) are turned to meet divinely intended objectives. All things (all events) serve divine ends. With every advance in human understanding and with every failure to advance in understanding and wisdom in any given time, in a manner which escapes our immediate understanding or awareness, the interaction or dialectic which is occurring is being used as a divine instrument. In the history of the Church's doctrinal development (and in the history of theology), a divine omnipotence is revealed since only God can achieve aims and objectives through means that sometimes succeed and sometimes fail in the secondary causality which is proper to them. Fallible, self-moving causes unwittingly achieve goals and ends which transcend the immediacy of their proximate causality.

In a brief survey which attends to major shifts of meaning in the history of dogmatic development and the history of theology, Lonergan looks at four controversies that, in their own way, served to introduce a new apprehension of meaning in the articulation and self-understanding of the Church's faith. If the task and purpose of dogmatic theology is to distinguish "between the language of dogmatic sources and the language of scientific thought" in order to express the sense and meaning of a dogmatic truth in a new language which differs from an earlier language without saying anything really new or different, the controversy which led to the calling of the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 presents itself as the first, major turning point.¹⁶⁸ Is Christ as divine as is God the Father? And so, in 325 at Nicaea, a non-biblical, technical term (*homoousios*) was introduced and employed in the text of the Church's creed in order to exclude a heretical interpretation of the creed which had claimed that Christ is not as divine as is God the Father. Each person (Father or Son) is fully divine or fully God. As used by the council fathers, this term meant "of the same kind of stuff as" although a more precise meaning later came to it as St. Athanasius began to argue that the Son is *homoousios* or consubstantial with the Father "if and only if what is true of the Father also is true of the Son, except that only the Father is Father."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 89.

¹⁶⁸Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, pp. 165-6.

¹⁶⁹Bernard Lonergan, "The Dehellenization of Dogma," *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan*, eds. William F. J. Ryan, S. J. and Bernard J. Tyrrell (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), p. 23.

In moving from meanings that are latent, vague, and implicit, a new meaning was accordingly introduced in order to deal with a crisis--a meaning which now is obvious, definitive, and explicit.¹⁷⁰ One cannot now recite the Church's creed with a wording that can be combined with heretical interpretations which say that Christ's divinity was somehow lesser than that of the Father's, the Son being a very high form of creature. While some words in scripture say some very strong things about the intimate relation which exists between Christ and God the Father (as in "I and the Father are one"), nothing exactly or precisely says that each person is as fully divine as the other. But, with *homoousios*, one can now say this. In the relation of Father and Son to each other, they possess an identical divine nature (a point strongly emphasized later by St. Augustine in the *De Trinitate* and a point of departure for his trinitarian theology). The rationalism of heretical objections is countered by a new rationalism which is the rationalism of the Church's orthodox teaching.

In the aftermath of a decision made by the Council of Chalcedon in 441, a new, second major crisis emerged with respect to the history of theology and its impact on the settling of another major doctrinal dispute. The changed context is one which now admits the propriety of employing technical language when it is needed to resolve a dispute about what the Church truly and faithfully believes. But, now, how is technical language to be used with reference to Christ's humanity? If Christ is a divine person (a divine being) and if he was born and lived a genuinely human life, how does one speak about Christ's nature or form? How does one cope with the fact that, normally, when a given thing exists, it possesses only one form, nature, or essence? Oneness of form is typically correlated with the being or existence of a given thing (oneness of form with oneness of being). To understand the being of any given thing, one attends to its form or nature which enjoys a certain primacy in the general scheme of things. As Aristotle had spoken of it, being is form and form is being.¹⁷¹ Nothing exists apart from its specific determination through the agency of an active, intelligible principle which refers to the causality of a form. This form unites itself to what can receive it which thus presents itself as a passive principle. And so, a specific kind of being or thing exists, a specific kind of substance. A "this" rather than a "that" comes into existence.

Accordingly, in the context of this kind of thinking which prevailed during the patristic centuries (from the end of the 1st Century into the close of 7th Century), a crisis arose when some way had to be found to speak about how one could clearly distinguish between Christ's humanity and Christ's divinity while, at the same time, maintaining belief in the oneness of Christ's divine being. The close association between oneness of form and oneness of existence engendered a belief which postulates a divinity of Christ which totally absorbs Christ's humanity. This was the Alexandrian thesis, the Monophysite position. But, in response to theological objections which argued that Christ's humanity needs to be properly acknowledged, it was argued that one should speak of two natures and thus two persons in Christ (since, for each nature, a corresponding person or being should be acknowledged). And so, in Christ, one finds two natures and two persons: the man Jesus, on the one hand, and the divine Son of God, on the other. This was the Antiochene thesis, the Nestorian position. However, after the Council of Chalcedon in 441 explicitly spoke of two natures in Christ (to counter monophysite objections and denials), Severus of Antioch (d. 538) argued that, although Christ's humanity is not to be denied (since it cannot be really denied given what is said about Christ in the creed with respect to Christ's human predicates), the term "nature" should not be used in the Christian creed since its use

¹⁷⁰*Grace and Freedom*, p. 165.

¹⁷¹Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 7, 17; Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 390-1.

unfortunately implies two distinct persons in Christ (which detracts from the unity of Christ's being).¹⁷² For this reason thus, in employing the word "nature," it can only be properly applied when speaking about Christ's divinity. As a technical term, it cannot be properly applied to speak about Christ's humanity. While verbal or mental distinctions can be drawn between person and nature, the absence of a real distinction precludes being able to say that the reality of one thing is not the reality of the other.¹⁷³ If person and nature do not really differ from each other as different things (if they are viewed only as terms which refer to the same reality), it is not possible to speak about a fluid relation which can exist between a concretely existing thing and a form or nature that it can possibly possess. One cannot speak about how an existing thing can have an identity which endures over time even as it is, or if it is informed over time by a succession of different intelligible natures. In metamorphosis, caterpillars turn into butterflies. Nor, obviously, in such a situation can a given thing be said to have more than one nature concurrently. The abstract possibility of such thesis only moves into probability if, in some way, in the order of being, person and nature can be distinguished from each other as different realities or different things. Instead of a verbal or mental distinction, one would have a real distinction.

In the wake of dogmatic decisions that were thus made at the Council of Ephesus in 431 and at the Council of Chalcedon in 441, a group of realities were affirmed and joined together. Ephesus had clearly spoken about the reality of Christ's undivided being, the unity of Christ's person. Then Chalcedon spoke about the reality of two natures which, as constituents, inform who or what is Christ's incarnate being. And so, when these different realities were all joined together at Chalcedon, it created philosophical problems in terms of how they were all to be ordered to each other. How do they all fit together? How does one real distinction relate to another real distinction? Can an order be discovered or postulated among the different real distinctions so that experiences of contradiction are turned into a heightening of one's understanding? Christ's divinity is quite other than Christ's humanity. Christ's being or personhood is not purely or simply synonymous with Christ's divinity. In some way, Christ's humanity needs to be related to Christ's being, Christ's person. The posing of these different, difficult questions accordingly explains why, in the wake of Ephesus and Chalcedon, in the 7th Century, the nature and the reality of real distinctions came under a scrutiny and a species of inquiry arose which led to a new differentiation of meaning. While, thus, it can be said that one concretely existing being differs from another (the two are not the same) and while it can be also said that certain conjugates or properties really differ from each other (weakness is not strength), in terms of finding a coherent, intelligible order for the sum or collection of all these real distinctions and relations, if different beings are to be distinguished from each other, one can speak about real distinctions which are to be known as *major real distinctions*. In some of Lonergan's own words, "there is a major real distinction between the Father and the Son, between the Holy Spirit and John the Baptist, between Peter and Paul, or between Stephen and his horse."¹⁷⁴ But, when speaking about the different properties or conjugates that are constitutive of given existing things and about the differences existing among these properties, one speaks about *minor real distinctions*. A man's right hand is not his left hand. They are two different things. And so too, a man's soul is not his body. A minor real distinction distinguishes the two. Body and soul do not refer to the same thing, the same reality.

¹⁷²Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished manuscript translated 1989 by Charles C. Hefling, Jr. from the Latin of the *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964), pp. 96-98.

¹⁷³Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 95; p. 107.

¹⁷⁴Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 95.

In subsequent articulations, mixed distinctions can be identified in attempts to relate two different things which possesses a different ontological status. One exists independently of whether or not it is conceived by a human act of understanding and the other exists only as an idea or notion which exists within one's mind.¹⁷⁵ Things which exist only within a person's mind have only a mental or notional existence. Adequate real distinctions can also be distinguished from inadequate real distinctions when, for instance, in an inadequate real distinction, one distinguishes between the person or being of a thing and a constitutive property or conjugate which belongs to the same thing. In other words, in the developments which arose following the Council of Chalcedon, the apprehension of technical meanings within theology emerged more frequently and more commonly as the desired object of inquiry. A larger, richer context of meaning was created which served to encourage a methodological shift in the praxis of theology as, in the western "middle ages," theologians began to preoccupy themselves with questions about being (metaphysical questions). What is and what is not and what follows if one affirms either that something is so or is not so?¹⁷⁶ In this development, as orders of meaning were sought that tried to find better ways to relate truths of faith with each other, an explanatory focus became more and more dominant and, with this dominance, a transcendence which moved beyond contexts of meaning that had existed in scripture and in the culture of the church fathers.

In a third development which occurred in the 13th Century, systematic theology emerged as a distinct discipline, having a different aim and objective than that which belonged to dogmatic theology.¹⁷⁷ However, as Lonergan illustrates the contrast by referring to the criticisms and censures of John Peckham (Archbishop of Canterbury from 1279 to 1292), when systematic theology is not clearly distinguished from dogmatic theology (on a basis that is grounded in a real distinction that exists between first and second operations of the human intellect), censures are pronounced for mistaken reasons.

To give a bit of background information on John Peckham (c.1225-1292), it is to be noted that Peckham was an English Franciscan theologian, a contemporary of Aquinas, who also taught at the University of Paris shortly after Aquinas returned to teach there (probably in 1268).¹⁷⁸ He became a Master in theology in 1269 and was known to be strongly influenced by the theology of St. Bonaventure.¹⁷⁹ He left Paris for Oxford somewhere between 1270 and 1272. In his day, he was regarded as a strong defender of traditional Augustinian theology against the growing presence and influence of Aristotelian thinking within theology. Because he opposed a far reaching use of Aristotle's thought in Catholic theology, he worked to try "to prevent 'the spread of Averroism and Thomism'" long before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1279. In his writings, he advocated a return to the

¹⁷⁵Lonergan, *Insight*, p. 514.

¹⁷⁶Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 106.

¹⁷⁷Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 93. As Lonergan expresses it:

The achievement of the thirteenth Century, even among the Augustinians, was the transition from what was prior for the scriptural and patristic people of faith to the theological and systematic 'prior to itself'.

¹⁷⁸Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Volume 1 The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 182-183.

¹⁷⁹*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1968 ed., s. v. "John Peckham (Pecham)," by A. Emmen, p. 1065.

thought of St. Augustine; he “systematically used Aristotelian terminology” to express his arguments; and he also made a “highly selective use of non-Christian philosophers to the extent that their works could be made to harmonize with the thought of St. Augustine.”¹⁸⁰ As Archbishop of Canterbury at Oxford, on October 29, 1284, he confirmed an earlier prohibition issued earlier in 1277 by Robert Kilwardly OP, his predecessor as Archbishop of Canterbury: a prohibition which censured a number of Thomist theses and forbade their teaching. Then, shortly afterwards, on April 30, 1286, he issued a more comprehensive prohibition which listed eight new proscribed propositions drawn from Aquinas’s writings. In his philosophy, against Aquinas:

[Peckham] taught the immediate evidence of the existence of God, approved the argument of Anselm of Canterbury [St. Anselm’s famous ontological argument for God’s existence], and denied the possibility of eternal creation. In psychology he accepted only a virtual distinction between the soul and its faculties, held that immortality can be proved by irrefutable arguments, and accented the auto-determinism of the will and its primacy over the intellect. He also disputed Thomas’s notion of the unicity of the substantial form in man.

With respect, for instance, to the unity, the unicity of a thing’s form, he argued against Aquinas that “no single thing ever has more than one form.”¹⁸¹ Rather, “in each thing there are many forms, or at least many grades of one form.” In speaking then about man, “there are several forms-vegetative, sensitive, and rational-in a gradated order that cooperates toward the good and unity of the being as a whole.” With respect to the nature of human cognition, again, against Aquinas, he argued that human knowing occurs on the basis of innate ideas and an illumination that ultimately comes from God (a divine active intellect). Before the human intellect engages in any form of abstraction, before any essence or form is abstracted from an experience of matter, the human mind is already in act with respect to a given form or essence that is possibly being abstracted. The abstracting powers of the human intellect add nothing to the knowing of the human intellect. This intellect is always active. It wholly lacks a potential or passive aspect which Aquinas has spoken about when he had referred to the passive intellect and how active and passive intellect interact with each other in human knowing. In human beings, “the intellect is not a passive Aristotelian *tabula rasa*.” With respect to questions about the eternity of the world, effective arguments easily prove that the world had a temporal beginning and so was created.¹⁸² Aquinas had argued that rational arguments cannot be mustered to decide the question one way or the other. It is by faith that one can hold that the world is not eternal and so had a beginning.

With respect then to the significance of John Peckham in the development of systematic theology, his importance lies in the extent of his misunderstanding. Lonergan adverts to this when commenting on a lengthy text that he cites from one of Peckham’s letters. In Peckham’s interpretation of things, “philosophical dogmas” are being presented by Aquinas as new truths which one ought to believe and, as these become objects of belief, truths of faith are supplanted by them. They are no longer believed. Philosophical speculations have taken center stage and, as a result, the higher interests of theology are no longer being served. Or, in other words, as an adapted use of Aristotelian philosophy in Aquinas replaces the conceptuality of St. Augustine’s theology and its reliance on Platonic ways of speaking, it

¹⁸⁰*Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1972 ed., s. v. “Peckham, John,” by Ferdinand Etzkorn OFM, p. 69.

¹⁸¹Etzkorn, p. 70.

¹⁸²Torrell, p. 184.

is suggesting that the achievements of St. Augustine can be put aside. And so, a threat is perceived with respect to the Church's dogmatic theology and the ratifications that this theology has received from Church authorities. Because Peckham speaks of "philosophical dogmas" as opposed to "philosophical principles," the explanatory value of Aristotelian notions and concepts is not seen for how they can help persons move toward a deeper understanding of the different Christian beliefs that are constitutive of the Catholic faith. Peckham was not able to distinguish between the purpose and function of dogmatics in theology and the purpose and function of systematics within theology.

Turning now to a fourth stage in the development of theology as this can be grasped by attending to the history of theology, after Lonergan speaks about the achievements of theology in the 13th Century and the systematic ordering of all doctrines and dogmas which occurred then, he concludes his analysis by looking at the state of theology as this has existed since the 13th Century and as it presently exists down into our own time. His chief point of departure is a tension which has continued to exist between two basic human inclinations. One inclination tends to be positivistic and existential. It tends to have an Augustinian flavor as, on the one hand, one basic human desire yearns for concrete experiences of meaning in matters having to do with faith, belief, and religion. Whether the object of study is the witness of scripture, or whether it is the writings of the mystical authors, or whether it is the symbolism of the Church's liturgy, the species of meaning which exists in these sources continues to elicit a natural human interest which wants to enjoy like experiences of meaning. The object is a full living of one's faith and belief in a context which is as concrete as are the concrete circumstances of one's own condition, time, and place. In Catholic theology, there can be no development if the positive sciences or disciplines within theology are under-emphasized or downplayed in some way.

At the same time, however, and, on the other hand, a desire that yearns for an explanatory understanding of things which can relate as many variables as possible into a single overarching whole is a second inclination that sometimes jars with the first (even as this second desire works with concrete apprehensions of meaning to find higher principles of intelligibility that can reveal a deeper, more significant meaning which is added to one's experiences of meaning). A Thomist inclination interacts with Augustinian desires in a relation that grounds and leads to a dialectic of conflict and opposition. And so, into our own day, theology is faced with a major problem which has yet to be overcome. How are positivist desires to be mated with speculative concerns? How can the doing of theology undergo an ordering within itself so that, as an effect, a more fruitful ordering of meaning can begin to occur within theology and within the Church's life?

In discussing this question, Lonergan sketches a heuristic which schematically reveals all the different distortions that have made themselves present within the Church's theological life. If, for instance, an exaggerated notion of systematics has been making its presence felt, three different defects can be traced as consequences. Philosophical questions assume a centrality and importance which they should not have within theology; historical and scriptural studies are largely used as a mine for apologetical arguments; and at times historical and scriptural studies are ignored entirely. But then, when positive studies (historical and scriptural studies) are overemphasized, three different defective consequences follow. Some persons seek to return to some kind of pure idealized form of early, primitive Christianity; for others, a new myth of some kind is sought which can carry them on into a new future; and then with others, certainty becomes the sole focus of one's studies and no shrift is given to searching for a deeper understanding of things. To provide some illustrations and a degree of criticism that comes with his illustrations, Lonergan gives a list of examples for each defect that is drawn both from the Church's past and from the current situation as this exists in theology today.

The virtuous mean amid all these extremes, however, is the Church's teaching which urges the value of directing one's thoughts and reflections toward the mysteries of Faith. The object of one's study is not a datum of sense or consciousness that leads to philosophical questions, nor is it a datum of meaning as this simply exists in receiving texts that have come down to us from a given religious tradition. The focus that Lonergan speaks of refers to meanings and realities which belong to a higher order of things, meanings and realities that are revealed initially through the meanings that one encounters in the sense of one's religious tradition. *Mystery* is key here in the reference which it possesses (by way of a relation that is joined to meanings which have an unrestricted depth, an unrestricted significance) although, in our culture, in the wake of 18th Century Enlightenment notions, this concept has been largely brushed aside. It is seen as unworthy of serious human attention.¹⁸³ A mystery, in its initial significance, is obviously something that we cannot fully understand. It cannot be understood at least by us *in the context of our present life* since it exists as more than simply a puzzle of some kind that elicits our attention and interest although, as the Church teaches, the existence of unrestricted meaning or unrestricted meaningfulness (as this exists in divine mysteries) is no argument against possibly coming or moving toward some growth in our human understanding as this exists in the work of theology and in the reception of any understanding which might come to us in our theological labors. This focus thus on mystery, as a principle, accordingly explains why theology possesses its own language. It has its own terms and concepts. The self-transcending character of understanding points toward the existence and the reality of mystery and, at the same time, this self-transcending character of our human understanding explains why our theological understanding is characterized by an inherent stability and by an ongoing development that is intrinsic to the Church's life. In the providential order of things which God has set up (for salvific reasons and purposes), the Holy Spirit, through the secondary causality of fallible human causes, effects a wide ranging development of things which transcends the immediate causality of any created cause. Through the greatest of trials, greater good is inevitably always being brought about.

9. The Object of Theology

...since acts are known through objects and movements are known through terms, we shall have to discuss briefly (1) the twofold aspect of theology, (2) the object as the goal of theology (3) the object as an immanently produced term, (4) the object as moving (5) the process from the object as moving to the object as term, and (6) the process from the object as a term to the object as a goal.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³Glenn Hughes, "Lonergan and the Concept of Stupidity," an unpublished paper copyright 2006, p. 1. See also by Hughes, "The Discussion of Mystery in *Insight*," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, March 1986.

¹⁸⁴Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 101. For further reading and discussion, look at Appendix 2: The Act of Understanding, pp. 559-601. The first four sections within this appendix speak about the Notion of Object, the Object of the Intellect as End and Term, the Object That Moves the Intellect, and Passages in St. Thomas on the Object as Mover. As is obvious in his discussions, Lonergan frequently employs traditional metaphysical language when speaking about the nature of human understanding although his own preference in his work is to speak of cognitive desire and about how this desire expresses itself through different questions which give a structure to the form and shape of human inquiry.

As Lonergan now moves to conclude his methodological discussions in chapter 1 of *The Triune God: Systematics*, he employs a principle that he takes from Aquinas in order to order a discussion that relates six distinct issues. Aquinas had argued, for instance, in his *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 13, that acts are distinguished from each another on the basis of the different objects which they intend or desire. In “Christ as Subject: A Reply,” *Collection*, p. 167, Lonergan cites the Latin phrasing as *actus specificantur per obiecta*, i.e., acts are specified by their objects. In Appendix 2A, in the *Triune God: Systematics*, p. 603, citing Aquinas, *De anima*, II, 4, 415a 14-22, *In II De anima*, lect. 6, 304-308, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 77, a. 3; q. 87, a. 3, Lonergan argues that, in Aquinas, “operations of the soul are distinguished by their respective objects.” Hence, by way of illustration, one can say that a “first operation of the mind” (*prima mentis operatio*) proceeds from a first set of questions that have a distinct object, but this operation prepares the way for a “second operation of the mind” (*secunda mentis operatio*) which follows from a second set of questions that have an object that differs from the object sought by the first set of questions.¹⁸⁵ Human knowing functions in a self-assembling way as human desires succeed each other to reveal a succession of differently intended objects.

The goal-orientated or teleological character of human inquiry accordingly allows one to move from what is perhaps being understood in a specific, concrete case to the subject of understanding: the functioning of the human mind or intellect in its different operations. Aquinas borrows his introspective procedure from Aristotle.¹⁸⁶ From objects, one moves self-reflectively back toward subjects in terms of what activities properly belong to oneself as a subject. Then, once these activities are identified and understood, they reveal a knowledge of abilities in terms of what human intellects or human minds are able to do and accomplish. From Aquinas, Lonergan takes a cognitional principle and applies it to theology. Aquinas’s principle functions as a heuristic for thinking about the potentialities of theological understanding as this exists in human beings: what human beings are able to accomplish in their theological understanding.

For a better and perhaps overly exhaustive understanding of the principle that Lonergan is employing, a fuller articulation of it would say as follows. In seeking to understand one’s own understanding, one seeks to grasp a nature or essence (in this case, the human intellect as it exists as an incarnate form or species of understanding). However, in seeking such an understanding, the heuristic of one’s inquiry gradually assumes a form that specifies more exactly where one must begin as one attends to the data of one’s cognitive consciousness.¹⁸⁷ To understand one’s understanding, one must first try to grasp exactly what the human intellect is able to do. One must attend to what could be its potencies or powers. However, if any potency or capability is to be understood, one must understand how a certain type of act is related to a certain type of potency and so is able to raise or convert a potency into an act. One attends to acts in terms of how they realize certain potencies. A potency is understood thus if it is related to what is not in potency: if it is related to its corresponding acts or operations.¹⁸⁸ However, if, in turn, acts are themselves to be understood and distinguished from each other, one must attend to what objects or objectives specify the form or orientation of different acts. Objects or objectives reveal

¹⁸⁵See Aquinas, *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 9, 1239.

¹⁸⁶Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8; Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, pp. 87-88; and William Murnion, “The Meaning and Import of Aquinas’s Philosophy of Mind,” (paper presented at the Second International Lonergan Workshop, Regis College, Toronto, August 1-6, 2004), p. 21.

¹⁸⁷*Sententia Libri De anima*, 2, 6, 304-8.

¹⁸⁸*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 77, a. 1; q. 79, a. 1.

the orientations of different acts. Acts intend goals and are defined by the goals that they seek. Hence, as an inquiry into one's understanding begins with experiences of understanding that one already possesses, one begins with consciously experienced goals or objectives which ultimately govern the whole pattern or form of one's conscious human inquiry. One begins with an object or intelligible relation that is grasped by one's conscious understanding and which already exists in one's understanding and, from there, one asks about the acts or operations that lead to these objects and which can be regarded as their proper correlatives.¹⁸⁹ Then, from these acts or operations, one asks about the potencies or the powers of the human soul from which these acts, in a way, have emerged. From an understanding which thus grasps what these potencies and powers are, one can then move toward an understanding that grasps what is the nature or essence of the human intellect as a specific center of activity and reception which can move persons from a state of ignorance about any topic toward an understanding or apprehension that is a knowledge of reality.

In discussing six distinct but related issues on the object of theology, Lonergan first distinguishes theology from other sciences before speaking about theology in terms of its own nature and purpose. With respect then to all the different sciences which exist in the human world, all these sciences study different aspects of one common world. They are all related. But, if they are all individually to function effectively, they must all be ordered to each other in a way that allows each science to use and exploit what the others have studied and understood. Lack of good ordering in the relations between all the different sciences would introduce distortions which take away from the coherence or wholeness of what would be known in human knowing. For a deeper understanding about what Lonergan is talking about here, one can refer to Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University* and Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. In Newman's *Idea*, arguments are given on the necessity of including theology within the university curriculum. Our human understanding is such that it is guided by a desire that wants to come to a complete view of things (a desire which can be viewed as a species of implicit metaphysics). Hence, if any science is arbitrarily omitted or excluded, it will create a void that other sciences will try to fill but which they cannot fill without introducing a distortion into their own proper activities. The insufficient understanding that belongs to all the other disciplines explains why theology is needed as a general principle of order which, in its own way, reveals an understanding of things that complements and completes what the others are not able to do. In *Insight*, in Lonergan's notion of sublation, Lonergan provides an explanatory principle which accounts for the order which exists among all the different natural and human sciences. On a moving scale, as each science postulates laws that explain certain phenomena, each science encounters events which it cannot explain but which, perhaps, can be explained if one acknowledges the existence of a higher science or study which asks a different set of questions. The individual human sciences all provide us with a certain understanding of things as these things exist in the human world. Each postulates laws that account for some aspect of human behavior. The human science of sociology attempts to identify variables which account for the behavior of human groups. In psychology, the object of inquiry is the nature and structure of the rational human soul. Norms are discovered which reveal constitutive principles. Certain things happen in a certain way because they should happen in the way that they do. But, also, at the same time, certain things happen because principles and laws are being violated. The human world, as it exists, is not able to provide an entirely adequate account of itself and of all that happens within it and so, as a result, if the human order of things is to be fully understood, if it is to be understood in a way which restores its meaning and significance in a way that reveals a deeper meaning, it requires an order of study that shifts, first, into metaphysics and, then later, into theology.

¹⁸⁹*De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8; Murnion, p. 21.

From an understanding of things that never change, from an understanding of things that more fully reveals the fruitfulness of co-operating with a supernatural solution that is offered for human problems which have no other solution, theology emerges as an ultimate principle of order which puts every other discipline into its proper context and proper shade. In a more critical way, the sovereignty of theology more fully presents and asserts itself.

With respect then to the object of theology, what theology studies, Lonergan speaks about God as the object of theology after first speaking about being or *esse* as the object of the intellect. Being or *esse* or simply “what is” is the first, primary, and natural object of the intellect in all of its intellectual operations.¹⁹⁰ As Aquinas had spoken of it, “the intellect regards its object according to the common concept of being, because the possible intellect is ‘that by which it is possible to become all things’.”¹⁹¹ As a common notion, *being* (*ens*) is the first, primary, and most basic of all notions since the object of human understanding as understanding is knowledge about what could be the being of a thing or a cause.¹⁹² Being is implicitly and ultimately sought by human inquiry as this inquiry begins to ask any questions that it might pose. A question about being implicitly informs and guides the meaning of any questions that are being asked (although knowledge about being as a fundamental category or concept is a product of subsequent reflection on the activity which is the performance and the experience of human inquiry).¹⁹³ In Lonergan’s *Insight*, in a context where Lonergan distinguishes between “notion of being” and “concept of being” (“concept” being the term of an act of understanding), Lonergan refers to the “notion of being” which, in the meaning that he gives it, is to be approximately identified with Aquinas’s fundamental “concept of being.”¹⁹⁴ The notion of being, as a general all pervasive notion, interest, and orientation underlies all our acts of inquiry and understanding. We ask questions because we want to know what is the reality of a given situation, the reality of a given thing. Because of this distinction which Lonergan clearly makes but which Aquinas does not so clearly make, Lonergan can then speak about how the object of theology is the reality or being of God and all other things insofar as they relate to God. While Aquinas would not disagree with this position since he certainly admits that God and all things related to him is the proper object of theological inquiry,¹⁹⁵ he elsewhere argues that, because God is the cause or act of being, he cannot be seen as a subset or species of being (i.e., as a being among other beings).¹⁹⁶ Even if we want to talk about God as the highest of possible beings, he should not be seen to fall within being as a category or concept within it. God, as the author and communicator of being, is more than simply being (being as an effect).¹⁹⁷ Lonergan’s distinction between notion and concept thus permits a less encumbered, a more exact articulation of things. Lonergan’s emphasis on the reality of secondary objects is explained by how he regards them as created causes which have a life of their own but which, in a mysterious way, are always being used as instrumental causes by God to achieve transcendent objectives which are not to be identified with proximate goals and objectives that are operative in the life of created, secondary causes.

190Frederick Crowe, “St. Thomas and the Isomorphism of Human Knowing and its Proper Object,” *Three Thomist Studies*, pp. 229-230.

191*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 7.

192*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2.

193*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2.

194See Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 388-398.

195*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 1, a. 7.

196*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 25, 9-10; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1.

197*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 13, a. 7.

With respect now to a third question which refers to an immanent object of understanding which exists in theology versus an external object that is understood (to some extent) by every act of understanding in theology, Lonergan talks about immanent objects or terms of understanding in theology in a way which clearly distinguishes these objects or terms from God and all things that are intimately related to God. A *real distinction* distinguishes every term of understanding in theology (what is understood in an act of understanding in theology) from what is other that is being understood through a term or object which proceeds from an act of understanding in theology (as an inner word immediately springs from an act of understanding). In every act of understanding (whether in or outside of theology), only a *conceptual distinction* seems to distinguish an act of understanding from the proceeding of an inner word which is the term of the act in question. No act of understanding exists without a proceeding inner word; and, at the same time, no inner word or term of an act exists apart from a generating act. Both items seem to refer to the same reality, the same thing. Hence, it seems that one can only speak about a conceptual or mental distinction.¹⁹⁸ But, when one looks at the relation between an inner word and what is understood by means of this inner word, a real distinction clearly presents itself. What is understood by means of an inner word exists whether or not it is being understood through the mediation of an inner word that is the ultimate term of somebody's act of understanding. These differences are crucial since, by adverting to them, one is able to speak about the self-transcendence of acts of understanding in theology (a self-transcendence that occurs in every field of human cognitional activity). Through this essential self-transcendence (which characterizes human knowing in general), every inner term, word, or object of an act of understanding in theology mediates a knowledge of God. Knowledge of God is brought more fully into the content and context of one's conscious life. Lonergan accordingly speaks here about the "mediation of intelligible truth."¹⁹⁹

When Lonergan speaks about the connection between self-transcendence and evidence (since it is by evidence that truths are known and, by means of truth, reality), he speaks about the difference between our immanently generated knowledge and the immanently generated knowledge that had been experienced by the Twelve Apostles and all those who had known Christ in his earthly life and who had been witnesses to what he had said and done. Recall the gospel and acts of St. Luke which frequently refer to eye-witness accounts that Luke puts down on paper. Later In his *Method in Theology*, Lonergan speaks about the sociology of belief and about how belief functions as part of human cognition.²⁰⁰ Our personal immanently generated knowledge is to be distinguished from the immanently generated knowledge of other persons who are believed for what they have to say because of the authority which they possess in their knowing. In speaking thus about the role of faith and belief in theology, Lonergan accordingly returns to a Thomist thesis which had spoken about how theological inquiry and understanding works from revealed truths which become more reasonably and rationally known as a consequence of theological inquiry and experiences of theological understanding.²⁰¹ By faith and belief, revealed truths are known. But, through rational inquiry, theology is distinguished as another order of meaning that rises on the first. The parallel which Lonergan draws is the difference

198Please note that both Aquinas and Lonergan speak about a *real distinction* which can be made between an act of understanding, on the one hand, and a second act, on the other hand, which is the proceeding of an inner word from a prior act of understanding. Understanding this distinction becomes necessary as one moves into chapter 2 of *The Triune God: Systematics* where Lonergan speaks about the nature of intellectual emanations.

199Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 105.

200Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, pp. 46-47.

201*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 1, a. 2.

between pre-scientific knowledge and scientific knowledge where, in scientific knowledge, “things are conceived through their causes.”²⁰² The language is traditional although it still refers to reasons and having an apprehension of reasons which explain why things are as they are. Something is scientifically known if it is known through a reason, through some kind of rational principle.

To understand why or how Lonergan is able to compare understanding in systematic theology with science and judgment with faith, one can refer to the use of explanatory theorems as discoveries of meaning which are then applied within theological speculation to produce a better ordering of meanings which, themselves, as meanings, already exist in revealed truths of faith. As one tries to move toward an order of meaning that more closely reveals or reflects a divine point of view, very many more elements and parts are shown to be related to each other. A “universal viewpoint” begins more fully to emerge and to absorb the understanding which one has. In the context of a discussion about the truth of interpretation in hermeneutics, in *Insight*,²⁰³ Lonergan speaks the possibility of working from an understanding of things that is grounded in a “universal viewpoint.” However, in turning to a comparison which Lonergan makes between theological judgment and religious faith (as distinct from an earlier positive association that he had drawn when speaking about the relation between theological speculation and science), the best way that perhaps this can be used to understand what Lonergan means is by referring to Aquinas’s notion of judgement as a species of reflective reduction to first principles: first principles of reason and then first principles of sense. In incarnate human knowing, in the knowing which occurs through an ongoing interaction between sense and intellect (sensing and understanding) in human beings, in the reflection of judgment, a person moves from a new, conscious act of understanding through an analysis that attempts to determine what principles of reason are in fact operative which allow a potential human knower to move from initial experiences of sense to a later experience of new, novel, understanding. As all human knowing in this world begins with sense, whenever one engages in acts of judgment, in some way, one returns to sense to see if a given understanding of things is grounded in reasoning activities which are then grounded in appropriate acts of sense. In every judgment, there is introspection. And so, if in incarnate human knowing there is a reduction of some kind to acts of sense, in the making of a theological judgement, there is a similar species of reduction though it is to acts of faith and belief since, by faith and belief, one has the starting point or point of departure for theological inquiry and the subsequent development of theology as a critical ordering of meaning. A parallelism explains why, in Lonergan, theological judgement is closely associated with acts of faith and belief though this should not be seen to contradict an earlier point which Lonergan had made that spoke about coherence and comprehensiveness as a criterion that needs to be considered in attempting to judge the probable truth of a given theological theory. Obviously, the more variables which are understood in a given understanding, the better. However, each variable exists as an article or datum of religious faith. The fidelity of a proposed theological understanding of things is a criterion that cannot be forgotten or omitted.

In a fourth consideration which now deals with the question of an originating object in theology, Lonergan speaks about how the doctrines of one’s religious belief and faith are to be seen as external objects that provoke theological questions and inquiry as agent objects. As human sensing (as a passive or receptive potency) is acted upon from without by an external object that, as a mover, produces or elicits an act of sense (as, for example, an act of hearing which responds to a sounding of sound), human inquiry and later human understanding are similarly acted upon by external agents

²⁰²Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 107.

²⁰³Lonergan, *Insight*, pp. 587-592.

which are to be understood as agent objects. In both cases, one can identify different forms of receptivity. With respect to theological inquiry, a curious asking of questions is elicited through an initial encounter with meanings which are presented to one through acts of sense but which are only understood by us through initial acts of understanding which grasp a spiritual or intellectual sense that transcends and which is to be distinguished from a purely material, sensible sense. Strictly speaking, no meaning is ever a datum of sense. And so, for this reason, it cannot be said that the credal truths which belong to a religion are to be viewed essentially as material causes. Material causes are to be correlated only with acts of sense. To understand the causality of religious truths, one best alludes to a form of efficient or instrumental causality which belongs to God as a primary mover or first cause. If, indeed, it is true that revealed religious truths refer to God in terms of God's self-understanding and knowledge, these truths being part of God's understanding of himself, then it is by means of revelation that God first enters our human world (a world which he has created) in order to introduce within it an understanding and knowledge of things that can begin to transform a human culture from within and how human beings can begin to relate to each other in ways that lie beyond what they have been able naturally to do. In other words, through revelation, God provokes theological inquiry and then, through the causality of his divine understanding (which is always fully and actually operative), God brings human beings into an ever closer relation with himself through movements which now are internal to the life of human souls. With the reception of every act of understanding which occurs in human beings (as a second species of receptivity), something of God's own understanding is shared in where, by this sharing, degrees of self-transcendence are experienced by human beings, degrees of self-transcendence which cannot be effected by human beings purely by themselves in their willing and seeking of it. In aligning the efficient causality of revelation with the formal causality of divine understanding, a relation is established which can see how theology serves as a medium to bring persons ever closer towards God to the extent that this can be done through acts of understanding which, successively, can then act to condition human volitional life in a way which can foster a life of charity. Persons begin then to do things simply out of love for God and not substantively for any other reason.

Moving now to a shift which occurs as one moves from agent objects found in revelation to terms of understanding as these occur within instances of theological understanding, Lonergan distinguishes between two fundamental, interacting, intersecting movements. One refers to the principle of tradition as this works to pass on a received way of thinking and understanding which has become widely accepted as the way things should be done. The other refers to a principle of disruption which challenges and even threatens received ways of thinking and understanding in theology. On the one hand then, in an inherited theological culture (as perhaps one can find this in the neo-scholastic theology which had been dominant in Catholic schools of theology up into the early 1960s), dogmatic and speculative questions were posed and responded to in the context of a common conceptuality--a theological language which was informed by a commonly accepted, standard set of theological terms. The use of this language established general parameters of meaning for theology. Certain questions were posed in certain ways and they were answered in certain ways. An historically conditioned achievement has been functioning as a paradigm.

However, as one turns toward possible changes which can occur to challenge the legitimacy of maintaining a commonly accepted paradigm for theology, Lonergan identifies two sources when he speaks about the meaningfulness of the Church's received faith and its infinite richness and when he speaks about more external causes which refer to serious problems that can arise in the human order of things--problems which are intimately related to serious failures in human meaning, failures which are

intimately related to what he refers to as the reign of sin. In thinking then about the truths of revelation and their infinite meaningfulness, a charismatic factor can be identified which refers initially to single persons who play a prophetic role in the Church's life through new apprehensions of meaning that they have had and which they espouse. In his little biography of the life of St. Francis of Assisi, G. K. Chesterton speaks, for instance, about orthodoxy becoming stale. Church life had settled down into some kind of routine and then someone like St. Francis comes along and presents a new vision of things. What is old is seen in a refreshing, renewing light. A tradition is enlivened and currents are released that spread outwards to create a new religious subculture which can act as a basis-- creating conditions for the development of new theological life. When we attend to the life of St. Thomas Aquinas, the religious culture which was created by St. Dominic and his early companions created conditions that elicited the love and loyalty of someone like St. Thomas Aquinas who could then embark on a way of life which, in turn, led to the rise and development of a new theological culture. In this way, through secondary causes, higher objectives are pursued and met.

On the other hand, as things deteriorate and fall apart in a given human culture, another and even stronger impetus is created which, in its own way, elicits a reappraisal and re-evaluation of things that challenge paradigmatic ways of looking and evaluating things. In his *Insight*, Lonergan identifies longer and shorter cycles of decline.²⁰⁴ But, because he speaks of cycles, he implies that a dialectic appears to be operating in human history, a dialectic that knows of conflicts and which admits of ups and downs, but a dialectic which, in God's hands, in some way, is serving higher purposes and ends. Certain things improve and certain things worsen and, within the stream, by attending to the different kinds of failure in understanding which occur among human beings, one can begin to identify different kinds of decline and different kinds of solutions which possibly can be brought to bear in many different human situations. In a later work, Lonergan identifies three vectors that are constitutive of human history in general: progress, decline, and redemption and, in looking back into the past, one can find examples which perhaps show how these three vectors all interrelate.²⁰⁵ For instance, if one attends to the collapse of the Roman order of things as this reached a point of climax in the 5th and 6th centuries, one thinks about the "Benedictine centuries" which later followed and a time of healing which helped to prepare the way for the rise of a new human order in what had remained of western Europe. In other words, from the experience of serious problems and difficulties within the life of the Church, a serious rethinking of things becomes necessary within theology if the Church's pastoral mission is to succeed in winning souls for Christ in a manner which truly builds God's Kingdom.

In a sixth and last consideration which concludes Lonergan's discussion in Section 9 on the goal or object of theology, Lonergan speaks about the impact of theological understanding in the life of the Church and the lives of individual believers. God, union with God, is the overriding objective and aim. God is the final, the ulterior end. But, as Lonergan speaks about it, theological understanding is not sufficient in effecting all the changes which are necessary if human beings are to be fully joined to God as their ultimate and last end. Understanding is not willing in human life (the two are distinct in terms of one not being the other) and, as much as we are assisted in our willing by any growth in understanding, conversion in our understanding is not to be confused with conversion in the willing and doing which responds to what it is that one may be understanding. Knowing does not produce willing

²⁰⁴*Insight*, pp. 247-267

²⁰⁵Bernard Lonergan, "Healing and Creating in History," *A Third Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J. (New York/Mahweh: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 100-109.

nor willing, knowing although it is possible to speak about a conditioning which does naturally occur from the viewpoint of understanding when any growth in understanding occurs within theology. With the clarification of some ambiguities and the solving of some problems, certain meanings become more fully known and this knowing can elicit a range of appreciative or aversive desires which transcend desires that belong to purely cognitive consciousness as this exists in understanding.

To understand a bit better the point that Lonergan is making, it is not without value to note that the context is a development which had occurred earlier in the understanding of Aquinas with respect to how the relation between intellect and will (understanding and willing) is to be understood. With respect then to the development of this understanding, early on, in interpreting Aristotle's *De Anima*, 3, 433b10-13 in the *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 15, 830, Aquinas had argued that, in Aristotle, the "absolute starting point of movement" in the movement of desire or appetite is the apprehension of a desired object which is given either through the powers of human imagination or the activity of the human intellect. *Appetibile apprehensum movet appetitum*; "the apprehended object of desire moves the appetite" even if this phrasing only presents the meaning of Aquinas's interpretation and so does not cite any literal wording from anything written by Aquinas.²⁰⁶ On the whole, by in large, in the early writings of Aquinas, the will was largely viewed in passive terms. It exists as a function of reason. It is something which is acted upon.²⁰⁷ The will lacks a causality of its own.

However, in a development of view which gradually transcended the simple intellectualism of Aristotle (whose roots refer to Socrates's thesis that knowing the good immediately leads to doing the good), in Aquinas, as he came more fully to understand the issue, the human will should be seen to have a causality of its own. It operates on the basis of its own set of principles (principles which are distinct from those that belong to reason) and so, in the relation which exists between knowing and willing, these relate to each other on the basis of a mutual causality, a causality of mutual priority, where each mutually effects or causes the other.²⁰⁸ Earlier, in a number of different texts scattered here and there (*In 2 Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2; *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 6; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 10, 17; *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 3; *Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 14; and *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 81, a. 3, ad 2; q. 82, a. 2), Aquinas had in fact admitted that acts of understanding and judgment do not force or necessitate the will to engage in activities which lead to a desired end. While, admittedly, the life of the human imagination and the human intellect plays a primary role in exciting the human will toward movement, a double primary causality is more appropriately postulated (two operative efficient causes) since it has to be admitted that the human will also acts (to move itself) on the basis of naturally desired ends which already belong to the structure of the will and which incline it to act in certain ways or in

²⁰⁶Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 95; Stebbins, p. 323, n. 90.

²⁰⁷Lonergan, "On God and Secondary Causes," *Collection*, p. 63.

²⁰⁸See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 137-138, for a discussion about the Augustinian roots of a thesis which argues that a circular causality exist between knowing and willing or, in language which more closely reflects St. Augustine's wording, "knowing and desiring." As Taylor speaks of it, a "potential conflict" exists "between vision and desire." In the context of our present life, the human will sometimes functions as if it were an "independent variable." It determines or sets before us "what we can know" although, at other times, it is a dependent variable. It is "shaped by what we see." A linear relation does not exist where, in simply knowing the good, one always does the good. Because of original sin (the sin of Adam), "the will must first be healed through grace before we can function fully on the Socratic model."

certain directions. As Aquinas, for instance, had noted in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 10, 17: “to will and not to will lie within the power of the will.” As Aquinas then goes on to explain the matter more fully in the *secunda prima* of the *Summa Theologiae*, two causes or two principles move the human will.²⁰⁹ One refers to a structure of reason and the other, a structure of desire or appetite. Each relates to the other and both work together to move things forward in one’s human life. As one’s understanding specifies an object or end which is to be desired by one’s willing, at the same time, the self-movement of the will is accounted for by its own ends and first principles which, rationally, are constitutive of its inner life. The object or end is some kind of concrete, practical good that is desired or wanted. An *appetibile* or “seekable” designates the object of a yearning or striving.²¹⁰ A teleological order or structure belongs to the dynamism of the human will as this willing constructs a relation of means and ends which eventually hopefully lead to the actualization of a highest goal or end. Hence, in both Aquinas and Lonergan, as this general understanding of things is applied to questions which ask about how human beings best move toward God, the answer is one which best speaks about a turning or a conversion in both the life of the intellect and the life of the will. Growth in understanding hopefully reveals the presence, value, and necessity of a higher law: a life lived in charity and through acts of self-sacrificing love. In Lonergan’s own words, “we are not perfected by theology alone but only by that theology that breathes forth charity more deeply and enlightens it more effectively.”²¹¹

However, as Lonergan speaks about the value of theology and the subsidiary role that it can play in leading persons toward God, he concludes his discussion by noting that it is a very difficult thing to move from an explanatory grasp of things in theology (what is “prior in itself” in theology) to what is “prior in itself” in a given culture. The two tend to clash as they did in St. Paul’s time and as they do today. In some way, every culture has to be transformed from within itself and so, if systematic theology is to play a positive role in the life of the Church and the world, it must offer an understanding of things which works with theological understandings in a way that makes them more accessible--more intelligible for a given consciousness. When the problem of relativity is mentioned in connection with Pope Pius XII’s encyclical, *Humani generis*, issued in 1950, the implication given is the need for a growth or a development of understanding within philosophy, a philosophy that can then serve as a proper handmaid for theology. To the extent then that any given culture is thoroughly and critically understood (and this applies to our own contemporary culture), to the same extent, conditions are created which should facilitate and lead to a new flowering in the work of systematic theology as this labor works with meanings that already have a significance in our human experience of things. A very difficult labor but worth pursuing as Lonergan warns and as he encourages: “whatever is understood becomes very easy from the moment one has understood it; but until it is understood, it seems very obscure indeed, almost impenetrable.”²¹²

10. The Purpose of This Work

As Lonergan concludes the first chapter of his *The Triune God: Systematics*, he notes in the last paragraph of section 10 that his study of the systematics of the Trinity should be seen as an illustration of the nature of theological understanding in systematics.²¹³ Other kinds of theological work are being

209*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 9, a. 1; a. 3.

210Rhonheimer, p. 26; p. 32; p. 71.

211Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 113.

212Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 115.

213Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, p. 123.

done by theologians. Lonergan refers to scholarly and historical studies under the heading of “positive studies.” However, without good systematics, these positive studies will not occur and develop in a way that is well ordered. But, from a good ordering of things at the start that should serve as a kind of heuristic (a higher level principle of control for subordinate activities in the work of theology), better decisions might be made about what positive studies should be made and how they should be related to each other. As one obvious consequence, from a wise ordering of things as this gradually emerges from within a renewed theological culture, chances grow and increase that theologians will begin to work with each other in a manner that will move them toward more intimate forms of collaboration which, in turn, will create new forms of community that could be a new source of life for the Church. This is the hope and prayer although, as Lonergan admits, it is no easy task to work for advances in the kind of understanding that is sought by systematic theology--a species of understanding which is quite different from the certitude in reasoning and evidence that is the special object and province of dogmatic theology. If dogmatics works from what is obvious to what is obscure, systematics works from what is obscure and very dimly understood towards an understanding which is still obscure but which can possibly shed some light on the meaning of a significance which is a transcendent mystery--something which, as creatures with created intellects, we will never be able to comprehend and understand with a fullness which can only belong to an unrestricted act of understanding--an act of understanding which only exists in God and which is to be equated with God. The understanding which supremely belongs to God, and which is constitutive of God, and which is also the uncreated cause of all created acts of understanding, accordingly explains why the nature of understanding presents itself as the best point of departure for a principle of order that can best order or form an understanding which can intelligently talk about the Christian God of the Trinity in all its essential aspects. From any clarifications that can come about, a deeper faith is nourished which can then be more successfully communicated to others in the hope that minds and hearts will be moved toward apprehensions and understandings which can begin to grasp the existence of a transcendent order of meaning--an order of meaning by which it is possible to govern and live one's life in a spirit of joy and celebration.

Appendix 1

The Church's Theological Notes or Qualifications²¹⁴

The following presentation is borrowed, with slight adaptation, from a work of the highest weight and authority entitled (in translation) *On the Value of Theological Notes and the Criteria for Discerning Them* by Father Sixtus Cartechini S.J. (Rome, 1951), a work which was drafted for use by auditors of the Roman Congregations. This translation and adaptation is by Mr. John Daly.

(a) Theological note: Dogma.

Equivalent terms: Dogma of faith; *de fide, de fide Catholica; de fide divina et Catholica*.

Explanation: A truth proposed by the Church as revealed by God.

Examples: The Immaculate Conception; all the contents of the Athanasian Creed.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Heresy

Effects of denial: Mortal sin committed directly against the virtue of faith, and, if the heresy is outwardly professed, excommunication is automatically incurred and membership of the Church forfeited.

Remarks: A dogma can be proposed either by a solemn definition of pope or council, or by the Ordinary Magisterium, as in the case of the Athanasian Creed, to which the church has manifested her solemn commitment by its long-standing liturgical and practical use and commendation.

(b) Theological Note: Doctrine of ecclesiastical faith

Equivalent term: *De fide ecclesiastica definita*

Explanation: A truth not directly revealed by God but closely connected with Divine revelation and infallibly proposed by the Magisterium.

Example: The lawfulness of communion under one kind.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Heresy against ecclesiastical faith.

Effects of denial: Mortal sin directly against faith, and, if publicly professed, automatic excommunication and forfeiture of membership of Church.

Remarks: It is a dogma that the Church's infallibility extends to truths in this sphere, so one who denies them denies implicitly a dogma or Divine faith.

(c) Theological Note: Truth of Divine faith.

Equivalent term: *De fide divina*.

Explanation: A truth revealed by God but not certainly proposed as such by the Church.

Example: Christ claimed from the beginning of His public life to be the Messiah.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Error (in faith).

Effects of denial: Mortal sin directly against faith, but no loss of Church membership. May incur a canonical penalty.

(d) Theological Note: Proximate to faith.

Explanation: A doctrine all but unanimously held as revealed by God.

Example: Christ possessed the Beatific Vision throughout his life on earth.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Proximate to error.

Effects of denial: Mortal sin indirectly against faith.

²¹⁴Cited from <http://www.the-pope.com/theolnotes.html>.

(e) Theological Note: Theologically certain.

Equivalent term: Dogmatic fact; theological conclusion.

Explanation: A truth logically following from one proposition which is Divinely revealed and another which is historically certain.

Example: Legitimacy of Pope Pius XI.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Error (in theology).

Effects of denial: Mortal sin against faith.

(f) Theological Note: Catholic doctrine.

Equivalent term: Catholic teaching.

Explanation: A truth authentically taught by the Ordinary Magisterium but not as revealed or intimately connected with revelation.

Example: Invalidity of Anglican Orders; validity of Baptism conferred by heretic or Jews.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Temerarious.

Effects of denial: Mortal sin indirectly against faith.

Remarks: The expression Catholic doctrine is sometimes applied to truths of a higher order also, but never of a lower one. In some cases the appropriate censure may be graver than "temerarious"

(g) Theological Note: Certain.

Equivalent term: Common; theologically certain.

Explanation: A truth unanimously held by all schools of theologians which is derived from revealed truth, but by more than one step of reasoning.

Example: The true and strict causality of the sacraments.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Temerarious.

Effects of denial: Usually, mortal sin of temerity.

Remarks: Proportionately grave reason can sometimes justify an individual who has carefully studied the evidence in dissenting from such a proposition; since it is not completely impossible for all the theological schools to err on such a matter, although it would be highly unusual and contrary to an extremely weighty presumption.

(h) Theological Note: Safe.

Explanation: Affirmed in doctrinal decrees of Roman Congregations.

Example: That Christ will not reign visibly on earth for a thousand years after Antichrist.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: Unsafe/temerarious.

Effects of denial: Mortal sin of disobedience and perhaps imprudence.

Remarks: Exterior assent is absolutely required and interior assent is normally required, since, though not infallible, the Congregations possess true doctrinal authority and the protective guidance of the Holy Ghost.

(i) Theological Note: Very common/commoner.

Explanation: The most solidly founded or best attested theological opinion on a disputed subject.

Example: Antichrist will be of the tribe of Dan.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: None.

Effects of denial: None.

Remarks: Very common or commoner opinions can be mistaken and there is no obligation to follow them though prudence inclines us to favor them as a general policy. It should be noted that an opinion

which is "very common" is less well established than one which is "common" which implies moral unanimity of theological schools.

(j) Theological Note: Probable.

Explanation: A theological opinion which is well founded either on the grounds of its intrinsic coherence or the extrinsic weight of authority favoring it.

Example: Judas received Holy Communion at the Last Supper. Judas did not receive Holy Communion at the Last Supper.

Censure attached to contradictory proposition: None.

Effects of denial: None.

Remarks: The better founded of two conflicting opinions is referred to as more probable; but Catholics are free to prefer some other opinion for any good reason.