

# The Unified Field Structure for Systematic Theology: A Proposal<sup>1</sup>

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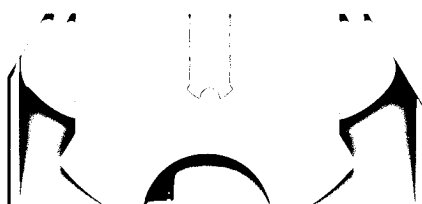
## 1 The Thesis

The fundamental thesis of this paper is that there is at hand a unified field structure for the functional specialty 'systematics.' A subsidiary thesis is that previous attempts, including my own, to state what that structure is have not quite hit it off correctly, even as they have made contributions to its accurate presentation. We might think here of the first chapter of Bernard Lonergan's dissertation, on 'The Form of the Development' in the theology of grace, and on the movement from a specific theorem to a generic theorem to a higher synthesis of the two.<sup>2</sup> I suspect that something similar has been going on to date in the discussion regarding a unified field structure for the functional specialty 'systematics.' What corresponds to the specific theorem is a theological theory of history. What corresponds to the generic theorem is a four-point hypothesis on created participations in the divine relations. Neither alone is sufficient, but the synthesis of the two via the cognitional

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1 Since delivering this lecture at the 2002 Lonergan Workshop, I incorporated it into chapter 7 of my book *What Is Systematic Theology?* to be issued in the fall of 2005 by University of Toronto Press. The Press has graciously permitted me to publish the paper.

2 See Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) 162-92.



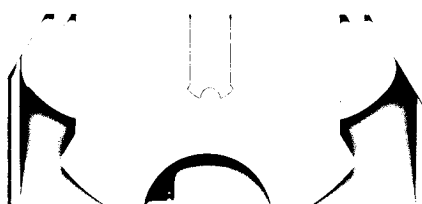
theory, epistemology, and metaphysics of *Insight* and the existential ethics of both *Insight* and *Method in Theology* will yield the unified field structure.

What is meant by speaking of the unified field structure? The expression ‘unified field structure’ is not mine, but Daniel Monsour’s.<sup>3</sup> However, I have developed my own way of expressing what I mean by speaking this way. The unified field structure would be some open set of conceptions that embraces the field of issues presently to be accounted for and presently foreseeable in that discipline or functional specialty of theology whose task it is to give a synthetic understanding of the realities that are and ought to be providing the meaning constitutive of the community called the church. The unified field structure would be a statement, perhaps a quite lengthy one, perhaps even one taking up several large volumes, capable of guiding for the present and the foreseeable future the ongoing genetic development of the entire synthetic understanding of the mysteries of faith and of the other elements that enter into systematic theology. It would guide all work at bringing these elements into a synthetic unity. It would stand in continuity with the implicit unified field structure of the *Summa theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas, which marks what we might call the first great plateau in the unfolding of systematic theology, and it will leave itself open to further enrichments, differentiations, and transformations analogous to those that it adds to the Thomist conception.

Thus, to draw on one of Monsour’s articulations, the unified field structure will stand to a contemporary systematics much as the periodic table stands to chemistry. Again, in a different articulation, it would be a summation and integration of what Lonergan once called the dogmatic-

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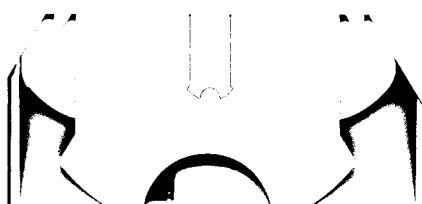
3 See the two papers by Monsour mentioned below in section 3.



theological context<sup>4</sup> as that context stands at the present time, given both the development of theology to this point and an intelligent, faith-filled anticipation of where theology must go from here. Again, in yet another articulation, it would stand to a contemporary systematics as the theorem of the supernatural and the elaboration of *auxilium divinum* (both of which Lonergan studied in his doctoral dissertation), joined to Aristotle's metaphysics, stood to the emergent systematics of the Middle Ages as it came to its first great synthesis in Aquinas, and in fact it will be a genetic development upon that structure. The conjunction of the theorem of the supernatural and of actual operative grace with Aristotle's metaphysics provided, if not a unified field structure for all of systematics, at least the organizing conception for the theology of grace at the time Thomas wrote the *Prima secundae*, and any future structure must build on that synthesis even as it shows itself capable of addressing issues which that framework could not handle. Thus, an adequate contemporary field structure would make systematics historically conscious and would place it in tune with modern scientific methods and achievements, with exegetical methods, and with historical scholarship. A contemporary systematics has to be able to address problems and relate to theological functional specialties that had not emerged at all at the time that Thomas did his work. Thomas could know

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4 The most complete discussion of the dogmatic-theological context occurs in the 1962 lectures on 'The Method of Theology' delivered at Regis College, Toronto. These lectures are presently available in audio form on compact disc from the Lonergan Research Institute. A written transcription will form part of volume 22 of Lonergan's Collected Works, *Early Works on Theological Method I*.

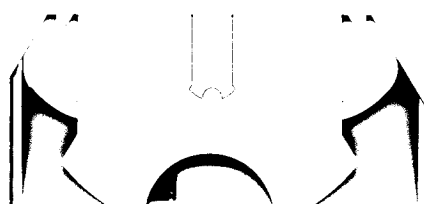


nothing of what we have come to call scientific historical-critical exegesis, nothing of critical history, nothing of modern science whether natural or human, nothing of methodical dialectic. That is not to say that he has nothing to contribute to these, but only that the methods and results of these disciplines or functional specialties as we know them were simply beyond his horizon. A theology that mediates between a cultural matrix and the significance and role of a religion within that matrix cannot simply repeat even the permanent achievements of another age, but must carry them forward in the same spirit as the one Lonergan embodied when he took as a central inspiration for so much of his work Pope Leo XIII's injunction *vetera novis augere et perficere*, to augment and complete the old with the new.

So the two principal components of the structure that I will suggest sublate the two components of Thomas's structure, that is, the theorem of the supernatural and Aristotle's metaphysics. Lonergan's notion of sublation (*Aufhebung*) is taken not from Hegel but from Karl Rahner: '... what sublates goes beyond what is sublated, introduces something new and distinct, puts everything on a new basis, yet so far from interfering with the sublated or destroying it, on the contrary needs it, includes it, preserves all its proper features and properties, and carries them forward to a fuller realization within a richer context.'<sup>5</sup> Thus, like the medieval organizing conception, the unified field structure that I am going to suggest combines a specifically theological element with a more general set of categories. The theorem of the supernatural was discovered around the year 1230 by Philip

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 241.



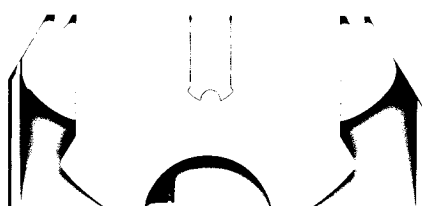
the Chancellor of the University of Paris. And it is precisely a theorem: it no more changes the data on the experience of our spiritual life than the scientific notion of acceleration as  $d^2s/dt^2$  changes our experience of going faster or slower. A theorem is a scientific elaboration of a common notion. As Lonergan says, the theorem of the supernatural ‘completed a discovery that in the next forty years released a whole series of developments. The discovery was a distinction between two entitatively disproportionate orders: grace was above nature; faith was above reason; charity was above human good will, merit before God was above the good opinion of one’s neighbors.’<sup>6</sup> As these two orders are disproportionate, so they are related to one another in the most intimate fashion. And as Lonergan has shown in his doctoral dissertation and in the articles based on it, the discovery and the distinction and organization that the discovery brought about ‘made it possible (1) to discuss the nature of grace without discussing liberty, (2) to discuss the nature of liberty without discussing grace, and (3) to work out the relations between grace and liberty.’<sup>7</sup> But, it may be argued, it did more than this. It grounded the specifically theological component of Thomas’s entire conception, while Aristotle’s metaphysics provided its general categories, the categories that dealt not with the supernatural but with nature.

The principal specifically theological element in the unified field structure now at hand is a four-point hypothesis proposed in Bernard Lonergan’s systematics of the Trinity. The hypothesis differentiates the theorem of the supernatural into a set of connections between the four trinitarian relations — what the tradition calls paternity, filiation, active

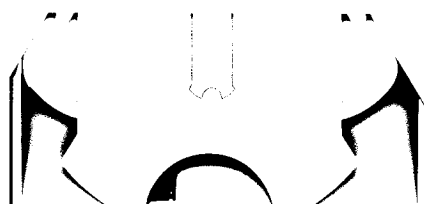
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6 Ibid. 310.

7 Ibid.



spiration, and passive spiration — and created supernatural participations in those relations. Thus, the secondary act of existence of the Incarnation, the assumed humanity of the Incarnate Word, is a created participation in paternity. ‘Whoever has seen me has seen the Father’ (John 14.9). In the immanent trinitarian relations, the Word does not speak; the Word is spoken by the Father. The Incarnate Word speaks. But he speaks only what he has heard from the Father. Again, sanctifying grace as the dynamic state of being in love is a created participation in the active spiration *by* the Father and the Son *of* the Holy Spirit, so that as the Father and the Son together ‘breathe’ the Holy Spirit as uncreated term, so sanctifying grace as created participation in the active spiration of Father and Son ‘breathes’ some created participation in the same Holy Spirit. The habit of charity is that created participation in the passive spiration that *is* the Holy Spirit, a created participation in the third person of the Blessed Trinity. And the light of glory that alone renders possible the beatific vision is a created participation in the Sonship of the divine Word. And so the hypothesis, which is an astounding theological synthesis, explicitly embraces the doctrines of the triune God, of the Incarnate Word, of the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit, and of the last things, and it does so in such a way that the mysteries affirmed in these doctrines are related systematically or synthetically to one another. Thus it presents in a systematic order some of the principal realities named by the special categories, the categories peculiar to theology. The hypothesis itself is beyond anything explicit in Aquinas, even though it may be argued that the seeds of much of it are present in question 43 of the *Prima pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, where Thomas discusses the missions of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. There is in Lonergan’s hypothesis a coordination of the divine processions with the processions of word and love



in authentic human performance that, in Lonergan's beautiful words, almost brings God too close to us.<sup>8</sup> This coordination remains potential in Aquinas and is spelled out perhaps for the first time in the hypothesis from which I am taking my lead in the present paper.

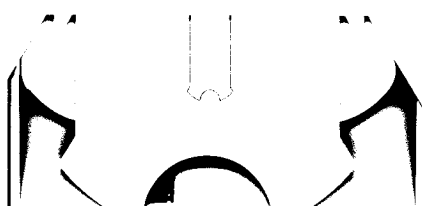
Now, over the past few years there has developed a discussion at the Lonergan Research Institute, Toronto, and in some of the graduate seminars sponsored by the Institute, in some of the systematic courses at Regis College, and at the Lonergan Workshop at Boston College, as to whether this four-point hypothesis is adequate in itself to function as a unified field structure for systematics. That discussion has spilled over into several publications. At least two earlier presentations at the Lonergan Workshop at Boston College addressed the issue, one by myself in 2000, as a small part of a larger paper, and one by Daniel Monsour in 2001. I now want to add to the discussion. And I begin by proposing that, however synthetic the four-point hypothesis may be, and however much it may provide those core categories to which all other categories must be referred, still it does not stand on its own; it is not enough to unify a synthetic contemporary theological understanding. To accept it as sufficient seems to me similar to the tendency to accept the generic theorem of the supernatural as the full solution to the problem of grace.

There are several reasons for my position.

First, while the four-point hypothesis does provide a specifically theological element in the unified field structure, still there are other

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8 Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, vol. 3 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 747.



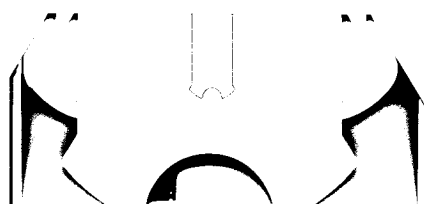
specifically theological realities, and so other special theological categories, that a unified field structure must integrate, and they cannot be mapped adequately onto the four-point hypothesis or reduced to it. They are related to it, and must be configured to it in some way, so that theological reflection that employs them must be enlivened and informed by the hypothesis. But they have a theological reality of their own that is not simply reducible to the realities named in the hypothesis. I have in mind categories regarding creation, revelation, redemption, the church, the sacraments, and Christian praxis in the world. While all of these are intimately related to the elements expressed in the four-point hypothesis, still they are not organized by that hypothesis alone. Part of the specifically theological reality is reality on the move, reality in development, reality as history, and that part is not accounted for by the hypothesis alone.

Second, while the integration of these further theological realities will not involve adding something completely extraneous to the four-point hypothesis, still that integration will locate the divine missions, which are at the heart of the four-point hypothesis, in creation and especially in the history whose dynamics of progress, decline, and redemption are part of the reasons for the missions in the first place. If possible, the missions must be located in creation and in history, not vaguely but precisely. And I believe this can be done through the scale of values that Lonergan suggests in *Method in Theology*<sup>9</sup> and that I have developed as fully as I could in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*.<sup>10</sup> The latter work views the scale of

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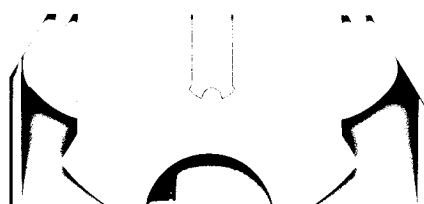
9 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 31-32.

10 Robert M. Doran, *Theology and The Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990, 2001).





values — vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious — as a key to the theory of history. As such, the scale will form an additional component in the unified field structure. But this means that the theological realities named in the special categories must be integrated not only with one another but also with the heuristic account of the order of the universe (what Lonergan calls emergent probability) and with other realities constitutive of human history, that is to say, with realities that are known by sciences and scholarly disciplines other than theology. An additional set of sets of categories beyond those rooted in the four-point hypothesis and beyond the other special categories is required for such a theological synthesis to take place. *General* theological categories are required even for the adequate theological understanding of specifically theological realities. As the medieval theorem of the supernatural needed a metaphysical system, in the theology of Thomas Aquinas, if it was to mediate religion and a cultural matrix influenced by Aristotle, so the four-point hypothesis requires general categories shared with other disciplines if the divine missions that are at the core of the hypothesis are to be located in relation to their historical occasions and effects. More precisely, a mission is for a purpose, and the divine missions are for the purpose of establishing and confirming interpersonal relations, first between God and us, and then among ourselves; and interpersonal relations are also the core element in the structure of the human good that is coincident with the immanent intelligibility of history. Thus understanding the divine missions entails understanding the history that the Word was sent to redeem from the alternating cycles of progress and decline and that the Holy Spirit is sent to renew with the outpouring of self-sacrificing love.

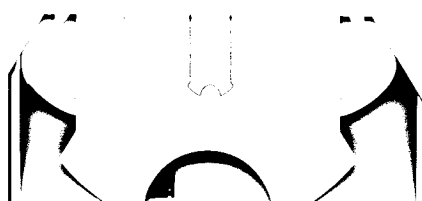


Where, then, are the general categories to be located, or at least grounded? My thesis is that *the set of sets of general categories will be based in the cognitional theory, epistemology, and metaphysics of Insight, in the existential ethics of Insight and Method in Theology, and in the theory of history proposed by Lonergan over the span of his writings and complemented by the contributions that I have tried to offer in Theology and the Dialectics of History.* My thesis, then, is that, *taken together, these two elements — a four-point theological hypothesis and what Lonergan calls the basic and total science, the Grund- und Gesamtwissenschaft, especially as the latter issues in a theory of history — provide the basic framework, the set of terms and relations, of a unified field structure for systematic theology.* This is a development on the position that I expressed at the Lonergan Workshop in 2000, where the proposal was limited to the four-point hypothesis and the theory of history.<sup>11</sup> These remain the principal components, but the general categories include much more, as is clear already from Lonergan's discussion of them in *Method in Theology*.<sup>12</sup> The

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11 See Robert M. Doran, 'Reflections on Method in Systematic Theology,' *Lonergan Workshop 17*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston College) 23-51.

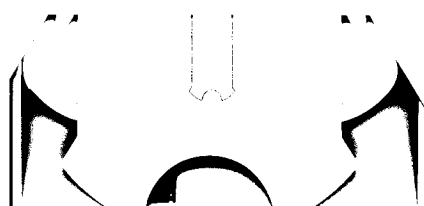
12 See Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (latest printing, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) 285-88. If further confirmation is needed, consider the following statement: '... theology sublates philosophy to define its special categories while it derives from philosophy its general categories,' where by 'philosophy' is meant precisely the *Grund- und Gesamtwissenschaft* referred to here: cognitional theory, epistemology, metaphysics, and existential ethics. The quotation is from Bernard Lonergan, 'Questionnaire on Philosophy: Response,'



combination of the four-point hypothesis with the grounding base of the general categories will be required even for the discussion of the other *special* theological realities: creation, revelation, redemption, church, sacraments, and Christian praxis. None of these can be understood solely in the terms provided by the special categories. But with the four-point hypothesis *and* the philosophical positions that are for the most part already in place in *Insight* and that are complemented where necessary by later developments, we have everything we need to begin constructing a systematic theology. And that ‘everything we need to begin constructing a systematic theology’ is precisely what I mean by a unified field structure. It is true that no systematic theology will ever be complete until we enjoy the systematic theology that is coincident with the beatific vision. There is no possibility of a closed system in theology any more than there is in mathematics or empirical science. Eventually, every system will give rise to questions that cannot be answered on the basis of the resources provided by that system. Every system is an open system, that is, one in which it is anticipated that questions will arise from within the system itself that the system is not able to answer, that will demand the move to a higher viewpoint, perhaps a paradigm shift, before satisfactory hypotheses can be provided. Any system that claims not to be open in this way is an idol. Still, we must begin somewhere, and we must begin with the anticipation that the further categories that emerge will be validated by their connection with the categories that frame this unified field structure. Lonergan says as much, I

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*Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 17, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004) 382.



believe, in section 3.121 of his response to a 'Questionnaire on Philosophy' sent to him in preparation for a symposium on philosophical studies for Jesuits. In brief, '... the Christian religion as lived is the sublation of the whole of human living. It follows at once that to thematize the sublation of the whole of human living is a task beyond the competence of theology as a particular science or particular discipline, that theology can perform that task only by broadening its horizon by uniting itself with philosophy as the basic and total science.' Moreover, 'theology is the sublation of philosophy. For philosophy is the basic and total science of human living. The Christian religion as lived is the sublation of the whole of human living. Hence the Christian religion as thematized is the sublation of the basic and total science of human living.'<sup>13</sup> At one point that sublation yields a theologically transformed theory of history, and here is where the principal though not sole general categories of systematics will be applied.

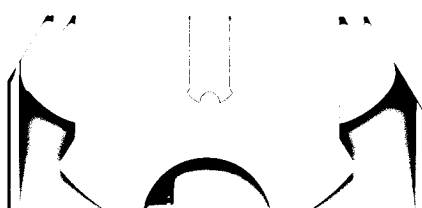
## 2 The Four-point Hypothesis

Probably it is best that we simply state the hypothesis before developing our thesis further.

... there are four real divine relations, really identical with divine being, and so four special ways of grounding an imitation or participation *ad extra* of God's own life. And there are four absolutely supernatural created realities. They are never found in an unformed or indeterminate state. They are: the secondary act of existence of the Incarnation, sanctifying grace, the habit of charity, and the light of glory.

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13 Ibid. 359-60.



Thus it can appropriately be maintained that the secondary act of existence of the Incarnation is a created participation of paternity, and so that it has a special relation to the Son; that sanctifying grace is a [created] participation of active spiration, and so that it bears a special relation to the Holy Spirit; that the habit of charity is a [created] participation of passive spiration, and so that it has a special relation to the Father and the Son; and that the light of glory is a [created] participation of filiation that leads perfectly the children of adoption back to the Father.<sup>14</sup>

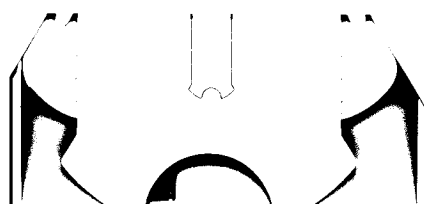
### 3 Previous Discussion on the Issue

The discussion of these issues to which I have already alluded has been focused in two papers by Daniel Monsour. The first is entitled ‘The Categories “Gratia Increata et Creata” and the Functional Specialty Systematics.’ It was presented for discussion at a Lonergan Research Institute Graduate Seminar, in Toronto, on 18 November 1999. The second, ‘The Four-point Hypothesis and the Special Theological Categories,’ was delivered at the Lonergan Workshop in 2001.<sup>15</sup> The state of the question is adequately displayed, I believe, in these two papers. The second repeats many of the general points made in the first, but goes on to develop a much more complete argument in favor of an antecedent likelihood that the four-point hypothesis will provide the integrating principle.

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14 Translated from Lonergan, *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 234-35.

15 References will be to the pages of Monsour’s as yet unpublished typescripts.

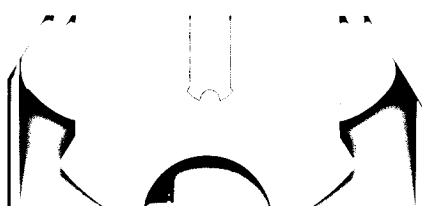


The first paper frames the question in terms of a problem raised by Henri Rondet in his book *The Grace of Christ*.<sup>16</sup> Rondet states that Western Catholic thought on grace has been one-sided. The questions of grace and freedom, grace and merit, justification and predestination are divorced from the emphases of the Greek Fathers on divinization, adoption, union with Christ, and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There is in Western Catholic theology a split between the tract on grace and the treatise on the Trinity, which discusses the mission of the Holy Spirit. Created grace has been in the foreground of Western Scholastic theology, while the gift of the Holy Spirit has been severely underemphasized. But the final chapter of *De Deo trino: Pars systematica* overcomes this trend, Monsour claims. Some earlier attempts to overcome the 'error in perspective' in the dominant trend — notably, those of M.J. Scheeben in the nineteenth century and Karl Rahner in the twentieth — proved inadequate because of their use of formal causality or quasi-formal causality as a way of understanding God's self-communication and so the relation between the gift of the uncreated Holy Spirit and the created grace on which the Western paradigm placed its emphasis. The integration of the two emphases is achieved in principle, in would seem, in Lonergan's treatment of the divine missions, and perhaps only there.

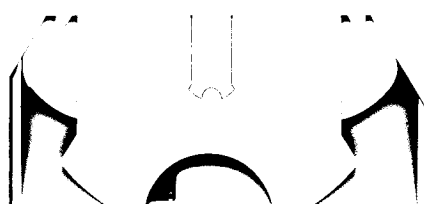
But Monsour's question goes further than simply seeking a more satisfactory theory on this precise issue. He asks whether there can be found in Lonergan's writings and especially in his theology of the divine missions

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16 Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ: A Brief History of the Theology of Grace*, trans. Tad W. Guzie (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1967).

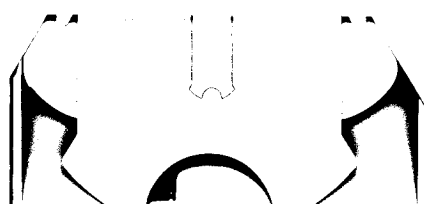


‘a more comprehensive perspective ... that would not only successfully overcome the split ... but ... also weigh against *any* such split or disconnection and systematically favor and promote ... the systematic understanding of the mysteries of faith’ (p. 3). He frames the question more precisely by appealing to what Lonergan says about systematic conceptions. A systematic conception is a conception that expresses an understanding that is virtually sufficient for the resolution of all the questions of some systematic tract. It is the organizing and integrating principle of the tract, expressing as it does the comprehensive understanding that mediates the relation of every less comprehensive conception in the tract to every other less comprehensive conception in the same tract. Monsour goes on from that notion to ask whether there are systematic conceptions of systematic conceptions, that is, ‘systematic conceptions that function as organizing and integrating principles for other systematic conceptions.’ Is there ‘a systematic conception that can function as the organizing and integrating principle for every other systematic conception’? (p. 5) If there is, he says, ‘it would be the conception that expresses an understanding of the organizing and integrating principle that is virtually sufficient for the resolution of all questions in the functional specialty Systematics,’ that is, in every tract in systematic theology (pp. 5-6). It would mediate the relation of *every* less comprehensive conception in the whole of systematics to *every other* less comprehensive conception in the whole of systematics. But as the periodic table is open to further development and even transposition, even while what it has enabled chemists to understand will remain permanently valid, so the unified field structure of a systematic theology would be open to further development and transposition, even while some of its achievements must be regarded as permanent. It will be the secure basis of



an ongoing genetic sequence of ever more comprehensive systematic syntheses, even as it is itself transposed in the light of new questions and exigences to something that may look as different from the conception being proposed here as that conception looks compared to the medieval structure that combined Philip the Chancellor's theorem of the supernatural with Aristotle's metaphysics. The present conception is in continuity with the medieval structure, even as it goes far beyond it, and any development on the present conception will be in continuity with it even as it extends the parameters of the field structure to limits that presently belong at best to the known unknown that comes within our horizon only as a set of questions, and at worst to the unknown unknown that has not even begun to emerge as a question.

Monsour cites both Matthew Lamb and myself as alluding to what might be a candidate for such a status in systematic theology, namely, the four-point hypothesis that has been quoted above. Moreover, he argues that an appropriate name for such an organizing conception would be a 'unified field structure' for systematics. He chooses this name in preference to 'axiom,' as in Karl Rahner's term *Grundaxiom*, and again in preference to 'unified field theory,' the term used in physics. 'Axiom' suggests, he says, something self-evident, or perhaps a fundamental proposition from which one can draw conclusions logically; and neither of these characterizations applies to the four-point hypothesis. And the unified field theory that physicists desire to achieve would bring physics, at least in its present phase, to a close, whereas the four-point hypothesis or for that matter any unified field structure, if accepted, would do anything but bring systematics to a close; in a sense, it would enable it to begin, by providing its fundamental organizing and integrating principle. It would enable the construction of a





systematics that to date remains, for all practical purposes, not yet assembled. Again, ‘just as metaphysics is the whole *in* knowledge, but not the whole *of* knowledge, so,’ suggests Monsour, ‘the hypothesis [or any other unified field structure] might be considered the whole *in* Systematics but not the whole *of* Systematics.’ Thus the question is whether the four-point hypothesis may be ‘virtually sufficient for the resolution of all questions in the functional specialty Systematics,’ (p. 8) where ‘virtually sufficient’ does not have a logical meaning but a heuristic one. Still, a caveat is added: ‘... though it would certainly function heuristically in Systematics, the hypothesis is not purely heuristic, for it contains theological content’ (p. 8).<sup>17</sup> That, however, implies no contradiction, since the periodic

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17 I believe Monsour is clearer on the heuristic role of these systematic conceptions than Lonergan himself was when he wrote the first chapter of *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*, from which Monsour is drawing his notion of systematic conceptions. In the section of that chapter where he discusses these conceptions Lonergan is very attracted by a logical ideal. In my interpretation of that chapter he is still coming to grips with the logical ideals that he scrutinized in preparation for his 1957 lectures on mathematical logic at Boston College, now published as Part 1 of *Phenomenology and Logic: The Boston College Lectures on Mathematical Logic and Existentialism*, volume 18 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Philip J. McShane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001). See Robert M. Doran, ‘The First Chapter of *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*: The Issues,’ *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 18 (2000) 27-48; ‘*Intelligentia Fidei* in *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*,’ *Method*:

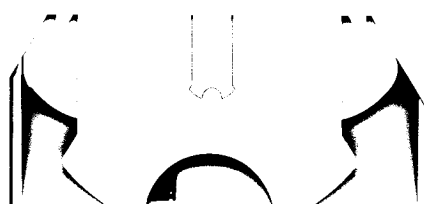


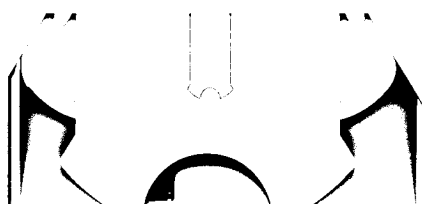
table may be said to function heuristically for chemistry, and differential calculus for classical physics. Heuristic structures are not some permanent feature of the human mind. They develop in the course of history, and they are modified and transformed by accumulated discoveries and by corrections of mistakes.

After discussing some of the difficulties presented by the hypothesis and relating them in a very creative way to what Lonergan says in the third part of *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*<sup>18</sup> about the classification and resolution of the truths we know about God, Monsour proposes in the first of his two papers a test of the viability of the hypothesis as a unified field structure for systematics: 'Take some or all of the five sets of special theological categories enumerated by Lonergan in Foundations and actually attempt to work out tentatively the categories belonging to each set. Then transfer whatever categories one has derived in Foundations into Systematics and try to map them onto the proposed unified field structure ... If it is truly a unified field structure for Systematics, it would ... provide the organizing principle integrating all the categories of all the five sets. To the extent that one continued to succeed in mapping the categories onto the hypothesis, to that extent one continues to confirm the hypothesis as indeed

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*Journal of Lonergan Studies* 19 (2001) 35-83; 'The Truth of Theological Understanding in *Divinarum Personarum* and *De Deo Trino, Pars Systematica*,' *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 20:1 (2002) 33-75.

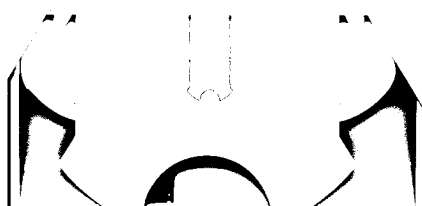
- 18 Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, vol. 7 in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, trans. Michael G. Shields (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).



a unified field structure for Systematics' (p. 16). In this regard, Monsour speaks of some categories being 'mapped onto the structure through their connection with the four absolutely supernatural [realities] understood as participations in the four real subsistent relations' (p. 17). Furthermore, 'if one supposes that the categories in each of the five sets are intrinsically irreducible to the categories of any of the other sets, then not only will there be a permanent diversity in Systematics, that no proposed unified field structure will abolish, but also with each successful transfer and mapping of categories onto the unified field structure, the structure itself, while retaining its identity as an organizing and integrating principle, will be enriched and rendered more complex' (p. 17).

So much for the initial framing of the question. In his second paper, Monsour begins the test. He begins to attempt mapping the five sets of categories onto the four-point hypothesis. He insists that he has 'no intention of adopting a definitive position as to whether it is possible and theologically sound and fruitful to bring together Lonergan's four-point hypothesis and the set of five special theological categories.' '... all I propose to offer here,' he says, 'is a set of inchoate considerations that perhaps may incline one to regard the attempt to bring the four-point hypothesis and the special theological categories together as a worthwhile and promising line for subsequent investigation' (19).

Those considerations, however inchoate they may be, are nonetheless quite complex. There are eight of them. I will not summarize the arguments here. Suffice it to say that Monsour begins by asserting an antecedent likelihood that the four-point hypothesis will provide the integrating principle for the five sets of special categories, and that the rest of his points build on this initial assertion.



#### 4 A Distinction

I will review the five sets of theological categories later in this paper. But I wish to indicate now my own position on the issue as it has been framed by Monsour. My position is twofold.

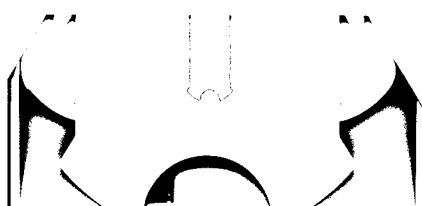
First, in my view only the third set of special categories can be completely mapped onto the four-point hypothesis. The mapping of the third set will resolve the initial problem with which Monsour began, namely, the divorce between Trinitarian theology and the theology of grace and the imbalance and loss of perspective in the relations between the theological conceptions of uncreated and created grace. But, I propose, any attempt to map the other sets onto the four-point hypothesis is really reducing the other sets to the third set. And if the other sets cannot be mapped without remainder onto the four-point hypothesis, then clearly more is needed if we are to arrive at a unified field structure for the functional specialty Systematics, and this on Monsour's test itself. Not even all the special categories can be adequately mapped onto the four-point hypothesis.

Second, I would make an important distinction: it is one thing to integrate the special categories, and it is something further to integrate the functional specialty 'systematics.' Systematics is more than the special categories, however integrated and synthetic may be their presentation. Let me elaborate.

Lonergan's method and the emphases that I have highlighted in several articles on the method of systematic theology<sup>19</sup> impose on our use of

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19 In addition to the article mentioned in note 11 above, see 'Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology,' *Theological Studies* 59:4 (December 1998) 569-607, and 'System and History: The

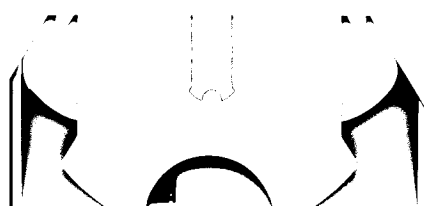


the four-point hypothesis a twofold requirement. First, *the objects intended in this statement must be spoken of in categories based in interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness*. The categories employed to frame the hypothesis itself are derived, not basic. In Lonergan's words, '... general basic terms name conscious and intentional operations. General basic relations name elements in the dynamic structure linking operations and generating states. Special basic terms name God's gift of his love and Christian witness. Derived terms and relations name the objects known in operations and correlative to states ... For every term and relation there will exist a corresponding element in intentional consciousness.'<sup>20</sup> More

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Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology,' *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 652-78.

- 20 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 343. Two comments must be made on this passage. First, it does not mention 'special basic relations.' I have searched related texts in the Lonergan archives, to see whether perhaps something was omitted by mistake in the typing of the manuscript for publication, but I have found nothing to indicate this. So I would like to raise the question whether the four-point hypothesis itself might provide us with the hint as to where we might find special basic relations. I have in mind especially the relation between sanctifying grace and charity as created participations, respectively, of active and passive spiration. If there is anything to this suggestion, then the religiously differentiated consciousness that would enable us to grasp what is meant by distinguishing sanctifying grace and the habit of charity might be the source of special basic relations.

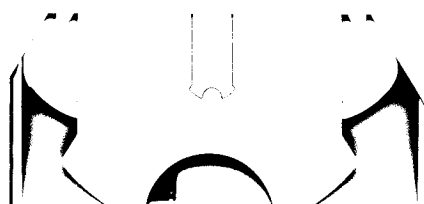


specifically, since the four-point hypothesis speaks of realities that are named in special categories, the base of these categories in religiously differentiated consciousness must be specified as carefully as possible. But general categories will be important even in unpacking the hypothesis in its own terms, since (1) the divine relations are based in the divine processions, (2) the processions are understood by analogy with intelligible emanations of word and love in human consciousness, and (3) the categories that express such emanations are not peculiar to theology but are fundamental to the *Grund- und Gesamtwissenschaft* whose fundamental components Lonergan has put forth in *Insight*. But a differentiation in terms of religious experience is also required, and this is particularly true for the second and third points of the hypothesis, those having to do with sanctifying grace and the habit of charity as created participations, respectively, of active and passive spiration.

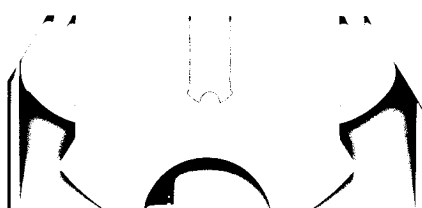
The second requirement builds on an argument that I have offered elsewhere, which is in harmony with elements that appear in Lonergan's papers at the time of his breakthrough to functional specialization. The argument was to the effect that *systematics is to assume the general form of*

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Second, as I will try to indicate later, the 'corresponding element' that identifies the basic term or relation may be found either in intentional consciousness, as Lonergan says – and this is most often the case – or in nonintentional consciousness, as is the case in what St Ignatius Loyola calls 'consolation without a cause' as interpreted by Karl Rahner and Lonergan as consolation with a content but without an apprehended object. Any conscious state that is not a response to an apprehended object is nonintentional.



*a theology of history.* And building on it means that *the primary general categories must be those that enable us to formulate a theory of the complex dialectical process of human history.* These categories include preeminently those that Lonergan has employed to speak of progress, decline, and redemption as constituting the basic structure of history, and the structure of the human good that he has proposed most clearly in *Method in Theology*. But complementing these are other categories that can be found in Lonergan's work and added to his analysis of history: principally, the scale of values as explaining the intelligible ongoing relations among three complex dialectical processes — in the subject, culture, and community — and so as providing further details of the dynamics of progress and decline in history. This mediation of general and special categories in a theology of history is required if we are to relate the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, grace, and eschatology concretely to the processes of history and to add to the core systematic spheres of Trinity, Incarnation, grace, and eschatology the understanding of doctrines regarding creation, revelation, redemption, the church, the sacraments, and the praxis of religious persons, of Christians, of Catholics, and of the Christian churches. The doctrines on creation, revelation, redemption, church, sacraments, and praxis are not explicitly included in the core 'focal meanings' contained in the four-point hypothesis, but positions in their regard are obviously demanded in a systematic theology. And those positions cannot be developed without a theory of history. Even the four-point hypothesis contains a demand for expansion into a theory of history, since at the core of the hypothesis is the theology, not only of the immanent Trinity — there are four real divine relations, really identical with divine being — but also and especially of the divine missions; and the divine missions are the Trinity in history, for the missions



are identical with the divine processions joined to created external terms that are the consequent created conditions of the fact that the processions are also missions.

## 5 History and the Special Categories

This second requirement can be further illustrated by turning to Monsour's test and appealing to Lonergan's five sets of special theological categories, but now to argue that the four-point hypothesis will not be able to integrate the second, fourth, and fifth of these sets into an overall systematic exposition unless there is added to it the theory of history that issues from the *Grund- und Gesamtwissenschaft*, the basic and total science, of *Insight and Method in Theology*.

The first set of special categories, then, is derived from religious experience. These categories will emerge from 'studies of religious interiority: historical, phenomenological, psychological, sociological. There is needed in the theologian the spiritual development that will enable [one] both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience.'<sup>21</sup>

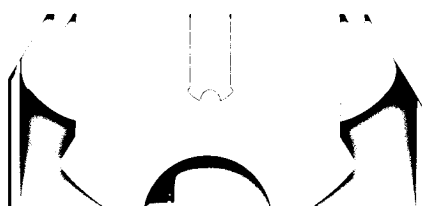
A second set has to do, not with the subject but with 'subjects, their togetherness in community, service, and witness, *the history of the salvation that is rooted in a being-in-love*, and the *function of this history* in promoting' the reign of God in the world.<sup>22</sup>

A third set 'moves from our loving to the loving source of our love. The Christian tradition makes explicit our implicit intending of God in all

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21 Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 290.

22 Ibid. 291, emphasis added.





our intending by speaking of the Spirit that is given to us, of the Son who redeemed us, of the Father who sent the Son and with the Son sends the Spirit, and of our future destiny when we shall know, not as in a glass darkly, but face to face.’<sup>23</sup>

A fourth set differentiates authentic and inauthentic humanity and authentic and inauthentic Christianity. ‘... to the unauthentic [person] or Christian, what appears authentic is the unauthentic. Here, then, is the root of division, opposition, controversy, denunciation, bitterness, hatred, violence.’<sup>24</sup>

And a fifth set ‘regards progress, decline, and redemption. As human authenticity promotes progress, and human unauthenticity generates decline, so Christian authenticity — which is a love of others that does not shrink from self-sacrifice and suffering — is the sovereign means for overcoming evil. Christians bring about the kingdom of God in the world not only by doing good but also by overcoming evil with good ... Not only is there the progress of [humankind] but also there is development and progress within Christianity itself; and as there is development, so too there is decline; and as there is decline, there also is the problem of undoing it, of overcoming evil with good not only in the world but also in the church.’<sup>25</sup>

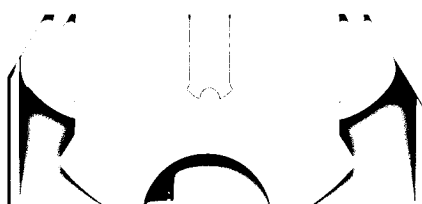
Now, obviously the third set matches the four-point hypothesis almost point by point, so that it can safely be said that this set can be mapped without remainder onto the hypothesis. Moreover, I believe the hypothesis provides a key to clarifying religious experience, and so is relevant to

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23 Ibid.

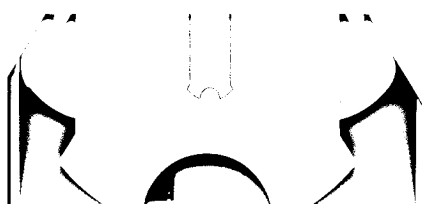
24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.



elements of the first set of special categories. But mapping the other three sets onto the hypothesis is not only more difficult; in the last analysis, it is, I believe, impossible. One can relate the other three sets to the third set, and so to the hypothesis, but any attempt to go further would be an attempt to reduce the other three sets to the third. It would be to regard the generic theorem of the hypothesis as sufficient for the full solution. The other three sets demand a framework that locates within, or in relation to, the dialectical dynamics of history the four created supernatural realities that are the created consequent conditions either of the divine missions (the *esse secundarium* of the Incarnation, sanctifying grace, and the habit of charity) or of the beatific vision (the light of glory). The categories that detail the relation of these created supernatural realities to history are required if we are to have a systematics of creation, revelation (which, as Lonergan says, introduces a new meaning into *history*), redemption, the church, the sacraments, and Christian praxis.

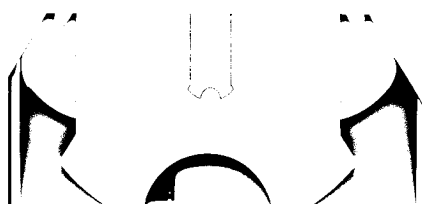
The four-point hypothesis, then, has to be placed in history. Speaking as it does of the divine missions certainly does locate it in history, but it has to function within a conception of history that will enable the integration of the second, fourth, and fifth sets of special categories into the overall systematic conception. The created contingent external terms that make possible that there are divine missions are not enough to allow for this integration. The divine missions have to be related in a thematic and explicit manner to the dynamics of history, and the dynamics of history have to be configured in a thematic and explicit manner to the divine missions. That can be done only by developing a theological theory of history. The four-point hypothesis does not in itself tell us anything about what the Incarnation and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit have to do with historical progress and



decline, whereas creation, revelation, redemption, the church, the sacraments, and Christian praxis cannot be understood apart from historical progress and decline.<sup>26</sup> As Lonergan himself wrote at the time of his breakthrough to the notion of functional specialization, a contemporary systematic theology in its entirety must be a theological theory of history; or again, the mediated object of systematics is *Geschichte*. We may conclude, then, that the basic organizing systematic conception must contain, in addition to the four-point hypothesis, the fundamental elements of a theological theory of history. And I would propose that those fundamental elements are provided at least in an incipient fashion in Lonergan's analysis of the dialectic of history in terms of progress, decline, and redemption and in the complementary suggestions that I offer in *Theology and the Dialectics of History*. While there is no doubt that further work (for example, in social

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26 In a discussion period at the 1962 Institute at Regis College, Toronto, on 'The Method of Theology,' Lonergan expressed a conviction that the sacraments and the church are two areas in systematic theology in which an enormous amount of work needs to be done. In fact, he said, there is needed even doctrinal development in these areas. 'The fundamental developments are: the trinitarian doctrine in which the key element is the consubstantial; christological doctrine: one person and two natures; the idea of the supernatural, habit and act. There is then the field in which the categories are not yet fully developed. For example, categories as to the instrumental causality of the sacraments; they have to be developed more fully. There is also *everything regarding history and the mystical body, and the church*; all these need further development.' (Emphasis added)

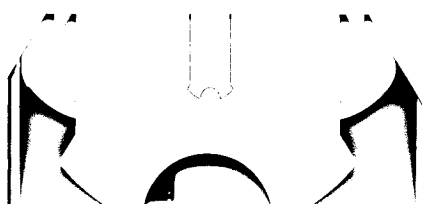


theory and economics) will uncover other elements and so other categories, these give us enough to get started and provide the basic map or grid for locating the elements that further work will discover, just as the periodic table provides the basic grid for locating further atomic elements.

## 6 Glimpsing Some Implications

Perhaps we can already glimpse the enormous theological implications of the twofold methodological insistence on basing everything in interiority and on locating everything in relation to history. It is one thing to transpose, for example, trinitarian theology into categories dictated by interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness. We are already familiar with the historical antecedents of such a transposition in the psychological analogies first of Augustine and then of Aquinas. Lonergan in *Divinarum personarum* and then in *De Deo trino* transposes the psychological analogy into categories explicitly derived from interiorly differentiated consciousness. But to add to this requirement the additional demand that all of this material must be formulated in terms of a theory of history adds a new dimension. The direct impact, of course, is on that portion of trinitarian theology that treats the divine missions, and particularly the mission of the Holy Spirit. But the implications are more far-reaching.

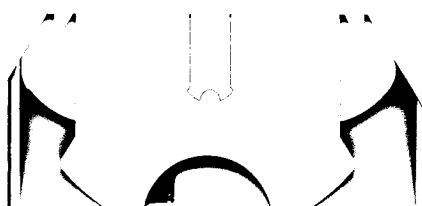
The theory of history based on the interrelations of the levels of value — from above, religious, personal, cultural, social, vital — proposes that the recurrent intelligent emanation of the word of authentic value judgments and of acts of love in human consciousness (personal value) is due to the grace of the mission of the Holy Spirit (religious value) and is also the source of the making of history, of historical progress through schemes of recurrence



in the realms of cultural, social, and vital values. But the mission of the Holy Spirit *is* the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit joined to a created, contingent external term that is the consequent condition of the procession being also a mission or of the proceeding Holy Spirit also being sent *ad extra*. Thus the intelligent emanation in God of the Holy Spirit, the eternal procession in God of the Holy Spirit, joined to the created, contingent, consequent external terms that are sanctifying grace and the habit of charity (as well as to the operative movements that are known as *auxilium divinum* or actual grace), the eternal intelligent emanation of the Spirit in God as also Gift in history, is the ultimate condition of possibility of any consistent or recurrent intelligent emanation of authentic judgments of value and schemes of recurrence rooted in acts of love in human beings. This collaboration of intelligent processions, divine and human, is, then, the condition of the possibility of the consistent authentic performance of what Lonergan calls the normative source of meaning in history.<sup>27</sup> And if such personal value conditions the possibility of functioning schemes of recurrence in the realms of cultural, and then social, and then vital values, if that normative source, functioning communally, is the origin of progress in history, then the mission of the Holy Spirit, which is identical with the eternal procession of the Spirit joined to the created, contingent, consequent term of charity, and so the Spirit as Gift, is the very source of progress in history. Conversely, wherever genuine progress (measured by fidelity to the scale of values) takes place, the Spirit is present and active. The combination of the four-point

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27 See Bernard Lonergan, 'Natural Right and Historical Mindedness,' *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1985) 169-83.



hypothesis with the theory of history thus enables us to relate trinitarian theology, and even the theology of the immanent Trinity, directly to the processes not only of individual sanctification but also of human historical unfolding. The discernment of the mission of the Holy Spirit thus becomes the most important ingredient in humankind's taking responsibility for the guidance of history.

