

## LONERGAN AND PANNENBERG'S METHODOLOGIES: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION

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*Perhaps without intending it, Robert Doran began a conversation that contrasts the methodological procedures of Wolfhart Pannenberg with the methodology of Bernard Lonergan. This essay explores the differences further and shows how a clarification of these two distinct but helpful methodological procedures not only enhances an understanding of the mysteries of the Christian faith and aids ecumenical discussion but also yields "mutually self-mediating advantages of dialogues."*

ROBERT DORAN'S MUCH DISCUSSED *What Is Systematic Theology?* has stimulated a renewed interest in systematics.<sup>1</sup> Building on an earlier work in which he developed the notion of psychic conversion as a theological outcome of Lonergan's intentionality analysis,<sup>2</sup> Doran treats the nature of systematic theology, raises some critical methodological questions, and through these sets the objectives and grounds of systematic theology. In this work—in the tradition of George Lindbeck's and Alister McGrath's<sup>3</sup> classics—Doran essentially agrees with Lonergan about the nature and function of systematic theology. Although he insists that Lonergan's distinct emphases be preserved, Doran sees a need to refine Lonergan's

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); and Alister McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).

explication of systematics and suggests several ways of developing that understanding,<sup>4</sup> arguing that the development is “required by the very dynamic exigencies that gave rise in the first place to [Lonergan’s] developed account of theological method.”<sup>5</sup>

Doran brings Lonergan into conversation with Wolfhart Pannenberg by contrasting Lonergan’s emphasis with Pannenberg’s methodological procedures in his multivolume *Systematic Theology*.<sup>6</sup> Doran does not develop the kind of result a conversation between Lonergan and Pannenberg would yield because, for him, Pannenberg is not doing what Lonergan does in *systematics* (the seventh of his functional specialities).<sup>7</sup> However, the conversation between Lonergan and Pannenberg could be fruitfully explored around their mutual concern with what Maurice Blondel long ago described as “the relation of dogma and history, and of the critical method and the necessary authority of doctrinal formulae.”<sup>8</sup> Dogmas are, for Pannenberg, “eschatological” and “provisional.”<sup>9</sup> He also speaks of dogmatic statements and the theses of Christian doctrine as “hypotheses” because systematic theology, in his view, attempts to develop models about the world, humanity, and history as they are grounded in God.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, for Lonergan and his method, which is rooted in modern science, systematic theology is “to be taken as a model. By a model is not meant something to be copied or imitated. By a model is not meant a description of reality or a hypothesis about reality. It is simply an intelligible, interlocking set of terms and relations that it may be well to have about when it comes to describing reality or to forming hypotheses.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Robert M. Doran, “System and History: The Challenge to Catholic Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 60 (1999) 652–78, at 652.

<sup>5</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), esp. vol. 1.

<sup>7</sup> I have italicized references to this functional specialty to distinguish it from ordinary references to systematics as a branch of theology.

<sup>8</sup> See Frederick E. Crowe, “Dogma versus the Self-Correcting Process of Learning,” in *Foundations of Theology: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970*, Philip McShane, S.J., ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1970) 22–59, at 22.

<sup>9</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:16. See also Mark C. Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004) 76.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 56, 60. See also Mark C. Mattes, “Pannenberg’s Achievement: An Analysis and Assessment of His Systematic Theology,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 26 (1999) 51–60, at 52.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1996) xii. Lonergan hopes that readers find in his work more than models. The elaboration of categories constitutes a model until one chooses certain categories in *doctrines* and *systematics*, but *systematics* is a hypothetical understanding of what one has affirmed in *doctrines*.

My aim here is to show that the methodological approaches of Lonergan and Pannenberg are potentially complementary, once it is acknowledged that Pannenberg's work is closer to what Lonergan means by "doctrines" rather than by "systematics." Still, there are differences in cognitional theory that need to be addressed: the criterion of truth, realism versus idealism, proof or argument (Pannenberg) versus conversion (Lonergan) as ground of theological doctrines. Thus I will show how a clarification of methods proper to systematic theology advances an understanding of the mysteries of faith by comparing the seventh of Lonergan's functional specialties, *systematics*, with Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology*, volume 1. I will work with this hypothesis; although the two systematicians present a more nuanced and elaborate position in chapters prior and subsequent to the ones under examination (in addition to a more elaborated position in their later works), Lonergan in *systematics* and Pannenberg in *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, say essentially what they want to say about systematic theology. This hypothesis is supported in part by Pannenberg's clear statement that the methodology of the individual chapters of his trilogy varies according to the topic pursued.<sup>12</sup> His general starting point is the theoretical enterprise of logic and the authority of Scripture. Lonergan, on the other hand, began with the same science as mediated to him through his study of Aquinas and medieval Scholasticism, but effected a shift from logic to method by the time he worked out the functional specialties. I will show how the different theological methods of the two theologians yielded specific kinds of results and how these methods shaped their understanding of mysteries of faith. By so doing I will show how a comparison by contrast of Pannenberg's claim that systematics deals with the truth claims of dogma and Lonergan's insistence that the chief function of systematics is an understanding of the truths of faith helps one attain, in Doran's memorable phrase, "mutually self-mediating advantages of dialogues."

I should, however, point out that one cannot discount Doran's insight that our age is more interested in hermeneutics and history than in doctrines and systematics, and that a conversation between Lonergan and Gadamer or Ricoeur, or even Heidegger, is more apt to yield these mutually self-mediating advantages of dialogues.<sup>13</sup> But such conversations have already been set in motion by Matthew Lamb and Frederick Lawrence, who relate Lonergan's method to that of Dilthey and Gadamer; and by Joseph Flanagan, who contrasted Lonergan's methodological approach to

<sup>12</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:xii.

<sup>13</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 6.

knowledge with a purely logical or conceptualist approach.<sup>14</sup> What I wish to highlight is the significance of methodological clarifications for the basic work of theology and how such clarification charts a new course of dialogue between Lonergan and Pannenberg, a dialogue that can enrich an understanding of the function of systematic theology.

### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

A preliminary remark is in order before I explore the dialogue between Lonergan and Pannenberg. Although there are similarities between Lonergan's and Pannenberg's work, there are also significant, consequential differences. Lonergan was born in 1904, Pannenberg in 1928. Lonergan was Roman Catholic, traditional, and Jesuit in training. Pannenberg was generically Lutheran but not "practicing" and began his systematic investigation with a more personal "religious experience." Lonergan was schooled in a Scholastic and Thomistic curriculum; Pannenberg's work (initially) has a Barthian and Kerygmatic flavor. Lonergan began a review of his tradition with a "Generalized Empirical Method" that guided his intricate methodology. Pannenberg came slowly to realize that he had to organize and systematize his experience in order to give human reason a place in Christian theological construction. Lonergan stressed the subject but also the intersubjectivity and the affective conversion necessary to speculative and constructive thought. Pannenberg was influenced by the *analogia tes pisteos* (analogy of faith) and the "I-Thou" tradition. Both men stressed the body/person unity.<sup>15</sup> For Lonergan, *systematics* is only one of the functional specialties. It depends on the prior steps. The similarity, however, between Lonergan and Pannenberg, although incidental, is fruitful for dialogue.

### LONERGAN: SYSTEMATICS AND THE AFFIRMATION OF REALITIES

Frederick Crowe's discovery of scribbling and comments by Lonergan in a book by Husserl at the Regis College, Toronto, library is significant for a

<sup>14</sup> See Matthew Lamb, "William Dilthey's Critique of Historical Reason and Bernard Lonergan's Meta-Methodology," in *Language, Truth, and Meaning: Papers from the International Lonergan Congress 1970*, ed. Philip McShane (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1970) 115-66; Frederick Lawrence, "Self-Knowledge in History in Gadamer and Lonergan," in *Language, Truth, and Meaning* 167-235; Joseph Flanagan, "Knowing and Language in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan," in *ibid.* 49-78; and Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Bernard Lonergan Responds," in *ibid.* 306-12, at 306.

<sup>15</sup> No evidence suggests an interdependence of the two men, and almost certainly Lonergan was not influenced by Pannenberg.

proper understanding of Lonergan's method and the shift in his thinking. Based on this and similar findings, Crowe estimates that between 1947 and 1953 Lonergan was indebted to Husserl's *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, though there is no single reference to this particular work in any of Lonergan's writings or lectures.<sup>16</sup> Simultaneous with this indebtedness was Lonergan's dependence on Martin Heidegger, Max Scheler, and more especially the intentionality analysis of Maurice Blondel that effected in Lonergan a shift from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis (or phenomenology) in which he distinguished four levels of conscious and intentional operations: experiencing, understanding, judging, and deciding, each successive level sublating the previous levels by going beyond them and setting up a higher principle. New levels introduce new operations, preserve the integrity of the previous levels, and extend their range and significance. Intentional acts are correlative to their objects since the phenomenon examined in phenomenology is a unified reality that comprises not only an intending subject and an intended object but also their correlation.<sup>17</sup> For Lonergan, the four levels of consciousness demonstrate that the intellect is oriented toward absolute mystery and is preceded by God's gift of love that God offers to all of humanity. The gift is basic to systematic theology in that it provides the origin and basis for inquiry about God and illuminates apophatic (negative) theology, which is content to say what God is not, and kataphatic (positive) theology, which inquires into whether God is an object. Lonergan's shift from faculty psychology to intentionality analysis has some far-reaching consequences: the basic terms and relations of systematic theology will no longer be metaphysical but psychological. Knowledge of intentional consciousness can also develop, admitting of revision of earlier views.

Lonergan admits to the shift in his thinking that helped him in methodically articulating the operations of a theologian. "While I spoke in terms of a faculty psychology, in reality I had moved out of its influence and was conducting an intentionality analysis."<sup>18</sup> He assigns eight distinct tasks (functional specialties) to this operation and explains in great detail how each task is to be performed. In treating the seventh specialty, *systematics*, which is concerned with promoting an understanding of the realities affirmed in the previous specialty, *doctrines*, he to all intents and purposes

<sup>16</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, "The Task of Interpreting Lonergan: A Preliminary to the Symposium," in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. Timothy P. Fallon, S.J., and Philip Boo Riley (Albany: State University of New York, 1987) 3–16, at 5.

<sup>17</sup> W. F. J. Ryan, "Viktor Frankl's Notion of Intentionality," in *ibid.* 79–93, at 81.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Insight Revisited," in *A Second Collection: Papers by Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.*, ed. William F. J. Ryan, S.J., and Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J. (Toronto: University of Toronto) 263–78, at 277.

discusses systematic theology.<sup>19</sup> His functional specialization lends itself to a distinction between *systematics* and *doctrines*, the former presupposing the latter. Unlike *doctrines*, which aim at increasing certitude and establishing facts, *systematics* aims at promoting understanding. The relation between *doctrines* and *systematics* is similar to that between natural theology (philosophy) and speculative theology (systematics).<sup>20</sup> *Systematics* takes over facts established in *doctrines* and attempts to work them into an assimilable whole.<sup>21</sup> For this reason Lonergan thinks “that natural and systematic theology should be fused in the manner of Aquinas’ *Contra Gentiles* and *Summa theologiae*.”<sup>22</sup>

Lonergan carefully avoids conflating the mystery of God with the human linguistic expression of that mystery. He thinks that the old dogmatic theology had misconceived history on a classicist model by thinking in terms of universality and permanence rather than evolution and development.<sup>23</sup> The human response to transcendent mystery is adoration (in words and worship), but the context in which mystery is adored is problematic because the meaning of words is culturally conditioned. Human language is transient because it expresses the thought of the moment, at the moment, for the moment.<sup>24</sup> So it is possible to know what church doctrines are without knowing what they mean. Systematics, therefore, seeks gradual increase in understanding.<sup>25</sup> It proceeds according to *ordo disciplinae* or *ordo doctrinae*, the order of learning and teaching.<sup>26</sup> It is the proper order for systematic ordering of ideas.<sup>27</sup> “Not only does the order of teaching or exposition differ from the order of discovery, but also the terms and relations of systematic thought express a development of under-

<sup>19</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 335.

<sup>20</sup> Lonergan thinks the distinction or separation of natural theology from speculative theology is “misleading” and “unfortunate” because it tends to overemphasize the significance of proofs and overlooks the primacy of conversion (*Method in Theology* 337). He calls for an integration of natural and systematic theology, insisting that the distinction between philosophy and theology not be transformed into a “separation.” See Bernard J. Tyrrell, S.J., “The New Context of the Philosophy of God in Lonergan and Rahner,” in *Language, Truth, and Meaning* 284–305, at 295.

<sup>21</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 336.

<sup>22</sup> Lonergan, “Insight Revisited” 277.

<sup>23</sup> Lonergan, “Theology in Its New Context,” in *A Second Collection* 55–67, at 59.

<sup>24</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 71. <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 345.

<sup>26</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 9.

<sup>27</sup> “In the way of discovery, one begins with what is most clearly known to us and proceeds by way of analysis to the discovery of causes, reasons, explanation. In the way of learning and teaching, one begins with the causes, reasons, explanation reached in the way of discovery and composes synthetically the realities thus explained” (editor’s preface to *The Triune God: Systematics*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 12, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour [Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007] xvii–xxiv, at xix).

standing over and above the understanding had either from a simple inspection or from an erudite exegesis of the original doctrinal sources."<sup>28</sup>

Lonerган speaks of *systematics* and *doctrines* as both aiming at understanding and truth, though in different ways. *Doctrines* seek an understanding of truth and affirmations of religious realities, although its understanding is limited to the clarity and distinctness of its affirmation. *Systematics* aims at understanding the religious realities affirmed by *doctrines*. They are "two instances of truth and two instances of understanding. Doctrines are concerned to state clearly and distinctly the religious community's confession of the mysteries so hidden in God that man could not know them if they had not been revealed by God."<sup>29</sup>

Lonerган dismisses the notion that systematic theology is speculative, irreligious, fruitless, elitist, and irrelevant. He concedes that, theoretically, it can be these but in fact it ought not to be. Although systematic theology can be speculative, it ordinarily aims at an understanding of the truth of faith, a *Glaubenverständnis* of church confessions. Systematic theology can be irreligious if its emphasis is not on conversion but on proof, or when positions are maintained to further individual or corporate pride. "When conversion is the basis of the whole theology, when religious conversion is the event that gives the name, God, its primary and fundamental meaning, when systematic theology does not believe it can exhaust or even do justice to that meaning, not a little has been done to keep systematic theology in harmony with its religious origins and aims."<sup>30</sup> Systematic theology will be fruitless if misunderstanding is systematized, for just as understanding can be systematized, so too can misunderstanding. Systematic theology can be elitist if one does not attain, on the level of one's age, an understanding of religious realities in which one believes. Lastly, systematic theology can be irrelevant if it does not provide the basis for the eighth functional specialty, *communications*, for to communicate one has to understand what is to be communicated. No repetition of formulas can take the place of understanding.

Consistent with Lonergan's view of systematic theology as an "ongoing collaboration" is his call for continuity, development, and careful revision of dogma. "All development involves some revision. Further, because a theology is the product not simply of a religion but of a religion within a given cultural context, theological revisions may have their origin, not primarily in theological, but rather in cultural development."<sup>31</sup> There is a

<sup>28</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 346.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* 349. <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 350.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 353. "Dogma," for Lonergan, is a very restricted category. It refers only to mysteries that we could not know at all had they not been revealed. Not even all revealed mysteries have reached the status of dogma. But what has reached that

fourfold reason for this. First, regarding the normative structure of intentional and conscious acts, that this structure is normative means that it can be violated; hence the need for intellectual and moral conversion. Second, God's gift of love is ever continuous; although it is given in various measures, it is still the same love. Third, dogma, as the mystery of God revealed and defined by the church, is permanent, but the human understanding of it may improve. Fourth, development may arise because of differentiation of consciousness.

### PANNENBERG: THE TRUTH CLAIM OF DOGMATICS

Pannenberg does not pay attention to the pragmatic aim of doctrine.<sup>32</sup> In sharp contrast to Lonergan, or even to "Kantian-influenced theologies, such as Schleiermacher's, Ritchl's, and Hermann's (1846–1922), or the twentieth century's no-less-Kantian neo-Orthodox theologies, such as Barth's and Bultmann's, metaphysical concerns are central, not peripheral, for Pannenberg."<sup>33</sup> He appeals to metaphysics as the best route for truth and for the grammar, syntax, and vocabulary of his theology, hoping to establish a common ground and a space in which God's reality would appear credible to contemporary skeptics.<sup>34</sup> In chapter 1 of *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, "The Truth of Christian Doctrine as the Theme of Systematic Theology," Pannenberg describes Christian doctrine as a historical construct that rests on the historical revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. He undertakes a reflection on this doctrine, mindful that historical and systematic reflections must continually permeate one another.<sup>35</sup> Like Lonergan, who began with the problematic of the dichotomy between natural and speculative theology, Pannenberg delves into the truth question as it relates to divine realities, rejecting outright the distinction between natural and revealed theology, a distinction that seems to suggest that the grounding of theology on divine revelation is a determination foreign to its nature. But for Pannenberg, the knowledge of God made possible by revelation is one of the basic conditions of the concept of theology.<sup>36</sup> He asks, Is theology right about what it says about God, and if it is right, by what right does it say it?<sup>37</sup> Not denying that theological discourse presupposes the truth that God has authorized,

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point has a permanent meaning, that is, a meaning that is not subject to radical revision.

<sup>32</sup> Bard Maeland, "Invention in Contemporary Theory: A Discussion Related to Selected Works of Alister McGrath, Wolfhart Pannenberg, and Oswald Bayer," *Studia theologica* 58 (2004) 157–73, at 161.

<sup>33</sup> Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* 72.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:xi.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 2. <sup>37</sup> Ibid. 7.



Pannenberg thinks this truth can be verified in ways other than by an appeal to Scripture. He accepts the Scholastic synthesis, come to fruition in Aquinas, that statements about God include statements about humanity and the created world. Pannenberg sees the task of systematic theology (which he calls "dogmatics") as that of ascertaining the question of truth. He wants to explain how dogmatics can advocate the truth of Christian discourse about God, how it does it, and by what right.<sup>38</sup>

Orthodox Lutheran dogmatics used the word "dogma" to denote all doctrines of faith and the Christian religion, including true or false doctrine, heretical or orthodox.<sup>39</sup> The crucial question for Pannenberg is establishing the truth of dogma. His concern for the truth question of dogma leads him to accept Gerhard Sauter's understanding of dogmatics as the science of dogma or the science of Christian doctrine.<sup>40</sup> As science, dogmas are divine revelation, not an opinion of an individual or a philosophical school. But since they are still formulated and proclaimed by humans, by the church and its ministers, the issue for Pannenberg then becomes that of determining the extent to which dogmas are more than human opinions. When do they cease to be mere human inventions and traditions? And how can we ascertain that they are an expression of divine revelation? Pannenberg argues that the truth question of dogma cannot be resolved by religious coercion, conciliar decrees, or legal codification of dogmatic statements. Only consensus that arises free from any coercion can be advanced as a criterion of truth.<sup>41</sup> He rejects an idea that played a major role in the Reformation understanding of church doctrine, namely, the consensus of the church, as an adequate criterion of the truth of a doctrine.<sup>42</sup> Knowledge of the subject matter of Scripture is what produces consensus because dogma must "offer a summary of the central theme of scripture as the truth of God."<sup>43</sup> Consensus, though it may denote the universality of truth, can also express mere conventionality among the members of a group. For this reason Pannenberg rejects the idea of conventional basic convictions as

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>39</sup> See Schubert M. Ogden, "Fundamentum Fidei: Critical Reflections on Willi Marxsen's Contribution to Systematic Theology," *Modern Theology* 6 (1989) 1–14, at 1.

<sup>40</sup> Pannenberg explains how the Greek *dogma* can denote both a subjective opinion (distinct from certain knowledge) and a legally binding opinion or rendered judgment as in edicts. Subjective opinion can assume a collective sense as in the "opinion" of a given philosophical school (*Systematic Theology* 1:8). See also Gerhard Sauter, "Dogmatik I," *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 10 vols. (1982) 9:41–77.

<sup>41</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:11.

<sup>42</sup> Supposedly to counter heretical teachings, Vincent of Lérins (d. ca. 450) devised the formula that, to establish church dogma, the same thing must be believed everywhere, at all times, by everyone: "curandus est, ut id teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est" (*Commonitorium* 2.3).

<sup>43</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:16.

criteria for the truth of dogma. They “reflect the human desire for comfort and the lack of challenges to the basic convictions. . . . Conceivably, some ideas and convictions are so deeply rooted in human nature that they can never be overcome even though they are false. An invincible prejudice would then be entrenched in the whole species which is invincible because it has become part of the inherited structure of the species.”<sup>44</sup> Although he does not, as does Lonergan, speak of systematics as lending itself to revision of previously held views, Pannenberg still thinks the dogmatic formulations of the church must be constantly put to test. The testing of the truth of dogma is the task of dogmatics. It probes whether the church’s dogmas express God’s revelation and God’s own dogmas.

Insisting that it is not possible to embark on a critical reconstruction of the Christian doctrine without exposing and determining the truth question,<sup>45</sup> Pannenberg invokes the authority of Johann Franz Buddeus (1727) who cited two conditions that systematic theology, then a newly emerging 18th-century term, must meet: it must deal with its subject matter comprehensively and explain, prove, and confirm its content, which, for Pannenberg, shows that systematic theology argumentatively (not catechetically) presents Christian doctrine in ways that involve its truth and the ascertainment of that truth. A systematic presentation of the Christian doctrine is related to the truth claim of that doctrine:

The specifically scientific nature which since the days of Scholasticism has been claimed for dogmatics, or more generally, as was then said, for theology, is thus closely connected to the systematic investigation and presentation of Christian teaching. At the same time, there is an implied reference to the question of the truth of what is presented. The systematic investigation and presentation itself entails also a very specific understanding of truth, namely *truth as coherence*, as the mutual agreement of all that is true. Systematic theology ascertains the truth of Christian doctrine by investigation and presentation of its coherence as regards both the interrelation of the parts and the relation to other knowledge.<sup>46</sup>

In ways similar to Lonergan’s acknowledgment of the problem involved in articulating Christian mystery, Pannenberg thinks the systematic presentation of Christian teaching sometimes comes in conflict with the truth assumed prior to any systematic presentation of that teaching, as in the reflections of theologians critical of traditionally accepted teaching. Even when theologians want to say the same thing as the tradition, their reflections often alter the content of that tradition. This raises, for Pannenberg,

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>45</sup> Maeland, “Invention in Contemporary Doctrinal Theory” 161.

<sup>46</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:21–22. Pannenberg’s preference for truth as “coherence” does not adequately represent the Scholastic term “*adaequatio*.” The word “coherence” may be a little weak and fragile and may suggest a mere provisional agreement.

the issue of criteria for resolving conflicting viewpoints. By its nature, truth precedes subjective insight; one who is seeking knowledge may either hit upon the truth or miss it. The process of coming to judgment involves the testing of truth claims, since a presupposed truth can be grasped only in the medium of knowing it as truth.<sup>47</sup> What is at stake, for Pannenberg, is God's revelation, not human opinions or judgments, an issue that has led to conflict between belief in the authority of Scripture and that of the church.<sup>48</sup> For him, presentation of church doctrine must be tested against Scripture and its inner coherence and relation to truths investigated. "So long as one thinks that the truth of Christian doctrine must be established in advance of all discussion of its content, and given the demise of both the infallible authority of the church's teaching office and the older Protestant doctrine of inspiration, there is little choice but to appeal to the act of faith, whether as experience or as risk or venture."<sup>49</sup> By such reasoning Pannenberg makes clear that what is at stake is not the formulation of doctrines but the identity of the faith: there might be development and progress in the use of language, but not in the identity of the contents of faith. The truth is present and independent of any testing of Christian teaching.<sup>50</sup> Systematic theology does not make the truth of Christian doctrine a question but accepts it because of its theocentric orientation.<sup>51</sup> If the truth of Christian doctrine is not presupposed and is made a theme of discussion and debate, then rational argumentation or human judgment decides the truth of faith. Judgments about what is true or false, like all judgments, are undoubtedly subjectively conditioned and do not necessarily correspond to the truth.<sup>52</sup>

Pannenberg believes that his understanding of truth as coherence is already implied in the reality of God. "Dogmatics cannot give concrete reality to the truth of God as such. It cannot present it in packaged formulas. Sincerely as it strives to grasp and present the truth, its possible correspondence to the truth of God is linked to an awareness that theology is a matter of human knowledge and is related as such to the conditions of finitude."<sup>53</sup> Pannenberg draws attention to the finitude and incompleteness of human "God-talk" and suggests the need to rise above this limitation. The truth of God's revelation lies somewhere between its assertion and its reception. Dogmatics as a presentation of this truth has to be

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Pannenberg suggests that, while the Roman Catholic Church has favored the church's teaching office, Protestant theology has favored a shift or transformation in the act of faith itself, a shift or transformation expressed in the development of the so-called prolegomena to dogmatics.

<sup>49</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:47.

<sup>50</sup> Maeland, "Invention in Contemporary Doctrinal Theory" 162.

<sup>51</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:49.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. 54.

systematic theology, a systematic doctrine of God and nothing else. For this reason systematic theology, for Pannenberg, has to be a “doxology.”<sup>54</sup>

### CASE STUDY: TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

That there is a strong relationship between one’s theological conclusions and the method by which one arrives at those conclusions has yet to be disputed. This interface between one’s theology and philosophy means that there are no isolated topics in systematic theology, because what is said about revelation, for instance, affects and determines the core of all other potential subjects: eschatology, ecclesiology, incarnation, grace, and Trinity.<sup>55</sup> The choice of the doctrine of the Trinity as a case study of the systematic theologies of Lonergan and Pannenberg is due to the fundamental role the doctrine plays in their theologies. This is truer for Pannenberg, for whom a Christian doctrine of God must be a doctrine of the Trinity. “His three-volume *Systematic Theology* is one of the strongest and most nuanced examples of a trinitarian doctrine of God,” declares Christiaan Mostert.<sup>56</sup>

Lonergan’s treatment of the Christian doctrine of Trinity follows in the Augustinian-Thomistic tradition that employs a psychological analogy in the understanding of the divine processions. Augustine employed the psychological analogy following the *via inventionis* (way of discovery), appealing to word and love as they proceed in human consciousness. Aquinas’s later development presented the analogy not only psychologically, as Augustine did, but also metaphysically, following the order he considered proper to a systematic ordering of ideas: *ordo disciplinae* or *ordo doctrinae* (the way of learning and the way of teaching). Lonergan follows the Thomistic *ordo disciplinae* and advances it by blending the psychological analogy with his theory of intentional consciousness, making his psychological penetration more differentiated in terms of interiority than that of Augustine and Aquinas.<sup>57</sup> Doran rightly observes in his preface to the English edition of Lonergan’s *De Deo Trino* that the systematic part has as its main objective “an understanding of a doctrine or set of doctrines that are already [proposed] by the church and/or accepted within a particular theological tradition.”<sup>58</sup> Lonergan’s conviction that insight occurs in all spheres of human knowledge (mathematics, history, science, theology, etc.) as a

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 58–59.

<sup>55</sup> Nicholas Adams, “Eschatology Sacred and Profane: The Effects of Philosophy on Theology in Pannenberg, Rahner, and Moltmann,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 2 (2000) 283–306, at 284.

<sup>56</sup> Christiaan Mostert, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Eschatological Doctrine of God* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2002) 3.

<sup>57</sup> See Lonergan, *Triune God: Systematics* xix.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Lonergan’s original *De Deo Trino* was published in two volumes entitled *Pars Dogmatica* (rev. ed. of the formerly titled *Pars analytica*) and *Pars Systematica*

response to inquiry leads him to seek intelligible unity in the Thomist and Augustinian trinitarian theory.<sup>59</sup> He uses the Thomistic idea that the order of exposition differs from the order of discovery to show how the terms and relations of systematic thought ought to express a development of understanding. Hence he writes on the trinitarian analogy:

For a better understanding of this the following should be noted: (1) although in this life we do not know what God is, we do have a knowledge of him through analogies that are imperfect; (2) some analogies are philosophical, by which, apart from any revelation, we can form some conception of God and demonstrate his existence, while other analogies are theological, by means of which we try to acquire some measure of understanding of the mysteries revealed by God; (3) the philosophical analogies of being and intellect and love are complemented and perfected by the theological analogies of word and proceeding love; and (4) although the theological analogies afford a fuller and more intimate knowledge of God, they are more imperfect and obscure than philosophical analogies.<sup>60</sup>

Pannenberg, for his part, discusses the subject matter of dogmatics with the goal of presenting it as the “unfolding of the Christian idea of God,”<sup>61</sup> because theology is essentially a *Gotteswissenschaft*, a doctrine of God and all things in their relation to God.<sup>62</sup> The influence of Hegel’s philosophy on Pannenberg’s theology is more pronounced here where he adopts “Hegel’s account of Trinity and history, within the context of a conceptual approach to the absolute”<sup>63</sup> and uses this (Hegelian) dialectic to present his argument on the unity and plurality in God.<sup>64</sup> Even though Pannenberg scarcely uses trinitarian language in talking about how God has partaken in human history, the goal of his *Systematic Theology* is to provide a more thorough trinitarian theology, because the object of theology, when all is said and done, is the truth of God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. Liam Taylor elucidates Pannenberg’s thought:

Even though, in Pannenberg’s view, the whole of history has come to light in the life of Jesus as a “proleptic anticipation”, before then all Christian claims to truth can be presented only as hypotheses, not as self-grounded dogmas. Christianity’s truth, he says, comes not from some a priori authority, but is corroborated by its

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(3rd ed. of the formerly titled *Divinarum Personarum*) (Rome: Gregorian University, 1964).

<sup>59</sup> See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 2, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2005).

<sup>60</sup> Lonergan, *Triune God* 683.

<sup>62</sup> Mostert, *God and the Future* 2.

<sup>63</sup> Adams, “Eschatology Sacred and Profane” 292.

<sup>64</sup> See Anselm K. Min, “The Dialectic of Divine Love: Pannenberg’s Hegelian Trinitarianism,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6 (2004) 252–69.

coherence with all that is true. That is, it must correspond to the evidence of human history.<sup>65</sup>

Pannenberg's concentration on the question of the truth claim of dogma would lead him to separate ontology (material substance of theology) from epistemology (how we come to know God), the former establishing the primacy of the triune God and the latter attempting a clarification of a general notion of God and how God transforms and fulfills human history.<sup>66</sup> "Dogmatics, although it treats all other themes from the standpoint of God and thus discusses them in exposition of the concept of God, cannot begin directly with the reality of God,"<sup>67</sup> that is, the triune God.

Consistent with his view of truth as coherence, Pannenberg assumes that a systematic development of the doctrine of the Trinity must begin with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. "Here lies the material justification for the demand that the doctrine of the Trinity must be based on the biblical witness to revelation or on the economy of salvation."<sup>68</sup> The Christian confession that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of the Father ascertains "that God himself, the eternal Father, is present in history through his Son. The 'eventual actuality' of that history is not something accidental to the eternal identity of God the Father. And yet the Father is prior to that eventful actuality, and therefore the Son is also prior to his involvement in that dramatic history. Otherwise the Son could not be of one essence with the eternal Father."<sup>69</sup> Pannenberg explains the eternity of God from the viewpoint of God's future action in time. The incarnation was not accidental to the eternal identity of Jesus as Logos and Son of the Father because the eternal Son of God was always to become incarnate, *filius Dei incarnandus*.<sup>70</sup> Pannenberg thus uses the Plotinian categories (dating back to Augustine), particularly the Plotinian description of eternity in terms of wholeness of life, to show how eternal life is realized in the trinitarian nature of the one God:

The divine economy that manifests the activities of Father, Son and Spirit includes the temporal distinctions between creation, incarnation and the final consummation of the world. The unity of immanent and economic Trinity secures these distinctions to be significant within the eternal life of the immanent Trinity. Conversely, however, the same unity of the divine economy and the immanent life of

<sup>65</sup> Lain Taylor, "How to Be a Trinitarian Theologian: A Critique of Wolfhart Pannenberg's Systematic Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60 (2007) 180–95, at 184.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* 187.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 299.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Eternity, Time, and the Trinitarian God," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39 (2000) 9–14, at 12.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* 13.

<sup>67</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:61.

the Trinity guarantees the wholeness in the “eventful actuality” of the divine economy. It does not get separated in the course of time, but it overcomes the separateness of our temporal experience and of our finite life in such a way as to let it participate in the wholeness of God’s eternal life.<sup>71</sup>

### CLARIFICATION BY CONTRAST

*Systematic Theology*, volume 1, broadens an understanding of *systematics*, both elucidating and at the same time highlighting significant differences in a way that neither Lonergan nor Pannenberg would have anticipated. Pannenberg’s work grows out of other significant contributions he has made across several theological fields,<sup>72</sup> contributions that no serious modern presentation of theology can ignore. *Systematic Theology* is a brilliant systematization of his earlier works which he brings into conversation with ecumenical Christian tradition.<sup>73</sup> Like the newly completed three-volume work of James William McClendon Jr., Pannenberg’s follows an approach that reverences the insight of Karl Barth: “a good dogmatics is the best apologetics.”<sup>74</sup> The strength of Pannenberg’s argument lies in the connection he makes among dogmatics, the community of faith, and the truth question. As Bard Maeland attests: “To him the truth in the tradition is the fundamental matter of concern. Based on this, a theory of vital aspects of doctrinal activity is developed. His perspective of a truth-contest is in particular relevant for the diversity of interpretations within Christian teaching. Considerations with a reference to this fact must be expected from any proposal of doctrinal theory.”<sup>75</sup>

Like Lonergan, who spoke of the need to acquire a historical perspective, that is, the understanding of how the patterns of living, the institutions, and the common meanings of one place and time differ from those of another,<sup>76</sup> Pannenberg stresses the need for a critically heightened (historical) consciousness in constructing modern systematic theology, without which systematic theology remains comparatively vague and naïve.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>72</sup> Mattes, *The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* 56.

<sup>73</sup> Mattes, “Pannenberg’s Achievement” 51. See also Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

<sup>74</sup> Robert Barron, “Considering the Systematic Theology of James William McClendon Jr.” *Modern Theology* 18 (2002) 267–76, at 267. See also James William McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vols. 1 & 2 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994) and McClendon, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000).

<sup>75</sup> Maeland, “Invention in Contemporary Doctrinal Theory” 167.

<sup>76</sup> Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical Mindfulness,” in *A Second Collection* 1–9, at 4.

<sup>77</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:xi.

Pannenberg, however, does not speak of “historical consciousness” in the way both Lonergan and John Courtney Murray use the term.<sup>78</sup> His point, rather, is to emphasize what he sees as an essential element in the investigation of the truth claim of Christian doctrine, that is, that historical and systematic reflection must continually permeate each another. Christian doctrine is a historical construct, and attempts to formulate the universal scope of the divine action in the person and history of Jesus cannot be understood without properly situating them within history.<sup>79</sup> Lonergan has made a similar argument in *De systemate et historia* that a contemporary systematic theology ought to be a theological theory of history.<sup>80</sup> In Doran’s helpful clarification, systematic achievements are permanent contributions that can be built upon, and because questions can arise that cannot be answered by drawing on the resources of any available system, “higher viewpoints” are demanded. When such questions arise, “readjustments are demanded that call not just for an expansion of the present system but for its sublation into a more inclusive point of view that has yet to be reached. Higher viewpoints are ‘higher’ not because they are more inclusive but because they call for a shift in terms and relations within the discipline and consequently for a rearrangement even of some of the permanent achievements.”<sup>81</sup>

In spite of Lonergan and Pannenberg’s agreement on some matters, there are also areas of sharp contrast. They clearly diverge on their notion of truth. Lonergan, the critical realist, here espouses a correspondence theory of truth, which leads him to view the principal function of systematics as concerned not with the truth of doctrine but with the synthetic understanding of doctrines already affirmed to be true. Pannenberg, characterized by Doran as an idealist, sees truth as coherence and in turn assumes that a systematic investigation and presentation entails a specific understanding of truth.<sup>82</sup> The

<sup>78</sup> See John Courtney Murray, *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism*, ed. J. Leon Hooper (Louisville: Westminster, 1993).

<sup>79</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:x.

<sup>80</sup> The meaning of the phrase *De systemate et historia* is complex; it means more than simply saying that systematics should be a theology of history. The expression is based on a course Lonergan taught in the fall of 1959 at the Gregorian University; Doran (“System and History”) assigns it four meanings.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 655.

<sup>82</sup> See Robert M. Doran, S.J., “Bernard Lonergan and the Functions of Systematic Theology,” *Theological Studies* 59 (1998) 569–607, esp. n. 4. Mark Mattes does not see Pannenberg as an idealist. Rather he concurs with J. Wentzel van Huyssteen that Pannenberg is a “critical realist.” See Mattes, “Pannenberg’s Achievement” 52; and J. Wentzel van Huyssteen, “Truth and Commitment in Theology and Science: An Appraisal of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s Perspective” in *Essays in Postfoundationalist Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997) 69–72.



insight of Sallie McFague, who has forcefully made the argument that systematic theology has to be historical and contemporary, might help to mediate these two opposing viewpoints.<sup>83</sup> If systematic theology is to be historical, it must be faithful to the Christian Scriptures and revelation that speak of Jesus of Nazareth as God's paradigmatic self-revelation; if it is to be contemporary, systematic theology must adequately address contemporary issues and problems.<sup>84</sup> How then can systematic theology perform the dual role of revitalizing classical understanding of Scripture and revealed truths while still being responsive to contemporary issues if its principal function is not, as Lonergan maintains, to promote understanding of realities affirmed in doctrines?

Some areas of difficulty remain in Lonergan's work on systematics—problems, as Doran has observed, that will not go away.<sup>85</sup> Some stem from the shift Lonergan effected from truths to data, which implies conceiving theology on the analogy of the natural sciences. Although he vehemently dismissed this criticism, Lonergan acknowledges that placing the starting point of theology not on truths but in data poses a complex problem.<sup>86</sup> Charles Davis has cautioned, based on Lonergan's argument in *De Deo Trino*, that the infallible magisterium of the church alone is capable of making judgments about revealed doctrine with complete certitude, that Lonergan's starting point, like any powerful system, rests on unquestioned assumptions: Lonergan takes the Roman Catholic view of magisterium for granted, making speculative or systematic theology depend essentially upon the magisterium. Lonergan, in Davis's judgment, assumes a great deal because there is no "inherent reason why God should impart the wisdom needed in judging of revealed truths only through a hierarchically constituted Church."<sup>87</sup> He thinks Lonergan overstates the absolute character of truth and reaches his philosophical conclusions too rapidly.<sup>88</sup> This criticism, however, was based on Davis's reading of Lonergan prior to *Method in Theology*, which Davis admits offers a "much more flexible approach" than *Insight* and *De Deo Trino*. He nevertheless maintains that Lonergan's results are "predetermined" because his "method will lead to the same dogmas as before, the same Catholic religion, the same Catholic Church, even indeed substantially the same theology."<sup>89</sup>

<sup>83</sup> See Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>84</sup> Joseph A. Bracken, S.J., "Images of God within Systematic Theology," *Theological Studies* 63 (2002) 362–73, at 365.

<sup>85</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 3.

<sup>86</sup> Lonergan, "Bernard Lonergan Responds," in *Foundations of Theology* 223–34, at 224.

<sup>87</sup> Charles Davis, "Lonergan and the Teaching Church," in *Foundations of Theology* 60–75, at 64.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 69.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 73.

In my view, Lonergan does not use the magisterium as an excuse for what Crowe calls “intellectual complacency and laziness.”<sup>90</sup> He is clear in *Method in Theology* that intentional consciousness develops and that the structure eliminates rigidity because it admits of development and revision of earlier views. This approach eliminates “any authoritarian basis for method. One can find out for oneself and in oneself just what one’s conscious and intentional operations are and how they are related to one another. One can discover for oneself and in oneself why it is that performing such operations in such and such manners constitutes human knowing. Once one has achieved that, one is no longer dependent on someone else in selecting one’s method and in carrying it out. One is on one’s own.”<sup>91</sup>

Applied to the task of systematic theology, Lonergan’s intentional analysis raises some important questions: Does the self-correcting process of learning apply to dogma? If it does, how can dogma remain dogma?<sup>92</sup> Does this method not predetermine the conclusions derived? Did Lonergan switch to intentionality to meet the challenges of modern culture or was it just an ingenious design of a Catholic trying to be faithful to the church’s magisterium? Using the insights of Lonergan, Crowe answers that in the development of theology based on dogma there is little restriction on the learning process. “The dogmas are not a continent but a beachhead, not the sea of infinity but little islands scattered on the sea; they are not boundaries (at least not just boundaries), they are also openings to further investigation; not a *summa theologiae*, but fragmentary items of knowledge.”<sup>93</sup> Dogma becomes data to be sifted, judged, rearranged, and interpreted.<sup>94</sup> Lonergan uses, as an instance of the permanence of dogma and its subsequent systematic development, Vatican I’s statement that, while it is the same dogma that is still understood, “understanding grows and advances down the ages.”<sup>95</sup> Thus for Lonergan, while *doctrines* affirm the permanence of dogma, despite the historically shifting contexts within which dogmas were understood and expressed, *systematics* maintains the permanence of dogmas while still attending principally to their systematic developments.<sup>96</sup>

Doran offers a more balanced appraisal. He observes that most of what is in the first chapter of *De Deo Trino* appeared in 1957, about eight years

<sup>90</sup> Frederick E. Crowe, “Dogma versus the Self-Correcting Process of Learning,” in *Foundations of Theology* 22–40, at 28.

<sup>91</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 344.

<sup>92</sup> Crowe, “Dogma versus the Self-Correcting Process of Learning” 26.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* 29.

<sup>94</sup> See Langdon Gilkey, “Empirical Science and Theological Knowing,” in *Foundations of Theology* 76–101, at 85.

<sup>95</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 347; see Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, chap. 4 (DS 3020).

<sup>96</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 347.

before Lonergan arrived at the notion of functional specialization and before he grasped with clarity that theology mediates between faith and culture and that systematics is grounded in conversion. He is, however, puzzled that “the understanding of systematics presented in this earlier manuscript survives essentially unchanged in the new framework opened up in *Method in Theology*.”<sup>97</sup> He points out four helpful emphases that should be noted in Lonergan’s systematics. First is Lonergan’s insistence in *Method in Theology* that the principal function of systematics is “the hypothetical, imperfect, analogical, obscure, and gradually developing understanding of the mysteries of faith.” Second is Lonergan’s argument in *De Deo Trino* that the systematic theologian takes as core or central problems the mysteries of faith that have been defined in ecclesial dogmatic pronouncements (e.g., Trinity, the hypostatic union, and grace). Third is Lonergan’s argument, following Aquinas, that systematic understanding should proceed as much as possible according to *ordo disciplinae* or *ordo doctrinae* because the order of teaching is different from the order of discovery, the *via inventionis*. Fourth is the need to make the move in systematics from description to explanation and doing so on the level of one’s own time.<sup>98</sup>

In this careful appraisal, Doran stacks the first of Lonergan’s emphases against the procedures followed by Pannenberg and finds Pannenberg’s conception of truth as coherence<sup>99</sup> an idealist conception that does not adequately distinguish between insight and judgment, within which “there is no ground for distinguishing doctrines from systematics, for there is no acknowledgment of judgment as a distinct constitutive element in human knowing.”<sup>100</sup> Pannenberg’s account, Doran points out, suggests that doctrine and systematics are one because, as in all idealism, judgment and understanding are not properly distinguished. But in Lonergan, doctrines (affirmations) are correlated with judgment and systematics with understanding,

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. Doran further notes: “I have said that the exposition in *De Deo Trino* is classic. But when Lonergan speaks of the classic text, he speaks also of the traditions that the classics ground and in which they are received. A genuine tradition displays ‘a long accumulation of insights, adjustments, re-interpretations, that repeats the original message afresh for each age.’ It is my suggestion that functional specialization, mediation, and the new notion of foundations call for an accumulation of insights, adjustments, and reinterpretations around the notion of systematics that do not find their way into the chapter on that functional specialty in *Method in Theology*” (Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology* 6).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. 7–13.

<sup>99</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:21–22. “The systematic investigation and presentation itself entails also a very specific understanding of truth, namely, *truth as coherence*, as the mutual agreement of all that is true. Systematic theology ascertains the truth of Christian doctrine by investigation and presentation of its coherence as regards both the interrelation of the parts and the relation to other knowledge.”

<sup>100</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 8.

since systematics attempts to understand what has been affirmed. “On Lonergan’s account, again, affirming Christian doctrine as true is one thing, while understanding what one has affirmed to be true is something else. For Lonergan, it is the *meaning* of Christian doctrine, not its truth, that is ‘the theme of systematic theology.’ It is ‘how it *can* be true’ that is at stake in systematics. *That* it is true is already affirmed. Or, to be more precise, by the time the theologian begins to do systematics, he or she has already determined precisely what are the doctrines that are to be affirmed.”<sup>101</sup> This is why, in assigning functional specialties to theology, Lonergan lists and describes eight functions a theologian performs and assigns the ground for this division without using the word *truth*. He instead uses such terms as *reasonably affirmed*, *judgments of fact*, *elimination of contradictions and fallacies*, *the refutation of error*, and *distinction between correct and incorrect understanding*.<sup>102</sup> This is in contradistinction to Pannenberg for whom the truth question is essential to the hermeneutic of the theologian and is the goal, not presupposition, of theological investigation.<sup>103</sup> Equally significant is the contrast between Lonergan and Pannenberg regarding the order of teaching and order of learning. Doran makes this point emphatically:

For Lonergan, as long as one is moving in the way of discovery, one may be moving toward systematic reflection, but one is not doing systematics. One is working in one or more of the first six functional specialties: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines. Pannenberg’s three-volume *Systematic Theology* proceeds almost entirely in this *via inventionis*. It is good *via inventionis* work, in some places quite outstanding. For the most part, it leads to, represents, or supports “sound doctrine.” But it is not what Lonergan means by systematics. In fact, I think it is no exaggeration to say that Pannenberg is working at one time or other in every other functional specialty, and hardly, if at all, in systematics as Lonergan conceived the latter.<sup>104</sup>

One must agree with Doran that Lonergan’s conception of theology in terms of the functional specialization of the operations that theologians perform requires that more be said about systematic theology than Lonergan says in the chapter on systematics.<sup>105</sup> Lonergan could also have said more about the role his shift from faculty psychology (Aquinas’s metaphysics) to intentionality analysis played in his conception of systematic theology. In the two studies he did on Aquinas—*Grace and Freedom* and *Verbum*—we find glimpses of changes Lonergan would effect were he to rewrite them following the new method he is proposing: there would be significant differences from (as well as affinities with) Aquinas. “For Aquinas—

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Crowe, “Dogma versus the Self-Correcting Process of Learning” 24.

<sup>103</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:36.

<sup>104</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 10.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 4.

nas' thought on grace and freedom and his thought on cognitional theory and on the Trinity were genuine achievements of the human spirit. Such achievement has a permanence of its own. It can be improved upon. It can be inserted in larger and richer contexts."<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, is a kind of prolegomenon that provides a foundation for his systematic theology. He follows a narrative approach in which, like the older Protestant dogmatics, theology is conceived of as knowledge of God made possible by God. The possibility of the knowledge of God would be logically inconceivable and would contradict the very idea of God were this knowledge not made possible by God.<sup>107</sup> By historical and critical analysis Pannenberg reconstructs this knowledge of God as it has been understood in the works of early Lutheran orthodox dogmaticians like Johann Gerhard, reformed theologians like Franz Junius, medieval Scholastics like Scotus, Aquinas, and Albert the Great, and synthesizes them with the thought of modern thinkers like Schleiermacher and Barth. This narrative historical reconstruction enables Pannenberg to connect systematics with the community of faith. The distinctiveness of this approach lies in how Pannenberg concentrates on the question of truth, that is, the truth in the tradition which for him is a fundamental matter of concern. On this basis he develops a theory of vital aspects of doctrinal activity, a perspective of truth-content that is particularly relevant for the diversity of interpretations within Christian teaching.<sup>108</sup>

The functional specialty *systematics* is to Lonergan what *Systematic Theology*, volume 1, is to Pannenberg. Herein are the loci of their systematic theologies. Lonergan's attention to method led to his remark that, when culture is conceived empirically "theology is conceived to be an ongoing process, and then one writes on its method."<sup>109</sup> Method is, for him, a framework for collaborative creativity. He assigns eight distinct tasks to this operation that a theologian performs: research, interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications. It is in the penultimate specialty, *systematics*, that he developed his idea that systematic theology promotes an understanding of the realities of faith. Lonergan's method deviates from the medieval Thomistic-Aristotelian logic based on first principles that was used for demonstration, not deepening understanding. As Michael O'Callaghan puts it, "Methodical mediation begins, not with logical propositions, but with

<sup>106</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 352.

<sup>107</sup> Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:2.

<sup>108</sup> Maeland, "Invention in Contemporary Doctrinal Theory" 167.

<sup>109</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* xi.

concrete realities: sensitively, intellectually, rationally, morally conscious subjects.”<sup>110</sup> Not content with medieval Scholasticism’s overlay of Aristotelian logic and theology as science of logically first propositions from which further propositions were derived, Lonergan uniquely distinguishes the task of the theologian, speaking of the *ordo inventionis* and *ordo disciplinae* as interrelated but distinct. The order of teaching is different from the order of discovery; in the order of teaching the theologian systematically presents the truth that has been revealed, leading to a development in understanding.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, Pannenberg’s dedication to ecumenism, especially rapprochement between Protestants and Roman Catholics,<sup>112</sup> makes him a good dialogue partner for Lonergan. Pannenberg’s *Systematic Theology*, as Doran rightly points out, is a good *via inventionis* work that “leads to, represents, or supports ‘sound doctrine.’”<sup>113</sup> Although Pannenberg may have been “working at one time or other in every other functional specialty, and hardly if at all, in *systematics* as Lonergan conceived the latter,”<sup>114</sup> he offers both a contrast and a complement to Lonergan who has consistently maintained that a contemporary Catholic theology has to be not only Catholic but also ecumenical; its concern must reach not only Christians but also non-Christians and atheists.<sup>115</sup> Pannenberg’s dedication to metaphysics as “offering scientific neutrality” and as the best route of attaining truth, though it may not have been as general as he intended it,<sup>116</sup> complements Lonergan’s quest for a universal method that meets all exigencies of meaning operative in all religions and religious traditions. For Lonergan offers a method that is:

- transcultural: it discerns in all religious traditions common unifying factors verifiable for methodical inquiry
- transhistorical: it avoids both classicist and modernist presuppositions
- transideological: it does not succumb to dogmatisms of either the right or the left
- metahistorical: it does not derive itself from any horizon, but serving as the instrument for understanding, judging, and transforming all horizons past, present, and future.<sup>117</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Michael O’Callaghan, “Theology and the Secularizing of Truth,” in *Religion and Culture* 135–47, at 137.

<sup>111</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 346.

<sup>112</sup> Mattes, *Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* 57.

<sup>113</sup> Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* 10.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

<sup>115</sup> Lonergan, “Theology in Its New Context” 62.

<sup>116</sup> Mattes, *Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology* 72.

<sup>117</sup> Michael P. Morrissey, *Consciousness and Transcendence: The Theology of Eric Voegelin* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 1994) 194–95.