

## Cruciform Encounter in a Time of Crisis: Enfleshing an Ethics of Alterity

Theological Studies  
2019, Vol. 80(1) 79–101  
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DOI: 10.1177/0040563918819810  
journals.sagepub.com/home/tsj



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### Abstract

This article connects the work of M. Shawn Copeland to a dialogue between Bernard Lonergan and Emmanuel Levinas. Exploring these authors' insights on intersubjectivity, alterity, dialectic, and embodiment, the article develops a framework for engaging and overcoming contemporary crises of relationality. These resources are then used to reframe questions of otherness in terms of the imitation of Christ, advocating encounter grounded in open, prayerful engagement with the marginalized.

### Keywords

M. Shawn Copeland, consciousness, dialectic, embodiment, intersubjectivity, Emmanuel Levinas, Bernard Lonergan, otherness

“The future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognize the other as a ‘you’ and themselves as part of an ‘us.’ We all need each other.”<sup>1</sup> These words come near the conclusion of the first papal TED Talk, given by Pope Francis in April 2017. While the phrase “papal TED Talk” is itself indicative of the unprecedented nature of our time, many of the papal lecture’s lessons are timeless: the reminder

1. Francis, “Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone,” trans. Elena Montrasio (presented at TED2017: The Future You, April 25, 2017), [https://www.ted.com/talks/pope\\_francis\\_why\\_the\\_only\\_future\\_worth\\_building\\_includes\\_everyone?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/pope_francis_why_the_only_future_worth_building_includes_everyone?language=en).

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that “none of us is an island, an autonomous and independent ‘I,’ separated from the other”; the exhortation to move beyond “harsh judgment”; the importance of solidarity and tenderness.<sup>2</sup> Reflecting upon the theme of the conference at which his paper was presented (“The Future You”), however, it is necessary to contextualize Francis’s concerns within our present moment, when the future seems especially occluded. This historical horizon adds an urgency to his exhortations to restore relationships, foster mutual recognition, and overcome the enmity “that needs to be extinguished before it goes up in flames, leaving only ashes behind.”<sup>3</sup> The future may be in the hands of those who recognize the dignity of the “you,” and the importance of the “us,” but our own era often obscures the fact that “we all need each other.”<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the pope’s message of solidarity, prevalent polarization and widespread *ressentiment* illustrate the horrifying results of contemporary relationality-gone-awry. Totalizing viewpoints and reductive rhetoric ostracize and inflict violence on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, political affiliation, and religion. False binaries are drawn between prioritizing the struggles of the marginalized and affirming the dignity of all lives, and even some advocates of equality and intersectionality risk overshadowing their messages with violent demonstrations. Overcoming present crises will require the charitable collaboration of a variety of viewpoints, acknowledging the distinctive volatility of our time, and contextualizing current conflicts within a fuller historical framework, as intolerance and enmity are not new phenomena.

The work of M. Shawn Copeland provides one such alternative: a critical realist anthropology grounded in the contextual particularities and experiential specificities of the oppressed Other.<sup>5</sup> The bodies of black women are the primary “prism” through

2. Francis, “Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone.”

3. Francis, “Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone.”

4. Francis, “Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone.”

5. Copeland’s understanding and application of the term “critical realism” is drawn from the work of Bernard Lonergan, for whom “critical realist” refers to those “recognizing knowing to be a threefold compound of the following: experiencing, thus affirming the empiricist’s indubitable intuition that there is a real world that can be known through attention to data, while rejecting the empiricist’s untenable supposition that this world is the data and can thus be known absent some sort of constructive work; understanding, thus affirming the idealist’s indubitable supposition that reality is always constructed while rejecting the idealist’s untenable supposition that reality as constructed is other than real; and judging, by which one decides the extent to which a particular effort at construction adequately apprehends reality, thus repudiating the empiricist’s and the idealist’s shared supposition that construction by its very nature obviates any knowledge of the real. Critical realism thus transcends empiricism and idealism, yet integrates within itself the valid insights of both, thus producing a theory of knowledge superior to both” (Jonathan Bernier, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus after the Demise of Authenticity: Toward a Critical Realist Philosophy of History in Jesus Studies*, The Library of New Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 26). Copeland’s own work stresses that any contemporary theological “reevaluation and reinterpretation must be rooted in a critical realism that rejects both naive realism and idealism as adequate foundations for a theology of suffering” (M. Shawn Copeland, “Wading through Many Sorrows: Toward a Theology of Suffering in Womanist

which Copeland frames her analyses, and she insists that celebrating such specificity is the key to affirming the dignity of all human beings.<sup>6</sup> This universality in particularity is quite literally incarnate in the body of Jesus of Nazareth, “because of the marks of that body (gender, race, sex, culture); because of that body’s openness to, turn toward, and solidarity with even radically different others; and because of that body’s pledge to be given and poured out for all others.”<sup>7</sup>

In this article, I will connect Copeland’s thought to a dialogue between Bernard Lonergan and Emmanuel Levinas, developing a theoretical framework drawn from their insights on intersubjectivity, dialectic, and embodiment. I will then utilize this framework to argue that Jesus shatters all reductive paradigms of alterity and similarity, reframing questions of otherness in terms of the imitation of Christ’s relational attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and lovingness. Advocating open, prayerful encounter with those rendered least among us, I will explore ways we might be challenged, changed, and converted by the grace beckoning in and through the face of the Other.<sup>8</sup>

## Resourcing a Lonergan–Levinas Dialogue

At first glance, it may seem strange to suggest a Lonergan–Levinas dialogue as a resource for exploring cultural tensions and intolerance on the basis of race, gender, political affiliation, and so on. A great deal of Lonergan scholarship focuses specifically on his development of the notion of the subject, and it is not uncommon for those with limited exposure to Lonergan’s writings to read him as inadequate in his treatment of the relational.<sup>9</sup> On the opposite end of the spectrum, Emmanuel Levinas’s writings on

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Perspective,” in *A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 109–29 at 122).

6. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 8.
7. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 5.
8. Levinas’s inconsistency concerning capitalization of “Other (whether the personal “*autrui*” or impersonal “*autre*”) is mirrored in his translators’ various positions regarding which instances of “other,” “the other,” “others,” “otherness,” etc., ought to be capitalized in English. For simplicity’s sake, I have chosen to capitalize all occurrences of “Other” that refer either to a particular personhood rupturing the horizon of the subject, or to the principle of alterity itself. All quotations from Levinas, on the other hand, retain the translators’ own capitalizations. For a more detailed discussion of these issues of capitalization, see Jeffrey Bloechl, “Words of Welcome: Hospitality in the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas,” in *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 232–41, at 233.
9. Cloe Taddei-Ferretti, “Intersubjectivity in the Thought of Bernard Lonergan and in Cognitive Science,” in *Going Beyond Essentialism: Bernard J.F. Lonergan an Atypical Neo-Scholastic*, ed. Cloe Taddei-Ferretti (Napoli: Nella Sede Dell’Istituto, 2012), 191–213 at 191. In contrast to these misunderstandings described by Taddei-Ferretti, Paul Kidder argues, “Lonergan finds utter ontological priority in neither the individual

the subject's a priori responsibility for the irreducibility of the Other can "seem so strange that one can hardly grasp what they mean or even what they *might* mean."<sup>10</sup> This leads some readers to wonder whether Levinas's thought emphasizes alterity to such a degree that it "create[s] new problems as troubling as those it sought to resolve."<sup>11</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, dialogue between the works of Lonergan and Levinas has been limited. This is regrettable, as the few studies that have initiated such conversation suggest that further Lonergan–Levinas exchange could prove quite constructive.<sup>12</sup>

While Levinas's work differs drastically from Lonergan's in a number of respects, their projects are not without overlap, and these harmonious elements resonate powerfully with Copeland's ethics of enfleshment. For example, Copeland, Bryan Massingale, and Jon Nilson have all demonstrated and/or argued for Lonergan's value as "a legitimate voice in the effort to theologically reflect on and oppose oppression."<sup>13</sup>

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nor the community, but rather makes an ontological commitment to their dynamic inter-relationship." See Kidder, "Lonergan and the Husserlian Problem of Transcendental Intersubjectivity," ed. Mark D. Morelli, *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 4 (1986): 29–54 at 30. Balancing the subject's exigencies toward authenticity with the shared meanings and self-correction of collaboration, Lonergan's method is ultimately grounded in the communication and dialogue fostered by interpersonal encounter.

10. Michael L. Morgan, *Discovering Levinas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 143.
11. Steve Harrist and Frank C. Richardson, "Levinas and Hermeneutics on Ethics and the Other," *Theory & Psychology* 22 (2011): 342–58 at 349, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959354310389647>.
12. These studies are few in number, but they provide illuminating insights into these seemingly disparate thinkers. For a detailed examination of the similarities and differences between Lonergan and Levinas, the challenges accompanying their interaction, and the benefits that might result from a mutual dialogue between their works, see Michele Saracino, *On Being Human: A Conversation with Lonergan and Levinas* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2003). See also Michele Saracino, "Subject for the Other: Lonergan and Levinas on Being Human in Postmodernity," in *In Deference to the Other: Lonergan and Contemporary Continental Thought*, ed. Jim Kanaris and Mark J. Doorley (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004), 65–89. For a brief exploration of how Levinas's prioritization of alterity might help facilitate the budding transition toward a similar emphasis in Lonergan studies, see John D. Dadosky, "Is There a Fourth Stage of Meaning?" *Heythrop Journal* (2010): 768–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2009.00518.x>; and John D. Dadosky, "Midwiving the Fourth Stage of Meaning: Lonergan and Doran," in *Meaning and History in Systematic Theology: Essays in Honor of Robert M. Doran, SJ*, ed. John D. Dadosky (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2009), 71–92. Extended analysis of Lonergan's and Levinas's contributions to a theory of intersubjectivity can be found in Brian Bajzek, "Intersubjectivity, *Illeity*, and Being-in-Love: Lonergan and Levinas on Self-Transcendence," *The Heythrop Journal* August 15, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12353> (online only). These arguments are expanded and refined in Brian Bajzek, "Alterity, Similarity, and Dialectic: Methodological Reflections on the Turn to the Other," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2017): 249–66, <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq20176788>.
13. Jeremy W. Blackwood, "The Heart of the Mystical Body of Christ: Subjectivity and Solidarity with Poor Women of Color," *Theological Studies* 77 (2016): 652–77, at 653,

My own contribution to this conversation will be to suggest that Lonergan's rich but underexplored account of intersubjectivity and its connection to self-transcendence provides a robust base from which to explore a non-reductive theory of relationality. This foundation can be bolstered by Levinas's arguments for the primordial, pre-reflective responsibility for the Other, a theme closely related to Copeland's concerns.

### A "Prior 'We'": Lonergan on Intersubjectivity

Lonergan's thought emphasizes the dynamism underlying, conditioning, and advancing all of Creation. Human beings are participants in this movement, so they are also always engaging in a process of self-transcendence. Ideally, this involves an ever fuller actualization of subjects' capacities for inquiry and engagement with the world around them.<sup>14</sup> As knowing subjects within the world, we raise questions and attend to data, recognizing relations and patterns immanent in the data, and generating concepts, definitions, and formulations of these understandings. In a further step, we come to reflection, deliberating upon the fruits of our inquiry, and passing judgment on the truth or falsity of our understanding of the evidence marshaled. In an even further development, self-transcendence reaches beyond the order of knowing into the order of doing, and questions for deliberation lead to judgments of value regarding how each subject will live her or his life, asserting who she or he wants to be through the actions they choose to perform.

Lonergan frames the exhortation to such self-transcending authenticity through the injunctions he names "transcendental precepts."<sup>15</sup> These precepts compel human beings to "Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible."<sup>16</sup> Prior to any explicit thematization or linguistic expression, however, these exhortations exist concretely "in the spontaneous, structured dynamism of human consciousness."<sup>17</sup> The objectification and reflection upon the operations constituting this structure provides the basis of Lonergan's cognitional theory, and there is no shortage of literature

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563916653088>. At 652–54 of this article Blackwood points to numerous places where Copeland, Massingale, and Nilson reference, resource, or quote Lonergan's thought.

14. For a general introduction to the unfolding of this vertical finality (especially as this movement involves humanity) see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Mission and the Spirit," in *A Third Collection*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 16 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 21–33.
15. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Lecture 3: Philosophy of God and the Functional Specialty 'Systematics,'" in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965–1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 199–218, at 201.
16. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, ed. Robert M. Doran and John D. Dadosky, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 52.
17. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 23.

unpacking and applying Lonergan's thought on the subject.<sup>18</sup> One under-resourced component of Lonergan's writings, however, is the assertion of a primordial, sensitive-psychic intersubjectivity preceding and accompanying these cognitional operations.<sup>19</sup>

Lonergan's account of intersubjectivity is built upon the assertion that human beings are fundamentally, relationally linked to one another. "Prior to the 'we' that results from the mutual love of an 'I' and a 'thou,' there is the earlier 'we' that precedes the distinction of subjects and survives its oblivion."<sup>20</sup> Intersubjectivity is the psychic link that binds subjects together in this "we." While each human being has her or his own personal interests and concerns, the self "is no Leibnizian monad," but a communal, social being, joined to others by the primordial ties "of mother and child, man and wife, father and son."<sup>21</sup> It is within the intersubjective matrix of foundational connections that people grow and learn, developing within the family, clan, tribe, nation, and the human community as a whole.<sup>22</sup> Prior to the specificities accompanying technology, societal structures, and cultural advancement, human beings share intersubjective meanings, and these meanings bind groups together on the basis of an irreducible relatedness. Such meanings emerge naturally and extemporaneously in human life, and Lonergan frequently cites the smile as an example of such intersubjective

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18. For a concise overview of Lonergan's cognitional theory, see Bernard Lonergan, "Cognitional Structure," in *Collection: Papers by Bernard J.F. Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 205–21. For a thorough introduction to this cognitional theory's relationship to a general theory of history, see Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 19–41. For an overview of the way this theory of subjectivity grounds Lonergan's theological anthropology, see Mark T. Miller, *The Quest for God and the Good Life: Lonergan's Theological Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013). For an overview of how knowing and its expression in Lonergan's cognitional theory are inextricably linked to embodiment, see Jonathan Heaps, "Insight Is a Body-Feeling: Experiencing Our Understanding," *Heythrop Journal* 57 (2016): 461–72, <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12311>.
19. Lonergan typically uses the term "intersubjectivity" to refer to the pre-intentional, psychic bonds between all human beings, while he usually employs "interpersonal" to denote the intentionally relational, including all the ways our understanding, judgment, decision, and lovingness are bound up in the social and communal elements of human life. My own usage of these terms will observe and follow this distinction. For an introduction to the connection between the intersubjective and the interpersonal (as well as the ways this connection can become distorted), see Robert M. Doran, *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions, Volume 1: Missions and Processions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 196–226.
20. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 56.
21. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe, Robert M. Doran, and Daniel Monsour, 5th ed. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 237.
22. Lonergan, *Insight*, 237.

meaning.<sup>23</sup> We do not learn to smile as we learn other skills, which necessitate our acquiring habits and developing ordered patterns of actions. Smiles happen spontaneously. Their meaning is irreducible. Their meaning is intersubjective.

Interestingly, the “we” of intersubjectivity extends beyond one’s acquaintances, manifesting itself in spontaneous intersubjective acts on behalf of others, even total strangers. These acts occur prior to any thematization or reflection, and the subject acting only becomes fully aware of his or her action during or after the action’s occurrence. Spontaneous intersubjective acts happen selflessly, in instances where one’s “perception, feeling, and bodily movement are involved, but the help given another is not deliberate but spontaneous, [where] we act as if ‘we’ were members of one another prior to our distinctions of each from the others.”<sup>24</sup> This assistance occurs as instinctively as one would raise an arm to block one’s own head from being hit.<sup>25</sup> Lonergan often cites a particular personal experience as an example of such spontaneous, intersubjective aid:

Leading up to the Borghese Gardens in Rome, where I usually go for my favorite walk, there is a ramp. Coming down the ramp was a small child running ahead of its mother. He started to trip and tumbled; I was a good twenty feet away but spontaneously I moved forward

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23. Lonergan, *Insight*, 60. See also “Method in Catholic Theology,” in *Philosophical Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 29–53, at 37; “Time and Meaning,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 94–121, at 97; “Analogy of Meaning,” in *Philosophical Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 183–213, at 210–11; *Topics in Education: The Cincinnati Lectures of 1959 on the Philosophy of Education*, ed. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 10 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 166–67, 210; “Analysis of Meaning and Introduction to Religion,” in *Early Works on Theological Method 1*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Robert C. Croken, 1st ed. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 22 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 534–52, at 535; Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Absence of God in Modern Culture,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. Robert Doran and John Dadosky, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 13 (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 86–98, at 87; “Belief: Today’s Issue,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. Robert Doran, SJ, and John Dadosky, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 13 (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 75–85, at 78; “The World Mediated by Meaning,” in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965–1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 107–18, at 111.

24. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 56.

25. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 56.

before taking any thought at all, as if to pick up the child. There is an intersubjectivity, there is a sense in which we are all members of one another before we think about it.<sup>26</sup>

This pre-reflective response to the need of another serves as an excellent transition to Levinas, whose work provides a useful complement to and expansion of Lonergan's articulation of the intersubjective.

## A Primordial Obligation: Levinas's Ethics of Alterity

Like Lonergan's presentation of spontaneous intersubjectivity, Levinas's account of relationality is rooted in encounter and pre-reflective aid. Levinas's emphasis, however, is on the face-to-face engagement with irreducible alterity. According to Levinas, the Other ruptures the comfortable horizon of the self, breaking through with a transcendence escaping the tendencies toward totalization or control.<sup>27</sup> This encounter divests me of my own needs or wants. It demands my dis-interestedness with respect to myself, as the Other is the one whose well-being I must prioritize. "The Other is this, not because of the Other's character, or physiognomy, or psychology, but because of the Other's very alterity."<sup>28</sup> The face of the Other calls me into question, presenting me with a choice: I can afford the Other the dignity she deserves, or I can assert my own ego, impose my own will, and—in the limit case—murder her.<sup>29</sup>

In this encounter, the face of the Other exposes me to the divine injunction, "Thou shalt not kill," and so I am also faced with what Levinas terms "*illeity*," the trace of the

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26. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, "Time and Meaning," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 94–121, at 96. This episode is alluded to in many of Lonergan's works, and it is often mentioned as a correlate to Max Scheler's *The Nature of Sympathy*, which Lonergan references as a foundational text on intersubjectivity. See *Method in Theology*, 56–57; "Analogy of Meaning," in *Philosophical Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 183–213, at 187; "Philosophical Positions with Regard to Knowing," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958–1964*, ed. Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 6 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 214–43, at 241–42; "The World Mediated by Meaning," in *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965–1980*, ed. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran, 2nd rev. ed., Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 107–18, at 110–11.
27. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1996), 39.
28. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 83–84.
29. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 232–33.

Divine.<sup>30</sup> This command obligates me into a complete transformation of how I exist in the world, reorienting my being-in-the-world as being-for-the-Other.<sup>31</sup> The self is never absolved from this responsibility, and this responsibility is not reducible to or conditioned by the acts resulting from it. It is primordial, “the original ethical relation,” which is always already present, prior to any reflection, but explicitly manifests itself in the face-to-face encounter with the Other.<sup>32</sup>

Where Lonergan addresses the primordial dimension of psychic, spontaneous solidarity constituting a “we” that is prior to individuation, Levinas calls attention to the fact that each “we” demands a self-giving assent of the “I” in the face-to-face encounter with the Other. This responsibility is not even reducible to any object of conscious intentionality. It precedes objectification, both underlying and constituting the intersubjective, and its referent is so disproportionate to the self that it demands a new mode of authentic sociality.<sup>33</sup> This imperative is startling, and the language Levinas uses to stress its significance is equally jarring: In the encounter with the Other, I am overwhelmed, even taken hostage by this obligation to the weak, the poor, the widow, and the orphan.<sup>34</sup> We might say, then, that where Lonergan was profoundly impacted by the aforementioned episode with the falling child, Levinas’s own experiences and sensibilities might have inclined him to illustrate intersubjective spontaneity by describing falling on a grenade or leaping in front of a bus to protect the Other.

This tonal divergence is matched by a methodological disparity, as Lonergan’s “prior ‘we’” appears at odds with Levinas’s insistence that all other human beings present a radical rupture of the subject’s horizon. This disjunction is compounded by Levinas’s tendency to speak of alterity as an absolute, complicating the possibility of knowing or

30. Emmanuel Levinas, “Apropos of Buber: Some Notes,” in *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 40–49, at 46–47. In Levinas’s account of the Other’s radical rupturing of the individual’s horizon, the ethical obligation commanded by the Face of the Other is infinite. Human beings are finite, so they are obviously incapable of wholly living up to an infinite command, and this infinity also cannot be produced solely by the particular Other encountered (precisely because she is also a human being, i.e., at least partially finite). Levinas uses the term “*illeity*” (originating from the personal-impersonal pronoun “*il*” (he/it)) to refer to a third term of otherness beyond the limits of this one-to-one encounter between finite subjects. Only this even more enigmatic, transcendent alterity could be the originating source of an infinite obligation, and this alterity is glimpsed as a “trace” in the face of the Other. For an introduction to the role of *illeity* in Levinas’s thought, see Adriaan T. Peperzak, “*Illeity* according to Levinas,” *Philosophy Today* 42 (1998): 41–46, <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday199842supplement61>.

31. Emmanuel Levinas, “The Proximity of the Other,” in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 97–109, at 104–105. Levinas often hyphenates the term “being-for-the-Other” in order to signify a drastic reorientation of selfhood, transforming the Heideggerian “being-in-the-world” in response to the ethically exhortatory encounter with alterity.

32. Levinas, “Apropos of Buber,” 43–44.

33. Levinas, “Apropos of Buber,” 43–44.

34. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, 83–84.

meaningfully engaging any particular other.<sup>35</sup> It is my contention, however, that alterity and similarity ought not be understood in such a mutually exclusive manner. This strict dichotomization presumes a particular kind of relationship between alterity and similarity, one that does not adequately reflect the complex interactions between these two principles. Overcoming this false binary is essential to maintaining a Lonergan–Levinas dialogue, and—as I will argue below—in combating the false theoretical constructs operative behind marginalization on the basis of race, gender, sex, and so on.

### *Alterity and Similarity in Tension*

In order to more adequately and integrally approach the relationship between alterity and similarity, I will draw from Robert Doran’s expansion of Lonergan’s work on dialectic.<sup>36</sup> According to Doran, it is necessary to recognize two meanings of “dialectic” operative throughout Lonergan’s writings. Doran identifies these two types as (1) dialectics of contradictories, which present an either/or, and (2) dialectics of contraries, which present a both/and.<sup>37</sup> Examples of dialectics of contradictories include good and evil, authenticity and inauthenticity, truth and falsity, insight and bias.<sup>38</sup> These opposed principles cannot be reconciled with one another. The choice between them is divisive. In a dialectic of contraries, on the other hand, the choice is not one of either/or, but of the constant, creative push-and-pull of a both/and, a unity in tension, which results in a reconciling, creative dynamism, wherein both principles continue to exist in mutual benefit to the other.<sup>39</sup> The paradigmatic example of a dialectic of contraries is the productive tension between the unfolding of unconscious neural demands manifested in the psyche, and the operations of intentional consciousness (Lonergan calls this tension the dialectic of the subject).<sup>40</sup>

35. For example, in *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas writes, “[The Other] and I do not form a number. The collectivity in which I say ‘you’ or ‘we’ is not a plural of the ‘I.’ I, you—these are not individuals of a common concept. Neither possession nor the unity of number nor the unity of concepts link me to the Stranger [*l’Etranger*], the Stranger who disturbs the being at home with oneself [*le chez soi*]. [...] He escapes my grasp by an essential dimension, even if I have him at my disposal. He is not wholly in my site. But I, who have no concept in common with the Stranger, am, like him, without genus. We are the same and the other. [...] A relation whose terms do not form a totality can hence be produced within the general economy of being only as proceeding from the I to the other, as a *face to face*” (39, emphasis Levinas’s).

36. An extended version of this argument may be found in Brian Bajzek, “Alterity, Similarity, and Dialectic: Methodological Reflections on the Turn to the Other,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 57 (2017): 249–66, <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq20176788>.

37. Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 68.

38. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 68.

39. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 10.

40. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 72–75. For a thorough overview of the dialectic of the subject, see Lonergan, *Insight*, 242–44, and Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 177–210.

In such dialectics of contraries, a principle of limitation is held in tension with a principle of transcendence, and the harmonious interdependence of these principles is constitutive of the dialectic.<sup>41</sup> When such interdependent principles are mistakenly dichotomized, the result is an imbalanced, distorted dialectic of contraries, or, perhaps more precisely, a false dialectic of contradictories.<sup>42</sup> It is my contention that the relationship between alterity and similarity is often (perhaps even usually) construed with this incorrect mutual exclusivity. This can happen for a number of reasons, with a wide range of regrettable results.

First, the genuine desire to avoid doing violence to the Other can be stressed to such a profound degree that any possibility of truly knowing the Other is automatically ruled out of the question.<sup>43</sup> This authentic impulse can also create a false binary from the opposite end of the dialectic, as similarity can be overemphasized at the expense of fostering and valuing genuine plurality and difference. While stressing the similar may result from the legitimate desire to celebrate commonality, shared values and experiences, and so on, if pushed too far such a tendency can result in the half-measures of watered down dialogue and patchwork *rapprochement*.

Lastly, a false dialectic of contradictories can also be caused by a reversionary, fundamentalist, or—in extreme cases—xenophobic overemphasis of the need to preserve similarity and avoid alterity. In such cases, the “others” who stand outside of a particular group are deemed totally alien, and similarity within one’s own group is mistaken for sameness. Those who are not deemed “the same as we are” (or, perhaps

41. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 91.

42. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, 91–92.

43. This recourse to an entirely unknowable alterity is directly relevant to Levinas and Lonergan’s apparent divergences. Emphasizing alterity at the complete expense of similarity—and, in the limit, at the expense of knowledge itself—is a common consequence of the postmodern prioritization of difference, and it often results from the admirable desire to avoid doing violence to the Other. Rightly reacting against the shortcomings of Kantian epistemology, many postmodern philosophers are suspicious of attempts to reduce the integrity of the unknown to a synthesis between impoverished phenomenal givenness and the regulatory concepts of the mind. In order to avoid reducing real, unique individuals to the shadow of the merely phenomenal, thinkers like Levinas often write of alterity as if it were necessarily synonymous with unknowability. In doing so, they frame alterity and similarity as mutually exclusive, and they do not have an alternate epistemology by which this bifurcation might be overcome. Lonergan provides such an alternative, as his epistemology transcends the problematics critiqued by Levinas. To put it simply, what Lonergan means by “knowing” is not the Kantian “knowing” Levinas rejects. While a complex epistemological analysis would detract from the aims of the present article, the definition of critical realism provided above in note 2 illustrates the major distinction between Lonergan’s critical realism and Kantian idealism. For an articulation of the reasons Lonergan’s epistemology transcends this problem, opening space for an adequate (i.e., nonviolent and non-totalizing) epistemological approach to the Other, see Bajzek, “Alterity, Similarity, and Dialectic,” 260–63. For analysis of the differences between Kant’s epistemology and Lonergan’s, see Giovanni B. Sala, *Lonergan and Kant: Five Essays on Human Knowledge*, ed. Robert M. Doran, trans. Joseph Spoerl (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

more accurately, as *I* am) are labeled a threat, and dialogue is rendered nearly impossible. In less overt forms, a more moderate reaction to overemphasized and opposed alterity can result in condescension, lack of meaningful conversation, and exclusion.

Instead of understanding the Other and the similar as irreconcilable, the application of Lonergan's and Doran's work allows for the possibility of identifying alterity and similarity for what they really are: the interdependent poles of a dialectic of contraries. Holding these linked yet opposed principles in creative tension, we can affirm both Lonergan's assertion of a "prior 'we,'" and Levinas's insistence on the radical obligation to the Other. Lonergan names the spontaneous intersubjectivity underlying and connecting all human beings. These contributions are grounded in the recognition of the element of similarity inherent in the relational. Levinas, for his part, identifies the irreducibly ethical element both underlying and constituting this intersubjective field, as the subject has an overwhelming, *pre-intentional* responsibility for the Other. Lonergan addresses the psychic similarity and spontaneous solidarity constituting and manifesting the "we" prior to individuation, and Levinas argues that each instantiation of this "we" demands a self-forgetfulness of the "I" on behalf of the Other, whose very real alterity holds the "I" accountable for something completely beyond itself, transcending easy limitation and control. Examining Levinas's entreaties in light of Lonergan's project and Doran's expansion of it, it becomes clear that, while the intersubjective and relational are a natural, even a spontaneous element of the human subject's self-transcendence, we are called to respond to, foster, and exercise *authentic* intersubjectivity and relationality vis-à-vis all others, and this precarious task requires the integration of the sensitive-psyche and the operations of intentional consciousness.

Understood as a dialectic of contraries, the dual poles of alterity and similarity can work in a productive tension for the growth of the subject or group without sacrificing prior experiences, understandings, beliefs, and so on, or forgoing authentic, open encounter with the Other. This creative push-and-pull does not imply the simple commensurability of all differing positions, nor does it suggest that the alterity each person or group embodies to all others is so radical as to preclude any real knowledge or growth. Instead, thematizing the dialectical relationship between alterity and similarity in this way opens up the possibility of real encounter and meaningful exchange, as people, groups, or ideas perceived as "other" are not automatically understood as "opposed to me." Alterity and similarity can be simultaneously present in the same place, idea, group, or even individual person without threatening, limiting, or destroying either identity or openness.<sup>44</sup>

44. This possibility of simultaneous alterity and similarity within a single human subject is one of the key insights provided by Paul Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey, reissue ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Although Ricoeur does not use the phrase "dialectic of contraries" to describe the relationship between alterity and similarity, I understand his approach to otherness to be complementary to the position I am outlining here. Ricoeur's work also opens interesting avenues for addressing how otherness and similarity change depending upon perspective. I would argue that reframing alterity and similarity as an integral dialectic of contraries helps to recontextualize and dialogues

Establishing an integral approach to this interplay is central to the tasks of the present article, as embodiment (one of Copeland's primary areas of emphasis) is perhaps the most acute exemplar of the ever-present, productive tension between simultaneous alterity and similarity. According to Levinas, "The body is not only an image or figure [...]; it is the distinctive in-oneself of the contraction of ipseity and its breakup. [...] It is a recurrence to oneself out of an irrecusable exigency of the other, a duty overflowing my being, a duty becoming a debt [...]. Here what is due goes beyond having, but makes giving possible."<sup>45</sup> Such "contraction" of ipseity emphatically places the onus for ethics, not on selfhood or ego in the abstract, but on the concrete "me." It is only in my concrete, particular body that I experience the universal obligation in the face of the Other, and I only experience the human Other in and through her or his embodiment. My corporeality serves as the precise locus of my exposure to this call. Levinas speaks of such accountability in terms of prophetic election, and his articulation of the response to such election is (in a typically Levinasian fashion) biblical. If I am truly being-for-the-Other, I meet this divine injunction by offering up my body in solidarity, replying, "Here I am."<sup>46</sup>

This divine command implicates me prior to any thematization, and, as Levinas explicitly states in one interview, "It is not a metaphor: in the Other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the Other, I hear the Word of God. [...] I am not saying that the Other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God."<sup>47</sup> The face of each particular, embodied Other speaks the divine prohibition against murder. I can choose either to use my own body to inflict violence upon her, or I can open myself up to obligation, exposing myself to danger on her behalf, helping bear the brunt of her sufferings.

### *Copeland's Christological Contributions*

This attentiveness to the suffering of particular others provides an excellent transition to the work of M. Shawn Copeland. Like Levinas, Copeland's concern for the poor, the widow, and the orphan permeates her entire project. Similarly, just as Levinas's deeply personal, traumatic experiences of the Holocaust underpin his whole intellectual undertaking, so too Copeland's writings are saturated with very real experiences of

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between people, groups, and thinkers who are both very similar in certain respects, and very different in others. While perspective certainly impacts which groups are more or less "other" or "similar" to any given person or group, my own suggestions in the present article might help reframe these concerns without the need to draw hard and fast division between differing groups of differences.

45. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, Or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000), 109.
46. Emmanuel Levinas, "The Philosopher and Death," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 153–88 at 163.
47. Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy, Justice, and Love," in *Is It Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Jill Robbins (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 165–81 at 171.

racism, misogyny, and their insidious insertions into deviated social, cultural, and even religious structures.

Copeland connects the visceral ways such surds “mark” human bodies, the enduring scars seared into the psyche and spirit by bias and embitteredness, and the long-term, widespread decline initiated by these evils.<sup>48</sup> Instead of drawing false binaries between the individual and the communal, she adamantly asserts the interconnectedness of particularity and universality (and, I would suggest, of alterity and similarity): “Rather than exclude or overturn or punish other bodies or persons, specificity and particularity insist that we are all subjects.”<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, this interconnectedness is severed by the tendency to determine social bodies according to the desires of a privileged few, imposing a falsely constructed conception of normativity, and exercising indifference or brutality toward those who fall outside said norms.<sup>50</sup>

In stark contrast to this tyranny of inauthenticity, Copeland presents the person of Christ, the one who prioritizes the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, and states bluntly, “Truly I tell you, just as you [do] to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you [do] to me” (Matt 25:40 NRSV, used throughout). Jesus identifies himself as the one anointed on behalf of the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed (cf. Luke 4:16–21), and also as the one who “will draw all people to [him]self” (John 12:32). Copeland connects this simultaneous emphasis on particularity and universality to Jesus’s offering of his own flesh, writing, “For these [poor, dark, despised bodies], for all, for us, [Christ] gave his body in fidelity to the *basileia tou theou*, the reign of God, which opposes the reign of sin. Jesus of Nazareth is the paradigm of enfleshing freedom; he *is* freedom enfleshed.”<sup>51</sup>

In his interactions with the tax collectors, lepers, adulterers, and all other pariahs of his historical period, Jesus provides the paradigm for evaluating our own responses to the marginalized in our milieu. In his engagements with a Samaritan woman at a well, a man born blind, or a centurion with a sick servant, Christ calls into question the inauthentic narratives and norms prevalent in his time. He openly and lovingly encounters those who social, cultural, and even religious authorities label “unclean” or “sinful,” directly opposing these presumptions and their consequences. As Copeland observes, we are obligated to imitate Christ’s unmasking of unjust assumptions and attitudes, patterns, and paradigms: “We are incarnate origins of value and love. Questioning and decoding the given or constructed narratives, assumptions, rules,

48. Copeland’s writings have repeatedly stressed the connections between embodiment, acts of violence against particular bodies, the memory of such violence, and violence’s enduring impact upon society and culture. For examples of this emphasis on the “marks” inflicted by the surds of slavery, racism, and unjust social structures, see *Enfleshing Freedom*, 23–54, 107–28; see also M. Shawn Copeland, “Chattel Slavery as Dangerous Memory,” in *Tradition and the Normativity of History*, ed. Lieven Boeve, Terrence Merrigan, and Colby Dickinson, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 155–73.

49. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 2.

50. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 12–15.

51. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom* 53; emphasis Copeland’s.

preferences, and attitudes implicit in those meanings and values we espouse, informing and expressing ourselves as a culture, calls for ongoing, serious, and authentic critique.”<sup>52</sup>

In her ethics of enfleshment and imitation, Copeland articulates how Christ embodies and incarnates the epitome of attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, and loving relationality. He meets, engages, ministers to, and heals the wounded, weakened, and reviled bodies of the marginalized. In short, Christ gives us the way, because he is the Way.<sup>53</sup> We traverse this way through *basileia* praxis: “These acts of justice-doing, empire critique, love, and solidarity mark us as his flesh made vivid leaven in our world.”<sup>54</sup> The values incarnated by and in Christ present a non-totalizing, non-systemizing, enfleshed ethic, obliterating our reductive expectations for the Image of God. Jesus’s encounters with others eschew false bifurcations of alterity and similarity, and Copeland highlights his unprecedentedly authentic relationship with what “otherness” means. I would expand these observations even further, arguing that in Christ and through Christ, alterity and similarity converge perfectly.

As the Word become flesh, Christ takes a tension already present in human existence—what Erich Przywara names the “in-and-beyond” relation between humanity and God—and embodies it.<sup>55</sup> Even more unexpectedly, Jesus humbles himself relative to both his fellow human beings and his Father in Heaven. In his complete openness to the will of the Father, poignantly demonstrated in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:36–46), Christ draws vertical alterity (i.e., the apophatic experience of dissimilarity between God and Creation) into an unprecedented relationship with the similarity he shares with all of us: his humanity. In the concrete, particular body of Christ, all humanity is redeemed, drawn more deeply into communion with God. This does not obliterate the distinction between God and creatures, as Christ’s kenotic love only highlights the gratuity of a gift wholly beyond (and, in a sense, “other” than) our created capacities.

Christ’s concrete universality fleshes out Levinas’s emphasis on the contraction of theoretical ipseity into my being concretely called into question and elected by and for the Other, and Lonergan’s observation that we are all bound together by a profound connection. In Christ, all of our responses to the obligation to the poor, the widow, and the orphan are inherently linked. We are all integrated and made new in and by the body of Christ, but this integration abolishes neither the particularity of Christ’s body, nor the particularity of the ones made new in Christ:

[Christ’s] taking us in, this in-corporation, is akin to sublation, not erasure, not uniformity; the *basileia* praxis of Jesus draws us to him. Our humble engagement in [Christ’s] praxis revalues our identities and differences, even as it preserves the integrity and significance of

52. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse* (Los Angeles: Tsehail, 2016), 23.

53. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 11.

54. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 81.

55. Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics—Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 287.

our body marks [i.e., the particularities of race, gender, sex, etc.]. At the same time, those very particular body marks are relativized, reoriented, and reappropriated under his sign, the sign of the cross. Thus, in solidarity and in love of others and the Other, we are remade and remarked as the flesh of Christ, as the flesh of his church.<sup>56</sup>

This remaking and remarking reinforces the responsibility each of us has to all others, to each Other, impelling us to prioritize the struggles of the marginalized, placing “the bodies of the victims of history at the center of theological anthropology, [turning] to ‘other’ subjects.”<sup>57</sup>

### *Cruciform Encounter in a Time of Crisis*

In light of these christological reflections, how ought we incorporate the insights of Levinas, Lonergan, and Copeland into the concrete praxis of an embodied ethics of cruciform encounter? In *Enfleshing Freedom*, Copeland stresses the central role the Eucharist plays in incarnating the fellowship and healing at the heart of *basileia* praxis.<sup>58</sup> I agree that sacramentality and fellowship ought to be fostered, especially as they are made present in the integrating, healing, and elevating communion of the Eucharistic table. Given the polarization of our present moment, however, I want to examine and emphasize a complementary component of Copeland’s work, examining how our horizons—and, consequently, our encounters—are shaped by prayer. This exploration of prayer will connect Copeland’s concern for the marginalized with Lonergan’s focus on self-appropriation and interconnectedness, Levinas’s prioritization of otherness, and my own dialectical framework for integrating the tension between alterity and similarity.

Copeland’s approach to prayer is holistic. She sees no disconnect between the life of prayer and the life of solidarity, service, or sacrifice. Prayer provides “the ground of lived spirituality and love as option and action”; it is the fertile soil “that nourishes lived spirituality, that makes self-transcendence credible, and that sustains compassionate active solidarity.”<sup>59</sup> More than a specific method, technique, or exercise,

56. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 83. Unlike Hegel’s *Aufhebung*, Lonergan’s (and, consequently, Copeland’s) understanding of sublation omits “the Hegelian view that the higher reconciles a contradiction in the lower.” Instead, it refers to “a lower [principle, idea, operation, etc.] being retained, preserved, yet transcended and completed by a higher” (Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Subject,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. Robert Doran S.J and John Dadosky, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 13 (University of Toronto Press, 2016), 60–74, at 69). This movement to higher synthesis does not entail the violent or destructive implications inherent in the opposition of the Hegelian paradigm of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (*Method in Theology*, 227). For a detailed examination of the similarities and differences between Lonergan’s and Hegel’s uses of sublation, see Gordon Rixon, “Locating Hegel’s *Aufhebung* and Tracing Lonergan’s ‘Sublation,’” *Heythrop Journal* 57 (2016): 492–519, <https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12323>.

57. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 84.

58. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 124–28.

59. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 35.

This grounding prayer is a mode of being, of living in and with Christ as response to the invitation “to come and see” (John 1: 39). Prayer expresses and responds to love, seeks to live in love for love of and with God even as the gracious gift of God’s love draws us on to deeper encounter, deeper love. Prayer becomes our mode of being; we become beings-in-love with God.<sup>60</sup>

This mention of becoming “beings-in-love with God” is a reference to Lonergan’s writings on religious experience and sanctifying grace.<sup>61</sup> In the dynamic state of being-in-love with God, we find our intentionality and capacity for self-transcendence fulfilled. In this paramount instance of being-in-love, the object of one’s love is God, and such a love results in a complete reorientation of one’s whole way of being. Copeland describes how, in this dynamic state and its deepened engagement through prayer, “We are transformed. No longer do we attempt to fit God into our lives, but seek to fit our lives into God. All that we are and all that we do is absorbed in being loved by God and loving God.”<sup>62</sup> Prayer draws us more deeply into this state, and this state draws us more fully into prayerful engagement with the object of our affection: God.

Because God loves all beings, this overflowing of grace flooding our hearts transforms our horizons, compelling us to spread God’s love to the entire human family. In the sense that the dynamic state, “as principle of acts of love, hope, faith, repentance, and so on, is grace as cooperative,” we are called to responsibly respond to it of our own will and volition, outwardly manifesting our reply to God’s love by loving our fellow human beings.<sup>63</sup> This love heals any psychic baggage or biases encumbering

60. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 35.

61. In Lonergan’s writings, being-in-love is often hyphenated to signify that the very core of a person’s being is transformed by subsisting in a state of love. There are different kinds of being-in-love, and Lonergan identifies romantic, parental, civic, and sororal or fraternal loves as common examples. “Being-in-love has its antecedents, its causes, its conditions, its occasions. But once it has blossomed forth and as long as it lasts, it takes over. It is the first principle. From it flow one’s desires and fears, one’s joys and sorrows, one’s discernment of values, one’s decisions and deeds” (*Method in Theology*, 100–101). The paramount instance of such love is being-in-love with God. The gift of God’s love that constitutes this state is synonymous with sanctifying grace, with the notional distinction that within the stage of meaning “when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense [...], the gift of God’s love first is described as an experience and only consequently is objectified in theoretical categories” (*Method in Theology*, 103). For an extended explanation of the stages of meaning, see *Method in Theology*, 82–95. For a detailed treatment of Lonergan’s positions on love, see Jeremy W. Blackwood, *And Hope Does Not Disappoint: Love, Grace, and Subjectivity in the Work of Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J.* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2017).

62. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 35.

63. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 107. The distinction between operative and cooperative grace is drawn from Aquinas’s distinction in *Summa Theologiae*, 1–2, q. 111, a. 2, resp.: “The operation of an effect is not attributed to the thing moved but to the mover. Hence in that effect in which our mind is moved and does not move, but in which God is the sole mover, the operation is attributed to God, and it is with reference to this that we

our intersubjective spontaneity, elevating our attentiveness to the needs of the Other, our understanding of our own obligations, our judgment concerning the myriad ways we ought to follow through on the responsibility inherent in this relationality, and—most importantly—integrating our actions in the habit of charity.<sup>64</sup> The dynamic state of being-in-love helps us to know others as God knows them, bearing “fruit in a love of one’s neighbor that strives mightily to bring about the kingdom of God on this earth.”<sup>65</sup>

Returning to Copeland’s observation that prayer draws us ever more deeply and fully into this dynamic state, it becomes clear that our prayerful response to God’s love is intimately linked to our response to God’s grace reaching out to us in and through the face of the Other.<sup>66</sup> Our response to others and our response to God are mutually connected: “without fidelity to a life of prayer, our words are hollow, our living shallow, our capacities for discernment distracted.”<sup>67</sup> At the same time, our prayer must be concretized and galvanized by our acts of compassion and concern for the Other, as “actions speak louder than words, [and] preaching what one does not practice recalls

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speak of “operating grace.” But in that effect in which our mind both moves and is moved, the operation is not only attributed to God, but also to the soul; and it is with reference to this that we speak of ‘cooperating grace.’” For a detailed treatment of the relationship between operative and cooperative grace, see Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

64. For a detailed explanation of the habit of charity, especially as it relates to human imitation of and participation in divine love, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, ed. Robert M. Doran and Daniel Monsour, trans. Michael G. Shields, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 12 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 471–73.
65. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 101.
66. In two recent conference presentations, I have connected Levinas’s theory of *illegitimacy* with Lonergan’s understanding of being-in-love, arguing that the sensitive-psychic exhortation beckoning intersubjectively in the face of the Other is itself God reaching out and acting on the subject through operative grace. This operative grace urges the subject to respond cooperatively in loving relationality and the habit of charity, but the realization of this request is contingent upon the subject’s free choice. See Bajzek, “Being-in-Love is Being-for-the-Other” (paper presented at Dialectical Traditionalism International Research Conference, Regis College, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, February 24–25, 2017); Bajzek, “The Fifth Level and Being-for-the-Other,” a part of “‘And Hope Does Not Disappoint’: Understanding and Applying the Concept of the Fifth Level of Consciousness” (presented as a panel with Jeremy Blackwood, Ryan Hemmer, and Eric Mabry at the 32nd Annual Fallon Memorial Lonergan Symposium, West Coast Methods Institute, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA, April 20–22, 2017).
67. M. Shawn Copeland, “Living into the Promise of the Spirit” (keynote address, annual meeting of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, St. Paul, March 2010), 15, <http://nacc.org/docs/conference/2010materials/M%20Shawn%20Copeland%20-%20Living%20into%20the%20Promise%20of%20the%20Spirit.pdf>.

sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.”<sup>68</sup> How ought we go about fostering a prayer life at once ordered toward action and grounded in love? What resources can Copeland, Lonergan, and Levinas offer for growing in prayerful engagement with and response to the needs of the Other?

First, we must continually remind ourselves that no one prays in a bubble or a vacuum. All prayer emerges from within personal and communal horizons of experiences, understandings, and concerns. Furthermore, these horizons of experiences, understandings, judgments, beliefs, and so on, are all connected to particular, embodied subjects. None of these horizons is exhaustive, and mistaking any particular perspective as permanent and universal leads to what Lonergan calls the classicist notion of culture. In Lonergan’s writings, classicism refers to the belief that culture is a fixed, universal, normative, and permanent achievement.<sup>69</sup> The classicist exalts a particular culture (e.g., fourth-century Greece, nineteenth-century Rome, 1950s “Middle America,” etc.) above all others, holding this particular culture or society’s norms, beliefs, customs, and rituals as the standard toward which all other (and, therefore, inferior) cultures must strive. This understanding of a monolithic, unchanging cultural ideal overlooks or denies that philosophy, theology, politics, biology, economics, and so on, are ongoing processes. It precludes the humility and receptivity that are essential to healing and creating in history, especially in a time of crisis.

The facet of prayer most pertinent to the present article, therefore, is openness. Such openness and humility ought to shape the horizons in which we pray, and from which we respond to the voice of the one to Whom we pray. Each of us needs to consider the possibility that many of those positions shaping our horizons, especially those regarding race, gender, sexuality, and so on, are predicated upon misinformation, misunderstandings, and remnants of past and/or present misanthropy. Prayer, and especially lament—both personal and collective—opens up the space for naming and owning corporate complicity or intentional participation in structures and patterns of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia vis-à-vis other religions, and so on.<sup>70</sup> When incarnated in instances of open, honest encounter, such lament can help restore and foster our spontaneous intersubjectivity, and lead to its intentional

68. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 334.

69. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 3. For a fuller discussion of the shift from classicism to a viewpoint acknowledging historical dynamism and development, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, “The Transition from a Classicist Worldview to Historical Mindedness,” in *A Second Collection*, ed. Robert Doran, SJ, and John Dadosky, *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 4–10.

70. I understand my proposal here as complementary to those offered by others who resource the connections between prayer, race, injustice, and lament. For examples of such complementary proposals, see Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2010), particularly 105–20; Andrew Prevot, *Thinking Prayer: Theology and Spirituality amid the Crises of Modernity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015).

correlate, mutual self-mediation, helping both persons and institutions foster respect and lovingness toward and with the Other, each other, all others.<sup>71</sup>

In a Catholic context, this ties back in a special way to the reframing of alterity and similarity as an integral dialectic of contraries, especially as Christ so dramatically incarnates this necessary, productive tension. As Copeland highlights, “For those of us who identify ourselves, no matter how halting or fitful, as followers and disciples of the Jewish rabbi from Nazareth, [the contemporary] situation of societal and existential impasse prod us to self-examination and to conversion, to witness and to action.”<sup>72</sup> Now, more than ever, if Catholic theology is to be truly Christian theology, it must be attentive and open to the needs of all those on the margins. Prayer and liturgy give us the space for recognizing, acknowledging, and lamenting our all-too-common inattentiveness to the experiences and struggles of black Catholics, brown Catholics, female Catholics, gay Catholics, trans Catholics, and especially those Catholics who embody multiple categories marginalized as “Other.” Furthermore, we ought to reflect upon our responses to those who do not identify themselves as Catholics or Christians, or those who we may tend to demarcate as distinctly “outside” the fold of Catholicism or Christianity. Are we sufficiently attentive and responsive to the fact that these people and their bodies are also incorporated into the body of Christ, by virtue of “that body’s openness to, turn toward, and solidarity with even radically different others; and because of that body’s pledge to be given and poured out for all others?”<sup>73</sup>

When we pray to this same Christ, the one who gave himself for all others, we sign ourselves in his name, naming ourselves in conformity with his sacrifice. We affirm our desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus of Nazareth, the one who willingly walked through Gethsemane and Calvary on behalf of all peoples, without exception. When we sign ourselves with the Cross, offering our supplication, contemplation, praise, and/or lament in the name of the Triune God whose very immanent constitution is love itself, we are (however tacitly) expressing our fidelity to this love, a love manifested in cruciform cooperation with grace. For this reason, we must recognize that prayer is a practical response to crisis, not a request for God to simply break into the created order and short-circuit events on our behalf. God acts in the world in many ways, yes, but God does so at least partially through transforming and converting us. Prayer plays a major role in this process of conversion. The way we pray shapes us.

If our prayer is itself cooperation with grace, and if grace acts on us in and through our encounters with others, our prayer cannot be considered as something entirely

71. Lonergan uses the term mutual self-mediation in reference to an existential positing of self—of making oneself who one wants to be—by which and in which each party involved wholly gives herself or himself over to the other, entering a state transcending the limits of giving and receiving. In such a state, two people open themselves up to each other in the most profound way possible, with each person loving and acting for and with the other. Doran expands this term to include the mutual self-revelation and collaboration that can occur between groups or institutions. See Robert M. Doran, *What Is Systematic Theology?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 53–60.

72. Copeland, *Discipleship in a Time of Impasse*, 3.

73. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 5.

independent from our ethical response to alterity. As self-appropriative subjects, linked to one another and impelled by the ethical obligation in the face of each Other, we need to reflect upon our own practices, questioning our individual and/or communal complicity in injustice and marginalization. We need to take candid, even uncomfortable stock of whether we have allowed fear, bias, or hatred to impact our actions or institutions, particularly if this has resulted in ignorance toward or exacerbation of the struggles of those on the margins. Taking an honest look at our own prayer lives, do we actively ask for and foster openness to being challenged and changed, not from within the easily defined confines of our preconceptions, but in encounter with God's image in all others?<sup>74</sup> Similarly, we might ask, even if we actively seek to open ourselves to encounter with and prioritization of the marginalized, whether we do so having already decided which groups are allowed to fall within this category, and, by extension, to be met with full openness. Do we conclude in advance (whether we thematize it or not) that certain groups are too problematic, too challenging to our own understandings, relegating them to an-other class of Other? Are there certain faces, certain bodies from which we turn away, whether out of confusion, discomfort, or fear?

Building upon this last question, I would highlight the importance of asking whether our prayer truly attunes itself to the full influence of the God infinitely transcending our tendencies—however unintentional—toward limitation, totalization, and reductive categorization. Following Christ's example, we need to open ourselves to the will of the one who sends us, seeking to discern the profoundly creative movements of the Spirit who defies our expectations, lest we add ourselves to the list of hypocrites decried by Jesus. God's influence manifests itself in many ways, not least of which is speaking to us in and through the needs of the Other, and the shift toward "a listening church" advocated by Pope Francis offers a starting point for hearing these needs.<sup>75</sup>

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74. These remarks regarding often-overlooked elements and effects of prayer are complimentary to Levinas's own observations on prayer and liturgy. Levinas contends that the authentic practice of prayer is understood in terms of an offering, primarily focused on glorifying God, secondarily focused on the community of the persecuted, and only indirectly concerned with our own well-being. See Emmanuel Levinas, "Violence of the Face," in *Alterity and Transcendence*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 169–82 at 181–82.

75. Pope Francis, Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (October 17, 2015), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151017\\_50-anniversario-sinodo.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html). Francis's initial statement emphasizing listening was given in the context of a talk on synodality, and specifically the Synod on the Family, but it matches his general emphasis on dialogue, openness, and encounter, especially with those who have suffered injustice. For a concise overview of the emphases to which I am referring, see Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The 'Francis Moment': A New Kairos for Catholic Ecclesiology," *CTSA Proceedings* 69 (2014): 63–80; Richard R. Gaillardetz, *An Unfinished Council: Vatican II, Pope Francis, and the Renewal of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2015); Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis' Revolution of Tenderness and Love: Theological and Pastoral Perspectives* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2015).

Reflecting upon this ecclesial approach in light of present paranoia and polarization, another quote from Francis's TED Talk resonates powerfully with the themes I have drawn from Lonergan, Levinas, and Copeland: "The future is made of 'yous,' it is made of encounters, because life flows through our relations with others. [...] Each and everyone's existence is deeply tied to that of others: life is not time merely passing by, life is about interactions."<sup>76</sup>

If our interactions are to begin from a place of true listening, we must be open to real encounter with the voices, faces, and bodies of all the marginalized. This is true even, and perhaps especially, if their struggles speak to ways the church and its members have been—or may continue to be—indifferent to, silent about, or complicit in particular, concrete injustices. Bearing any such individual or corporate shortcomings in mind, I would nevertheless emphasize the overwhelming and unexpected excess of God's love, a love that is always operatively beckoning to us, seeking to draw us to fuller conformity with Christ. It is this love with which we are called to cooperate, participating in the dynamism at the very heart of the Trinity.<sup>77</sup> As Copeland stresses, "the Spirit, who is Good and Love, moves us, draws us, and leads us into 'love creating *koinonia*' with the Triune God. The Spirit perfects us through and in communion and conversation, contemplation and prayer; our consent to the Spirit's gentle will, without at the same time renouncing our intelligence and our dignity as human beings, constitutes true freedom."<sup>78</sup>

This is the freedom Copeland urges us to embody, the freedom to exercise the authentic subjectivity toward which Lonergan impels us, the freedom to respond to the ethical exigence Levinas identifies. Christ enfleshes this freedom, and we are called to imitate it in our own encounters. Such attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and lovingness is the only thing capable of meeting and overcoming

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76. Pope Francis, "Why the Only Future Worth Building Includes Everyone." In light of the themes of my present article, I would be remiss to cite a TED Talk without acknowledging the tensions recent technological advances present for human relationality. The digital age has broken down previous barriers to communication, introducing instant, even "face-to-face" interaction between people separated by thousands of miles. This ability to communicate despite great distances presents the potential for fostering mutual recognition, and Francis's TED Talk is an excellent example of the good that can be done with the help of technology. On the other hand, computers, cell phones, social media, etc. all bring an accompanying capacity for alienation, whether through removal of physical contact, the demand for instant gratification, the ideological echo chambers cultivated by advertisers and news outlets, etc. These challenges to authentic relationality merit further examination, but such reflections are beyond the scope of the present article. My own, small suggestion is that reframing alterity and similarity as an integral dialectic of contraries might add a degree of nuance to complex discussions of technology, otherness, and human interaction.
77. For an analysis of the ways such imitation and participation is possible, and a constructive exploration of the theoretical apparatus for articulating such participation and its redeeming role in history. See Doran, *The Trinity in History*.
78. Copeland, "Living into the Promise of the Spirit," 9, quoting Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992), 298–99, 362–63.

contemporary crises of relationality. Its exercise is what allows us to imagine and incarnate an ethical future, a future where each “I” will act on behalf of each “you,” recognizing that all are bound up in a “we” where otherness and similarity can coexist in love.

### **Author Biography**

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