

IMPLEMENTATIONS OF LONERGAN'S METHOD: A CRITIQUE

Ivo Coelho, SDB

Bernard Lonergan's *Method in Theology* was published in 1971.¹ It was a book that was long in the making, and long awaited. Since its publication, it has evoked a whole range of literature. But, surprisingly, there have been very few attempts to actually implement the method. In this article, I will attempt to outline and enter into dialogue with these few attempts. The efforts naturally divide into two types: exercises in the individual functional specialties, and attempts at implementing the method as a whole.

1. Exercises in the Individual Functional Specialties

There exist a few exercises in the individual functional specialties. Frederick Crowe's *Theology of the Christian Word: A Study in History*, for example, explicitly claims to be an exercise in the functional specialty history.²

In this work I have tried to follow the division of tasks set forth in Bernard Lonergan's theological method.... My study is confined ... to 'what was going forward,' and that in the limited field of the notion of the word; it does not ... assemble its own data, or determine their meaning; much less does it go to the roots of conflicting ideas, or proceed to the author's own position on the word of God, with expansion into foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.³

Crowe notes, however, that the history he is doing is slightly different from that outlined in *Method in Theology*:

The reader will notice a difference between the conception of history I use here and that set forth in Lonergan's *Method*. In the latter work, history is the product of scholarship in the precise sense defined by Lonergan, 'a commonsense grasp of the commonsense thought, speech, action of distant places and/or times' (p. 233). Now an overall view such as I have attempted cannot be a work of scholarship in that sense; it is impossible to deploy the needed expertise on every writer, from Paul to Pannenberg, whose work is relevant to the history of the Christian word. But Lonergan's earlier work provided a pattern for such an overall history; see his ideas on the movement of thought, *De Deo Trino*, Vol. 2 (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964), pp. 33-53. The notion of history in *Method* does not invalidate this earlier conception, but rather needs it to span the centuries and link stage to stage of development.⁴

So where *Method* speaks of a history that is the result of scholarship, Crowe is content to provide a sort of x-ray of the transition points in the history of the Christian word. The purpose of history as he practices it is not scholarship or erudition, but a reflective ordering of the results of such scholarship. The chief contribution of history,

¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

² Frederick E. Crowe, *Theology of the Christian Word* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 158.

³ Crowe 4-5.

⁴ Crowe, *Theology of the Christian Word* 158.

according to Crowe, is the organisation of a set of ideas, where the organisation is not systematic but genetic, and the ideas are not theoretical but historical. Clearly then, Crowe is content to make use of existing research and exegesis in order to present a sequence of ideas ordered not just temporally, not systematically, but rather genetically.⁵

Crowe's practice of functional history clearly exploits the prior two specialties, research and interpretation.⁶

It is not a work of research in the ordinary sense, for most of the data I use have been searched out and assembled by others, and I simply borrow their results.... It is not a work of biblical theology, or of patristic or medieval or reformation or modern theology; all these pertain to specialist areas, and my purpose is very precisely not to enter those areas in detail, but once more to borrow results from others and link them in an intelligible sequence and pattern.⁷

Robert Doran's *Theology and the Dialectics of History* is an exercise in foundations.⁸ The principal burden of the book, says Doran, is to generate the categories that will enable systematic theology to be a theory of history.⁹ How exactly does Doran generate the required categories? By means of self-appropriation and with the help of the human sciences, it would seem, and not so much through an exercise of research, interpretation, history and dialectic. But the functional specialty foundations, as conceived by Lonergan, seems to be designed to follow from the first four specialties. Again, Doran's attempt is the effort of a single individual; but functional foundations ought to be the result of teamwork. However, we should note two important points made by Doran: that the situation of theology should be treated as one of the sources of theology, and that psychic conversion should be added to intellectual, moral and religious conversion.

Francesco Rossi de Gasperis' *Cominciando da Gerusalemme* seems to be an exercise in history: it traces the history of the Judaeo-Christians.¹⁰ David Burrell's books are probably attempts to recover categories across traditions, and so might perhaps qualify as exercises in foundations.¹¹ My own *Hermeneutics and Method* claims to be an exercise in research and interpretation.¹²

⁵ Crowe, *Theology of the Christian Word* 3.

⁶ Crowe 147.

⁷ Crowe 4.

⁸ Robert M. Doran, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

⁹ Doran 7, 5.

¹⁰ I am indebted to J.E. Pérez Valera of Sophia University, Tokyo, for having brought this item to my attention.

¹¹ David B. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God: Ibn-Sina, Maimonides, Aquinas* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1986); *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); *Freedom and Creation in the Abrahamic Traditions* (Georgetown University, Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, 1995); "Medieval Jewish, Islamic, and Christian Perspectives on Love and Will," *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997) 7-11.

¹² Ivo Coelho, *Hermeneutics and Method: The 'Universal Viewpoint' in Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

According to Philip McShane, however, no one has as yet successfully done proper work in any of the functional specialties.¹³ He feels, for example, that Crowe's book is not really functional history: it rambles line by line and does not really stick to the functional specialty, history. He extends the same criticism to Doran: he does not really stick to the functional specialty, foundations. And, says McShane, Crowe's x-ray procedure is not good enough: it gets him into dialectic.¹⁴ Still, McShane appreciates Crowe's attempt: at least he has made an attempt. The fact is that no one has ever had a shot at differentiated history in the style of von Ranke's suggestion.¹⁵ In conversation with McShane, I have suggested that his critique would become clearer were he to work out an example of what he means by functional and differentiated interpretation and/or history. I personally tend to think that both functional interpretation and functional history will include a good deal of 'informal or non-methodical' dialectic of the type that is practised anyway in most contemporary scholarship. I do not see any other way in which functional interpretation and history might make use of good work that is already existing.

2. Implementations of the Method as a Whole

When we come to implementations of the method as a whole, Terry Tekippe's *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method* is the first and only attempt.¹⁶ As is well known, Tekippe's attempt evoked, on the one hand, a virulent reaction from within the Lonergan camp, and on the other hand, a deafening silence. We will try to make up for this silence by the following rather long consideration.

2.1 Way or method?

Vernon Gregson regards Tekippe's study as "fatally flawed by a radical misunderstanding of Lonergan's contribution to theological method."¹⁷ According to Gregson, Lonergan never intended his method to be applied in this way. Lonergan, he says, is concerned not with recipes but with the mind that makes recipes and does theology. Lonergan invites us to take reflective and active possession of our minds, rather than implement his or anyone else's recipe.¹⁸ Gregson therefore takes objection to Tekippe's claim that Lonergan's method has never been tried before. If it is a recipe for an eight-course meal, as Tekippe seems to understand it, then Tekippe's claim is true. But if it is not such a recipe, if it is the subjectivity operative in theology, then what Lonergan writes about has been done over and over again, whenever good theology has been done. Lonergan "simply but elegantly brings theology to fuller reflective consciousness and therefore helps in the distinguishing of good theology from bad and in the studied encouragement of the

¹³ Philip McShane, Cantower XIII: 19, www.philipmcshane.ca. Cf., for example, his critique of my *Hermeneutics and Method* in Cantower XIII.

¹⁴ Cf. McShane, note to me, 2003 A.

¹⁵ McShane, note to me, 2003 A.

¹⁶ Terry J. Tekippe, ed., *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983).

¹⁷ Vernon Gregson, "On Learning from an Error," review of Terry J. Tekippe, ed., *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method*, in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 1 (1983) 223.

¹⁸ Gregson 223.

former.”¹⁹ Tekippe’s misunderstanding places “impossible demands on the authors.”²⁰ There is no specific Lonerganian Method in Theology. There is simply method in theology, and Lonergan’s specific contribution to it.²¹

Tekippe responds by noting that Gregson fails to produce textual evidence for his extremely minimalistic interpretation.²² But already in *Papal Infallibility* he had outlined his reasons for maintaining that Lonergan did intend his method to be actually implemented in a collaborative way. [Tekippe 332-333.]

Gregson also objects to the fact that Tekippe’s team chose to repeat existing research and exegesis in the area of infallibility. Method does not demand repetition of good work; “Primarily it is recognising the unique contribution of specific experts.... It is doing one’s own specialisation well, acknowledging and appreciating that others are engaged in complementary facets of the same theological and human enterprise.”²³ I think this accusation is quite unfair. Tekippe and his team do not repeat existing research and exegesis. They clearly admit that ‘starting from scratch’ is quite impossible, and they intelligently and critically make use of existing work. As Tekippe himself points out, there is “quite a bit of creative work there” and that “when we had finished we had the best thing published in English on papal infallibility in both interpretation and history”.²⁴

In contrast to Gregson’s consistently negative comments, Walter Kasper is far more nuanced. He is openly appreciative about the scholarly part (i.e. research, interpretation, history) of Tekippe’s efforts:

The team publication offers something previously unavailable in this field: a solid overview of the biblical, patristic and scholastic sources of the doctrine of infallibility; the controversies from Ockham and Luther to Febronius; the history of the definition in the First and Second Vatican Councils; as well as a survey of the postconciliar discussions raised, above all, by Hans Küng.²⁵

Coming to dialectic and foundations, Kasper highlights the complaint made by the participating theologians themselves:

But the real difficulties lie, as the authors themselves point out, in what Lonergan calls ‘Dialectic’ and ‘Foundations,’ and so in the more systematic sphere (understanding systematic in its ordinary, wider sense, and not in Lonergan's

¹⁹ Gregson 223-224.

²⁰ Gregson 224.

²¹ Gregson 224.

²² Terry J. Tekippe, “On Learning from an Error: A Response to Vernon Gregson,” *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 2 (1984) 42-43.

²³ Gregson 225.

²⁴ Tekippe, e-mail to me dt. 26 March 2002. This claim is backed up by Walter Kasper, review of Terry J. Tekippe, ed., *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method*, tr. T. Tekippe, in *Lonergan Studies Newsletter* 5 (1984) 30. The original review appeared in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 164 (1984) 230-231.

²⁵ Kasper 28.

narrower meaning), more precisely in the fundamental significance that Lonergan ascribes to conversion. The authors operate out of the conviction that, in Lonergan's view, fundamental personal options, presuppositions, intellectual horizons and so on, which stand 'behind' opposing positions, must be brought out into the open and objectified.... They must however finally admit a certain naivete... and too high a degree of abstraction in this method... leaving aside altogether the fact that, while a judgment about the intellectual and moral conversion of an author may possibly be admissible, a judgment about his religious conversion, especially in the case of a living person, would be highly arrogant... and could easily lead back to the dark times of Reformation and Counterreformation polemics. But of what use is a methodical criterion, which a person cannot in practice employ?²⁶

Despite this, Kasper admits that the method does seem to have some utility.

Kress' treatment... clearly and decisively sets aside all the polemic, rhetoric, logical short-cuts and pseudo-arguments of which this debate has been full, in order to come to the matter itself, and carry it forward. Philosophically Kress exposes the untenability and self contradiction of the criticism of propositional truth... as well as does T. Tekippe himself... ; theologically Kress envisions the problem of infallibility in its only appropriate context: a sacramental understanding of the Church.... The two contributions by G. Fagin move in the same direction.²⁷

Kasper goes on to add:

From a purely pragmatic point of view, the authors are consistently on the right track when they affirm that the method is no automatic process, but rather a vision and a coherent whole of creative proposals and guidelines; the concrete application of the method in no way renders superfluous the creativity and the competence of the individual scholar....²⁸

He concludes with this appreciative remark:

Within all the limitations that attend such a teamwork prolonged over years... this work will be recognized as a successful and important contribution to a discussion which, with all its often slanted and distorted ways of stating the question, still has the advantage of raising an until now overlooked, and perhaps even repressed, fundamental methodological question. Surely, that discussion has not yet come to a conclusion. But the volume under review shows at least the boundaries within which Catholic theology may operate, with some prospect of reaching a wider consensus.²⁹

²⁶ Kasper 29-30.

²⁷ Kasper 28.

²⁸ Kasper 30.

²⁹ Kasper 30.

So: should Lonergan's method be applied concretely, as Tekippe has tried to do, or should we with Gregson talk of "the theologian as method"? I would go along with Fred Crowe who represents a middle line between Gregson and Tekippe. I think that, while Crowe would not agree completely with the way Tekippe has applied the method, he would maintain that it does need to be applied. This is obvious from Crowe's *The Lonergan Enterprise* which calls for a detailed programming of the method, ideas which will mediate between the great idea and its applications. Crowe of course insists that, given the existence of conflicting ideas about how the method should be put into practice, we should spend time mastering the method.³⁰

2.2 Collaboration

Given that Lonergan's method is meant to be implemented, what kind of collaboration does it call for? On the analogy of the empirical sciences, I think we would have to think of two types of collaboration: collaboration in the broad sense, and collaboration in the strict sense. Tekippe's attempt is collaborative in both senses of the term: it is collaboration in the strict sense, and it does not hesitate to draw from good work that has already been done. In fact, as the attempts of both Crowe and Tekippe show, it is quite impossible to exclude the broader collaboration and interdependence, and clearly Lonergan never intended excluding this. Such collaboration is already an ongoing reality. We may note here that already in *Insight* Lonergan had enunciated a canon of successive approximations, and had noted the existence of a set of critical principles that makes collaboration possible.³¹ In *Method* too he notes that a serious contribution to one of the eight specialties is all that can be demanded of a single piece of work, and that in fact, the distinction and division of functional specialties enables us to resist excessive demands.³² Interestingly, Lonergan goes on to envisage an interim period until method is generally recognized. In this interim period at least, any single contribution will have a major part and a minor part:

The major part is to produce the type of evidence proper to the specialty. So the exegete does exegesis on exegetical principles. The historian does history on historical principles. The doctrinal theologian ascertains doctrine on doctrinal principles. The systematic theologian clarifies, reconciles, unifies on systematic principles. But there is, besides this major and principal part, also a minor part. Each of the specialties is functionally related to the others. Especially until such time as a method in theology is generally recognized, it will serve to preclude misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and misrepresentation, if the specialist draws attention to the fact of specialization and gives some indication of his awareness

³⁰ Frederick E. Crowe, *The Lonergan Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cowley Publications, 1980) 59. I would think that we need studies on the genesis of the *Method* chapters on interpretation, history, dialectic, foundations, doctrines, and systematics. Such studies would clarify many obscure points in the text and would also bring together the richness of Lonergan's reflections over the fifteen years that separate the completion of *Insight* from the publication of *Method*.

³¹ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan 3 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 610-612.

³² Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 137.

of what is to be added to his statements in the light of the evidence available to other, distinct specialties.³³

Lonergan's method will therefore certainly involve people working in the individual functional specialties in a broad and loose collaboration. The existence of dialectic and foundations makes it possible to (eventually) draw their contributions together. But the method definitely also calls for collaboration in the strict sense of people collaborating together explicitly on commonly agreed projects. Much of even this work will be done individually, but at least dialectic and foundations will involve actual interaction at some point.

We have been noting that Lonergan's method calls for collaboration in a very formal and explicit sense, but we still need to define this 'strict collaboration' more precisely. In Tekippe's pioneering effort, several functional specialties are carried out by a single individual rather than by a team. Thus Sean Freyne does research; Tekippe himself does dialectic; Gerald Fagin does foundations and doctrines, Robert Kress does systematics, and Lucille Sarat communications. Interpretation and history on the other hand are done by several individuals each (Anthony Saldarini, Tekippe and Stephen Duffy), but this is a question of dividing up the matter between the three scholars. Most amazingly, dialectic is performed by one individual and foundations by another.

In communication with me, Tekippe has clarified that there was teamwork: "Our procedure was that one person would work on a specialty, write up a draft, and submit it to the group. We then discussed it; sometimes that discussion was pretty vigorous..."³⁴ I have two comments on this. First, I think Lonergan's method demands that work on a single topic in a single specialty be done by several individuals. Thus several people must do research, interpretation and history, and not in the sense that they divide up the work among themselves, as Tekippe and co. did. The reason here is that we must allow the dialectical range of interpretations to be worked out. History itself usually takes care of this; and method is, in many ways, a compressed imitation of history. Secondly, teamwork such as that described by Tekippe should properly form part of functional dialectic. At the level of functional research, interpretation, history, different individuals simply do their job, on the same basic piece or pieces of work!

Tekippe admits that the type of teamwork carried out for the project could have been done more in depth. But, he says, he does not see any other practical way to do it. "If you had 8 members of the team on a fully equal level, would you publish 8 accounts? Would you take votes on conversions? Would you wait until a consensus emerged? None of these appeals to me as doable."³⁵ My response is yes, we can and should have several members of the team on a fully equal level, all interpreting the same set of texts. And yes, Lonergan's method demands that we should publish the series of interpretations – after

³³ Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 137-138. It is interesting that four functional specialties are not mentioned in the above quote: research, dialectic, foundations and communications. Is there some significance in this omission? Is it that dialectic and foundations necessarily call for teamwork?

³⁴ Tekippe, e-mail to me dt. 26 March 2002.

³⁵ Tekippe, e-mail to me dt. 26 March 2002.

all, this is what is happening anyway, in any field of scholarship. And no, there is no question of taking votes on conversions. Assuming that there has emerged a series of interpretations, and then a series of histories, we should initiate formal teamwork by carrying out the six plus three steps described on p. 250 of *Method*: assembly of the series of interpretations and histories; completion, comparison, reduction, classification, selection; identification of positions and counterpositions, development of positions and reversal of counterpositions, and application of the first eight steps to the results. This is a complicated affair, no doubt, but still quite 'doable'. And no, there might be no consensus after all this work. What then? – The issues would be laid bare. The controlling horizons of the investigators would be laid bare. *Some* light would emerge – as, for example, that the root of disagreements about the doctrine of papal infallibility is intellectual, or moral, or religious conversion.

Tekippe does not tell us much about the nature of his team, but the members were presumably all Christian. In a paper presented at Boston in 2001, I had noted that the team of scholars should be as diverse as possible.³⁶ Tekippe says he has reservations about this. He says this would be best in theory, but would simply lead to paralysis in practice. Would a Hindu or a Sikh agree in the first place to adopt a 'Christian' method such as that of Lonergan? Or even if we were to suppose a team with great familiarity with Lonergan, would we ever reach agreement on even how to pursue method?

Here is a thought experiment. Suppose you got together Fred Crowe, Bob Doran, Vern Gregson, yourself and myself. Do you think in 20 sessions we could agree on how to pursue the method? I doubt it, even though we probably are among those who know most about it, and would tend to be 'on the same page.' And if that group couldn't accomplish, how would a group more diverse?³⁷

Well, I think the difficulty is not insurmountable. An outline of procedures would have to be circulated in advance, and anyone willing to be part of the team would have to indicate his/her willingness to collaborate along the lines indicated. Would there be people willing to engage in research, exegesis, history, dialectic along the lines indicated by Lonergan? I think so. Is this a 'Christian' method? I don't think so – what is explicitly Christian about research, exegesis, history, dialectic? Would there be difficulties? Of course. But are these difficulties in principle? Once again, I don't think so. And at any rate, we should not go about defining the composition of the team. It would be sufficient to note that the method welcomes diversity.

2.3 End products

Tekippe and his team present their results along the lines of the eight functional specialties. In my Boston paper of 2001, I had stated that I would certainly not envisage such a division of chapters, arguing that the functional specialties were divisions of tasks

³⁶ Ivo Coelho, "Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Applying Lonergan's Method in India," paper presented at a meeting of 'young Lonergan scholars' organized by Joseph Flanagan, SJ, August 2001 Boston College, Boston. Unpublished.

³⁷ Tekippe, e-mail to me dt. 26 March 2002.

rather than of fields, areas of research, or subject matter. Tekippe, in his response to me, feels that, since the method is a serial succession of tasks, there was no reason why one could not communicate the results of each of the steps in turn, so as to show how it leads on to the next. He also points out the added advantage in such a procedure: “the possibility of sharing an insight into the method with those outside the Lonergan circle.” I think I would agree now with Tekippe: there is, in fact, a distinct advantage in a step by step description of the process, especially in premier attempts at applying the method. In fact, I would go further and suggest that the series of products of special research, of interpretation and of history be published in an ongoing fashion. Something similar could also be done for the products of dialectic – which might be many!

2.4 Research

Sean Freyne's chapter on Research runs to some 5 pages, if the introductory page is omitted. The reason for such brevity is that the work required was really quite modest. Critical editions and translations of New Testament texts and of several other selected texts were already at hand. The role of the researcher was therefore limited to establishing which were the best critical texts, or to assess the reliability of other texts which lacked critical editions.³⁸ In fact, Freyne candidly admits that checking of sources was actually left to the individual actually doing interpretation or history, while his own contribution was to double check the work done by them, “drawing attention to the possible dangers which may lurk for the historian or interpreter in dealing with particular authors and texts.”³⁹ He leaves it to the reader to decide “whether the individual researcher was aware of such pitfalls and if greater attention to some particular textual problems might not have had important consequences for his conclusions.”⁴⁰

Freyne expresses concern about the selection of data to be studied: “In studying a topic such as papal infallibility the question of how to delimit the data from the tradition which should be examined must of necessity be debatable.” [Tekippe 2.] and again: “The real problem seems to lie in deciding how far flung one's investigation of the tradition should be. Should one's *Fragestellung* be sufficiently wide to take account of divergent or non-representative aspects of the tradition...? Is one searching the tradition to discover whether or not this doctrine is representative of it or is one tracing the history of a dogma already accepted? The answer to this question will decide the selection of texts to be investigated and determine the shape of the work to be done. It will also indicate one's understanding of what the theological undertaking is all about.” [Tekippe 6.] but these are really questions to be handled by the functional specialty dialectic, though Freyne seems to suggest that they will be handled by the functional speciality interpretation.

A point to be noted is that Freyne's work (and honesty) neatly indicates how the present effort of research might be complemented in the future. Thus he notes that in general, critical editions and translations of the Fathers are easier to come by than of the medieval writers. There is, for example, neither a critical edition nor an English

³⁸ Tekippe 1, 2.

³⁹ Tekippe 3.

⁴⁰ Tekippe 3.

translation of Ockham's *De Potestate Papae et Imperatoris*, an important text for the doctrine of papal infallibility. Again, there are good critical texts and translations of Luther's works, but not of the works of Bellarmine and Febronius. [Tekippe 6.]

In the Epilogue, Tekippe complains that research does not really lend itself to teamwork – the other scholars usually have to presume that the research has already been done. And even if a team did have a research specialist, his task would be so large as to be unmanageable. The best that can be done, he says, is to ask the researcher to fill in the lacunae, and to re-investigate particular points arising from interpretation and history. [Tekippe 324.] I agree with Tekippe – except that I would not see this as a problem. 'Teamwork' need not be understood univocally.

2.5 Interpretation

The rather long chapter on interpretation – with the subject matter divided into five parts – makes for interesting reading.

I question the decision to present the historical background not in the chapter on interpretation but rather in the chapter on history. [Tekippe 8.] While it is true that Lonergan distinguishes the functional specialties interpretation and history, I do not think he asks that interpretation be done without taking into account the historical background of texts. The first task of interpretation, understanding, includes 'understanding the author,' which really amounts to understanding the context of the text. The functional specialty history deals rather with 'what was going forward'. There also issues of background and context will surface, but this does not amount to requiring that context be omitted entirely from interpretation.

The decision to divide up the matter between different interpreters, on the other hand, is an eminently practical one. Perhaps we might have to go a step further and ask that more than one individual study the same text or set of texts. This is what happens in the broad collaboration that is modern scholarship, and it is important that it not be excluded, or rather, actively included, within the functioning of Lonergan's method.

Tekippe's discussion of Irenaeus raises the interesting question whether a certain amount of informal dialectic is not built into functional interpretation. Given that Irenaeus' original Greek has been lost, and the text is available to us only in a Latin translation, Tekippe notes that each phrase of the key sentence containing the words *potentior principatatem* is ambiguous, so that the total number of possible interpretations is huge. [Tekippe 23.] He goes on to observe that in the limited space available to him, "it is obviously impossible to debate and decide each of the alternatives." [Tekippe 23.] I think a certain amount of dialectic is inbuilt into the task of interpretation, and simply cannot be avoided, unless we want interpretation to be absolutely naïve, ignoring completely the contributions already made by scholarship.

2.6 History

In the Epilogue Tekippe complains that the priority of interpretation to history sometimes creates severe difficulties: Ockham's texts and positions, for example, make little sense until one understands the strange historical circumstance in which he was writing. [Tekippe 324.] The problem I think lies in Tekippe's understanding of functional interpretation. Functional interpretation cannot simply abdicate determination of the historical context, as I have said already.

Again, I am not quite sure what Saldarini is doing in the chapter on history, and how his work here differs from what he has done in the context of interpretation. It is not quite clear, for example, just how his historical work follows from his interpretative work, though he declares his intention to draw upon that earlier work. [Tekippe 118.]

Further, while I appreciate and fully approve of the subdivision of matter in functional interpretation, I am not quite so sure that such a subdivision quite serves the purposes of functional history. For the task of functional history is to discover just what was going forward, the steps in the development of the doctrine under study, the major transition points. Would not such a task be better served if a single investigator were to handle the entire matter? But I would not like to quibble. I quite see that the mole of work can become so large as to make it quite impossible for a single investigator to manage it alone. Still, there would have to be an attempt to outline the sequence, the steps of the development, the major transition points; and perhaps there would have to be several attempts, not just one.

Having said this, I must admit that Tekippe, who handles the second, third and fourth sections of history, has made an attempt to outline the development of the doctrine of infallibility, and he has also made a very good attempt to make his historical work flow from his interpretative work. But I wonder why the texts of Clement and Ignatius of Antioch were not interpreted within the prior specialty.

2.7 Dialectic

Tekippe remarks several times about the novelty of dialectic as compared to the other functional specialties. Some reviewers of Tekippe's work feel, in fact, that dialectic and foundations are Lonergan's most original contribution to theology, and that they hold great promise. Biallas, for example, says: "The fourth step – dialectic – which pinpoints the differences in conflicting witnesses in terms of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, is quite original and holds some intriguing possibilities."⁴¹ Gregson himself notes that whereas Lonergan's contribution to research, interpretation and history is basically the articulation of the role of subjectivity in those specialties, "his contribution to dialectics is more substantial" [Gregson 226.]

Tekippe first gives an outline of the dialectical procedure, and then proceeds to 'illustrate' it by applying the steps listed on p. 250 of *Method* to the results of interpretation and history. The outline of dialectical procedure is commendable, and even

⁴¹ Leonard J. Biallas, review of Terry J. Tekippe, ed., *Papal Infallibility: An Application of Lonergan's Theological Method*, *Religious Studies Review* 11 (1985) 52.

more his efforts to provide concrete examples of various aspects of this procedure. Thus he points out how Lonergan constantly uses dialectical technique in *Insight*: the polemic against intuitionism, against materialism, sensism, positivism, pragmatism, phenomenism; the strictures against Plato, Augustine, Scotus, Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Hobbes, the Cambridge Platonists, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Husserl. [Tekippe 200.]

Tekippe makes a heroic effort to 'complete' the assembled interpretations and histories, by highlighting the values that appear within each interpreted author or text.⁴² He goes on to 'compare' the completed interpretations and histories in terms of different values. The next step, 'reduction,' does not flow quite as smoothly from 'comparison.' Tekippe maintains that 'reduction' is a question of moving from the differences toward their ultimate root in presence or absence of conversions. [Tekippe 201.] He therefore proceeds to ask of each author whether or not he/she is converted intellectually, morally, religiously. This is not an easy task, since it involves wading through the entire corpus of an author as well as any accounts of his life, [Tekippe 201-202.] but Tekippe succeeds in presenting quite an array of evidence for his global judgments on Irenaeus, Cyrilian, Augustine, Thomas, Ockham, Luther, Bellarmine, Febronius, and Küng – and also on the New Testament, Vatican I and Vatican II!

How does one actually decide whether or not a person is intellectually, morally and religiously converted? Lonergan does not say much on this point, and so Tekippe goes on to present his own rather explicit criteria: seven regarding intellectual conversion, three regarding moral conversion, and five regarding religious conversion. [Tekippe 202-204.] Further, Tekippe identifies religious conversion with Christian conversion (one of the questions Tekippe would ask is, "To what extent is Christ the effective center of his life?"), but of this, more below.

Tekippe's understanding of 'reduction' can be questioned. Lonergan does not speak of 'reduction' in terms of ascertaining the root conversions of an author. He simply talks about 'finding the same affinity and opposition manifested in a number of different manners.' In fact, it is the task of the next step, 'classification,' to determine which affinities or oppositions have dialectical grounds and which have other (genetic or perspectival) grounds. Since, however, Tekippe has already 'reduced' differences to their roots in conversions, he conceives of 'classification' in terms of meshing the findings of comparison with those of reduction, and 'selection' as 'correlating disparate data.' His 'final steps' – affirming positions and reversing counterpositions – also consequently tend to be somewhat of a letdown.

Unfortunately, Tekippe misses the last, ninth step of dialectic: applying the first 8 steps to the results themselves. He also misses out a nuance that becomes clear only in

⁴² Being a Lonergan scholar, I thought Tekippe could have been more careful in his use of the distinction between Semitic and Greek mentalities and notions of truth. As is well known, Lonergan avoids a facile distinction between these mentalities in favour of the more nuanced and systematically rooted distinction between undifferentiated and differentiated consciousness. The so-called Semitic mentality is but an instance of undifferentiated consciousness, whereas the so-called Greek mentality is an instance of a theoretically differentiated consciousness.

Lonergan's post-*Method* writings: the movement from a dialectic of subjects as objects to a dialectic – or dialogue – of subjects as subjects. [Cf. Coelho, *Hermeneutics and Method* 184-187.]

But my major criticism is that Tekippe performs dialectic all alone. As far as I can see, dialectic, as conceived by Lonergan, is meant to be a team affair. Some of the problems encountered by Tekippe could have been handled better if dialectic had been carried out in team. Thus, if each team member had assembled, completed, compared, reduced, etc., we would, at the end of 8 steps, have arrived at a list of positions and counterpositions and attempts to develop the former and reverse the latter. At this point, the method requires that the 8 lists themselves be subjected to the 8 steps. This is not an exercise in futility: it is an attempt to indirectly get people to reveal themselves, their operative horizons, the presence or absence of conversions. This is the point, the crucial experiment – that the controlling subjectivities of investigators are brought out into the open. There follows, as I have mentioned already, the moment of dialogue, the encounter of subjects as subjects, the gentle appeal to one another to see a point, to become aware perhaps of exercised contradictions, to make a decision to change. The path is then open to foundations: taking a stand, on philosophical, moral and religious issues, and in this way engaging in an objectification of categories.⁴³ In Tekippe's understanding of dialectic, what we have are one person's judgments about the conversions of the authors studied, one individual's classification of statements as positions or counterpositions, and one individual's indirect revelation of his horizon.

Given all these reservations, I think Tekippe's implementation of dialectic is the weakest link in the whole project. The interesting thing is that Tekippe and his collaborators themselves complain about the wooliness, the abstractness, the impracticality, of dialectic and foundations, [Tekippe 325-326] a complaint that was picked up by Kasper in his review. [Kasper 29-30.] Thus Tekippe says: "In the light of the actual attempt to implement this strategy, the promise held out by Dialectic must be pronounced somewhat naive." [Tekippe 325.] He lists some of the problems encountered with regard to authors of the past: there may not be sufficient evidence for deciding about a particular conversion; an author may have held opposed stances at different times in his life; he may have simultaneously held two different positions, without being aware of the contradiction; he may have said one thing and done another; or he may have been only half-converted. In spite of all this, Tekippe admits that dialectic does have the advantage of focusing attention on the roots of differences. [Tekippe 325-326.]

Again, Tekippe says that it is arrogant to pass judgment about the moral and religious conversion of living authors, and points out that Lonergan himself never did so. But what use is a method which no one will dare to use? [Tekippe 326.] – I would simply

⁴³ McShane insists on the need for investigators to take a stand. According to him, Tekippe and company, the people in the book *Lonergan's Hermeneutics* (except Meyer and Hefling), various authors in the *Method* journal, all tend to evade and avoid the discomfort at the end of p. 250 of *Method*; they fail to answer the question, what are MY foundations. (McShane, note to me, 2003 A.)

say that the method is not invalidated by the unavailability of data on certain counts, or by the impracticality of handling certain issues. I am thinking of equations in physics, where some of the factors simply reduce to zero. In some such fashion, we might not have to data to pronounce upon K ung's religious conversion, or we might not find it convenient. We might then simply assume that K ung is religiously converted, and concentrate our attention perhaps on his achievement of intellectual conversion, for example. But all this, presuming that the method does call upon us to explicitly pronounce upon the presence or absence of conversions in authors. If, instead, it merely requires us to identify positions and counterpositions of authors being studied, there might be a way out. It is one thing to label an author as religiously unconverted, and another thing to state that some particular stand of his is a religious counterposition.

2.8 Foundations

Gerald Fagin begins by explaining the meaning and function of the specialty foundations. He speaks about general and special categories, but does not attempt to derive any of the general categories, limiting himself to a derivation of some of the special categories which he considers relevant and necessary to the discussion of infallibility: love of God, fidelity of God, revelation, truth as saving, community, sacramentality, and authority as service. His method consists in sketching out an outline of each category by appealing to the Christian scriptures and tradition, and then indicating his own stand. The religious counterpositions he rejects make an interesting list: Pelagianism; extreme devotionalism or radical subjectivity in belief; radical individuality of belief or of experience; anti-sacramentality.

My main question is: how can dialectic and foundations be done by two different individuals? For the task of dialectic is to come up with a range of alternatives, sets of positions / counterpositions, and the requirement of foundations is that each investigator now take a stand by committing himself/ herself deliberately to one or other of these sets. It is in this way that the categories become explicit. They are generated seminally in dialectic, but with explicit commitment in foundations. [Lonergan, *Method in Theology* 292.]

Another question regards the identification of religious conversion with Christian conversion. Tekippe discusses the matter explicitly in the Epilogue. He knows that Lonergan speaks simply of 'religious conversion' and he is aware also that some Lonergan scholars have called for distinctions between Christian and religious conversions, or between theistic, ecclesial and Christian conversions. Tekippe points out, however, that religious conversion does not occur in the abstract: every conversion takes place within the context of some tradition. It is this concrete, tradition-related religious conversion that will be objectified, and not some abstract 'religious conversion'. [Tekippe 326-327.]

But if this is the case, is not Lonergan's method open to the charge of begging the question? For it is likely that the objectification of Catholic religious conversion will lend itself to the selection of Catholic doctrines, and the objectification of Protestant religious

conversion will likewise lend itself to the rejection of Catholic doctrines. Tekippe does not raise this point. He is content to say that Lonergan scholars “must work out this question more carefully before Foundations can be a fully coherent procedure.” [Tekippe 328.]

2.9 Doctrines

The task of doctrines is “to select doctrines from among the multiple choices presented by the functional specialty, dialectic,” [Lonergan, *Method* 298.] and also to forge new formulations of old doctrines. Fagin seems to have accomplished the first task already in the context of foundations, so that the present chapter is content to present a new formulation of the doctrine of papal infallibility. In this task, Fagin draws upon the categories he has outlined in foundations: the love of God, revelation, community, truth as saving, and fidelity, [Tekippe 256-261.] but also on some of Lonergan's categories such as the historically conditioned character of propositions. [Tekippe 257, 267.] The result is an extremely interesting reformulation of the doctrines enunciated in Vatican I and Vatican II. Hans Küng's position is rejected on the grounds of a lack of intellectual conversion, as seen in his radical scepticism about the truth value of propositions, and also on the grounds of an inadequate appreciation of the category of sacramentality. [Tekippe 265.]

The question remains however: Fagin's work of selection is largely facilitated by his identification of religious conversion with Christian conversion. What would happen if the foundational theologian had to work with a category of religious conversion that was not straightaway identified with Christian conversion? The task of selection would have probably become significantly more difficult.

2.10 Systematics

Robert Kress' job is to work out a systematics of the doctrine of papal infallibility – by which is meant “an explanatory framework in which the doctrinal statements can be related to each other and to the contemporary context” [Tekippe 269.] however, he feels obliged to preface his systematic efforts with some serious dialectic, most especially with Küng. The substantial systematics is therefore to be found only in the third section of this long chapter. We have noted above that Kasper had some very appreciative things to say about this chapter – especially in the way it makes use of the category of sacramentality and mediation. I would venture to add that it also makes very good use of the category of truth.

I do not feel competent to say more about Kress' effort vis-à-vis Lonergan's outlining of the task in his *Method*, but I do come away with the feeling that Lonergan has much more to offer – especially when one dips into the large body of unpublished and semi-published matter prior to *Method*.

2.11 Communications

Lucille Sarrat's effort to communicate the doctrine of papal infallibility is quite commendable, drawing as it does not only on systematics but also on the biblical and historical data made available by the first three specialties. She defines the choice of audience as "any and all who are interested in delving deeper into the mysteries that God has revealed – the student in school, the ordinary lay person and perhaps even the scholar" [Tekippe 310.]

3. Learning from the Past, Looking to the Future

We have been studying various attempts to implement Lonergan's method with the intention to learn from them, and with the hope that this learning will be helpful in future attempts at implementation.

Tekippe's attempt is extremely interesting not only for its successes but also for the problems it raises. Some of the advantages of implementing Lonergan's method have been listed by Tekippe himself. Firstly, the existence of a common framework for collaboration and the common appropriation of a sophisticated vocabulary and viewpoint made possible a highly nuanced and satisfactory theological exchange. Secondly, there was a definite growth in methodological awareness among the members. Thirdly, there was a greater appreciation of the importance of other specialties. [Tekippe 330-331.] Again, there is the abundant appreciation, noted above, from a theologian of the calibre of Kasper.

Both Crowe and Tekippe deserve our admiration for their pioneering efforts. The work of Tekippe, especially, has suffered from an undue neglect from the Lonergan community. Having had the occasion to study that work once again, however cursorily, I must admit that I am filled with a growing respect for the attempt. All that I have said above, and what I am going to say below, should be taken only in the context of a deep admiration and appreciation for this pioneering and, I must admit, heroic attempt to implement Lonergan's method. I will outline elsewhere my own positive proposal for implementing Lonergan's method in the area of theology,⁴⁴ but here I will content myself with drawing some lessons, mostly from Tekippe, but also from Crowe. These, then, are my suggestions:

1. Research should be understood, not as starting from scratch, but as drawing upon all the rich resources of scholarship, and complementing them where necessary.
2. Interpretation should not hesitate to draw upon and even engage in an informal dialectic with existing scholarship.
3. Interpretation should not hesitate to study historical backgrounds and contexts wherever necessary.
4. Interpreters should divide the matter to be interpreted among themselves, but it would be helpful if more than one scholar were to interpret the same text or set of texts.

⁴⁴ Ivo Coelho, "Applying Lonergan's Method: The Case of an Indian Theology," presented for publication in *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies*. Cf. also Coelho, "Lonergan's Method: A Proposal for Implementation," a paper presented at the Second International Lonergan Conference, Toronto, 1-6 August 2004.

5. History should make full use of the results of functional interpretation. It should not hesitate to draw from basic history wherever necessary, but should clearly understand itself as special history, and therefore concentrate on discovering transition points in a development.
6. Historians could also divide the matter among themselves, but then teamwork is needed to spot the transitions and outline the development. Here again, it would be helpful if, after such teamwork, each historian were to draw up his outline of the development.
7. Dialectic should involve a team that would include the collaborating researchers, interpreters and historians, but also, if possible, other competent scholars, especially those who will be doing doctrines, systematics and communications.
8. Each member of the dialectical team should apply the 8 steps of p. 250 of *Method* to the assembled researches, interpretations and histories, aiming at producing a list of positions and counterpositions, with attempts to develop the former and reverse the latter.
9. The 8 steps should now be applied to the results themselves.
10. With the results of this last step in hand, the dialectical team must now meet in face to face encounter, and engage in dialogue.
11. After the dialogue, each member proceeds to make deliberate decisions about his/her basic horizon, and thus to objectify his/her foundational categories, both general and special.
12. Once this is done, at least the selection of doctrines can be done by each one on the basis of the objectified horizons.
13. Those specializing in doctrines could now proceed to re-formulation of received doctrines.
14. Those specializing in systematics could proceed to working out an understanding of the reformulated doctrines.
15. Those specializing in communications could proceed to working out catechetical, homilectical, and other possibilities of communicating to various sections of the public.
16. Resultant foundational categories, doctrines, systematics and efforts at communication could themselves eventually be subjected to dialectic.

Lonergan himself asks that the different specialists be in easy and rapid communication, so that all may profit at once from the advances made by anyone. This suggests that a future collaborative project need not be bound by the inbuilt linearity of the method. Further, the internet today makes 'easy and rapid communication' possible in a way that would have been hard to imagine at the time of the writing of *Method*, or even when Tekippe's project was published. Could we think of a set of collaborators – even possibly from around the world – agreeing on a common project, working independently on their functional specialties, keeping in touch and exchanging notes and papers on the net, and coming together perhaps only for the exercise of dialectic and foundations? Or could we perhaps think of coming together for dialectic and foundations on the basis of work already done, such as that of Crowe and Tekippe?

- Published in *Divyadaan Journal*, Vol. 15, 2004.