



## Theological Instruction and Faith Transmission: Lonergan's Method as Pedagogy Theology<sup>1</sup>

Patricia A. Sullivan

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### Abstract

Hans Urs Von Balthasar's lament that coincidence of the theologian and the saint has not been the norm since the Middle Ages can be emblematic of a methodological issue impacting both academic theology and the Church wholly by separation of that which as a faith tenet should be unified—word and witness. Theologians' intent today to speak from but not be confused with their location, the theological discipline's reach for respectability in an increasingly secular academy, market forces deliberately shrinking theology's influence except in such as interdisciplinary endeavors supporting other publics' aims, the contemporary narrow specialization of the theologian, and the sometime view that narrow tasks serving theology are theology itself all result in confections of theology and religion. So "theology" and "spirituality," as Balthasar identified the breach, will be separate. Yet we hope that theologians, with all others, will be saints. Does this not, particularly to students, transmit the faith? Although Bernard Lonergan's method might seem to exacerbate the separation given its numerous theological specialties and conversion types, it also offers the way of reunification—without threat to academic integrity. The theological method, with its turn to the subject, can ground a theology (and method) of pedagogy.

### Keywords

Bernard Lonergan, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Theological Method, Theological Instruction, Saints

<sup>1</sup> The initial reflection for this expanded work was presented as a paper, entitled "Completing a Turn to the Subject: The Implicit Unity of (Academic) Theological Instruction and Faith Transmission in the Age of 'Religious Studies,'" at the College Theology Society Convention, U.S.A., in the summer of 2013.

Hans Urs Von Balthasar's lament that coincidence of the theologian and the saint has not been the norm since the Middle Ages<sup>2</sup> can be the emblem of a methodological issue impacting not only academic theology but consequentially the Church wholly by separation of that which as a tenet of faith should be unified—word and witness. Theologians today speak from their location but are meant not to be confused with it; indeed, as a caveat, living faith is not identical to living Church doctrine. On theoretical levels with necessarily practical implications, such distinctions arise logically from recognition of the provisional nature of our knowledge, commitment to the important “critical” function of the theologian even in challenge to the Church (a hallmark particularly of a Catholic theological vantage point today), and openness and genuine Christian service to diverse student bodies in contemporary classrooms of theology. Added to such concerns are others practical from which theory can emerge intentionally or accidentally—the theological discipline's reach for respectability in an increasingly secular academy, market forces shrinking theology's influence except in such as interdisciplinary endeavors supporting aims of other publics, for examples. And not to be ignored is the contemporary narrow specialization of the theologian, alongside which similarly narrow tasks serving theology are viewed as theology itself, such that confluences of theology and religious studies or “religion” are sometimes barely detected. In this situation, “theology” and “spirituality” (or “sanctity”), as Balthasar identified the breach,<sup>3</sup> will be separate. And yet it is hoped that theologians with other Christians in the modern world might be saints, that theologians might even be saints toward students in the classroom. Is such sacramental and intellectual communication in unity not how the faith is handed on?

Catholic colleges and universities among other institutions of higher learning have been a crucial conduit of the intellectual engagement with Christian faith which is essential to the well-being of the Church—and thereby to the world—as well as to the academy. Although theological instruction is not catechism, today basic catechetical facts must be imparted in the classroom to the vast number of students lacking them who otherwise could not participate in or appreciate theological reflection. Yet transmitting the faith involves not merely supplying catechetical facts, even in conjunction with theological reflection, but living faith. While Bernard Lonergan's method might seem to exacerbate the separation of theology and spirituality given its identification of numerous theological specialties and

<sup>2</sup> Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology: I. The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), pp. 181-6, original edition *Verbum Caro (Skizzen zur Theologie I)*, Einsiedeln, Johannes Verlag, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

types of conversion, not all of them religious, it also offers the way of reunification—without threat to academic integrity. For one, his eight functional specialties together complete the theological task, consciousness of which prevents theology from being mistaken for religious studies or religion. For two, his placement of conversion at the center of the theological enterprise, with religious conversion highest, can be seen to make transmitting the faith the work of the Holy Spirit rather than of the theologian, yet work occurring when the theologian, in grace, is, or is open to, living the faith, unapologetically so to speak, even in teaching and with all due respect to students who do not share the faith. But these facts of Lonergan’s thought must be fitted, together and to other elements of his program, so that the implicit unity of (academic) theological instruction and faith transmission can be seen. For in Lonergan’s theology even the converted “theologian” is not necessarily theologizing. And therefore a question arises: why and how might theology be more effective as an instrument of the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith than any other discipline taught by a converted subject? The answer rests in the formal object of theology, which must be considered first for its methodological importance, both on theological and personal levels, second for its relevance for teaching theology, especially at the undergraduate level, and third, as an addendum to Lonergan’s method, for its implications in the extent to which observed sanctity might be a theological source valuable in academic theology.

### Doing Theology: The Method and its Formal Object

Quick review of Lonergan’s system will remind of theology’s formal object, in his “functional approach” as opposed to a subject or field specialization approach.<sup>4</sup> Lonergan’s functional specialties as outlined in *Method in Theology* are divided first by the “phase” of the “theological operation,” that is, whether it “encounters the past,” learning that which has been said “about God and the economy of salvation” (“*in oratione oblique*”),<sup>5</sup> or whether it “confronts the present and future,”<sup>6</sup> “enlightened by the past,” addressing “the problems” of the present (“*in oratione recta*”).<sup>7</sup> The specialties are demarcated second by the four levels of “conscious and intentional operations”: “experiencing” (“the apprehension of data”); “understanding” (“insight into the apprehended data”); “judgment” (“acceptance or rejection of the

<sup>4</sup> Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, repr. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

hypotheses and theories put forward by understanding to account for the data”); and “decision” (“acknowledgment of values and the selection of the methods or other means that lead to their realization”).<sup>8</sup> Lonergan noted that “one operates on all four levels to achieve the end proper to some particular level,” yet “there are four levels and so four proper ends” in each of the two phases of theology.<sup>9</sup> The resulting eight functional specialties are, in phase one, research, interpretation, history, and dialectic, and, in phase two, foundations, doctrines, systematics, and communications.<sup>10</sup> In phase two the order of operations is inverted because “in the first phase one begins from the data and moves through meanings and facts toward personal encounter,” whereas “in the second phase one begins from reflection on authentic conversion, employs it as the horizon within which doctrines are to be apprehended and an understanding of their content sought, and finally moves to a creative exploration of communications differentiated according to media, according to classes of men, and according to common cultural interests.”<sup>11</sup>

The first-phase specialties, “mediating theology,” so coined by Lonergan, “introduce us to knowledge of the Body of Christ,” “reveal the religious situation,” “mediate an encounter with persons witnessing to Christ,” “challenge to a decision: in what manner or measure am I to carry the burden of continuity or to risk the initiative of change?” This decision “is primarily not a theological but a religious event,” “effect[ing] the transition” to the next phase. The second-phase specialties, “mediated theology,” are “knowledge of God and of all things as ordered to God, not indeed as God is known immediately (1 Cor. 13, 12), nor as he is known mediately through created nature, but as he is known mediately through the whole Christ, Head and members.” The decision elicited in phase one “enters explicitly into theology” in phase two, then, in the first specialty there, foundations.<sup>12</sup> It is in foundations that special theological categories

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 127–33.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 135–6. Lonergan explained: “Like dialectic, foundations is on the level of decision. Like history, doctrines is on the level of judgment. Like interpretation, systematics aims at understanding. Finally, as research tabulates the data from the past, so communications produces data in the present and for the future” (p. 135). In the first phase, the four specialties correlate “to the four dimensions of the Christian message and the Christian tradition”: “For that message and tradition, first of all, are a range of data. Secondly, the data purport to convey not the phenomena of things, as in the natural sciences, but the meanings entertained and communicated by minds, as in the human sciences. Thirdly, these meanings were uttered at given times and places and transmitted through determinate channels and under sundry vicissitudes. Fourthly, the utterance and the transmission were the work of persons bearing witness to Christ Jesus and, by their words and deeds, bringing about the present religious situation” (Ibid.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

are developed, “as models, as interlocking sets of terms and relations.” Then “use and the acceptance of the categories as hypothesis about reality or description of reality occur in doctrines, systematics, communications.”<sup>13</sup> Lonergan wrote:

Foundations occurs on the fourth level of human consciousness, on the level of deliberation, evaluation, decision. It is a decision about whom and what you are for and, again, whom and what you are against. It is a decision illuminated by the manifold possibilities exhibited in dialectic. It is a fully conscious decision about one’s horizon, one’s outlook, one’s world-view. It deliberately selects the frame-work, in which doctrines have their meaning, in which systematics reconciles, in which communications are effective.<sup>14</sup>

Foundations “derive[s] its first set of categories from religious experience.”<sup>15</sup> On the whole it is “concerned largely with the origins, the genesis, the present state, the possible developments and adaptations of the categories in which Christians understand themselves, communicate with one another, and preach the gospel to all nations.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore conversion is critical. In the first phase of theology “conversion is not a prerequisite.”<sup>17</sup> Lonergan wrote: “As conversion is basic to Christian living, so an objectification of conversion provides theology with its foundations.”<sup>18</sup> So “foundations present, not doctrines, but the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended.”<sup>19</sup> Lonergan cautioned that “conversion may be authentic or unauthentic, so there may be many Christian horizons and not all of them need represent authentic conversion.”<sup>20</sup> It is “being in love with God [that] is the basic fulfilment of our conscious intentionality”<sup>21</sup>; “just as unrestricted questioning is our capacity for self-transcendence, so being in love in an unrestricted fashion is the proper fulfilment of that capacity.”<sup>22</sup> Love guides and brings to their

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292. “The use of the general theological categories occurs in any of the eight functional specialties. The genesis of the special theological categories occurs seminally in dialectic and with explicit commitment in foundations” (*Ibid.*)

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293. He explained: “There is needed in the theologian the spiritual development that will enable him both to enter into the experience of others and to frame the terms and relations that will express that experience” (p. 290).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130. Lonergan explained that foundations is different from fundamental theology in that fundamental theology is a “theological first,” before other specialties, “a set of doctrines” (p. 131).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131–2. See pp. 281–5 on “Categories.”

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106. He wrote further here: “That fulfilment is not the product of our knowledge and choice. On the contrary, it dismantles and abolishes the horizon in which

peak state our intellectual and moral conversions (i.e., those dealing with truth and value),<sup>23</sup> for “religious conversion is to a total being-in-love as the efficacious ground of all self-transcendence, whether in the pursuit of truth, or in the realization of human values, or in the orientation man adopts to the universe, its ground, and its goal.”<sup>24</sup>

Lonergeran’s method obviously is based upon the notion that “interiorly and religiously differentiated consciousness” “clarifies” theological thought.<sup>25</sup> Three interrelated factors are important in this regard, particularly as they concern foundations which, to be shown, ensures that academic theological instruction optimally admits transmission of the faith. First, foundations is eminently reliant on transcendental method,<sup>26</sup> “a normative pattern of recurrent and related operations yielding cumulative and progressive results.”<sup>27</sup> But this method “is a constituent part of the special method proper to theology, just as it is a constituent part in the special methods proper to the natural and to the human sciences.”<sup>28</sup> Lonergan noted that “the transcendental notions are our capacity for seeking and, when found, for recognizing instances of the intelligible, the true, the real, the good. It follows that they are relevant to every object that we come to know by asking and answering questions.”<sup>29</sup> So “all special methods consist in making specific the transcendental precepts, Be attentive, Be intelligent, Be reasonable, Be responsible.”<sup>30</sup> And

our knowing and choosing went on and it sets up a new horizon in which the love of God will transvalue our values and the eyes of that love will transform our knowing.

Though not the product of our knowing and choosing, it is a conscious dynamic state of love, joy, peace, that manifests itself in acts of kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self control (Gal. 5, 22).

To say that this dynamic state is conscious is not to say that it is known. For consciousness is just experience, but knowledge is a compound of experience, understanding, and judging. Because the dynamic state is conscious without being known, it is an experience of mystery. Because it is being in love, the mystery is not merely attractive but fascinating; to it one belongs; by it one is possessed. Because it is an unmeasured love, the mystery evokes awe. Of itself, then, inasmuch as it is conscious without being known, the gift of God’s love is an experience of the holy, . . .”

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 237–44.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 281–2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 282. See *Method in Theology*, chapter 1, on transcendental method.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 13–4.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 23. Lonergan wrote that transcendental method “supplies the basic anthropological component” of theological method (p. 25).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 282. Lonergan wrote: “Where other methods aim at meeting the exigences and exploiting the opportunities proper to particular fields, transcendental method is concerned with meeting the exigences and exploiting the opportunities presented by the human mind itself. It is a concern that is both foundational and universally significant and relevant” (p. 14).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 20. The “precepts have a prior existence and reality in the spontaneous, structured dynamism of human consciousness,” Lonergan explained (Ibid).

“while the transcendental notions make questions and answers possible, categories make them determinate.”<sup>31</sup> Second, theology and the sciences can have in common concern for human good. Lonergan urged that theologians engage with specialists in other disciplines for the benefit of all. Developing skills and structures to serve the human good, though, is a “process,” he wrote, that “is not merely the service of man; it is above all the making of man, his advance in authenticity, the fulfilment of his affectivity, and the direction of his work to the particular goods and a good of order that are worth while.”<sup>32</sup> Third, service of the human good relies on interpretation. Meaning, which has “cognitive,” “efficient,” “constitutive,” and “communicative” functions, has stages from undifferentiated to various differentiated consciousnesses.<sup>33</sup> Here religion is fundamental. “Before it enters the world mediated by meaning, religion is the prior word God speaks to us by flooding our hearts with his love,” Lonergan wrote. “That prior word pertains, not to the world mediated by meaning, but to the world of immediacy, to the unmediated experience of the mystery of love and awe.”<sup>34</sup> And so it can be asserted that the theological enterprise, pivoting on the functional specialty of foundations, has particular importance for, and a particular responsibility to, service of the human good, recognized by Christianity as eschatological in scope.

### Teaching Theology: The Formal Object and Faith Transmission

Lonergan’s method must allow that the authentically converted instructor in such as sociology or psychology or politics—or the authentically converted policy maker, business person, etc. engaged in work on behalf of the public good—may be a conduit of the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith, precisely because transcendental method netting authentic conversion can be employed in any setting. But the authentically converted Christian theologian is uniquely suited to be

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282. Lonergan wrote: “Theological categories are either general or special. General categories regard objects that come within the purview of other disciplines as well as theology. Special categories regard the objects proper to theology. The task of working out general and special categories pertains, not to the methodologist, but to the theologian engaged in this fifth functional specialty. The methodologist’s task is the preliminary one of indicating what qualities are desirable in theological categories, what measure of validity is to be demanded of them, and how categories with the desired qualities and validity are to be obtained” (*Ibid.*).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52. Lonergan wrote that “to advance from transcendental to theological method, it is necessary to add a consideration of religion. And before we can speak of religion, we first must say something about the human good and about human meaning” (p. 25).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76–86.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

an instrument of the Holy Spirit's work in transmitting the faith precisely because the tradition he or she investigates and guides is Christian reflection upon the revelation of Jesus Christ;<sup>35</sup> united are the person and that to which he or she is explicitly "witnessing." Yet since conversion is only integral to the theological task at phase two, where it is objectified in decision and existential commitment in foundations, it could be argued that only the theological practitioner here is, properly speaking, a theologian. As Giovanni Sala observed of Lonergan's fifth functional specialty,

The formal object of theology is the very reality of the theologian who has been converted to the Gospel. It is he who expresses in words the new and absolutely transcendent meaning through which his consciousness has been broadened by God's gift. Being himself the first principle of theology, he is able to keep under control the continuous and cumulative process of theology.<sup>36</sup>

But all other "theologians" are proximate to foundations, flowing into or from this critical theological specialty, in their explicit academic and personal concern for the Christian message. And if they will be truly theological they must recognize this and exercise their roles, in their integrity, to serve foundations in the one multi-specialty theological task. The specialties occurring after foundations—doctrines, systematics, and communications—are expressly working in light of conversion. This is not to suppose that foundations any more than any of the other specialties *is* or could simply *be* theology; Lonergan cautioned that "the distinction and division are needed to curb one-sided totalitarian ambitions."<sup>37</sup> And it must be underlined that it is in phase one, in dialectics, that occurs "the purification of the categories—the elimination of the unauthentic" from the "transcultural base[s]" of "the authentic or unauthentic man" for general categories and "the authentic or unauthentic Christian" for special categories. This "is effected in the measure that theologians attain authenticity through religious, moral, and intellectual conversion."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22–5, 257–62, 361–7.

<sup>36</sup> Giovanni B. Sala, S.J., "Theological Aspects of Bernard Lonergan's 'Method in Theology,'" trans. Donald E. Buzzelli, accessed December 30, 2012, [http://www.lonergan.org/dialogue\\_partners/Sala/theological\\_aspects\\_of\\_bernard\\_1.htm](http://www.lonergan.org/dialogue_partners/Sala/theological_aspects_of_bernard_1.htm), original article, "Aspetti teologici del 'Metodo in teologia' di B. Lonergan," *La civiltà cattolica*, March 17, 1973, pp. 553–67. Sala further explained: "In the functional specialization of 'foundations,' strictly methodological discourse becomes theological also. Judgments of fact and value are produced, not only about the structure of human intentionality, but also about a reality, the gratuitous love of God that is given to man and that makes him more than man. Man becomes capable of grasping divine things because he has become connatural with God's nature. Only the theologian enlightened by faith can assert the possibility and the fact of this new horizon of understanding and choosing."

<sup>37</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 137.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.



Consciousness of each theological specialty's proximity to foundations is as critical in teaching theology as in theologizing itself. Today, in undergraduate settings even in Catholic liberal arts institutions, wherein even among Christian students scant knowledge of the faith can be accompanied by great erroneous notions of the faith, even if one wishes to approach one's courses strictly as a "field specialist,"<sup>39</sup> teaching theology resembles Lonergan's final functional specialty of communications as well as (perhaps as much as) one's own specialty. "Communications is concerned with theology in its external relations."<sup>40</sup> Lonergan was attuned in the 1960s, when he developed *Method in Theology*, to the problems that lack of conversion inflicts on understanding and living the faith. Today his comments in that regard, made with respect to the specialty of doctrines, are all the more piercing:

The unconverted may have no real apprehension of what it is to be converted. Sociologically they are Catholics or Protestants, but in a number of ways they deviate from the norm. Moreover, they may lack an appropriate language for expressing what they really are, and so they will use the language of the group with which they identify socially. There follows an inflation, or devaluation, of this language and so of the doctrine it conveys. Terms that denote what the unconverted is not, will be stretched to denote what he is. Doctrines that are embarrassing will not be mentioned in polite company. Conclusions that are unacceptable will not be drawn. Such unauthenticity can spread. It can become a tradition. Then persons, brought up in an unauthentic tradition, can become authentic human beings and authentic Christians only by purifying their tradition.<sup>41</sup>

Undergraduate students will not be theologians, even as theologians assist them to think theologically. They will understand something about theology, however, in studying the thought of the tradition and observing a hopefully converted subject work through theological "problems." They will understand—if theological specialists teach them—tenets of the faith. Lonergan wrote that the unconverted (whether instructors or students) "have in doctrines the evidence both that there is something lacking in themselves and that they need to pray for illumination and to seek instruction."<sup>42</sup> Commonly

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 132. He explained: "These are of three kinds. There are interdisciplinary relations with art, language, literature, and other religions, with the natural and the human sciences, with philosophy and history. Further, there are the transpositions that theological thought has to develop if religion is to retain its identity and yet at the same time find access into the minds and hearts of men of all cultures and classes. Finally, there are the adaptations needed to make full and proper use of the diverse media of communication that are available at any place and time" (pp. 132–3).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 298–9.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

students encounter foundations and doctrines in systematics today, if not “residually,” in the context of analysis of an event or an issue, in a history or moral theology course; for uncommonly is a foundations course offered in an undergraduate setting. Lonergan was not providing a method of teaching theology, of course. So it is unsurprising that those using his method in their own theologizing may not find it beneficial to offer undergraduate courses in his distinct functional specialties. Through any subject open to conversion teaching his or her theological specialty—*particularly in consciousness of its role vis-à-vis foundations*—students might receive the faith. Yet this is not a matter about which the instructor needs to be concerned directly. Allegiance in academic theology is to one’s proper role in theology. Allegiance in one’s humanity, as Christian, is to the message of Christ which the theologian is consciously to serve.

In brief excursus, with regard to the first allegiance, Lonergan wrote: “Each of the eight [functional specialties] has its proper excellence. None can stand without the other seven.”<sup>43</sup> This is a consciousness that can be lost in the classroom if instructors do not think “functionally.” Then students are apt effectively to learn that there are different ways of doing theology (e.g., biblical, historical, systematic, moral)—which on their own may not be so theological—than that different theological specialties are different interrelated moments in a unified theological task. A realist, Lonergan thought that as specialties expanded in their scope different individuals would serve them distinctly, but he did not necessarily find this ideal. One individual could, for example, exercise all of the first four specialties.<sup>44</sup> Although he noted that there is a logical while indeed functional relationship especially between the first- and second-phase specialties of dialectic and foundations, and of history and doctrines, in general the dependence of the phases upon each other should not permit of one phase, with its interdependent specialties, failing to allow the other to retain its integrity on its own. This is for the good of theology.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the second allegiance, from a Christian and human standpoint and not only an academic one, ideally it would be authentically-converted subjects who would practice each of the functional specialties, even where the functional specialties themselves do not require conversion for valid contributions to theology. Conversion cannot and should not be measured (by other than God), but, to ensure that “theology” is that in fact, academic training and practice can be assessed. Projects contributing to but outside of theology are, or can be, far from foundations in their aim. Diligence in defining theology after Lonergan, thereby necessarily illuminating the

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 141–2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 143–4.

critical moment of foundations, along with the important role played by each other specialty in the one theological task of reflection upon the revelation of Christ, opens the classroom to the Holy Spirit's action. This is neither to surrender theology's academic status nor to impinge upon it, since for Lonergan conversion plays a "foundational" role in theology and therefore the Spirit is necessarily involved. Hereby theology and sanctity are linked, at least as goal. But what about in reality?

### Living Theology: The Formal Object and Its Method

If there is a grand difficulty in Lonergan's theological method beyond its sheer complexity, it is the requirement for the theologian in foundations: he or she should be a saint. Sainthood would be the intended end for any theologian, in any theological specialty, with any method, and indeed for every person no matter his or her vocation. But in Lonergan's thought it is the saint particularly who is best suited to identify the categories through which the Christian message can be received and communicated. And yet the fact cannot be escaped that theologians, even intellectually "good" ones, have in the history of Christianity not necessarily been saintly. Lonergan himself, concerning the base of the special theological categories developed in foundations, wrote that

a distinction has to be drawn between being in love in an unrestricted manner (1) as it is defined and (2) as it is achieved. As it is defined, it is the habitual actuation of man's capacity for self-transcendence; it is the religious conversion that grounds both moral and intellectual conversion; it provides the real criterion by which all else is to be judged; and consequently one has only to experience it in oneself or witness it in others, to find in it its own justification. On the other hand, as it actually is achieved in any human being, the achievement is dialectical. It is authenticity as a withdrawal from unauthenticity, and the withdrawal is never complete and always precarious. The greatest of saints have not only their oddities but also their defects, and it is not some but all of us that pray, not out of humility but in truth, to be forgiven our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.<sup>46</sup>

It must also be observed that some of the figures who have most successfully defined the special theological categories in their time, as they lived lives directed to holiness, nevertheless departed from Christianity either intentionally or by doctrinal misstep: Tertullian inclined toward Montanism and Origen's "spirit and fire"

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 283–4.

can be as misleading as leading, for examples.<sup>47</sup> And one final consideration with respect to theological method is that saints are not necessarily theological, in an academic sense. Many of the Church's greatest saints have not been intellectually disposed; the influential Saint Francis of Assisi, for example, did not embrace a charism that would allow his explicit objectification of special theological categories but rather simply lived the faith. Nevertheless others might observe Francis and, in their reach for authentic conversion, identify the categories reflected in his life of faith. Indeed, it may be that, in adopting Francis's name and exuding his charism, Pope Francis will at least implicitly objectify the saint of Assisi's categories in an "academically" instructional manner. Theologians could further clarify these categories in their articulation of the faith.

Allowing for the uncertainty of living theologians' authentic conversion, an addendum to Lonergan's method, then—a profitable and theologically justified one, drawn from his own principles—would be study of the categories employed by the saints, as implicit in their words and actions in their lives and at death. (Saints' completed, validated holy lives and/or deaths provide assurance of their authentic conversion. Transcendental method offers only the next best thing to that certainty with respect to ourselves.) In this approach, the theologian in foundations would employ the transcendental notions to ensure that perception of saints' categories is not skewed by the theologian's own concerns. Theologians in other areas, again employing the transcendental notions, could contribute, for example, in history by reading texts of or about saints with an eye toward the identification by foundations of the categories therein and in systematics by relating the mysteries to each other through the categories implicitly or explicitly identified by saints but through views particularly suited to present time and cultures. Despite the interest of recent popes in saints, academic theology has not embraced the saints as the resource they can be. Lonergan's method attests to the relevance of saints for theology. Balthasar wrote that the saints are the "living gospel";<sup>48</sup> theology studies the gospel and so it should study the saints. Teaching theology according to the special categories discovered through the saints (even if the saints themselves are not a course topic) would

<sup>47</sup> The description of Origen is taken from the title of Hans Urs Von Balthasar's work, *Origen, Spirit and Fire: A Thematic Anthology of His Writings* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1984), original edition, *Origenes, Geist und Feuer, ein Aufbau aus seinen Schriften*, [Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1938].

<sup>48</sup> Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit: Thérèse of Lisieux & Elizabeth of the Trinity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 26, original edition, *Schwester im Geist: Therese von Lisieux and Elisabeth von Dijon*, [Einsiedeln], Johannes Verlag, 1970.

be teaching in approximation of the formal object of theology, the converted theologian, via observed sanctity.

### Conclusion

In summary and conclusion, the mending of the separation between theology and sanctity is accomplished in Lonergan's method—especially with the emphases and addendum suggested—by the functional specialty of foundations. It might be argued that this is the point of the method; his method in theology proposes a theology of method—one that is useful for theological instruction—which nurtures the Church and its individual members while serving the academy. Asserted Lonergan: “Genuine objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity.” And “it is to be attained only by attaining authentic subjectivity.”<sup>49</sup> The method should make not only good theological practitioners but saints; only saints, whether or not canonized, can truly fulfill the need of foundations for theology. Acknowledged saints might be brought into the field of foundational focus in order to identify categories for interpreting and re-presenting the Christian message. With or without explicit reference to canonized saints, to the extent that theological specialties other than foundations are consciously, deliberately associated with foundations, despite that according to Lonergan's theory they may not be required to rely upon conversion for performance of their theological duties, they cooperate in holding together theology and sanctity. And in this conscious connection, in openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in the one teaching theology in any theological specialty, another separation is mended—that between theological instruction and faith transmission.

*Patricia A. Sullivan*

<sup>49</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 292.