

# Bernard Lonergan's *The Triune God: Systematics*

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## Chapter 1 The Goal, the Order, and the Manner of Speaking

### 4. The Truth of Theological Understanding

In this new section, Lonergan addresses a question that had been raised in the previous section which had spoken about the nature of the problem or question as it exists in theology. Encounters with incoherence raise questions about coherence, and the subsequent inadequacy of logical analysis encourages asking questions that look for a deeper meaning. Systematic theology accordingly seeks to grasp a deeper meaning in terms of how the mysteries of faith relate to each other. Now, finally, at this point, a question is asked about a third kind of problem: how to cope with questions that ask about the truth or the reality of postulated theological understandings. While questions about truth are more closely related to dogmatic theological activity (the second operation of the mind is correlated more with dogmatic theology than with systematic theology), questions about truth cannot be banished from systematic theological activity since the second operation of the human intellect is a completely natural activity which occurs in all departments of human inquiry. How is it possible to speak about the truth of understanding in systematic theological activity?

In speaking about whether or not any understanding in systematic theological activity is true or not, Lonergan first notes that the postulatory or speculative nature of every understanding in systematic theology is such that one cannot immediately say that, as postulated, it is to be regarded as either true or false. To speak about the truth or falsity of anything requires a second kind of inquiry which transcends an inquiry that only asks about a possible meaning or intelligible unity that is not grasped by any act of sense. No first operations of the mind entail any second operations which can only be initiated if persons are interested in asking about the truth of something. Within the first operation of the mind, truth is not an issue and so, for this reason, it has to be said that every understanding in systematic theology is not *per se* either true or false.

Secondly, for the same reason as noted above, when an act of understanding occurs in systematic theology to produce an inner word (a bright idea which grasps an intelligible relation which has yet to be put into spoken or written words), this inner word is to be contrasted with the inner word which is produced by an act of reflective understanding which occurs in judgment. Every prospective understanding in judgment takes an inner word which has been already grasped by a prior act of understanding (an act of understanding which is unlike the kind of understanding which occurs in judgment) and, in trying to judge the reality or truth of this inner word, it works by way of a kind of reductive analysis. From a postulated inner word, one tries to identify the responsible act of understanding which is its correlative. From this act of understanding, one then moves backwards to see if this act of understanding is properly grounded. Through a chain of reasoning, one returns to first principles present in sense and intellect (for example, in the case of theology, the data of revelation, on the one hand, and the law of non-contradiction, on the other). The object is some kind of critical grounding which, as evidence, can trigger a reflective

understanding that grasps the sufficiency of evidence for either making a positive or negative affirmation. Since reflective understanding, in its operation, presupposes prior direct understanding, it is probably for this reason that Lonergan speaks of simple inner words with respect to theological understanding in systematics versus compound inner words which are the terms of understanding in theology wherever judgments are made (whether in systematics or dogmatics).

To avoid any possible misunderstanding later about a controversial issue, please note that, in Lonergan's understanding of human cognition, conceptualization (the forming of inner and outer words) is an activity that follows as an effect of understanding. The proceeding of an inner word (best signified in English as a "bright idea") follows immediately and simultaneously every time an act of understanding comes to us. In every act of understanding, its term is experienced within human consciousness as something which is known as an idea. Cf. Lonergan, *Verbum*, p. 18; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 15, aa. 1-2. The proceeding of an outer word does not follow immediately or simultaneously since the putting of an idea into spoken or written speech is sometimes no easy task and its doing often requires subsidiary acts of understanding which can find or form the right words that are needed to express an idea that one has understood (once one has received a given act of understanding). On the basis of Lonergan's introspective analysis of himself engaged in acts of understanding, the forming of concepts in conceptualization should not be seen as taking center stage in human cognition. Acts of understanding are both prior and basic. On the basis then of Lonergan's self-understanding and also on the basis of his reading of Aquinas, it can be properly argued that Aquinas similarly held to the priority of understanding in human cognition and the fact that concepts (as inner words) follow *immediately* as an effect or consequence. As Aquinas notes, in different texts, on the priority of understanding: *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 34, a. 1: "it is of the nature of a mental concept to proceed from something else, namely from the knowledge of the person conceiving"; *De Veritate*, q. 4, a. 2: "conception is an effect of the act of understanding . . . something expressed by intellectual knowledge"; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 14, 3: "a word does not arise from our intellect except in so far as it is in act; but as soon as it is in act, a word is conceived in it"; and *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 11, 14: "for this intelligible reality (God) is identical with the understanding intellect, whose emanation is the conceived Word." On the priority of inner words with respect to outer words, Aquinas notes in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 34, a. 1: an "exterior vocal sound is called a word from the fact that it signifies the interior concept of the mind." Later on in the *Triune God: Systematics*, Appendix 2: The Act of Understanding and Appendix 2A, Lonergan explains how Aquinas understood the relation between an act of understanding and the necessity of an inner proceeding which occurs within every act of understanding and whose term is an inner word which can be viewed as a definition or proposition. See Appendix 2, p. 599, and Lonergan's citation of Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 5 which speaks about the intellect conceiving within itself "either a definition or proposition."

Thirdly, when the inner words of a systematic theological understanding are put into spoken or written words, care needs to be exercised that one does not confuse the statement of a hypothesis with an affirmation of fact. When the words of a statement speak of a relation between two or more things and even if verbs of "to be" are used, one should not be misled to think that some kind of fact is being stated. "To be" verbs are necessarily used to state judgments of fact, but they are often used to postulate relations which have been grasped by first operations of the

human intellect. As Lonergan urges, attend to the intention of a speaker to be sure about what is really being said when something is said.

Fourth and somewhat obviously, Lonergan notes that the characteristics of an understanding in systematic theology is something that belongs to the inner and outer words of conceptualization. The inner and outer words of conceptualization share in the characteristics which are proper to the nature of understanding in systematic theology. If this were not the case, it would not be possible to speak of the necessary existence of inner words as the terms of acts of understanding.

#### Antecedent truth

Turning to a second major consideration in reflections that speak about the truth of understanding in systematic theology, Lonergan speaks about the fact that systematic theological understanding is positively connected with what he refers to as “antecedent truth.” Three points are made by him. First, and by means of a very traditional statement of the case, since systematic theology begins with beliefs which are to be regarded as truths of faith, its activity is such that its point of departure is what God has revealed. Everything begins with the truths of revelation and works from there. In this conception or wording of it, theology does not begin simply from data (as the data of sense function as the point of departure for natural science), but from something that, by belief and the judgment of belief, is already known to be true. If one employs and adapts a notion of human science that was first proposed by the German philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey (d. 1911) and which was invoked by Lonergan in his methodological reflections given in *Method in Theology* (published in 1972), systematic theology takes its rise not only from data that already possesses a meaning which one is aware of (data as the data of human science in Dilthey’s conception of it), but also from this same set of data which also and already possesses a meaning which, through the judgment of belief, is regarded as true. In this way, the traditional teaching about beginning from revealed truths of faith is preserved although in a new context which correlates the data needed for systematic theology with truths of faith that must be accepted and believed. As has already been noted and as St. Augustine had taught: “I believe in order to understand.” In the traditional statement of this position which Lonergan repeats, God’s own truthfulness accounts for the truthfulness of what he has revealed.

Secondly, with respect now to the sources of revelation to which a systematic theologian turns, as the theologian turns to what God has revealed to learn more or to become more familiar with what it is that he has to understand, Lonergan speaks of the sources of revelation in a way which reveals a traditional Catholic view of the matter. Perhaps, in outlining this view, it is best to speak of it in a series of steps. And so, first, Lonergan speaks about the value of turning to the Church’s promulgated teaching to find out what is proposed for all to believe. While Lonergan speaks immediately about scripture and the ecclesiastical magisterium, he speaks of the Church’s teaching in a way which presupposes that there is nothing in scripture which is not taught by the Church, either frequently and clearly, or rarely and briefly as the case may be (pp. 35-7). Here, scripture and church teaching is not seen as juxtaposed. Given what the Church is (the Church’s ecclesiology) and why it was brought into being by Our Lord in the first place, a juxtaposition or contrast is not to be presupposed in the relation which exists between what scripture says and what Church authorities have said over the ages in matters pertaining to what Christians should believe about divine things and the order of redemption which God has created. See Cardinal

Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* for an exciting account which bears on this issue and which emphasizes a fundamental continuity as one moves through time from scripture to tradition. Admittedly, this point is disputed by some (especially, and traditionally, outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church) but, for the sake of understanding Lonergan's position here, it has to be admitted that Lonergan espouses a traditionally accepted Catholic understanding of things which remains normative to this day and which views the Catholic Church as a transcendent, mediating power. It is greater than any of its parts. To illustrate the point a bit with a story taken from history, in a conversation between the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and Cardinal Ercole Consalvi, the Pope's Secretary of State, the Emperor turned to Consalvi at one point and said: "Don't you realize that I have the power to destroy the Catholic Church?" to which Consalvi replied: "Your Excellency, even we priests have failed to do this in 18 centuries!"

Second, in systematics, a theologian normally begins with what the Church has taught in terms of how Church authorities have expressed themselves in the declarations which they have made over the years. In talking about this matter, Lonergan distinguishes between what he refers to as biblical and "catholic" categories. For a fuller study of this issue, look at a lecture which Lonergan gave at Regis College in Toronto on September 3, 1963, entitled "Exegesis and Dogma," a lecture which has since been published in Lonergan's *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, edited by Robert C. Croken, Frederick E. Crowe, and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 142-159. As Christianity began to move into the gentile world and as it began to encounter a different culture, a different type of exegesis came into effect as the Church sought to find answers for questions that could transcend cultural differences. The result was a species of exegesis which sought to cull a strictly intellectual component from the data of scriptural meaning and its characteristic mode of expression. The object was a new apprehension of meaning which could be understood by anyone with a functioning mind and which could be proposed and accepted as a true statement of fact (through a technical mode of expression that avoided any ambiguous references and which would become a characteristic mode of expression for clarifications or pronouncements that would be issued by the Church from time to time as problems or questions about right meaning or belief would occasionally arise). For this reason thus it is said that, for systematic theology, the initial starting point is normally the Church's official teaching (where the truths of the Faith are declared and taught).

Third, a systematic theologian turns to scripture as a point of departure when he must deal with truths of faith that have never been officially defined (because they have never really been disputed by anybody interested in matters of Christian belief). As Lonergan argues, certain beliefs which have always belonged to the Christian profession have never been controverted or disputed. It has not been necessary for the Church to introduce clarifications about everything. If one looks, for instance, at the texts of scripture, only some scriptural texts have ever received an official interpretation. For instance, certain passages in scripture speak about Our Lord's institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Mt 26, 26-28; Mk 14, 22-34; Luke 22, 15-20; 1 Cor 11, 23-25. Where passages have Jesus say "this is my body" or "this is my blood," in response to those who say that these words have only a figurative or allegorical meaning, or that they should be interpreted as having only a figurative or allegorical meaning, the Church officially teaches that no figurative meaning is being stated or suggested. And so, by means of

scripture and the common affirmations which exist within it, Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist is to be proclaimed as an apostolic teaching (which comes from Christ). Cf. Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Canon Bastible (Rockford, Illinois: Tan, 1960), pp. 374-375. However, as Lonergan notes, the study of scripture as this is done by biblical scholars is not to be confused with how scripture is to be studied by someone who is engaged in systematic theology. A positive link of some kind exists between the two although an understanding of this link, as Lonergan suggests, is a very major issue which elicits a separate, distinct inquiry. Biblical scholarship, surely, is supposed to exist as a help for other theologians, and this would have to include dogmatic and systematic theologians, although, at the same time, it should be said that biblical scholarship is not supposed to exist in an isolated manner, apart from what has been achieved in the knowing and understanding of faith as this has been achieved over the years by theologians who have been asking other kinds of questions. To the degree then that scripture scholars work from a more profound understanding of the meaning of their Christian faith, to the same degree then, a better context should exist for dealing with exegetical problems as these are encountered in reading scripture. Much later on, in his *Method in Theology*, published in 1972, Lonergan outlines a comprehensive notion of method in theology and, within the form that he gives there, scriptural studies and systematic theology each have a place, although, in the general scheme of things and in association with many other variables, each builds and augments the other in a somewhat complex, non-simple way.

Thirdly, beyond the Church's teaching and scripture, Lonergan adverts to the fact that the antecedent truth from which systematic theology begins is something which also exists in other sources. Lonergan here does not proceed to identify these sources although editorial footnotes amply do so in the citations that are given. What is of chief concern to Lonergan here is the problem of "poor understanding" since the absence of a good ordering in one's inquiry will undermine the fruits of any labor that is done in systematic theology. Hence, if systematic theologians are to make any real headway in the work that they do, they must first take time to take a possibly radical look at the heuristic which they have been employing in the inquiries which they have been conducting. In this respect then, it is an undoubted fact that whenever any of us asks questions, we each work from some kind of heuristic (even if this heuristic has not been clearly adverted to, understood, and known). The heuristic that is employed can determine one's object of study (what it is that one studies) even if it is also true to say that one's object of study also determines how one will conduct one's inquiry. Some kind of interaction normally obtains between question and object. In any case, at a certain point, if any significant progress is to be made in systematic theology, some thought must be given to questions that ask about the character of one's method: what it is that one is doing. In the context of sources which serve as points of departure for systematic theology, Lonergan accordingly recommends an approach that is grounded in the Church's teaching since, if one works from within this teaching, problems that are more proper to systematic theology will probably present themselves than would otherwise be the case.

### Consequent truth

Turning now to the last major section in section 4 on the truth of theological understanding, Lonergan looks at the truth of systematic theology: what he refers to as the "consequent truth" of systematic theological understanding. One might refer to it as the truth of a truth since, as

already noted, theology primarily begins with truths of faith in the hope of moving toward a theological understanding that possesses a truth of its own. Lonergan's discussion is given in twelve points although, in the first four, the truth of theological understanding is contrasted with what it is not.

First then, it is said that the truth of this understanding is not to be equated with the truth of first principles. To explain a bit more what is meant by first principles, in Aquinas, the nature of first principles as these exist in the structure of human reasoning is discussed. In how reasoning occurs for human beings, a basic set of principles or laws methodologically grounds this reasoning process, and their foundational character explains why they are known as first principles (*prima principia*) which, at some level, are known and accepted by all persons who seek to come to know anything. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 60, a. 2; q. 79, a. 8; 1a2ae, q. 63, a. 1; q. 94, a. 4. Two types of first principle exist here. One refers to "common notions" or "common conceptions" which are variously cited by Aquinas as "first conceptions of the intellect." Cf. *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2; a. 4; *De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1; *Super Boetium De Trinitate*, q. 6, a. 4. These refer to predicates or attributes which stand on their own (but which are needed for reasoning to make distinctions between one thing and another in order to have understanding and knowledge). Common notions are instanced by *being*, *one*, and *good* (Lonergan's transcendentals) although these are not the only examples which exist. As a common notion, for instance, *being* (*ens*) is the first, primary, and most basic of all notions since the object of human understanding as understanding is knowledge about what could be the being of a thing or a cause. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 13, a. 11, ad 2. In moving toward an understanding and knowledge of any reality, a question about being implicitly informs and guides the meaning of any questions that are being asked. *Being*, as an object of inquiry and understanding, is the most formal and the most general of any possible category. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 7, a. 1. It refers to everything that can be known by the human intellect and is its natural object since everything known presents itself as an instance of being. But, while *Being* is implicitly sought by every kind of human inquiry, knowledge about *being* as a fundamental category or concept can only come from one's self-reflection on the activity which is one's performance and the experience of human inquiry. The same applies with respect to knowing the one, the true, and the good.

The second type of first principle refers to "judgments" or "axioms" (*dignitates*) which elicit a predicate from a subject to aver a truth about the nature of understanding. Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 11, a. 1; *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2. These principles are all derivative since, from *being*, one moves toward a knowledge of other first principles which aver the rational necessity of having to draw certain conclusions in the conduct of one's reasoning. For instance, from *being* (*ens*) and *not-being* (*non ens*) comes the axiomatic principle of non-contradiction and then, from this principle, all other axioms emerge. For instance, "every whole is greater than its parts" and "things equal to one and the same are equal to one another." Cf. *ST*, 1a2ae, q. 94, a. 2. All together, from these first principles, all else follows within the structure of human reasoning although, from these general principles, particular conclusions cannot be reached about any particular thing that one wants to study, understand, and know in any given discipline. Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 33, a. 1. For this reason, it is said by Lonergan that theological understanding adds a determination or a specificity that comes from itself: a specificity which is not to be equated with the general, first principles of human reasoning (p. 41).

Secondly, about the truth of systematic theological understanding, Lonergan notes that this understanding never grasps who or what God is. The divine essence is never understood by any of our acts of understanding. Any understanding that we have of such a thing is very imperfect and partial since it always proceeds indirectly through analogies grounded on what is humanly known about the nature of created things. The contingency of created things is to be correlated with the contingency of human knowing, the proper object of *human knowing* being whatever exists as a form or nature embedded within matter. Hence, as Lonergan notes, the truth of an analogy (being provisional) cannot be compared with the absoluteness or the reality of God's own truth: the truth of who God is in the knowledge which God has of himself since this knowledge exists in an unrestricted, non-human way. It is totally lacking in any conditions or limits. Since the absence of any contingency in God is thus to be sharply contrasted with the contingency of everything else which exists, in a similar way or, to state the matter in another way, the absence of any contingency in divine knowing is to be contrasted with the contingency of our human knowing. With coming to know anything about God, one also comes to realize how much more there is to be known.

Thirdly, in another contrast, the truth of a theological understanding in systematics is not to be compared with any kind of truth which can be reached by persons who try to come to some understanding of God in a way that is purely philosophic (prescinding or operating apart from what is known through revelation). As Lonergan states his case and as he also reiterates, systematic theological understanding is to be distinguished from what can be known from revelation and also from what can be known merely through our human reasoning as one looks about one's world and asks questions about it.

Fourthly, and as a last point of contrast (which comes as a kind of conclusion given what has already been said), while systematic theology works from certitudes of belief (the truth of certitudes), theological understanding at best works for truths that are only probable. A conjecture is proposed and its truth is but a function of all the different good reasons that can be discovered to suggest that, in all probability, it should be regarded as a true and right understanding of things. For instance, to try and give an example taken from Aquinas, if questions are asked about the meaning or the intelligibility of Christ's incarnation, in many different texts, Aquinas argues that Christ's incarnation should be understood as a best and most fitting remedy for the mystery of evil as this exists in our human sin. Cf. *In 3 Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 54, 8-9, *Compendium theologiae*, 1, c. 200; *ST*, 1a, q. 20, a. 4, ad 2. In contrast with other possible solutions, Christ's incarnation best draws human beings toward a life of virtue and away from sin. Cf. *ST*, 3a, q. 1, a. 2. From St. Augustine, Aquinas cites five different reasons which show why Christ's incarnation best brings human beings toward a knowledge and life of virtue which leads to concrete realizations of the human good. Then, to show that Christ's incarnation best deals with how human beings can be delivered from sin, five other reasons are given on how Christ's incarnation best creates conditions which lead us to be delivered from the power of sin. However, in giving his reasons, Aquinas admits that his are not exhaustive. An infinitely valuable action has meanings which can be only grasped by an unrestricted act of understanding. As Aquinas argues, Christ's incarnation exists as a hypothetical necessity (and not as an absolute necessity) since, given the concrete order of things which God as Creator has brought into being, such a means best works with the concrete order of the human good to promote the concrete human good. Cf. Jeremy D.

Wilkins, "Trinity, Mission, and Grace in Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Bernard Lonergan: The Reception and Transformation of a Tradition," (paper presented at the Third International Lonergan Workshop, Erbacher Hof, Mainz, Germany, January 2-7, 2007), p. 8. In the experience of rationality which is proper to systematic theology, nothing thwarts achieving an ever deeper understanding of meanings which, by themselves as meanings, do not change because they refer to eternal truths (the eternal truths constitute of the faith that one believes and adheres to).

Fifth, since understanding in systematic theology is always provisional or, in other words, since every proffered understanding exists as a conjecture, theory, or hypothesis, the truth which properly belongs to it is said to be only more or less probable. When any given understanding of things explains a greater number of things (or when more variables can be related to each other by an ordering of things which grasps a larger, greater whole), by the same degree, it can then be properly argued that a proposed understanding of things is more probably true than not true. It is more true than other possible explanations that one could offer or which others in the past have proposed. Tentativeness in understanding is matched by a certain tentativeness in judgment which acknowledges the fact that indirect, analogical forms of understanding are being used in order to move toward some kind of understanding of divine things which, as realities or things, transcend the human intellect. As has already been noted, divine things in the way that they exist are not a proper object of human understanding and knowing in the context of our present life even if one must acknowledge that, in human beings, a natural desire exists for wanting to know the truth and cause of all things: "everything which belongs to the perfection of the mind." Cf. *ST*, 1a, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4. In God who exists as the supreme cause or first principle of all things, everything is understood. Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 25, 11 & 14; *Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 1, 4. The absence of a natural human facility to receive an adequate understanding of divine things thus accordingly explains why achievements or receptions of understanding in systematic theology present themselves as more an effect or gift of grace than is the case with other, lesser acts of understanding. Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 47, 3; 3, 48, 12-16; 3, 51-53; William E. Murnion, "Intellectual Honesty in Aquinas and Lonergan," (paper presented at the Third International Lonergan Workshop, Erbacher Hof, Mainz, Germany, January 2-7, 2007), pp. 8-9. In systematic theology, things are known in a more supernatural way. God's help is more urgently needed.

Sixth, the truth or the reality of an order that is grasped in an act of understanding in systematic theology manifests itself not only by its ability to order a greater number of variables in a greater whole but also through a history which manifests a wide ranging development. The development, in turn, reveals a consequent truth which had all begun from an original, seminal insight that was the beginning of an initial ordering of things into a system. Lonergan distinguishes three elements. First, what is understood is a constant in terms of a particular doctrine, teaching, or mystery which is the object of one's inquiry. The truths of the faith, as eternal truths, necessarily possess a permanent meaning which endures through time and which is readily accessible to any and all believers at any point in human history. In this regard, Lonergan adheres to the teaching of *Dei Filius* (as proclaimed by the First Vatican Council):

For the doctrine of faith, which God has revealed, has not been proposed as some sort of philosophic discovery to be perfected by the talent of man. It is a divine deposit, given to the Spouse of Christ, to be guarded faithfully and to be declared

infallibly. Hence there is ever to be retained that meaning of the sacred dogmas that once was declared by holy mother church. From that meaning there is to be no departure under the pretext of some higher understanding.

Cf. Lonergan, "Doctrinal Pluralism," *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1965-1980*, eds. Robert C. Croken and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 89, n. 26. Without a permanent meaning which one has as a point of departure, it would not be possible to speak about any growth in understanding that one would have with respect to a given thing.

Second, with respect to the use of analogies in theological speculation, different analogies can be identified as different persons make different attempts to find ways which would allow them to speak more intelligently about the meaning of certain teachings that are proposed by the Church for belief. Lonergan speaks here about a dialectical form of criticism that occurs in the history of theology as different kinds of analogy are first used and then found wanting and then, eventually, after much debate and further thought, a universal agreement begins to emerge about what serves as an apt or best analogy. To try to illustrate what is meant by this dialectic, if one reads through St. Augustine's work *On the Trinity*, the *De Trinitate*, one finds critical remarks here and there that disparage using material analogies for understanding how Father, Son, and Holy Spirit relate to each other in the Trinity. Material or sensible properties admittedly have their place if one's object of study is a material or sensible thing, but if one is trying to understand a spiritual thing (something that is totally lacking in material properties), its spiritual properties will not be understood for the different kind of nature that these possess. An errant understanding of things will easily arise and, with misunderstanding, an ordering of relations which jars and conflicts with the articles of one's faith. If, for instance, the relation between God the Father and God is Son is seen as akin to the relation between a root and its shoot; a spring and its stream; or the sun and a beam of light which emanates from it, one can begin to postulate an ordering of relations which suggests that God the Father is somehow more divine than God the Son (or God the Holy Spirit). Cf. Tertullian *Against Praxeas*, 8; 97, 3 ff. Father and Holy Spirit come to be seen as lesser deities in this type of approach. And so, Augustine's criticisms led him to postulate the aptness of a psychological analogy for understanding the relations which exist within the Trinity. An intellectual or mental analogy is offered instead of a material analogy and, with its introduction into the history of theological speculation, a heuristic is provided as a first principle for the reflections of later theologians.

Third and lastly, with respect to how a key analogy is used in the work of systematic theology, two aspects need to be distinguished. First, for any given theologian, an analogy may not be well understood. As has been already noted, serious problems are created by a poor, inadequate understanding of first principles. With respect then to the question of subsequent truth, truer understandings of things are accordingly reached when the first principle present in an analogy is profoundly and thoroughly understood. Second, when the knowledge of a theologian is such that prudent conclusions are drawn from the application of an analogy as a first principle, and if these conclusions are then wisely ordered in a connection of terms and meaning, in this second way, truth is more fully and suitably approached. By a receptivity that is able to receive very many acts of understanding, a theological understanding of things, as this exists in a theologian, participates more fully in an uncreated, divine understanding of things that is always actual. In

this way, one can speak about how the light of human understanding exists, in different degrees, by way of participating in a greater light which is the uncreated light of divine understanding. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 84, a. 5; 1a2ae, q. 19, a. 4; q. 91, a. 2. As Lonergan goes on to speak about how the psychological analogy of St. Augustine was taken up in the subsequent history of theology, he notes that it was taken up by Aquinas who expanded its meaning by engaging in a psychological and a metaphysical analysis which drew on a number of Aristotle's insights taken from his psychology and metaphysics. As will be seen later in Lonergan's own work with respect to the Trinity, this same analogy was also applied, but in a context of meaning that was greatly enriched by Lonergan's very precise study of human cognition as this can be found: initially, in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*; and then, in a much more sophisticated way, in *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*.