

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

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A Biographical Perspective on Conversion and the Functional Specialties in Lonergan¹

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Students of Lonergan are familiar with the fact that sometime during February of 1965 he had the insight into the eight functional specialties of theology.² This in turn became the centre point, the defining feature of his book, *Method in Theology*. What may not be so well known is that the original discovery in 1965 was not actually the same as what we read in the book. Initially conversion was one of the eight functional specialties. Between his initial insight and the publication of the article in *Gregorianum* in November 1969 it was replaced by dialectic. Conversion as such was removed from the functional specialties or theology as he now understood it. That replacement was part of an unfolding process of clarifying what in fact the functional specialties actually were. It, in turn, left him with the tasks of determining the relation between theology as so defined and conversion, and of redefining dialectic. Those challenges would give rise to a further major development in his thought, in its own way almost as significant as the February discovery, the task of differentiating and relating theology and religion. Initially he thought about theology as the science of God and of all things as related to God. His intermediate position early in 1965 was that theology was concerned with knowledge of God mediated through Christ. Under the challenge of removing conversion from theology and of relating it to theology, he came to define religion as the object of theology. At this point theology was reflection on religion. Later a theology became reflection on a religion in its cultural matrix. The implication seems to be that religion mediates a knowledge of God.

¹ I am greatly indebted to Frederick Crowe and Roland LeBlanc for providing me with materials necessary for this study. Frederick Crowe provided me with access to archival material in the Toronto Archives and to his correspondence with Lonergan. There are used with permission of the Trustees of the Lonergan Estate. Roland LeBlanc provided me with access to his correspondence with Lonergan. I am also drawing on tape recorded interviews with the late Sr. Florian (Winnifred Tattersell), with Roland LeBlanc, Matt Lamb, Howard Logan, Colin Maloney, and Bernard Tyrrell.

² See Lambert P., Tansey C., and Going C., (Eds) *Caring About Meaning, Patterns in the life of Bernard Lonergan* (Montreal: Thomas More Institute Papers /82, 1982) 59, 74-5. Here Lonergan recalls how he started off with four functional specialties, eventually arriving for the first time at eight in February of 1965.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

In the present biographical study I would like simply to show some of the details of these movements in Lonergan's life from the February discovery to the publication of the article in *Gregorianum*. The passage was highly dramatic in that it had to move from the high point of the discovery through the low point of a death-threatening encounter with lung cancer in August of the same year before it could emerge. Before he could work on the article he had to make a long and difficult recovery. He had to regain his health and he had slowly to come alive again as an author. This, in itself, was a significant episode in his faith journey within his religious history. The February discovery, the August passion-like experience, the recovery of his health and powers of writing, the subsequent tasks of relating theology to conversion and religion and of redefining dialectic, define the stage from which, finally, he began to compose *Method in Theology*. Actually writing up the final text of the article on the functional specialties after recovering from the operation settled him into the task of writing the book, enabled him to resume as an author. The study of significant developments in his understanding of the relation between theology and religion is linked with equally significant events in his personal religious history. In this movement he shows a simple acceptance of the providence of God at work in these events in his life.

I

In the late 1950ies after his move to Rome in 1953 Lonergan began to focus on the question of method in theology. In the Gregorian University in 1961 he gave his first formal course on the topic. For the next four years there was an interplay between his work on method and his courses on the Trinity and Incarnation. In those courses he was struggling with the problem of relating dogmatic and systematic theology with the new notion of history. The older dogmatics and systematics used history as a source for proofs. But modern history is more critical and autonomous. The question arises, how could doctrinal and systematic theology be reconciled with modern critical history? That was a central element for him in the problem of method in theology. In 1964 he gave a significant course on Method in Theology in Georgetown University. In it he was struggling to relate positive theology, systematic theology, dogmatic theology and foundations to human cognition. From the later perspective his probings were quite out of focus.

Lonergan returned to Rome at the end of September 1964. His only course at the Gregorian was on the Incarnation from September until February. By November of 1964 it is clear that he was ready to go to work on the book, *Method in Theology* but was experiencing a certain frustration in establishing the circumstances necessary for its composition. On November 15th he wrote to Crowe remarking that he had refused invitations to give lectures as a visiting professor because he wanted time to write. He

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

was reading Balthasar, *Phenomenologie de la Verite*, and Betti, *Teoria generale della interpretazione*. On December 29th he remarked that he had put off till tomorrow an attempt to get started on *Method in Theology*. In January he started to try and get work on *Method* off the ground. He was still on the runway, the motors had hummed a bit but there was no movement. The question of translating his "On the Trinity" into English was raised. His response was that he could not be bothered with it while he was trying to get *Method in Theology* going.³ Francis Sullivan, the then Dean, remembers him complaining that the problem of preparing his class notes on the Incarnation and Trinity over the years made it difficult for him to focus satisfactorily on the problem of method in theology. This, despite the fact that he acknowledged that it was through his work on the Trinity that the key insight would emerge.

In January 22nd, 1965 he featured in an article in *Time*, a surprising achievement for a shy and retiring professor of Dogmatic Theology in Rome. The reaction in the Gregorian was very cordial. There was loud and prolonged clapping from his class when he gave his next lecture. Despite what he called the "aura of myth" and the indelicate insinuation that his fellow professors were behind the times, the article pleased him.⁴

On February 1st 1965 he gave his last class of the academic year. On February 20th he wrote to Crowe that he had until the following October to get *Method in Theology* going. He considered it was now or never. He was arranging to travel to Canada at Easter, and to return to Rome for the slog of the June oral examinations. Around this time Matt Lamb remembers joking with him about the *Time* article.

In any event I remember there was an article that came out in *Time* magazine on Lonergan as a sort of underground Wittgenstein of the Catholic Church. Bernie thought I had put them up to it and I assured him that I hadn't. We were laughing at that. Then he said, "Well, I've had some marvellous discoveries" and I said, "Good. I'll be up to see you." Then I ran into Colin Maloney in the street several days later. He said, "Oh Bernie was talking my ear off on this discovery that he had had.... And I said Bernie, I don't understand it, but you write it down and I'll read it."⁵

³ For details see Letters 71, November 15th; Letter 73, December 29th; Letter 74 January 5th; and Letter 75, January 23rd from Crowe's collection.

⁴ Letter 75 of the Crowe collection.

⁵ from a recorded interview.

Lonergeran's Functional Specialties

Without apparently fully appreciating it, Lonergan had made the discovery of his lifetime, the discovery that would give him the ground plan for *Method in Theology*.

It is clear he recognised that he had made some kind of breakthrough. He shared it with some of his students, Matt Lamb, Colin Maloney and Fred Lawrence. For Colin Maloney Lonergan was possessed by an enormous intellectual passion. Although his memory of the discussion about the discovery is vague he felt Lonergan had a broader awareness of his own passion. "His excitement and the breath of it got to me. That something was happening was clear. It was clear that there was a shift; it was coming down to much broader perspectives. What struck me was the whole thing of conversion."⁶

Matt Lamb remembers that the content of the discovery was so new and so radical that he and others had difficulty entering into it. He did remember that there was an enormous sense of release. Lonergan was not an extrovert.

What I picked up right away from the monastic theology was the *lectio* and the *quaestio*, that these were the two orientations and terms of the four levels. I remember him very distinctly because it was obvious several times that he was correcting me in: All four levels operate, but they operate towards the goal set by one level.⁷

In the first Semester Lamb had been talking with Lonergan about three levels, but now Lonergan kept commenting on the level of deliberation and choice and decision. In the notes he made of the conversation conversion was listed as a functional specialty. Lamb had a sense of a release; things were now falling into place.

II

In his notes from work in progress Lonergan sketched the elements of the discovery on a number of extant pages. Being his original expression to himself of his discovery, they bring us closer to that insight experience. Some of the details from an unnumbered page in a file in the Archives are given below:⁸

⁶ from a recorded interview.

⁷ from a recorded interview.

⁸ Toronto Archives, Batch V, 7,a. I am only reproducing a fraction of what is

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

Method			
<i>mediating object</i>	<i>hearing</i>	<i>saying</i>	<i>mediated object</i>
Given Meaning Truth Encounter	Research Interpretation History(historie) Conversion	Doctrine Foundations	Communication World Explanation History Redemption God

Significant is the appearance of conversion in the place where in the final version he would write dialectic.

Later in the file he sketched his then view of the chapters of the book:⁹

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|---|
| | 1. | Theological Operations |
| | 2. | Operational Specialization |
| <i>Theology
as
Openness</i> | 3. | Research |
| | 4. | Interpretation = meaning + Understanding |
| | 5. | Historical methods |
| | 6. | Horizon, development, conversion
undifferentiated - diff. consciousness
Patterns of experience
worlds, weltanschauungs. |
| <i>Theology
as
Action</i> | 7. | Categories, recurrent questions on their roots |
| | 8. | Doctrines |
| | 9. | Theories |
| | 10. | Communication, explanation, Meaning |
| | 11. | Mutual Mediation |
| | 12. | Logic and Method |

As far as I can ascertain the term, dialectic does not appear anywhere on these two crucial pages.¹⁰ On the next page opposite history he wrote the terms, comparative, organistic, genetic, and dialectical. Clearly here he was thinking of dialectic as a feature of history. In this we can detect an influence from his earlier work on the positive or historical treatment of the Trinity,

on the page and have bolded the word, conversion.

⁹ Toronto Archives, Batch V, 7, c.

¹⁰ The line, "Science and Value (UCF v Dialectic)" does occur on an extended version of the above in a list of topics given after the title of chapter 12 but is not linked to the functional specialties.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

composed largely in the summer and autumn of 1960.¹¹ The later publication, *The Way to Nicea*,¹² was of the 1964 version of the Preface to this work. In this text there are three significant remarks on dialectic. In his discussion of the positions of Tertullian and Athanasius it was his view that the dialectic that brought about the movement from one position to another was the heart of the whole matter. Similarly Origen had to be located within the general dialectic that brought about a development in our conception of the Trinity. Finally, the material foundation of the process of dialectic was to be discovered in an inconsistent mixture of dogmatic and naive realism.¹³ Influenced by these sources he was now, in 1965, situating dialectic within history.

In the existential phase of theology instead of foundations he has categories, recurrent questions and their roots,¹⁴ and theories instead of systematics. In his earlier notes he had worked on all of these topics as well as horizons and conversion. What is clear is that in the initial insight Lonergan grasped that the tasks of theology had to be mapped, not onto the three levels of cognition, but onto the fuller account of conscious intentionality in terms of four levels. But he was still searching for a precise fit of the related theological tasks to the four levels and there was a resulting fluidity in his language use.

This process is made manifest later in the same file of notes.¹⁵ A first section will deal with method in general, a second with the theological operations, a third with their specialization and mediation. The theological operations are E-U-J-D. On a page entitled "Theological Operations" he types a paragraph on each. The data will be of revelation; the understanding will be of mystery. Under judgement we find him commenting that its method is dialectic but with this he paradoxically associates the term, values. Decision relates to conversion. In religious conversion a cradle Catholic must move

¹¹ He gives an extremely interesting account of this in Letters 49 (September 26th, 1960) and 50 (December 25th, 1960) to Crowe. In August of 1962 he wrote to Eric O'Connor that he had just spent three days at Alma where he gave a talk on "The Origins of Christian Realism," (first part of my *De Deo Trino*).

¹² *The Way to Nicea* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976).

¹³ *ibid.* 48f., 59, 133.

¹⁴ The root meaning of these terms is to be found in his earlier personal notes in the Toronto Archives: batch V, 6, h. These seem to be notes he made just prior to his course, *De Intellectu et Methodo* (On Understanding and Method), given in February 1959.

¹⁵ Toronto Archives, V, 7, c.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

towards being a "subject in Christ" through prayer. This was a topic he had treated in greater detail in his lecture, "Existenz and Aggiornamento," in September of 1964.¹⁶ There he talked about the transition from being a substance to being a subject in Christ. In the latter the hand of the Lord ceases to be hidden in our lives. In moral conversion there is a swing from an animal in a habitat with competing egoism towards a person among persons. Intellectual conversion will involve clearly distinguishing between two views on knowing, reality and objectivity.

On the next page the operational specialization of the theological operations is treated in short paragraphs. Research is concerned with what was said or done, interpretation with what was meant. History is concerned with the sequence of ideas and doctrines. It is involved in comparative, organistic, genetic and dialectical methods.¹⁷ The final line in the history section reads, "dialectic sets fundamental alternatives of judgement." Conversion is my encounter with intellectual, moral and religious history. Foundations, as well as involving categories and recurrent questions, now include conversion made thematic. (On another page in the file he would refer to it in terms of dealing with positions and counterpositions in intellectual, moral and religious conversion.) Further brief remarks follow on doctrines, theories and communications. Starting quite simply Lonergan was sketching, filling out what he considered to be the elements or details of each of the functional specialties. The almost random groping characteristic of his Georgetown Lectures, in fact of his strivings since the mid-fifties, has been replaced by a highly coherent structure. He now has the insight which, with the modifications I am exploring, will eventually bring under a system elements that previously were unrelated or coincidental in his thinking. Most of the elements of the book were now in sight.

He did not report his discovery in his letters to Crowe in February or March which suggests that perhaps he was still tentative about it and not yet ready to go public. In his March letter he commented: "Method is beginning to move along. For a while I was getting the feeling that my capacity to write had vanished. But there is not the same old drive."¹⁸ It was a remark he would repeat. At this point he would have no idea as to why his energies were running down. Preparing his Marquette lecture on Dimensions of Meaning,

¹⁶ see *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 4 Collection*, Papers by Bernard Lonergan edited by Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 222-231.

¹⁷ The linking of genetic with dialectical method here reminds us of section 3.2 of Chapter of 17 of *Insight* where he talks about a universal viewpoint as a potential totality of genetically and dialectically ordered viewpoints.

¹⁸ Letter 78, March 18th.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

to be given on May 12th 1965, would have meant that work on those chapters would soon have to be put on hold. After the visit to Marquette he returned to Rome from June 10 until July 8th for the end of year examinations.

In June, after returning to the Gregorian for the examinations, he commented to Crowe that he was "awake from 3.00 am on this morning and my idle mind...."¹⁹ Whether he suffered from insomnia up to this point is not known but it would certainly become a major problem for him in years to come. Towards the end of June, advised by Swain, he wrote a letter to the Jesuit General requesting more time to write. One of the listed possibilities was having a secretary. That also would become an element in the drama. The heat had started and his shutters and windows were tightly closed. In the last letter he would write from Rome to Crowe on June 27, he commented, showing another side of his character, that he was fascinated by the last of the 24 examinees of the day. This student was from the Upper Volta, "mulatto, delicately built, with three beautifully curved scars rising across each cheek, and, to add a touch of asymmetry, another scar under the right eye." The mortality rate in the exams was high, 60 out of 400. After the examinations he left for Montreal on July 4th hoping to work on method in theology until November when he would have to return to Rome and resume his course work.

III

After spending some time in Montreal, presumably resting after the end of year examinations which always drained him, Lonergan arrived at Regis College, then located at Willowdale, a Toronto suburb, on July 4th. Towards the end of the month he decided to have his varicose veins examined. According to Stan Machnik he had suffered from them at least since the forties, brought on Lonergan thought, by cycling. On many previous occasions he had discussed the possibility of having something done about them with John Olney who looked after health matters at Regis. But nothing came of it. In July 1965 he took the plunge and consulted the Regis doctor, Dr Callahan. The examination involved a stay in hospital. As part of the standard procedure his blood pressure was taken and his lungs X-rayed. The lung X-ray showed that there was a lesion or shadow on the lower left lung. Further tests revealed an egg size tumour. On August 5th it was discovered that the tumour was malignant.

According to Callahan if the tumour had not been identified Lonergan would have coughed one day, and he coughed a lot, and haemorrhaged and that would have been the end of him. The impact of this

¹⁹ Letter 79, June 12th.

Lonergeran's Functional Specialties

discovery on Lonergeran is almost impossible to grasp but I suspect that the memory of the death of his mother must have returned to him. She died from cancer in Buckingham, Quebec in 1940 while he was in Rome writing his doctoral dissertation. The event upset him so deeply that he could not speak for three days. There is also the fact that he knew that in the previous February he had made a major discovery, possibly the discovery that was the centre point of his life's work. That he was now facing a death-threatening situation before he had the opportunity to articulate it must also have weighed on his mind. Although waiting for the results of the test was hard on him, once they came Crowe found him outwardly in good spirits.²⁰ He always had a most simple acceptance of basic life situations such as this, an almost fatalistic acceptance of Providence. He would take the same stance for a later cancer operation in Boston.

Dr Callahan referred him to Dr Clair Baker who was one of the top cancer specialists in the field. The type of treatment he would undergo, radiation or surgery, depended on the power of his good lung. After testing it, it was decided that his bad lung could be removed. Sr. Florian and her assistants took total charge of his nursing from then on. The operation, which involved the total removal of the bad lung, took place on Friday August 13th. Lonergeran was in intensive care until the following Monday. According to Sr. Florian the pain involved in the recovery was crippling: "He was, oh he was drowned in pain I would say. He had so much pain after the operation; he never seemed free from it."²¹ Usually in post operative care of serious cancer operations the patient is put on painkillers, at the time morphine by injection. Sr. Florian remembered that Lonergeran would not take painkillers:

So I said to Dr Baker, he doesn't want to take a needle. I think he wanted to suffer, myself. But it was more than you could cope with I think. Well that is my opinion. He was perspiring buckets. He would be soaking wet and you would get him dry and he would be wet again. However, we gave him some brandy. Dr Baker said, give him some brandy; see if he would take some brandy. So I gave him an ounce of brandy for his pain. I wouldn't say that it relieved it, to a certain extent you know.

It was nothing like as good as Morphine or Damerol which was in use at the time and would normally be administered every four hours. He did in fact

²⁰ Crowe has described some of the details of Lonergeran's hospital experience in three letters which he sent to a circle of Lonergeran's friends, dated August 6th and 17th, and October 22nd, 1965.

²¹ from a recorded interview.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

take painkillers in two extreme situations when persuaded, but he never explained why he refused them as part of the treatment. Sr. Florian remembered that if he was uncomfortable or in pain he would not call for help. The nursing staff had to watch him carefully.

A select group of people was allowed to visit him including Crowe and LeBlanc. Crowe visited him on Tuesday, August 17th and found him out of bed for the first time. He was very weak, sweated profusely at the least exertion, and was troubled by his cough.

In the last days of August congestion began to build up in the good lung, eventually to crisis levels. On September 2nd a second operation had to take place on the good lung, inserting tubes to drain the congestion. It seems that only an intervention by Sr. Florian brought him through it. In a letter to LeBlanc Lonergan commented that Sr. Florian "did much for me during my 82 days; and when my three doctors were all away on holidays, she called in another, had a drain inserted, and that helped greatly."²² In fact in so doing so she saved his life in taking this action during this difficult emergency.

Despite this action the poison was still draining from the cavity of the old lung into the good lung which meant that the infection was going to heal very slowly, if at all. So on September 20th a third major operation took place to alleviate the problem. Several ribs were opened up in the sidewall with a view to eliminating the cavity and cutting off the sources of further infection, as well as some internal plastic surgery. According to Sr. Florian it was a harrowing affair, requiring four hours on the operating table and leaving Lonergan in a state of some shock and extreme exhaustion.

The third operation was very risky. It was dangerous to expose his good lung to the effects of further anaesthetics as well as operations. About his experience Sr. Florian remarked: "Well I can't say I thought he was going to die there and then, but I knew it was a risk and he might. And he knew himself. He could feel it, sense it. ... He had a sense he couldn't take any more. He didn't say it but I could read him, almost you know, without talking to him."²³ Yet it was successful. But at the end of the month his pulse went up to 150 and stayed there for the whole day. Somehow he survived it. The tubes were finally removed on October 8th and he left the hospital ten days later after almost three months.

In its unexpectedness, its threat to his very life and life's work, in its acute suffering and pain, and in the sheer duration of the three operations this

²² Letter dated March 8th, 1966.

²³ from a recorded interview.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

experience in Lonergan's life comes across as passion-like.²⁴ Within that experience the providential arrival of Sr. Florian was highly significant. As well as being a deeply caring nursing sister she also had a profound spirituality and sense of humour. Lonergan trusted her. In her nursing and human care at this drastic moment in his life he encountered a profound experience of being-cared-for, a sense of being loved by another person that was quite outside of his normal intellectual experiences and horizons. In no little way did it influence his later repeated assertion that religion was primarily the experience of the love of God. Theology for him was a particular expression of that religious experience, the experience of being in love with God.

Without being informed of the danger he was in, his friend Beatrice Kelly, who had typed up *Insight* for the publishers for him and who would do the same for *Method in Theology*, phoned after he was anointed in the hospital for the second time. She had sensed something was wrong and was disturbed. Lonergan considered her to be quite psychic.²⁵

IV

He left the hospital in October to convalesce in Regis. John Olney, who in years to come with care looked after his health, remembers that he needed some form of arm therapy. There was an extensive scar around his torso and the inner change due to the absence of the lung meant that the movement of the arm on that side had to be built up. He was also having trouble sleeping. Callahan was not keen to prescribe sleeping pills to help him to sleep. At the time they were barbiturates, Tuinol, and habit forming. Usually you had to build up the dose and could build up a dependency. So he said to Lonergan that he would be as well off taking a shot of whisky - by which he meant an ounce - in the evening. His efforts to resolve his problem of insomnia through alcohol would in time lead to problems, despite the fact that the whisky did not really help him to sleep. This poses for us the question, just how deeply did the operation and his encounter in it with death affect him, given that from this point on in his life he never really slept normally. Some form or degree of insomnia was a feature of his life from now on. It seems he had difficulty switching off his mind at night. It must also be clear that his focus on the intellectual in the previous years, to the exclusion of developing other aspects of himself left him vulnerable, ill prepared to deal with this

²⁴ For many the term passion is to be associated exclusively with the passion of Christ. It is my own belief that encountering in faith paschal-like cycles of suffering, death and resurrection within our life histories is an inherent element in Christian spirituality. It is from this perspective that I am locating these experiences in Lonergan's life.

²⁵ Letter to LeBlanc, November 10th, 1965.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

whole experience.

Sr. Florian, in a motherly way, cajoled him through his convalescence. A deep bond came to exist between them. But they related as a professor of theology and a nursing sister and their conversation, when he did not ask about his health, was mainly pious. He did not discuss his life with her, but repeatedly asked her if she thought the cancer was cured and in one letter he wrote to LeBlanc seems to have been under the mistaken notion that she held that he had at most five years to live.

By November of 1965 he had made some progress and even managed to talk about method in theology with Crowe. His reflections covered method in general and the functional specialties and then went on to discuss the specialties and their relation to the four levels of conscious intentionality. Again dialectic was treated within history. Reminiscent of *The Way to Nicea*, different interpretations form a dialectic leading to a yes or no, and conversion corresponded to the level of decision. Foundational theology was an account of what happens in conversion, intellectual, moral and religious. It is self-appropriation expressed. From the page of notes Crowe made and which are extant it is clear that despite his great physical weakness he was obviously still exploring the problem.

On November 10th, still quite weak, he had a friend write a letter for him to the Rector of the Gregorian. He thanked him for his letters and prayers and his invitation to return and give special courses in the future. For the moment he simply requested that his belongings be sent on to him in Toronto. His teaching days in Rome were now ended but later he would return there from time to time as a member of the Theological commission. He wrote to LeBlanc that "I still go round the house in a wheel chair to mass and meals and any slight effort at concentration, such as writing a letter, makes me perspire."²⁶ His achievements were modest. He was able to take a shower, standing on one foot he could just pull on his trousers. He could walk for ten minutes on the balcony and still had quite a crease in his tummy. He was weak and incapacitated. He jokingly described the pain, when it came, as being like a hippopotamus beginning to bite his side. Thoracoplasty, he added, is a brutal operation. By the end of November he could sit up for about twenty five minutes and then felt the need to lie down again. Getting a cold was a bit of a set back but the X-ray news from the hospital was good.

In the middle of December he raised the question with the Jesuit Provincial of having LeBlanc assigned as his secretary. The Provincial replied that while he had other intentions it was a possibility. From now until the following April he was quite pre-occupied with the problem of getting a

²⁶ Letter to LeBlanc, November 10th, 1965.

Loneragan's Functional Specialties

secretary and research assistant to help him with his book. He had Roland LeBlanc as someone to nose around everywhere and bring him information he needed. As things turned out, under the influence of Fr Nash, LeBlanc was assigned to Campion in Regina to be near his mother who was in bad health.

Just before Christmas Beatrice Kelly sent him a copy of Dag Hammarskjöld's *Markings*, a spiritual diary that moves from the ethical to the mystical. On Christmas day she phoned and they discussed it. It must have impacted on him because after Christmas he began to read again, a significant event in his recovery. He read Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*, presumably at the prompting of LeBlanc. He found that it amounted to a method for the study of literature done out in an international manner with forty pages of bibliography. It would be nice, he thought, if his *Method in Theology* could rival its learned manner. His letter goes on, "What dismays me is getting as complete as possible a list of question with references and quotes on good and bad theological practice."²⁷ He asked LeBlanc to jot down all the questions he could think of.

In January of 1966 Dr Baker examined him. He concluded that the outlook was quite good and cheered him up with the information that the discomfort and the ache in his left side would be over in about two months. He dropped using the wheelchair for meals but could still get breathless. In his letter of February 13th he remarked significantly; "Incidentally, it is six months today since my pneumectomy, and it will be twenty-six years tomorrow since my mother's death." The conjunction of the two events is significant. No doubt, under the mistaken notion that Sr. Florian held that he had at most five years to live, there was an inner anxiety at work in him. The statistics for the operation are not encouraging. So we have to bear in mind that for about five years after it, while he was composing *Method in Theology*, Loneragan was living permanently under the shadow of the question, has all the cancer been removed? Every six months or so he would go for an examination and each time there was no sign of any more cancer. But he seems to have suffered from a deep anxiety and it took a long time before his confidence in the surgery and its success was complete. Physically his convalescence took perhaps a year, psychologically much longer. He has stated that actually writing the book, *Method in Theology* got him through it. He recognized that if providence wanted it, it would happen. This did not absolve him from a primordial sense of a fear of death.²⁸

²⁷ Letter to LeBlanc, December 27th, 1965.

²⁸ In interviews Howard Logan SJ and the nursing sisters who looked after him in his final days at the Jesuit Nursing Home in Pickering, a Toronto Suburb, commented that like a number of priests they had encountered, Loneragan, in the end, was afraid of death and dying.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

By the end of February he was putting on weight. He continued to read, working his way through most of volume 2 of Herman Pongs, *Das Bild in der Dichtung* (The Literary Image): I (1927) A morphology of metaphor; II Preparatory Studies of the Symbol which he considered to be brilliant. But he was still agitated about the question of a secretary or research assistant. He desperately needed help with his work on *Method in Theology* but it did not come. His belongings arrived from Rome which meant that he could browse through his notes on work in progress over the previous years. He began to walk down the driveway at Regis and for relaxation watched Fellini's 8-1/2 and Marienbad on successive nights, joking that they were no doubt acting deeply on his psyche.²⁹

By early April he felt his health was good. Michael Longman was in touch with him about a possible new preface to a printing of *Insight*. Longman wanted him to recount in it how he came to write the book. It would have involved an account of such influences and given him space to write about Newman. His response is significant. It would, he felt "have complicated issues by introducing, as I then felt, too much of myself. A strictly objective account of my dependence on Newman would have forced me to give Plato and Augustine, Aristotle and Aquinas, theirs; and even as yet it is not clear to many what I got from them."³⁰ Clearly he was not yet ready to write "Insight Revisited."

In April, although he was reading voluminously, he had not yet got down to composing *Method*, had not yet begun to come alive again as an author.³¹ Even at the end of April he was still sounding off teasingly about the fact that it embarrassed him that his former pupils, now professors, had secretaries and he could not explain why he had not one. In response Jean Marc Laporte called to his room every morning at nine to get him books from the library. In May Phil Leah brought him a copy of Jung's *Aion*. His comments to LeBlanc about it are interesting in relation both to theology and communication. He found it to be conspicuously devoted to Christ as a symbol of the self, and relevant to the history of Christianity and dogma: "Jung complains that dogma is now just believed, that its bridge to inner experience has been lost, and much in that vein. It is the sort of thing that I think interests you and I would like to have you researching and thinking, and indeed, feeling through." Eric O'Connor sent him a paperback collection of papers that had been published between 1953-59 in Marshal McLuhan's

²⁹ Letter to LeBlanc, March 23rd, 1966.

³⁰ Letter to LeBlanc, April 20th, 1966.

³¹ Letter to Matt Lamb, April 23, 1966.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

review, *Explorations*. McLuhan's message that there are vast areas of human unawareness that become explicit through the new media came through to him clearly. As one can say in English what one cannot say in Latin, so for the new media: "There exists then the question, what is latent in contemporary or historical Xtianity, overlooked in older mores of expression, capable of, begging to be expressed in the new modes. There are new bottles awaiting a new wine.." ³² He was making progress with his reading but could still get breathless while walking.

V

During May Bernard Tyrrell visited Regis. He was a favourite of Lonergan's. He arrived late in the evening and just ran into him by chance in the building and they talked. For half an hour or so Lonergan "just spilled out the eight functional specialties and in such an enthusiastic and utterly simple way. He obviously had the thing so together that he could just articulate it." ³³ Although like Lamb and Maloney he had no clear idea what Lonergan was talking about, he had a real sense of sharing in his joy. He remembers talk about the four levels and the interrelationships, and the two phases, direct and indirect and found the emphasis in it on conversion quite striking: "It was something that I found utterly overwhelming. But it was so clear that it was some radical breakthrough for him." It was the turning point in Lonergan's work on *Method* and brought all of it together. "I was dazed by it. I mean - but it was so beautiful, I kind of just got enough of a glimpse of what was going on there that I was just utterly delighted too."

Tyrrell compared it to listening to a symphony, "kind of the way he unfolded the thing, and it was obvious with the enthusiasm that he had, and it was late and so forth, and yet he just kind of exploded with this thing." It came across to Tyrrell as something extraordinary, like the celebration of the discovery of a lifetime. Lonergan was delighted "and well - Archimedes running from the baths is the best image that I came away with, just this child-like joy." It was he felt something central for Lonergan and that it was important that he share it like this with someone even though it was a year after the discovery. It is my belief that Lonergan, through sharing his experience of the joy involved in his insight with Tyrrell in this encounter, brought to a completion certain elements of the process of discovery. After his passion experience of the previous summer here we see the joyful beginning of resurrection. It was a deep moment of celebration of human creativity. In his shared joy he is confirming Gruber's thesis that the study of

³² Letter to LeBlanc, May 2nd 1966.

³³ The quotations in this and the following paragraph are from a recorded interview with Tyrrell.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

insight ought not be dissociated from feelings such as joy.³⁴

Lonergan continued reading, at this time Louis Beirnaert, *Experience Chretienne et Psychologie*, a collection of papers from various journals. He and Beirnaert were together during his year in Amiens and at the Gesu in Rome. Beirnaert later became a Freudian but wrote perceptively on the mythic dimension of sacramentalism, as well as on the mystic's use of conjugal love as a symbol, a work which could have influenced some of his remarks on mysticism in *Method in Theology*. In a letter to Matt Lamb on September 18th concerning faith and the intellectual life he wrote:

I was almost forty when my first article was published and over fifty when my book came out. What carried me on over all the years was my trust that what God wants will be done; it also carried me through my pneumectomy and thoracoplasty last year; my *Method in Theology* is advancing very slowly but I feel confident that it will be done.

The letter is a significant window on the role of faith in Lonergan's life as a whole. It was his faith that sustained his intellectual vocation right up to February 1965. It was the same faith that sustained him through his cancer operations and would enable him to resume the project. In limit situations like this there is no other human resource other than our faith to guide us through them. At the same time in letters he was reassuring LeBlanc that God loved him. Slowly, through these experiences, many details of which I have omitted, he was moving towards the moment, the time, when he would begin again to wrestle with the composition of *Method in Theology*.

VI

In September 1966 he gave the lecture for the opening of the academic year at Regis, formerly known as the Quamquam. His title was "Transition from a Classicist World View to Historical Mindedness" a paper he would later read to the Canon Law Society.³⁵ In the paper he contrasted two notions of the human being, the classicist and the modern. Whereas the classicist focused on the nature rather than on the accidents, on the substance of the human, the modern apprehends the human as a concrete aggregate developing over time. That development will involve dialectic and meaning for meaning is constitutive of human living. For Rahner the natural law needs

³⁴ Howard Gruber, "Insight and Affect in the History of Science, in Sternberg, R. and Davidson J., eds *The Nature of Insight* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1996) 421-427. On page 426 he discusses the joy a major insight brought to Piaget.

³⁵ *A Second Collection* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd 1974) 1-9.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

to be approached through a transcendental method. For Lonergan the foundations of historical existence have to be found in a transcendental method. Responding to the question of how from a theological perspective a community of love adapts itself to its mission he brings in two things, his analysis of history in *Insight* and of the law of the cross in his work on the Incarnate Word. There is progress, decline, and redemption. Under the inspiration of Romans 12, 21 he ends with the question, Is the proper Christian ethic the law of the cross, i.e., the transformation of evil into good? Does law use good to defeat evil?

This was his first piece of serious writing and first academic talk since the operation and it signals the fact that he was now beginning to come alive again as an author. He was greatly relieved when after the first ten minutes he found he was not suffering from any shortness of breath and now felt that his speaking voice had recovered. In October he began travelling again, at first to Notre Dame, and later to Pittsburgh and to Boston College to meet Joe Flanagan, and eventually to the Chicago divinity school to give a lecture. Around this time Fred and Sue Lawrence were married in Buffalo by Fr Worthling, a friend of David Tracy. In the following year they would move to Basel where Fred would work on his doctorate.

By October 1966 Lonergan began to focus again on the book. On October 11th he wrote to LeBlanc that the work was moving ahead: "Chapter I has shifted from an attempt to set forth the problem to a more straightforward matter of describing The New Context (from logic to method, from the *Posterior Analytics* to Modern Science, from philosophy as ancilla to transcendental method, and from apprehending man in terms of human nature to apprehension through human history.)" He had finished the first two of these four topics and by the end of the month he was struggling with the fourth and finding it tricky stuff. In his earlier notes Lonergan had put a lot of work into explaining the *problem* of method in theology as he understood it. He now dropped that work in terms of something more manageable. In time he would drop even the study of context. Clearly he did not have the compositional energies involved in *Insight*. We should read the book in the light of these decisions. The lack of a chapter introducing the problem of method and setting forth the new context of theology in *Method in Theology* is serious.

Throughout November he was at work on method but progress though real was very slow. By mid November both *Theological Studies* and *America* were after him for a response to Dewart's *Future of Belief* but it seems that initially he was not interested, considering it a mare's nest. Still, on December 11th he wrote to LeBlanc that after two letters from J.C. Murray and four from Thurston Davis of *America* he had decided to write a critique of it, commenting "Am in it. Total involvement; hope to finish soon, as it

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

plagues me day and night." His quite unfavourable review was published in *Theological Studies*, June 1967. In opening his discussion of the book Lonergan distinguishes between a problem, which is genuine and widespread, and the solution proposed by Dewart. As he sees it "the problem is, at its most basic level, whether one can, while complying with the demand that human personality, character and experience be inwardly integrated, at one and the same time profess the Christian religion *and* perceive human nature and everyday reality as contemporary man typically does."³⁶ Dewart's solution held that in order to relate the everyday experience of today with theism there was required not merely the *demythologisation of Scripture* but the more comprehensive *dehellenization of dogma*, and specifically that of the Christian doctrine of God. For Lonergan, who held that in the Patristic era Christianity had worked out its own distinctive kind of realism, it was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Many such distractions would arise on the road to the final text of *Method in Theology*. It is my own opinion that, given his general state of wellbeing after the operation, he needed them.

By January 14th he had finished what he proposed as the first chapter of *Method in Theology*. Entitled "The New Context" it ran to sixty one double spaced pages.³⁷ On February 11th he wrote to LeBlanc that he was held up over a sub-section on conversion as part of theology: "not just as an object that theologians discuss, but as a change in theols themselves. It seems a very obvious requisite for theology, but it calls for a revised notion of science." On pages 57/8 of the text of the draft we find the following comments.

On conversion and its three forms -- intellectual, moral, and religious - - more will be said in due course. ... Such science (as conceived in the Posterior Analytics) has to be the work of some pure intellect, equally per se, abstract, and for that reason, necessary. It must prescind from values, from will, from conversion. Whether or not we are able to conceive theology as analogously or properly a science of the modern methodical type, had best, I think, be discussed in another context.

The theme would be developed centrally in the chapter on Functional Specialties, and in his essay, "Theology in Its New Context" which developed out of chapter 1. He was now on page sixteen of chapter two which was on the functional specialties. He hoped that when it was finished things would

³⁶ *A Second Collection*, 12.

³⁷ With the exception of section 3, pages 15-25 on philosophy as ancilla, the rest of the text is extant, Archives A577, Batch VI, file 1.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

start picking up as he now had a good deal of work done in outline on Hermeneutics, History and Horizon, Meaning, and System.

By March he was hammering away at *Method*, sixty one pages on Chapter one and thirty on an unfinished second chapter. But he would now have to leave it to one side to prepare talks for Notre Dame and Chicago. He relaxed at the movies, enjoying the Pawnbroker and the Collector. He commented to LeBlanc that he was now drinking beer instead of scotch, an indication that he was generally getting back to a more normal lifestyle. But the remarks are intimations of a further passion he would yet have to endure.³⁸ On the bright side Haper and Row offered him a contract for *Method in Theology*.

By mid April, after his various trips and lectures, and with the completion of the two chapters he had been working on he reached a milestone in the process of writing himself back into the process of composing *Method in Theology*. He now had the text of the chapter on functional specialties completed. It was within the text of this chapter that dialectic and conversion on the one hand and theology and religion on the other began to find their place. For the first time in his writings dialectic was now defined as a functional specialty associated with the fourth level of intentional consciousness. The materials for the theological task of dialectics are the conflicts centring in Christian movements. Its aim, through an ecumenical spirit, is the attainment of a comprehensive viewpoint.³⁹ We should not underestimate the significance of this relocation. In *Insight* dialectic was an intellectual problem. It arose because of the love of light and of darkness in the human mind and of the biases of common sense and counterpositions of philosophy that resulted from that conflict. In *The Way to Nicea* it was a problem on the level of judgement and of the conflict between naive and Christian realism. Now, when completing this chapter, it was for him a problem on the level of values. In his treatment of dialectic in a later seminar on Method in Theology at Regis College in July of 1969 Lonergan commented almost apologetically on the shift involved. What is also clear is that only slowly did he begin to work out the implications of the move.⁴⁰

³⁸ Letter to LeBlanc, March 11th. By February of 1973, a year after successfully publishing *Method in Theology* his dependence on alcohol became such that treatment was necessary. That experience I believe was for him another passion. He recovered up to a point and got on with his life but it left emotional scars.

³⁹ *Method in Theology*, (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972) 129-30.

⁴⁰ A text of the lectures is available at the Lonergan Research Institute in Toronto. The remarks on dialectic and will occur on page 427. This redefinition leaves us with the problem of determining precisely how his earlier definitions of dialectic relate to it.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

After describing research, interpretation, history and dialectic Lonergan went on:

As conversion is basic to Christian living, so an objectification of conversion provides theology with its foundations.... Research, then, interpretation, history, and dialectic reveal the religious situation. They mediate an encounter with persons witnessing to Christ. They challenge to a decision: in what manner or measure am I to carry the burden of continuity or to risk the initiative of change? *That decision, however, is primarily not a theological but a religious event*; it pertains to the prior more spontaneous level on which theology reflects and which it illuminates and objectifies in the fifth specialty, foundations.⁴¹

Conversion, which he had now removed from theology, is existential, intensely personal, intimate, and involves a change in direction. It can be authentic or inauthentic. It is a central element in Christian spirituality. It can happen to many and they can form a community. Lonergan is suggesting that the kinds of conversions or religious experiences outlined in for instance Merton's *Elected Silence* or Emilie Griffin's classic on conversion, *How God Became Real*⁴² are now to be viewed as sources for theological reflection. Those experiences or their absence radically determine the sense we make of scripture, on the one hand, and doctrines on the other. Reflection on such experiences will provide a future theology with its foundations.⁴³ The task of theology is not to accomplish conversion but to objectify it and its consequences.

If a clear distinction between theology and conversion, which here is identified with religion, is emerging so also later in the article we find a distinction between theology and religion.

Initially the Christian religion and Christian theology were

⁴¹ *Method in Theology*, 130, 135 (italics mine).

⁴² Emilie Griffin, *How God Became Real* (London: SPCK Press 1981). *Turning* seems to be the American Title. All students of Lonergan interested in religious conversion should read this book.

⁴³ Equally there is the question, to what extent are human passion-like experiences such as that suffered by Lonergan during this time significant elements in Christian religious experience and conversion, in Christian spirituality? Does the passion of Christ reflect the passion of humankind? Does reflection on such experiences provide theology with its foundations?

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

not distinguished. ... So religion and theology became distinct and separate in the very measure that religion itself develops and adherents to religion move easily from one pattern of consciousness to another. Still this withdrawal must not be without a compensating return.⁴⁴

Even though he still complained of a lack of energy, completing this chapter at this point had, I believe, a settling effect on him for effectively it contained the plan of the book. It was one thing to have the elements of the discovery expressed on a page in outline; it was another to fill it out into a carefully written chapter for the first time. Once this was achieved it became the base from which he built up the text.

The fate of his drafted 61 page first chapter entitled "The New Context" is more complex. Lonergan invited a number of his colleagues at Regis to read this proposed first chapter, the text of most of which survives. It was an uneasy mixture of what he would later publish as chapter one of *Method* and separately "The New Context of Theology." Containing sections on the new context, subject and soul, transcendental method, and the new theology, the quality of the writing was rough and unfinished, nowhere near his later expression which would move the treatment onto a new level. As in his recovery he had first to get his physical strength back, and secondly begin to read again, so also he had slowly to recover his writing style. The feedback was critical, mainly holding that it was too philosophical in tone in a book addressed to theologians.

In July 1967 Lonergan wrote to Courtney Murray wondering if it would be wise to send him the text of that first chapter of his book on Method with a view to publication. He added that it explores the new context in terms of five transpositions; "From Logic to Method; from the Posterior Analytics to Modern Science; from apprehension of man in terms of human nature to apprehension in terms of human history; from soul to Subject (cf Intro to *Verbum* finally out at Notre Dame Press); and from First Principles to Transcendental Method." Clearly he was thinking of offering the text of the original chapter to Murray. As things worked out, Lonergan radically reworked the whole text so that almost nothing of that first draft was actually published. A section of it was reworked to become chapter 1 on Transcendental Method in the book. Other sections were revised to become "Theology in its New Context." He read this paper at a Congress on the renewal of theology in Toronto, in Montreal, and as the opening lecture of the Academic year in Regis College in September.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Method in Theology*, 140.

⁴⁵ The text is given in *A Second Collection*, 55-67.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

A simple comparison of the headings, so to speak, of the new text with those of his original is revealing. Elements of the new context are a need for renewal, aggiornamento, bringing things up to date. Central to the new context is the year 1680, the year when Herbert Butterfield placed the origins of modern science, Paul Hazard placed the origins of the Enlightenment, and Yves Congar placed the beginnings of dogmatic theology. After some paragraphs on Butterfield and Hazard he turns quickly to dogmatic theology. This was opposed to the older scholastic theology which was strong on the element of the intellectual quest of faith seeking understanding. Dogmatic theology, under the inspiration of Melchior Cano, its founder who was also a bishop and inquisitor, replaced the inquiry of the *quaestio* by the pedagogy of the thesis. It was a conception of theology that has survived right up to the present day but among theologians, at least since the 1890's its defects have been becoming more and more apparent.

What, for Lonergan, is needed is not a new revelation or a new faith, but a new understanding of theology. Central to a new notion of theology will be new foundations by which he means two things. Firstly, the new foundations will not be found in propositions but rather in the very dynamism of the human mind and heart itself, transcendental method. Theology is a human enterprise and uses our mental and moral apparatus. In the second sense he notes that fundamental to religious living is conversion, a topic little studied in the era of dogmatic theology.

When conversion is viewed as an ongoing process, at once personal, communal, and historical, it coincides with living religion. For religion is conversion in its preparation, in its occurrence, in its development, in its consequences, and also, alas, in its incompleteness, its failures, its breakdowns, its disintegrations.⁴⁶

Fundamental to religion is conversion and so it follows that for Lonergan reflection on conversion can supply a renewed theology with a foundation that is concrete, dynamic, personal, communal and historical and which gives true meaning to doctrines. In his initial discovery the functional specialties were about differentiating a set of interdependent tasks within theology, with an internal differentiation. In the process of clarifying those tasks the further differentiation of theology itself from religion begins to emerge. Initially the Christian religion and Christian theology were not distinguished. But now religion and theology become distinct and separate. Theology is a withdrawal that aims at a later return.

⁴⁶ *Method in Theology*, 66/7.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

It is an interesting question to speculate as to whether Lonergan wrote the functional specialties before or after this text. But what is clear to me is that in his revised version here of *The New Context* he was answering all the criticisms that his colleagues had rightly addressed to the first draft. The tragedy is that the text, with a few paragraphs from "The Transition from a Classicist World-View to Historical Mindedness" was not published as the first chapter of *Method in Theology*. His significant explorations of the classicist and historical notion of the human, of the shift from the intellectualism of Aquinas and medieval scholasticism through the dogmatism of Melchior Cano, the dominant influence on early 20th century Catholic theology, were written out of the final text of *Method in Theology*. Lonergan clearly intended them to be a part of the text and it is within the text of the book that they should be read.

During the summer of 1967 Leblanc returned to Regis from Regina. He remembers Lonergan at the time as being anxious about *Method in Theology*. It was to be his major work but Lonergan felt that because it was turning out to be a smaller work it would not take pole position. He was worried that *Insight* would overshadow it.⁴⁷

A year later in July of 1969 Peter Henrici, the editor of *Gregorianum*, wrote to Lonergan to the effect that he was bringing out a special edition of the Journal on the teaching of theology and was interested in a contribution from him. In October he wrote to thank Lonergan for submitting his article on Functional Specialties. In May of 1969 he wrote again with the remark that "Functional Specialties in Theology" seemed a more appropriate title, a point Lonergan did not take up in his book. Through a crooked path, the discovery which Lonergan had made in February of 1965 in Rome and which, in the meantime, was delayed because of his passion experience and through the need for further refinement of the relation between theology, conversion, and religion, was first published in Rome. All of these elements and more should, I believe, be taken into account when we come to read the eventual text of *Method in Theology*.

VI

To conclude: the main objective of the present biographical study of a segment from Lonergan's life has been to show some of the elements of the movement that resulted in the ground plan for his book, *Method in Theology*. There was involved in this not one but two major insights. The first in February 1965 grasped that there were eight distinctive and functionally related tasks within theology, the functional specialties. At this point his understanding of those actual tasks was subject to revision. It was followed

⁴⁷ from a recorded interview.

Lonergan's Functional Specialties

by a period of clarification in which conversion was replaced by dialectic. This, in turn, led to the second insight which involved an understanding of the relation between religion as intellectual, moral and religious conversion, and theology. It was in reflection on conversion or, as some might like to put it, on Christian spirituality that the foundations of a future theology would be worked out. There resulted for him a redefinition of theology from knowledge of God mediated through Christ to reflection on a religion in a culture. These insights seem more like elements of paradigm shifts rather than simple clarifications. Because of this it will take time to assimilate the depths of this development.

Two further aspects of the study are of human and religious significance. Firstly, Lonergan's celebration of his insight with Bernard Tyrrell shows us that we, as a species, need to identify and celebrate both our particular insights and our power of insight itself. The present study can be read as an exercise in the identification and celebration of that uniquely human attribute. This, in turn, opens up a further possibility. For every insight is both an achievement and a sign. As achievement it illuminates possible or actual qualities of our world. As a sign it points us beyond ourselves to a mysterious and unknowable signified. In every Archimedean cry of eureka there is to be glimpsed darkly the unfathomable mystery of God's infinite and eternally joyful understanding. In our own insights as identified and celebrated we can experience and celebrate our participation in the creativity of God.

Secondly and finally, the study deals with a significant episode in Lonergan's religious history, in his faith journey. In February 1965 he had some intimation that he had made the discovery which was at the centre of his life. In August of the same year he had to face a death-threatening encounter with cancer which threatened to destroy his life's work. It was his basic religious faith that sustained him through this painful experience, through his difficult recovery and his coming to life again as an author. Is it the case that his very life at this point is comprised of the kind of religious episode on which a future theology ought to reflect in order to deepen its foundations?