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Redemption as End and Redemption as Mediation

I. TRANSITIONAL THESES

The present essay is a distillation of part of a lengthy chapter that, it appears at present, will introduce the third installment on a theology of the divine missions¹. The prospective volume will present elements of a contemporary soteriology. It will begin by adopting and adapting Bernard Lonergan's proposal of a distinction between «redemption as end» and «redemption as mediation» or catalytic process. Lonergan proposes this distinction in his thesis on the New Testament witness to redemption². My systematic-theological adoption and adaptation of the distinction will first divide redemption as end into the two considerations of redemption in history and redemption as beyond history in what N.T. Wright calls «life after life after death»³. The latter consideration will be left to a treatment of eschatology, and the book in process will focus on redemption in history, and it will propose that redemption as end within history can be identified in biblical terms with the incremental fulfilment of the prayer «Thy kingdom come». The reign of God, it will then be proposed, can be understood systematically as constituted by progress in the establishment of the integral scale of values, while redemption as mediation or catalytic process within history is constituted by what Lonergan calls the law of the cross. Thus, the basic dynamic may be expressed: the reign of God, interpreted through the

¹ The first two volumes are R.M. DORAN, *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions. Missions and Processions*, I, Toronto 2012; Id., *The Trinity in History: A Theology of the Divine Missions. Missions, Relations, and Persons*, II, Toronto 2018.

² The thesis is numbered 15 in his Latin Christology text, *De Verbo incarnato* (Rome, 1964). The section of this text that treats of redemption appears now with English facing pages in volume 9 of Lonergan's Collected Works, *The Redemption*, trans. Michael G. Shields, ed. Robert M. Doran, H. Daniel Monsour, and Jeremy D. Wilkins (Toronto, 2018).

³ N.T. WRIGHT, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, New York 2008. *passim*.

lens of the scale of values, is advanced in history through graced participation in the law of the cross⁴.

Though I do not cover it in this paper, I will propose as well that Lonergan's transpositions of the evil of fault (*malum culpae*) and the evil of punishment (*malum poenae*) from the Anselmian and Thomist traditions into the socially charged categories of 'basic sin' and 'moral evil' demands a further transposition, one not made by Lonergan but suggested by many of his analyses of historical process. I refer to a transposition of the familiar but timeworn theological category of 'satisfaction' into 'social reparation and restitution'. Satisfaction is offered not to God but to the historical victims of basic sin and moral evil.

A basic inspiration governing this proposal lies in Lonergan's record of his breakthrough to the notion of functional specialties as constituting the dynamic structure of the entire discipline of theology. On what has come to be known as his «breakthrough page», Lonergan indicated that the «mediated object» of his sixth specialty, Doctrines, is «redemption». And in pages that unfold his understanding of the breakthrough, he expands on this statement by indicating that the specialty of Doctrines culminates in «*synthesis in a doctrine about history*⁵, [and the] role of [the] church as continuing redemption»⁶. The second text allows us to expand the mediated object of Doctrines to «redemption in history»⁷. Lonergan then specifies the mediated object of Systematics, the next functional specialty, as «History (*Geschichte*)», that is, the history that is lived and written about. He thus conceives systematics as a theological theory of history.

The grounding thesis of my third volume, then, is the following: «Redemption as end within history and redemption as mediation of that end occur in and with respect to concrete historical events. Redemption as end is the breaking of the

⁴ For my initial steps in this direction, see R.M. DORAN, «Suffering Servanthood and the Scale of Values», in F. LAWRENCE, ed., *Lonergan Workshop*, IV, Boston 1983, 41-67; republished in R.M. DORAN, *Theological Foundations. Theology and Culture*, II, Milwaukee 1995, 217-58. This book is now available on www.lonerganresource.com, under Scholarly Works/Books.

⁵ Emphasis added.

⁶ The breakthrough page, with its indication of mediating and mediated objects of the various functional specialties, may be found at 47200D0E060 on the website www.bernardlonergan.com. The expanded statement of Lonergan's understanding of the breakthrough can be found on the same website at 47400DTE060. A transcription of the latter statement is located at 474T0DTE060.

⁷ Incidentally, I believe *Method in Theology* would have been a more productive work had it contained an exposition of what Lonergan calls the mediating and mediated objects, respectively, of the specialties in the first and second phases of theology. I have also suggested the addition of a ninth functional specialty joining the two phases. In this, I am following a hint provided by Lonergan himself. See R.M. DORAN, «The Ninth Functional Specialty», *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 2:1 (2011) 13-16. This paper may now be found on www.lonerganresource.com, Scholarly Works/Books: *Essays in Systematic Theology*, Essay 38. For an expansion of this proposal, see R.M. DORAN, *Missions and Processions* (cf. nt. 1), 111-123.

reign of God into history signaling the new creation already operative in the resurrection of Jesus and the universal gift of the Holy Spirit. Redemption as catalytic process mediating the end lies in fidelity to the just and mysterious law of the cross». In the context of the three-volume theology of the divine missions, this is thesis 91⁸.

Many references can be found in Lonergan's works to support this grounding thesis. Here I present just four. The first reads:

[...] a religion that promotes self-transcendence to the point, not merely of justice, but of *self-sacrificing love*, will have a *redemptive role in human society* inasmuch as such love can undo the mischief of decline and restore the cumulative process of progress⁹.

I correlate «the cumulative process of progress» with the ongoing establishment of the integral scale of values, which provides a systematic-theological framework for understanding the constitution of the reign of God in human affairs¹⁰.

The same dynamic of redemption in history, an alignment of progress with the reign of God and of decline as a departure from that reign, is affirmed in a second reference:

As human authenticity promotes progress and human unauthenticity generates decline, so Christian authenticity – which is a love of others that does not shrink from self-sacrifice and suffering – is the sovereign means for overcoming evil. Christians bring about the kingdom of God in the world not only by doing good but also by overcoming evil with good (Romans 12.21)¹¹.

The evil of decline is linked with ideology and alienation in the following text, which also indicates the vocation of the church as entailing a struggle with these agents of the social surd:

The church is a redemptive process. The Christian message, incarnate in Christ scourged and crucified, dead and risen, tells not only of God's love, but also of man's sin. Sin is alienation from man's authentic being, which is self-transcendence, and sin justifies itself by ideology. As alienation and ideology are destructive

⁸ A list of the first 90 theses can be found at the end of *Missions, Relations, and Persons* (cf. nt. 1).

⁹ B. LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, in R.M. DORAN – J.D. DADOSKY, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, XIV, Toronto 2017, 54 (emphasis added).

¹⁰ The scale of values is Lonergan's proposal. It is found, among other places, in *Method in Theology* (cf. nt. 9), 32-33, with the expression «scale of values» on p. 34. I developed the basic outline and dynamic structure of the scale in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (Toronto 1990). The structure will be further nuanced in the volume that is underway by integrating into it a set of comments drawn from interpreting Lonergan's macroeconomic theory. I will suggest that further nuance below (see p. 932).

¹¹ B. LONERGAN, *Method* (cf. nt. 9), 272.

of community, so the self-sacrificing love that is Christian charity reconciles alienated man to his true being, and undoes the mischief initiated by alienation and consolidated by ideology¹².

Finally, a fourth text provides a relevant image for the sovereign means or mediation of redemption in history.

The *fundamental theorem* [in understanding our becoming and that of Christ] is transforming evil into good, *absorbing the evil of the world by putting up with it*, not perpetuating it as rigid justice would demand. And that putting up with it *acts as a blotter; transforms the situation, and creates the situation in which good flourishes*¹³.

If redemption as end, the reign of God, begins to occur within history, it does so as a result of what a metaphysical theology would call the formal effects of habitual and actual grace, operative and cooperative¹⁴, as these lead to lives conformed to the law of the cross. Such graces produce affirmative responses to the visible and invisible missions of the divine Word and of the Holy Spirit. Those missions can also be understood in part under the rubric of «promotions»¹⁵. The formal effects of these responses accumulate as what the first two volumes have called «social grace». That category is a contemporary transposition of the biblical notion of the reign of God in history. The integral scale of values names the constitution of both social grace and the reign of

¹² B. LONERGAN, *Method* (cf. nt. 9), 335. In pastoral terms, see a June 18, 2020, tweet from Pope Francis: «The Lord cannot enter into hard or ideological hearts. The Lord enters into hearts that are like His: hearts that are open and compassionate»

¹³ B. LONERGAN, «The Mediation of Christ in Prayer», in R.C. CROKEN – F.E. CROWE – R.M. DORAN ed., *Philosophical and Theological Papers 1958-1964*, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, VI, Toronto 1996, 182 (emphasis added). I find an inspiring example of the image of an absorbing blotter in Pope Francis's response of silence to much of the attack against him from within the Catholic hierarchy. It is a lived example of the law of the cross. The emphasis on moving from one situation to another and better one that more closely approximates the reign of God is a key theme in *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (cf. nt. 10), where the reign of God is first understood in terms of the scale of values.

¹⁴ On operative and cooperative grace, see Lonergan's exposition of the way Aquinas build on the roots of these notions first found in Augustine: B. LONERGAN, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, in F.E. CROWE – R. DORAN, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, I, Toronto 2000. For Lonergan's transposition of these categories into a contemporary idiom, see *Method in Theology* (cf. nt. 9), 104, 226. The latter is especially illuminating: «Operative grace is the replacement of the heart of stone by a heart of flesh, a replacement beyond the horizon of the heart of stone. Cooperative grace is the heart of flesh becoming effective in good works through human freedom. Operative grace is religious conversion. Cooperative grace is the effectiveness of conversion, the gradual movement towards a full and complete transformation of the whole of one's living and feeling, one's thoughts, words, deeds, and omissions».

¹⁵ See R.M. DORAN, «Promotion: The Origins of a Notion in the Work of Bernard Lonergan», *METHOD: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 11:1 (2020), in preparation.

God in history. The dynamic involved here may be stated in another thesis, which I have numbered 92: *Assent to the premissions constituted by visible and invisible missions of Word and Spirit participates as cooperation in habitual and actual grace and promotes the realization of the scale of values, which as social grace constitutes the reign of God.*

I have mentioned both habitual and actual grace. As for habitual grace, chapter 2 of *Missions and Processions*, «The Immanent Constitution of Life in God», exposes the Trinitarian structure of habitual grace as a participation in, and communication and imitation of, divine active spiration, of the Father and the Son together as they spirate the Holy Spirit. The *memoria* or self-collection of a life caught up in the dramatic ebb and flow of a being in love that is the gift of God's love joins with faith, the knowledge born of that being in love, to spirate charity, a created participation in the Holy Spirit, who is breathed from the love that the Father and Son enjoy because of their mutual recognition of each other's loveliness. The created spiration of charity from memory and faith provides an analogy in the order of created grace for the relation of active and passive spiration in the triune God.

Chapter 3 of *Missions, Persons, and Relations*, «Actual Grace and the Elevation of the Secular», establishes the relation of actual grace to habitual grace. Habitual grace is being in love with a participation in God's own love. It is conveyed in two ways: by sacramental baptism but also and far more frequently as the outcome of some instances of what would become known after Aquinas as actual grace, operative and cooperative. Actual grace, I have argued, is a central category in a theology that would understand the universal and invisible mission of the Holy Spirit. But since Son and Spirit are always sent together, the theology of actual grace acknowledges the mystery of invisible missions of both the second and the third persons of the Trinity. This dynamic is expressed in a third of four theses that mediate from the first two volumes of *The Trinity in History* to the third volume. That thesis, numbered 93, reads: «The invisible missions of the Word and the Holy Spirit are initially, and respectively, the actual grace of divinely given insights (mission of the Word) into concrete circumstances of life and divinely prompted elevations of horizon to the ends dictated by supernatural charity in those concrete circumstances (mission of the Holy Spirit). As the operative grace of these gifts becomes the cooperative grace that enables human assent, the gift of God's love, which is a created participation in and communication and imitation of divine active spiration, starts into movement what in *Missions and Processions* I called the immanent constitution of life in God, the indwelling of the three divine persons, habitual grace».

As I argue in the first two volumes, this immanent constitution is the structure of the realm of religious values in the scale of values, in the form of the combination of elevated *memoria* and proceeding faith, then proceeding charity, and finally hope as the dynamic that enlivens charity's return of love to the

Giver. This process may occur either *in actu signato* or *in actu exercito*, either as *thématique* or as *vécu*, with or without explicit recognition and acknowledgment of the gift and the giver. Elevated *memory* is an analogue for the Father. *Faith*, the knowledge born of the gift of love recollected in memory, is an analogue for the Son. *Charity* is an analogue for the Holy Spirit. And *hope* is the disposition that keeps the person endowed with faith and charity, and so sharing in the life of the Son and the Holy Spirit, ever headed toward the eschatological knowledge of the Father. Hope keeps alive the natural desire to see God. *Missions and Processions* argues that memory, faith, and charity are created participations in active and passive spiration. Memory and faith together are a participation in the active spiration that is Father and Son, and charity is a participation in the passive spiration that is the Holy Spirit. In the eschatological vision for which hope aspires, the redemption that in this life is coterminous with the reign of God becomes the new creation of the life of resurrected bodies¹⁶.

Finally, as for the scale of values, (1) the «religious values» constituted by participation in active and passive spiration and by the actual graces that prepare and complete the habitual gifts of sanctifying grace and charity are the condition of the possibility of sustained personal integrity (personal value); (2) persons of integrity represent the condition of possibility of genuine meanings and values informing ways of living (cultural values); (3) the pursuit of such cultural values is a constitutive dimension in the establishment of (4) social structures and intersubjective habits (social values) that would render more probable an equitable distribution of (5) vital values to the human community.

The terminus of economic activity in this schema – and this is the nuance mentioned above that Lonergan’s macroeconomic theory adds to my previous articulations of the dynamic of the scale of values – lies not simply in the equitable restructuring of the availability of vital values but more importantly in what Lonergan calls the «overhead final products» of cultural development¹⁷

¹⁶ I have suggested in *Missions, Relations, and Persons* (cf. nt. 1), 90-91 that the opening words of Pope Francis’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* capture the dynamic that I am attempting to articulate: «The joy of the gospel [the evangelical disposition or state of mind: the fruit of graced *memoria*] fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept [the “yes” of faith] his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization [love manifest as mission marked by this joy], while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come». Incidentally – and this is a distinct topic but not unrelated to other emphases of Pope Francis as expressed in *Laudato Si’* – it may be that the general categories for expressing the constitution of the new creation will be hypothetically advanced as we anticipate and achieve progress in theoretical physics. But this must remain a hypothesis until we find out if it is true!

¹⁷ See B. LONERGAN, *For a New Political Economy*, in P.J. MCSHANE, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, XXI, Toronto 1998, 17.

that establish in a movement from above downward the link between cultural values and the social structures that yield increasing returns through economic transformations: the material fabric of culture, the instruments of learning, the development of the professions.

This link from meaning to structure, from culture to society, is the ingredient in the scale of values that is most difficult to bring about. If I may quote from chapter 5 in *Missions and Processions*¹⁸:

The link between cultural and social values concentrates exclusively on meaning as the controlling factor in human affairs, and there is a complex surd that at times escapes personal and communal control [and] prevents the scale from functioning in a seamless manner precisely *by preventing integral meaning from becoming operative in the constitution of the good of social order, the social mediation of the good*. That complex surd [is by default at the origin of] social sin. Lonergan addresses this surd in his treatment of individual, group, and general bias. I have attempted to address it further by speaking of the need for a psychic conversion that would join Lonergan's intellectual, moral, and religious conversions in a united front against the destructive force of bias in human affairs¹⁹.

If the integral functioning of the scale of values, as a social objectification of the structure of personal authenticity, is constitutive of the «social grace» that I would set over against social sin, and if redemption in history, which entails the work of the invisible and visible missions of the Word, consists in the emergence of social grace from social sin and so in the restoration of some approximation to the integral functioning of the scale of values, then *the point of insertion of the mission of the Word into the dynamics of history lies precisely in the link between cultural and social values, that is, between meaning at the level of culture and structure at the level of society*. This was true of the visible, palpable mission of the Word in Jesus of Nazareth as he linked transformations of meaning in the fulfilment of the religion of Israel with transformed structures in the religious life of his people. It is true as well of the invisible mission of the Word in the silent voices of conscience and grace in human minds and hearts and in the church's explicit proclamation of the message of Jesus in the visible mission of the Word. The breakdown occurs in the link between culture and structure, in the complex surd that prevents integral meaning from constituting social structures to facilitate the equitable distribution of vital goods to the whole community. It is at that point that the radical «No» to the invitation of social grace can be uttered. The mission of the Word mediates God's meaning in history to social, economic, and political structures and to the establishment of intersubjective solidarity. This it did in revelatory fashion in the mission of the incarnate Word in Jesus of Nazareth,

¹⁸ I am here introducing several additions or changes to the citation. They appear in brackets.

¹⁹ See R. DORAN, *Missions and Processions* (cf. nt. 1), 86-87, emphasis added.

and this it does throughout the course of history in the «invisible» mission of the Word found in the faith born of religious love and in the divinely bestowed insights into personal mission in actual graces; and this it does again when the community of the servant of God²⁰ and other divinely inspired communities mediate divine meaning and value to the structures constitutive of human historical process. But because of the radical «No» that can be uttered at precisely this juncture, this mediation has as a constitutive element of its catalytic agency participation in what Lonergan calls «the just and mysterious law of the cross».

With the overall orientation of the work in progress thus stated in anticipatory fashion, we may move to an interpretation, adoption, and adaptation of Lonergan's categories of «redemption as end» and «redemption as mediation».

II. REDEMPTION AS END AND MEDIATION IN LONERGAN'S APPROPRIATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF REDEMPTION

Thesis 15 in *De Verbo incarnato* reads in English translation: «Redemption» denotes not only an end but also a mediation, namely, the payment of the price, Christ the mediator's vicarious passion and death on account of sins and for sinners, our high priest's sacrifice offered in his blood, his meritorious obedience, the power of the risen Lord, and the intercession of the eternal priest»²¹.

2.1 *Redemption as End*

It is obvious from the wording of the thesis that the first and most important point it makes is the distinction between redemption as end and redemption as mediation of the end. The distinction is the main point of the thesis. The principal focus of the actual wording of the thesis is on the mediating process. Redemption as end receives no description or further characterization in the thesis. Redemption as mediating or catalyzing process is the issue. What brings about redemption as end?

The distinction between end and mediation of the end is important and can be revived again today in a more historically conscious fashion²². If

²⁰ See R. DORAN, *Theology and the Dialectics of History*, Toronto 1990, chapter 5.

²¹ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption*, in R. DORAN – D. H. MONSOUR – J.D. WILKINS, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, IX, Toronto 2019, 5. Trans. M. Shields. In Latin: «Redemptio non solum finem dicit sed etiam mediationem, solum nempe pretium, vicariam Christi mediatoris passionem et mortem propter peccata et pro peccatoribus, sacrificium a pontifice nostro in suo sanguine oblatum, meritoriam obedientiam, resuscitati Domini virtutem, et aeterni sacerdotis intercessionem» (IBID., 4).

²² This is not to accuse the Lonergan of *De Verbo incarnato* of a lack of historical mindedness.

redemption as end is heuristically anticipated in the elaboration of the scale of values, then redemption as mediation will be expressed by transposing into that context the basic structure that Lonergan proposes for the law of the cross.

A step towards reviving the distinction of redemption as end and redemption as mediation is suggested if we reflect on Michael Gorman's appealing proposal regarding the New Covenant «model» of redemption²³. «New Covenant», it would seem, functions for Gorman along the lines of what Lonergan is calling redemption as end, and everything else, including the forgiveness of sins, functions as mediating this end. The very way in which Gorman sets up the problem seems to be an instance of such a distinction, even though he uses other terms to express it. He insists that the end of the process, which he conceives to be the birth of the new covenant, is the more important consideration. This end is mediated by Jesus' death, which is the «shape» of salvation and therefore «determines the shape of the community – the community of the new covenant – that benefits from and participates in Jesus' saving death»²⁴.

All of this is in harmony with Peter Laughlin's criterion of continuity with the aims and intentions of Jesus²⁵. This criterion, in my mind, must be partly

Far from it. No Catholic theologian of the last century has done more to stress a needed and long overlooked transition from the ahistorical ethos of the remnants of classicism in twentieth-century Catholic theologies to the centrality that must be given to historical mindedness in theologies going forward. In the area of redemption, this emphasis is clearest in Lonergan's expression of the law of the cross. But the link between some of the categories in thesis 15 with the *aims of the historical Jesus* is at best tenuous. To what extent do «high priest's sacrifice», «meritorious obedience», and «intercession of the eternal priest» articulate *Jesus' self-understanding*? Are they not later culture-dependent theological preferences? Certainly, they are not categories in which he expressed his own intentions as he went to his passion and death. The first and the third are ecclesial constructions prompted in large part by the need to relate Christian faith to, and distinguish it from, the Jewish roots out of which it arose. And the reference to merit in the second category reflects a set of theological orientations which, while they may be interpreted correctly in a theology of cooperative grace, most often are popularly appropriated in a manner that has to be called Pelagian. These categories are, of course, important in the first phase of theology, which mediates from the past into the present and narrates what was going forward in key moments in the history of the community. And insofar as they express permanent elements of a theological understanding of the doctrine of redemption, they must be transposed into contemporary idioms. But as they stand, they are not expressive of contemporary questions or answers, and it may be that unnuanced efforts to employ them distort efforts at evangelization in the contemporary world.

²³ See M. J. GORMAN, *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant: A (Not So) New Model of the Atonement*, Eugene 2014, 4.

²⁴ M.J. GORMAN, *The Death of the Messiah* (cf. nt. 23), 4. This proposal is entirely in line with my argument for understanding the community of the church in the language of the deuterio-Isaian servant of God. See chapter 5 in R. DORAN, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (cf. nt. 20)

²⁵ For Laughlin, on whom I drew considerably in *Missions, Relations, and Persons* (cf. nt. 1), see P. LAUGHLIN, *Jesus and the Cross: Necessity, Meaning, and Atonement*, Eugene 2014.

constitutive of any soteriology. «New covenant» is a category that informs Jesus' self-understanding at the Last Supper, as is also the «new covenant in his blood». «This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood» (Luke 22.20)²⁶.

Gorman writes:

For most Christians, from professional theologians to lay women and men, the word “atonement” refers to the *means* [mediation] by which Jesus’ death on the cross saves us and reconciles us to God ... [But] “new covenant” is what the New Testament is all about [end]. The neglect of the new covenant in discussions of atonement is likely due to an over-emphasis on the theological question of *how* [means] Jesus’ death brings about atonement, salvation, etc. ... But this is not, I would submit, the focus of the New Testament. [...] [M]ost interpretations of the atonement concentrate on the *penultimate* rather than the *ultimate* purpose of Jesus’ death ... the ultimate purpose [end] of Jesus’ death was to create a transformed people, a (new) people living out a (new) covenant relationship with God together ... [I]t is the result [end] ... that is most important²⁷.

Now, while I am very sympathetic to Gorman’s proposals, I would maintain that even this «new people» is still penultimate. The new community itself has a mediating role to play in the universal redemptive process. We must revive the conviction of Ben Meyer that *salvation as end is equivalent to the reign of God*, «the triumphant consummation of God’s lordship over man and events»²⁸. It is the work of the new community to cooperate with God as God effects the emergence of God’s rule in human affairs. *That rule is the end*. Whoever is engaged in cooperating with God in bringing it about is part of the new community mediated by the Lord’s death and resurrection.

This end was first related by Jesus himself to the restoration of Israel as mediating God’s reign. But N.T. Wright makes it abundantly clear – and Meyer would not disagree – that a redefinition of kingdom, and so of what here I am calling redemption as end, took place in the proclamation of the early church, as the early church came to see itself as the Israel of God, and so as *exercising a new function of mediation*²⁹. The redefinition of kingdom was inspired by Jesus’ own teaching at the end of his life and especially by his words and actions at the Last Supper. In fact, the covenant purposes of God «always envisaged the redemption of the whole world» and now are explicitly

²⁶ Only some ancient manuscripts of Matthew and Mark include the word «new». But it is universally acknowledged in variants of Luke’s account. And see 1 Corinthians 11,25.

²⁷ M.J. GORMAN, *The Death of the Messiah* (cf. nt. 23), 1-3.

²⁸ B.F. MEYER, *The Aims of Jesus*, Eugene 2002, 130 (with a new introduction by N.T. Wright).

²⁹ See N.T. WRIGHT, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Minneapolis 1996, 214-20.

«call[ing] into being a trans-national and trans-cultural community»³⁰ to *catalyze the new law on earth* that comes from the establishment of God's reign. The ultimate end, beyond even the community of the new covenant, is the redeemed world itself, where redemption as end is coterminous with the reign of God.

I have already noted how in the wording of the thesis Lonergan provides a multiplicity of images for redemption as mediation and that the thesis lacks any images for redemption as end. Lonergan is far less specific about redemption as end, at least in his review of the New Testament contributions, than any of the exegetical authors on whom I have been relying. But we find a more specific statement about redemption as end in the systematic contribution of Lonergan's thesis 17, one that will harmonize to some extent with some combination of the exegetical proposals of Meyer, Wright, and Gorman.

In thesis 17 it is not so much the language of «end» that is used, but rather talk of *the supreme good* into which human evils are converted through the process that Lonergan regards as redemption as mediation. That supreme good is «the whole Christ, head and members, in this life as well as in the life to come, in all their details and concrete relations»³¹. Again, though, a distinction has to be made, similar to the one I suggested in relation to Gorman's thesis. «The whole Christ» cannot be taken to refer solely to the church. The church is not the reign of God. The identification of church with «kingdom» was a mistake, something that, while it has by no means died out, was definitively corrected at last by the Second Vatican Council. Lonergan may not yet have made this distinction when he wrote his reflections on redemption³². The church's vocation is to continue to mediate the reign of God, not to usurp it. And its mediation is to be shaped by the pattern of Jesus' own mediation, that is, by the law of the cross³³.

At any rate, in the *exposition* of thesis 15 itself, if not in the actual statement of the thesis, we have a multiplicity, not a unity, of images for the end: «*Redemption considered as an end is the state of the redeemed*»; the redeemed are those who, having been delivered from past evils, are enjoying the good

³⁰ N.T. WRIGHT, *Jesus* (cf. nt. 29), 219.

³¹ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 199.

³² It was in 1968 that Lonergan noted, «When I was a student of theology, the kingdom of God was identified with the church. That has been eliminated by Vatican II. The church is God's instrument, one of God's instruments in this world, for promoting the kingdom of God, but the kingdom of God regards the whole world», B. LONERGAN, *Early Works on Theological Method I*, in R.M. DORAN – R. C. CROKEN, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, XXII, Toronto 2010, 555-556. As late as 1964, in the final chapter of *De Deo trino: Pars systematica*, Lonergan was still identifying the church and the kingdom of God, though not emphatically. See B. LONERGAN, *The Triune God: Systematics*, in R.M. DORAN – H.D. MONSOUR, ed., *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, XII, trans. Michael G. Shields, Toronto 2007, 495.

³³ Again, see chapter 5 in R. DORAN, *Theology and the Dialectics of History* (cf. nt. 20).

things given to them»³⁴. More fully, «This thesis affirms redemption as an end; namely, there exists the state of the redeemed, those who, having been delivered from the power of darkness, from the fear of death, from sins, from punishments, *receive the promise made to Abraham, are reconciled to God, are justified, enjoy the indwelling Holy Spirit and adoptive filiation, approach God with confidence, are saved in hope, and await the resurrection of the body, the crown of glory, and everlasting life with Christ*»³⁵. This serves to bolster the conviction that salvation as end is equivalent to the reign of God, mediated by the new covenant in Jesus' blood. In this life, the mediating process moves asymptotically toward living simultaneously «in heaven and on earth», something which happens to far more people, I believe, than are cognizant that it is happening.

From this description of the state of the redeemed, one might argue also that redemption as end is the state of grace, since most of the elements listed here also are termed formal effects of sanctifying grace³⁶. Since the state of grace for Lonergan is a communal reality, that identification is valid within the parameters set by my central thesis. The state of grace is not simply a matter of individual «justification» (which itself is a first-stage-of-meaning expression for what the second stage called sanctifying grace and the third stage the gift of God's love). Rather, it is a new interpersonal community of human beings with the divine persons and with one another. In this way and to this extent, there is some harmony in Lonergan's formulation with Gorman's «new covenant» proposal. But both proposals must be sublated, I propose, into the emphasis on the kingdom or reign of God, which in a contemporary systematic theology may be understood in terms of the integral scale of values. The new community living by a new covenant is charged with continued mediation of the ultimate end, which is the redemption of human history itself in the reign of God in accord with the social grace that is manifest whenever, and to the extent that, the scale of values is realized in history.

2.2 *Redemption as Mediation*

I have already drawn attention to the multiplication of images for redemption as mediation mentioned in the statement of the thesis itself. But there is another element to be added: the intervention of a person. «*Redemption as a mediation* regards the process towards the end (a 'means' or 'medium' is that

³⁴ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 5.

³⁵ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 5.

³⁶ See B. LONERGAN, «Supplementary Notes on Sanctifying Grace», in R.M. DORAN – H. D. MONSOUR, ed., *Early Latin Theology. Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, XIX, trans. Michael G. Shields, Toronto 2011, 636-661. On the relation between formal cause and formal effect, see *IBID.*, 622-625.

which is to or for an end) and refers to *the intervention of a person* in order to attain the end»³⁷.

The process of mediation, then, has a twofold constitution: the person whose intervention is required, and the means. «... the passion and death of Christ, his resurrection, and the power and intercession of the risen Lord are *ordered to the end*. They are ordered to the end not only as means but also by way of a personal intervention. In this intervention are clearly revealed the *interpersonal relations* between Christ and God the Father, between Christ and sinners, and between Christ and the justified»³⁸.

The mediation of the end is done, then, by a person who acts vicariously and suffers vicariously. This statement will be taken by Lonergan to constitute a *law*, which in thesis 17 he will call the law of the cross, supplying perhaps the closest single intelligibility we are going to be able to arrive at for the relation between redemption as end and redemption as mediation. I will express this single intelligibility in more general terms in another thesis, numbered 94: «Redemption as end, the reign of God, is mediated by self-sacrificing love, the love that returns good for evil».

Lonergan elaborates on the self-sacrificing aspect of this love in a manner that requires further comment. Jesus

acts vicariously in paying a price himself, but he also suffers because the price to be paid is “to give his own life.” He acts in order to cancel, take away, wipe out sins; but he suffers because sins have been committed, are being committed, are going to be committed. He acts for sinners, that is, in order to confer a benefit upon sinners whose sins are forgiven; but he also suffers for sinners in accord with the mystery of the cross. He acts as the priest who offers a sacrifice; but he suffers as the victim who is offered. He acts by virtue of the merit of his obedience in order that many may be made just; but he also suffers because suffering was commanded for the obedient one. He acts as the Lord sitting at the right hand of the Father; but the intercession of the eternal Priest recalls the victim offered once³⁹.

Lonergan’s thesis 15 utilizes all these strands of thought, these various ways in which redemption as end, as a new state, a new creation if you will, is said in the New Testament to be mediated by the passion and death of Jesus. His thesis mentions various ways in which that mediation itself is symbolized, but it does so in a way that does not trace the historical roots of the symbolization. And so already a question arises, at least if we follow the lead taken in the last three chapters of *Missions, Relations, and Persons*, a lead governed by Laughlin’s insistence on continuity with the aims of Jesus himself: *to what extent does the common understanding of at least some of these symbolic themes maintain or*

³⁷ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 5, emphasis added.

³⁸ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 5.

³⁹ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 5.

break continuity with what we can know of Jesus' intentions? Most of these themes, as is obvious from Lonergan's explication of them in the course of the thesis, are the products of post-resurrection theology, particularly as found in the Letter to the Hebrews. They are not contained explicitly in the historical self-understanding of Jesus of Nazareth, except perhaps in an extremely tenuous fashion.

But I believe Ben Meyer is correct when he says that two themes found in what we now know as the fourth of the deutero-Isaian servant songs *were* among the aims of Jesus: (1) to lead the way in mediating the arrival of the reign of God by manifesting the law of the return of good for evil and (2) by so doing to offer expiation for the sins of those who had chosen a way of life contrary to the law of the cross, contrary to the law of returning good for evil, contrary to the law that makes of redemption the arrival of the reign of God through the self-sacrificing love of the servant of Yahweh⁴⁰.

But, while both of these themes were among the aims of Jesus as he went to his passion and death, the new community born of the paschal mystery appropriated the vindication of the servant before it made its own the expiatory value of Jesus' death. *Both* are present in Jesus' intentions. But vindication of the servant is present in the church's original proclamation, while expiation becomes part of the church's understanding of these events at some point between the early proclamation and the early writings of Paul⁴¹.

The Letter to the Hebrews, from which a number of the mediating factors specified by Lonergan are drawn, has to be understood in the context of the destruction of the Temple, which Jesus foresaw, and in the context of the initiation of the new covenant in the blood of a different kind of «lamb» from those sacrificed in the Temple, which Jesus definitely did intend. In this sense, there is a continuity from Jesus' intentions to the Letter to the Hebrews, but it is a continuity that must always be traced back to the relation between Jesus and the Temple. That contextualization entails the definitive replacement of temple sacrifice.

⁴⁰ See B.F. MEYER, «The Expiation Motif in the Eucharistic Words: A Key to the History of Jesus?», in B.F. MEYER, ed., *One Loaf, One Cup: The Ecumenical Studies of 1Cor 11 and Other Eucharistic Texts*, Macon 1993, 11-33. See R. DORAN, *Missions, Relations, and Persons* (cf. nt. 1), 167.

⁴¹ See B.F. MEYER, *The Aims of Jesus*, Princeton 2002, 66. See also R. DORAN, *Missions, Relations, and Persons* (cf. nt. 1), 167-170. This proposal is based on an interpretation of the first speeches of Peter in Acts as reflecting the earliest proclamation. On this interpretation, the vindication of the deutero-Isaian servant is clear in Peter's words but the expiation theme is not. The community had to grow into that aspect of gospel truth. Unless I am mistaken, the steps of that growth have still to be traced. While this interpretation of Peter's speeches as indicative of the earliest proclamation is not held by all, it also is not uncommon among biblical exegetes and New Testament scholars. For a review and synopsis of this consensus, see H.N. RIDDERBOS, «The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostles» at <http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/speeches_ridderbos.pdf>.

Now, the main concern of Lonergan's thesis 15 is with some of the New Testament teaching regarding the *fact* of mediation. The thesis is concerned to present a biblical *doctrine* of redemption, especially as mediation. The *understanding* of that doctrine is left until thesis 17. That mediation as it is presented in the New Testament involves a vicarious agent, who mediates redemption by being also a vicarious sufferer. Moreover, the emphasis in the thesis will be placed on what is meant by vicarious *suffering*, since that is more difficult to understand than is vicarious agency. However, the task of really doing what we can to *understand* vicarious suffering will be left to thesis 17, on the law of the cross. The point of thesis 15 is to present biblical *doctrine*, biblical teaching, «reaching certitude about the *simple fact* of [vicarious suffering] from the biblical texts»⁴². *This is what the NT teaches: redemption as end, the state of the redeemed, abiding in the reign of God, is the fruit of the mediation of a vicarious sufferer.*

In light of these considerations, let us propose a thesis of our own on these matters, a thesis numbered 95. «The understanding of redemption as end in this life and in the life to come as identified with the reign of God mediated by the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the share in these events on the part of those who live according to the law of the cross is a product of the revelatory function of the incarnate Word. These events are redemptive mediation. They are also revelatory events displaying a universal pattern through which the reign of God is advanced, a pattern of returning good for evil and so transforming the evil into a greater good. The greater good is a new community, which continues to mediate the reign of good through the suffering that returns good for evil».

We are left in the end with a mystery, however, and Lonergan warns us from the start not to try to deny that. «The vicarious suffering of Christ is not taught in scripture or by the church in such a manner that this doctrine is clearly, distinctly, exactly, coherently understood and explained. Full understanding of mysteries belongs not to believers but to God»⁴³.

The fundamental lived communication of redemption as revealed, and especially of redemption as mediation, is not going to be done in technical language. It is elemental. It is in the *incarnate meaning* of Jesus crucified. It is in the *images and symbols* that we use to express that incarnate meaning. It is in the *saving tale* we tell about what happened. It is in the *meal* he instituted whereby we remember what he did. There is to the mystery of redemption a permanently elemental meaning, grasped in insight but very difficult to conceptualize in any technical manner. «The law of the cross» may be the closest we are ever going to get to it. But somehow that elemental meaning

⁴² B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 7.

⁴³ B. LONERGAN, *The Redemption* (cf. nt. 21), 7-8.

keeps returning in the words and intentions of those who follow Jesus. In and for our time, the same law was expressed in terms less technical than Lonergan's but no less mysterious in the final words of Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream': '... *unearned suffering is redemptive.*' A contemporary soteriology begins with this conviction, uttered by a witness whose life embodied its catalytic agency.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the distinction between redemption as end and redemption as mediation introduced by Bernard Lonergan in lectures delivered at the Pontifical Gregorian University between 1955-1965. Regarding redemption as end, the author states: «it is the redemption of human history itself in the reign of God in accord with the social grace that is manifest whenever, and to the extent that, the scale of values is realized in history». Regarding redemption as mediation, the author focuses on the person of Jesus Christ and the events of the crucifixion and resurrection. He states: «These events are redemptive mediation. They are also revelatory events displaying a universal pattern through which the reign of God is advanced, a pattern of returning good for evil and so transforming the evil into a greater good». He comments on how Pope Francis helps to model the evangelical role of the Church, both in encyclicals such as *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'* and in a pastoral practice: «which continues to mediate the reign of good through the suffering that returns good for evil».

Keywords: Bernard Lonergan, redemption, law of the cross, scale of values, social grace, history, church.

RIASSUNTO

Il presente articolo approfondisce la distinzione tra redenzione come fine e redenzione come mediazione, proposta da Bernard Lonergan, nelle lezioni che ha tenuto alla Pontificia Università Gregoriana dal 1955 al 1965. A riguardo della redenzione come fine, l'autore afferma: «si tratta della redenzione della storia umana nel regno di Dio in accordo con la grazia sociale che si manifesta ogni volta, e nella misura in cui la scala di valori si realizza nella storia». Per quanto riguarda la redenzione come mediazione, l'autore si concentra sulla persona di Gesù Cristo e gli eventi della crocifissione e della resurrezione, affermando: «Questi eventi rappresentano la mediazione redentiva. Sono anche eventi di rivelazione, che mostrano un modello universale attraverso cui il regno di Dio propaga, un modello che prevede di rispondere al male

con il bene e di trasformare il male in un bene più grande». Secondo l'autore, papa Francesco ci aiuta a rimodulare il ruolo evangelico della Chiesa, sia attraverso le sue due encicliche *Evangelii Gaudium* e *Laudato Si'*, sia nella sua azione pastorale «che continua a mediare il regno del bene attraverso quella sofferenza che risponde con bene al male».

Parole chiave: Bernard Lonergan, redenzione, legge della croce, scala di valori, grazia sociale, storia, Chiesa

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